

**Orange Township
Planning Commission Meeting**

**Berlin/Orange Fire Department Bldg
265 W David Hwy
Ionia MI**

July 21, 2009 - 7:00 p.m.

Draft Until Approved

Chairman Dan Reeder called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Dan Reeder, Duane Nash, Brian Stuart, Tom Green and William Thomas. Also present were Zoning Administrator Jeanne Vandersloot, Peter Loftis of MDOT, Damon Root of Kwekel Co, Wayne DePotty and Maureen Reeder. Brian Calley came by later.

Minutes Approval: Chairman Reeder asked Thomas to read the last minutes aloud. Green motioned, Stuart seconded, to approve the January 20, 2009 minutes as presented. Motion Carried 5-0.

Agenda Approval: Nash motioned, Thomas seconded, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion Carried 5-0.

Agenda Item # 1 – Site Plan Review for MDOT Park and Ride Carpool Lot

Vandersloot briefly went through the application and attached supporting documents. The applicant is seeking preliminary site plan approval at this time and would come back at a later date for a final site plan review after engineering, purchase of property and working with the ICRC for driveway location.

Peter Loftis of MDOT was in attendance to explain the project to the members. MDOT has jurisdiction over M-routes, interstate routes and freeways. People are using the restaurant parking lot across the street for car pooling. MDOT asked them if a lot would be available there but the owners were not in favor and there are wet areas adjacent to the parking area that would prevent adding onto the lot. The parcel at the SW corner of Grand River and M-66 has been for sale for quite some time and due to the shape of it, would be a great fit for a car pool lot. The Ionia County Road Commission (ICRC) will need to approve the driveway upgrade and location. They are working with them on it. The project is not fully designed at this time, they do not expend that much funds unless a preliminary site plan is approved so they can safely go ahead with purchase and engineering costs. It will be put out to bid when ready for construction. ICRC mentioned possibly accessing through the Pilot Station. The way the vehicles move in that lot are right in, right out off M-66. If cars were pulling in to make a left into the car pool lot, they would be facing trucks and other vehicles coming out to make a right. It would be a dangerous traffic movement. Their engineers also don't think it is safe to use the M-66 driveway due to traffic movement. It would also cause south bounders to have to turn around to go back to enter or worse, cut across traffic.

Member questions and *MDOT answers:* Any plans to repave Grand River Ave to the east? *Nothing planned.* It is a bad intersection, will this make it worse? *Not that much traffic going east-west, most will be early morning and late afternoon, common work hours.* What about backups west bound on Grand River waiting to make a left, will they back up to the driveway? *There would be room for 9-10 cars to back up and not likely that situation would happen.* *The land is in a suitable location to the freeway and is for sale – not always is there land for sale.* A lot of recent site plan reviews have been from agencies that will take the land out of the tax base – hate to lose more. *MDOT don't want to purchase any more land than needed, thought this parcel not so suitable for a business due to shape.* *Parking lot lights could be installed in the future but the Township would have to pay the electric billing.* *They don't usually light them.* What if the traffic gets so bad people stop using the lots? *History has proven that people will use them no matter what, they don't like to screen too much, and need them open for visibility and driver safety, especially for women.* *The Lowell exit is so popular, it is full most of the time and they are discussing with the land owner to buy more land to expand it.* *They have two Portland exit lots that get heavy use.* Who would improve the intersection if needed? *The ICRC and MDOT would share costs and MDOT would pay for a traffic signal light.*

Audience member said she uses the current restaurant lot for carpooling and is nice because they can make a right turn onto M-66. Several of her friends have been in accidents at this intersection – what is required to put in a traffic light? *Mostly traffic counts and accident history.* *He is not aware of a plan for a light.* *He can look into the last time a count was done or order a new one.* P C member: After the lot is in, will the restaurant put up no trespassing signs? *Has not asked them that.* *Many of the Meijer stores lease space to car poolers, generates business for them and good for the community.* Have they talked to neighboring parcel owners such as Bader's or

Reed & Hoppes? *There was no interest there last time they spoke a few years ago. They will purchase the entire parcel and there is room for expansion.* Supervisor: Concerns about losing tax base, tight economy, losing police but using money for a car pool lot, is this a good use of State funds? *The money is Federal, a funding template for this use only so they can only spend the budgeted money on a car pool lot. Part of the idea is to get more cars off roads and save gas costs and pollution. The use is needed in this area due to people using the restaurant lot already.* Brian Calley asked if one could be placed on each side of the road to help with traffic and turning problems. Also, can they be placed inside of an access triangle? *There is not enough funding for two lots. The Federal highway regulations prohibit using these triangles because access to and from them are not safe with freeway traffic exits or entrances that are one way.*

What about the 50 foot setback from the right of way? Part of the lot meets it and part does not due to the wider right of way south. Won't a variance be required for the part that is deeper? Vandersloot read the ordinance section regarding Planning Commission modifications. It was her opinion that the parking lot setback would come under that modification section and so they could approve the variance for that part of the lot closer to the deeper right of way.

MDOT is asking for preliminary site plan approval so they can go forward with land purchase, work with ICRC on the driveway and do the engineering and landscaping plans to get ready for a final site plan review and approval. They will bid the job out and probably construct it in 2010 when all approvals are completed.

Chairman: We have established that there is a need for this use by people using the restaurant lot, it is not the best location due to the intersection traffic problems, property owner wants the sale, if problems arise – MDOT can fix them, funds are Federally set aside for this use only and the parcel is not very suitable for a business. He asked if there was any other discussion or questions?

Thomas motioned to approve the parking lot setback waiver for the portion of the lot near the south right of way and approve the preliminary site plan as presented. Stuart seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Public Comment:

Vandersloot asked who initiates a study for a street light. *MDOT representative said he would look into the history and criteria for requesting a street light.*

Adjournment

Green motioned, Nash seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 pm. Motion carried 5-0.

Next meeting: The next scheduled meeting will be at 7:00 pm, October 20, 2009, at the Fire Dept. Bldg.

Submitted by Jeanne Vandersloot, Recorder