

BLAIR TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

Special Meeting April 1, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER

The Blair Township Planning Commission Special meeting of April 1, 2025, was called to order at 6:00 pm. The meeting was held in the Blair Township Hall Meeting Room and there were 38 attendees from the public.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

C. ROLL CALL

Present at roll call: Fitzpatrick, Bearinger, Wagner, Nickerson, Heim and Clous. **Absent and excused:** Boeve. Also present: Zoning Administrator Lisa Guerrieri and Recorder Susan Kase.

D. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

E. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Nickerson, seconded by Clous to approve the agenda with the following correction: the removal of the approval of the February 25, 2025, Study Session minutes, which were approved at the March 19, 2025, Regular Planning Commission meeting. **Yes:** Heim, Bearinger, Nickerson, Wagner, Clous, Fitzpatrick. **No:** None. **Motion carried.**

F. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None stated.

G. MINUTES

Motion by Wagner, seconded by Bearinger to approve the minutes of the regular meeting March 19, 2025, with the following correction: page 6, “Vice Chairman Heim said that the Site Plan review will be the next item”, should read as “Vice Chairman Clous said that the Site Plan review will be the next item.” Yes: Heim, Clous, Bearinger, Nickerson, Wagner, Fitzpatrick. **No:** None. **Motion carried.**

H. CORRESPONDENCE

There were four pieces of correspondence received via email regarding the Special Use/Site Plan review on tonight’s agenda, attached to these minutes in PDF format.

I. PRESENTATIONS

There were no presentations.

J. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Special Use Case # SU/SPR 25-04-01:** The applicant, Meijer, is requesting a Special Use/ Site Plan review to establish a 161,221 SF retail store with drive through pharmacy, garden center (outdoor sales area), and a gas station on property located at 4249 US 31 S, Traverse City, MI 49685, parcel # 28-02-008-004-00 and 008-001-01.

Chairman Heim explained the process for a Special Use and Site Plan review to the meeting attendees.

Chairman Heim opened the Public Hearing at 6:08 p.m.

Jason T. Vander Kodde, PE, Senior Civil Engineer, Fishbeck Inc, 1515 Arboretum Drive SE, Grand Rapids MI 49546, representing the applicant, Meijer, presented the Site Plan to the Commissioners. Vander Kodde stated that the proposed Meier Super Center establishment will occupy 33 acres between the Menards store to the east and the Amazon distribution center to the west on US 31. Vander Kodde said that the project is currently awaiting MDOT approval for a traffic signal on US 31.

Chairman Heim asked Vander Kodde if he could please speak to the traffic study performed by MDOT. Vander Kodde said that the traffic count was studied at the nearest intersections, with a model created for morning and evening peak traffic hours. Vander Kodde stated that the proposed traffic signal at the Meijer entrance will implement mitigating measures in traffic by coordinating with the Chums Corner traffic signal.

Chairman Heim asked how the data collection was performed in terms of eastbound, westbound, northbound and southbound traffic. Vander Kodde said he was not sure, but he believed that the traffic data was collected directly in front of the proposed Meijer store, Menards, Family Fare and to East Commerce Drive. Vander Kodde said he didn't think they went as far as West Commerce Drive.

Chairman Heim asked the Commissioners to review the Staff Report prepared by Lisa Guerrieri for the Special Use/Site Plan review. Chairman Heim read the Staff Report aloud. Chairman Heim asked Guerrieri if there were any issues. Guerrieri said there were none. Chairman Heim referenced the four pieces of correspondence noting that all are opposed to the development due to traffic concerns. Chairman Heim asked for questions from the Commissioners.

Wagner asked Matt Levitt, Real Estate Manager, Meijer, 2350 Three Mile Road NW, Grand Rapids MI 49544, 616 735 8422, how this store compared to the other two area stores US 31 S in Traverse City and Rt 72 in Acme Township. Levitt said that the proposed Meijer Super Center in Blair Township would be the smallest of the three, at 160,000 SF; the Traverse City Meijer is 220,000 SF and the Acme Meijer is 190,000 SF.

Clous asked Levitt if this project is conditional on the MDOT approval for a traffic signal. Levitt said yes, it is.

Fitzpatrick asked Levitt if a study was performed by Meijer to justify adding a Super Center to the Grand Traverse County area. Levitt said that studies in general support a Super Center as proposed, and that Meijer makes a significant investment in planning before construction is proposed. Levitt

said that in general a Meijer Super Center draws customers from a 15 to 20-mile radius, with this proposed store drawing customers living mostly south and west of Chums Corners.

Fitzpatrick asked if the delivery trucks to the proposed store make night deliveries. Levitt said that there are deliveries to stores 24 hours per day, mostly in the morning and daytime hours.

Chairman Heim asked Levitt if there were any plans for the property to the south of the site, as it has easements. Levitt said there are no future plans to develop on the easements.

Chairman Heim asked how parking lots are sized. Levitt said that a general size parking lot for stores is based on the Meijer standard of 500 parking spaces for a Super Center.

Chairman Heim asked Levitt how many cars are in the parking lot during peak times. Levitt said that Meijer tries to balance an adequate number of parking spaces, as any excess parking lot space is not an economical use of the land.

Chairman Heim asked Levitt what times are considered peak shopping times for a Meijer store. Levitt said that the peak times for shopping are generally weekdays 4 to 7pm and weekends 12 noon to 6pm.

Bearinger asked Levitt if there are any plans for this proposed store to be open 24 hours a day. Levitt said that this is determined by Operations Managers, currently plans are for operating the proposed store 6am to 12 midnight seven days per week.

Wagner asked if there were plans for snow removal. Vander Kodde, assisted by Grant Braun, Civil Engineer, Fishbeck, said that the plans for snow removal call for moving the snow to the outer perimeter of the parking lot. Vander Kodde said if there was overage of snow, it would be moved to the rear of the property.

Wagner asked if there were any plans for a bus stop / public transportation. Vander Kodde said that the proposed store location is outside the current bus route. Vander Kodde said that if the Special Use/Site Plan is approved, Meijer will request a bus stop at the store.

At this time, Chairman Heim said that Public Input would be received, reminding the attendees that they should state their full name and address, and limit their comments to three minutes.

Jim Johnson, 6222 Westwood Parkway, Suttons Bay, MI 49682, Bingham Township, said that his concern was the already saturated area market for retail stores; Johnson said that there will not be a large enough customer base or employee availability to support this store, Family Fare, Tom's of Interlochen and the Traverse City Meijer store.

Anthony Brown, 4559 Quail Court, Traverse City MI 49686, said that the proposed store, the smallest of the three in the area, will not provide adequate inventory. Brown also asked what the cost of the traffic light and street construction will be passed on to the taxpayers. Brown also asked if the traffic study was performed during the height of the tourist season, summer months, when area traffic is the heaviest.

Kyle Kinsey, 254 S. East Silver Lake Road, Traverse City MI 49686, said that the traffic on Silver Lake Road has increased, especially the commercial vehicle traffic.

Don Furore, 278 S. East Silver Lake Road, Traverse City MI 49686, said that with the proposed store the traffic on Silver Lake Road from Interlochen will be worse.

Robert Mead, 4500 E. Duck Lake Road, Grawn MI 49637, said that he is concerned about the number of retail stores that are currently vacant in Grand Traverse County. He asked if this proposed store would cannibalize the area stores. He also asked how revenue models are built to justify a new Meijer store.

Roslyn Tyge, 3852 Rustic Manor Court, Traverse City MI 49686, said that at the present time she cannot drive out of her driveway in the mornings due to traffic congestion. She stated that she would be negatively impacted by an increase in traffic.

Anthony Brown, 4559 Quail Court, Traverse City MI 49686, asked if Meijer could work with Menards to construct a shared entrance to reduce traffic flow on US 31.

Chairman Heim asked if the applicant would like to respond to the Public Input comments.

Levitt said that Meijer is actively listening to all feedback and concerns and welcomes comments on the proposed development. Levitt stated that Meijer considers the safety of everyone in mind when designing a new store's entrance and exit driveways.

Vander Kodde spoke to the question of who is paying for the traffic light installation and street construction, explaining that Meijer will participate with MDOT on the costs for any road improvements, noting that MDOT has a scheduled road improvement for 2028 in this area. Vander Kodde said that the concerns of the hill on US 31 approaching the proposed traffic signal were addressed by MDOT during the traffic study and deemed safe for a traffic light for eastbound traffic on US 31.

Fitzpatrick asked when the MDOT traffic studies were performed. Vander Kodde said that MDOT gather a full year's worth of traffic data, and that seasonal variations in traffic patterns were considered. Vander Kodde said that the school year traffic stopping in the summer months offsets the increased tourist traffic in those months.

Robert Mead, 4500 E Duck Lake Road, Grawn MI 49637, asked if Meijer would still consider building the store as planned if the gas station was not approved. Levitt said that Meijer has not considered this an issue, and said that a gas station is a convenience, not a destination for shoppers.

Chairman Heim closed the Public Hearing at 7:03 p.m.

The Standards for Approval for Special Use application are:

Section 22.04 Standards for Approval

1. The Planning Commission shall review the particular circumstances and facts related to each proposed special use application in terms of the following standards and requirements and shall make a determination as to whether the use proposed to be developed on the subject parcel meets the following standards and requirements:

- a. Will be harmonious with and in accordance with the general objectives of the Master Plan.
- b. Will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in harmony with the existing and intended character of the general vicinity and the natural environment so that the use will not change the essential character of that area.
- c. Will not be hazardous or disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses.
- d. Will represent a substantial improvement to property in the immediate vicinity and to the community as a whole.
- e. Will be served adequately by essential public services and facilities, such as highways, roads, drainage structures, police, and fire protection, and refuse disposal; or the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the proposed special use shall be able to provide adequately for such services.
- f. Will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services and will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
- g. Will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment, and conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive smoke, fumes, glare, noise, vibration, or odors.

Chairman Heim said that there are three considerations for the Special Use application:

- 1. The drive through pharmacy
- 2. The gas station
- 3. The outdoor garden center

Motion by Clous, seconded by Nickerson to recommend to the Blair Township Board of Trustees to **approve** Case **SU/SPR# 25-04-01 as presented** as it has **met** the Standards for Approval as required in Section 22.04, A through G of the Blair Township Zoning Ordinance. **Yes:** Wagner, Fitzpatrick, Nickerson, Bearinger, Clous, Heim. **No:** None **Motion carried.**

Chairman Heim stated that the Site Plan Review would now be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Heim asked the Commissioners if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Motion by Fitzpatrick, seconded by Nickerson to **approve Case SU/SPR# 25-04-01 with the following conditions:** 1. the approval of the Special Use application by the Blair Township Board of Trustees; 2. The approval by MDOT of the traffic light. The Site Plan with the conditions will have **met** the Standards for Approval as required in Section 21.03, #1 through #11 and is a use permitted in the Commercial Zoning District of the Blair Township Zoning Ordinance. **Yes:** Wagner, Fitzpatrick, Clous, Bearinger, Nickerson, Heim. **No:** None. **Motion carried.**

The **Standard for Approval Section 21.03** are included here.

(Amendment 104-05-08-05, Effective January 29, 2009)

A site plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission upon finding

that the following conditions are met:

- 1. That the proposed use will not be detrimental to the adjacent property or the surrounding neighborhood, including properties located in adjacent municipalities.**
- 2. For all roads governed under this Ordinance, there shall be a proper relationship between existing roads and highways and proposed deceleration lanes, service drives, ingress and egress drives, and parking areas to assure the safety and convenience of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Public roads are not governed by this Ordinance.**
- 3. That buildings, structures, parking areas, utility areas, walls, and fences are so designed and located to minimize the adverse effects of such development on users of such development and occupants of adjacent properties.**
- 4. That any adverse effects of the proposed development and activities which will impact adjoining occupants or owners shall be minimized by appropriate landscaping, fencing, or other screening.**
- 5. That as many natural landscape features as possible are retained, particularly where they provide a barrier or buffer between the development and adjoining properties used for dissimilar purposes, and where they assist in preserving the general appearance of the neighborhood.**
- 6. The proposed development provides for the proper development of public utilities and infrastructure.**
- 7. All buildings or groups of buildings are arranged to permit emergency vehicle access.**
- 8. Site plan approval may be conditioned upon the applicant providing evidence that the necessary permits have been applied for. A land use permit shall not be issued until the Zoning Administrator receives a copy of the required permit(s).**
- 9. The Planning Commission may require additional landscaping, fences, and walls in pursuit of these objectives and same shall be provided and maintained as a condition of the use to which they are appurtenant.**
- 10. The Planning Commission may recommend that escrow money be placed with the Township to provide for a marginal service drive equal in length to the frontage of the property involved. Zoning compliance permits shall not be issued until the improvement is physically provided, or monies having been deposited with the Township Clerk.**
- 11. Where the Township has adopted a specific area or neighborhood improvement or redevelopment plans and recommendations involving, but not limited to, public rights-of-way, utilities, and storm drainage, parking facilities, building placement, access drives, floor space density allocations, building facade and architectural**

treatment, no site plan shall be approved unless there is general compliance with such Township plans.

K. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

L. REPORTS

- 1.) **Zoning Administrator** – Lisa Guerrieri asked the Commissioners if they wanted to hold the April Master Plan Study Session on April 16, 2025, as there is no business scheduled. As two of the Commissioners had a conflict, the Study Session was left on April 24, 2025.
- 2.) **Town Board Representative** – No meeting
- 3.) **Zoning Board of Appeals** - No meeting
- 4.) **Trails** – No meeting

M. Any Other Business The Commissioners agreed to meet on Thursday, April 24, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. for a Special Meeting Study Session to review the Master Plan progress.

N. Public Input There was no public input.

O. Adjournment

Motion by Nickerson, seconded by Wagner to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. **All Yeas.**

Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Kase, Recorder