

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF VAN BUREN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
JUNE 10, 2020 – VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM  
MINUTES**

Prior to the start of the meeting, the public was given instructions on how to take part in the meeting.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Jahr, Kelley, Atchinson, Budd, Franzoi and Thompson.

**Excused:** Boynton.

**Staff:** Director Best, Director Power and Secretary Harman.

**Planning Representatives:** McKenna Associate, Vidya Krishnan.

**Applicant(s) in Attendance:** Beth Ernat, Jared Kime and John Ackerman for Clover Development.

**Audience:** Three (3).

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion Jahr, Kelley second to approve the agenda of June 10, 2020 as presented. Motion Carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion Atchinson, Jahr second to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 27, 2020 as presented.

**Roll Call:**

**Yeas:** Franzoi, Jahr, Kelley, Atchinson, Budd and Thompson.

**Nays:** None.

**Absent:** Boynton.

**Motion Carried.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**ITEM #1: 20-009 – CLOVER DEVELOPMENT – REVIEW AND COMMENT ON PROPOSED VARIANCES IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SITE PLAN.**

**TITLE: THE APPLICANT, BETH ERNAT OF CLOVER DEVELOPMENT, IS REQUESTING REVIEW AND COMMENT ON PROPOSED VARIANCES RELATED TO ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND MAXIMUM ACCESSORY BUILDING AREA IN ASSOCIATION WITH A PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN AND SPECIAL LAND USE PERMIT APPLICATION ON A VACANT COMMERCIAL SITE.**

**LOCATION: 8470 BELLEVILLE ROAD. THE PROPERTY IS LOCATED ON THE WEST SIDE OF BELLEVILLE ROAD BETWEEN TYLER ROAD AND ROBSON ROAD.**

Beth Ernat of Clover Development gave the presentation. Ms. Ernat displayed a PowerPoint presentation of the proposed Clover Development senior housing project which included a map of the parcel, overview of Clover independent living, demographics, building information, unit

information, property features, the preliminary site plan and building elevation photos. Clover Development is proposing a 125-unit independent living senior housing development for ages 55 and over at 8470 Belleville Road, a 17.72 acre vacant lot, with 2-acres to be used as an out lot for commercial development along the Belleville Road corridor. The property is located in the Belleville Road Overlay District (BROD). The applicant is requesting a variance to the architectural requirements of the BROD for durable siding on 70 percent of the building and a variance to the maximum allowable accessory structure area from 4,800 square feet to 9,600 square feet for garage parking. Ms. Ernat presented examples of assisted living facilities which they are trying to differentiate from as they are independent living and desire the building to be more home like for the residents. She explained the cost of brick would drive the cost of units to above market rate values and may provide a more institutionalized look. Jared Kime, project engineer for Clover Development, reiterated the commercial use of the out lot will keep the desired architectural standards of the BROD along the Belleville Road corridor with the residential building as a backdrop.

Vidya Krishnan of McKenna Associated presented her review letter dated June 4, 2020 recommending the Planning Commission discuss the applicant's proposal with regard to architecture and accessory structure size and provide some feedback to the BZA to help them make a determination. The Planning Commission's input is vital to the BZA which is not involved in drafting and adopting ordinances or setting the guidelines. The feedback from the Planning Commission can be conveyed to the BZA through the liaison member serving on both boards and also summarized by administrative staff in a memo to the BZA.

Commissioners discussed the applicant's variance requests and had the following questions and comments:

1. Does the physical design currently have the architecturally different design standard every 40-feet? Applicant responded yes, the balcony breaks are every 40 feet and have stair wells, brick veneer, board and batten.
2. Does staff concur with the applicant's response? Director Power will take a further look to confirm whether or not those meet the architecturally different design requirements and make it a point for the BZA review.
3. In regards to the doubling of the accessory structure size, is an accessory structure allowed that size in any other zoning district? Under residential 9,600 square feet most likely would be allowed, the restrictions are due to the mixed-use district. Does it meet the test of a variance? Carports and accessory structures at apartments still have a limit for this zoning district.
4. If the accessory building size is allowable in a district with apartments, consider allowing.
5. Brick is required in the overlay district, it is spelled out in the ordinance, the requirement is a strong one in place for the appearance of the district overall. A variance takes advantage of the design standards that have been put in place for the district.
6. Commissioners agreed the brick is an important feature. Liked the idea of having the garages, would like to see them broken up.
7. In terms of marketability, financial hardships cannot weigh in on the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) decisions.

8. Not dismissing the applicant, there are many brick buildings in the Township, they don't look institutionalized, the overall architecture gives the look. Don't recommend the variance of the material.
9. The request for the garages is reasonable, the buildings have to have architectural design.
10. Van Buren as a premier community has a lack of senior housing, want seniors to age in place. Have zero independent living in the township, need housing for all. Would like to see this project move through the BZA.
11. Commissioners support the project, worked really hard to have senior housing. Understand the request from the applicant, agree the garage areas need to be broken up.
12. Regarding the garage variance, asked whether a structure of this size was allowable in another district, if there is no other district in which allowable then the argument stands.

John Ackerman from Clover Development advised that an aesthetic quality will be provided on the corridor. The building is set 400 feet off the road, the parcel will remain fully wooded until the commercial out lot is developed and would meet the BROD requirements.

No comments from the audience. Director Best informed Commission members and the audience that the guidance provided to the BZA from Planning Commission will be taken as guiding points. Any further questions or comments can be sent to staff.

**ITEM #2: DISCUSSION: ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS: C, LOCAL BUSINESS DISTRICT AMENDMENTS.**

Director Power provided an overview of the ordinance amendments that were reviewed at the March 11, 2020 Planning Commission meeting. A public hearing is scheduled for the June 24, 2020 meeting, any additional information and/or research needed will be brought forward to the public hearing.

Vidya Krishnan of McKenna Associates presented her review letter dated June 2, 2020, with a draft of the zoning ordinance amendments and displayed the following: Chart of C District Uses Trip Generation from the ITE (Institute of Traffic Engineers) Trip Generation Manual Data, map of C, Local Business zoning district coverage in Van Buren Township and examples of selected land uses currently permitted. The C district has a limit on the maximum building size for a single use. This standard was not intended for residential type uses in the C district. The intent of the amendment at this time is not to address a specific project, but to correct a requirement of the ordinance that is too generalized and inappropriate for general application. Addition of the clarification protects the Township and its residents from larger 'big-box' development on neighborhood parcels and at the same time allows for uses that may occupy a larger footprint but generate significantly lesser volumes of traffic and adverse impacts on the abutting areas.

Commissioner inquired if it is clear in the rest of the ordinance documents whether both types of senior facilities (assisted and independent) are commercial or residential uses? Director Power and Vidya Krishnan of McKenna Associates will look into the ordinance further for clarification.

No comments from the audience.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION:**

Director Best informed the Commission and the audience that while continuing to work as remotely as possible, the Township will be opening on June 15, 2020. Staff can be reached by phone and email with any questions.

Director Power informed the Commission and the audience that the June 24, 2020 Planning Commission meeting will have a public hearing, special land use review and preliminary site plan review.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion Budd, Atchinson second to adjourn at 8:59 p.m. Motion Carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Harman  
Recording Secretary