

	Charter Township of Garfield Planning Department Report No. 2016-19		
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Meeting:	March 22, 2016 Planning Commission	Attachments:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject:	2015 Annual Report		

Introduction

This 2015 annual Planning Report was prepared pursuant to the requirements of Section 19(2) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which states:

"A planning commission shall make an annual written report to the legislative body concerning its operations and the status of planning activities, including recommendations regarding actions by the legislative body related to planning and development."

This report is intended to serve as the Planning Commission's report to the Township Board, as required above, and will also outline the activities of the Planning Department in the 2015 year. Additionally, this report will also inform on both the Zoning and Building Department's recent activities.

Boards & Commissions

The Planning Department participates in various committees and provides support services to various Commissions and Boards, which include:

- Garfield Township Board
- Garfield Township Planning Commission
- Garfield Township Zoning Board of Appeals
- Joint Traverse City and Garfield Township Planning Commission (Grand Traverse Commons)
- Joint Traverse City and Garfield Township Recreation Authority
- Parks & Recreation Commission
- TC-TALUS Technical Committee
- Joint Housing Task Force
- Among others

Administration

The Planning Department continues to be very active as it moves towards finalizing the Master Plan, preparing the new Grand Traverse Commons Ordinance, and ensuring that development projects are completed as required by the Planning Commission and Township Board.

Routine tasks also include dialogue with the development community to ensure that development applications are complete and ready to be brought before the Planning Commission, which can take weeks or months. The management and oversight of active Natural Resources Trust Fund projects occupies a substantial amount of Staff time.

As current documents and plans are finalized in 2016, attention will be shifted to successor documents and ordinances to help the Township realize the goals of recently adopted documents. These may include sub-area plans, corridor planning, lake protection plans, etc. This, combined with yet another projected year of strong growth, as well as planning for upcoming grant applications, will continue to demand efficiency in the administration of the Planning Department.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission meets the second and fourth Wednesday of each month and is responsible for reviewing development applications, preparing plans, and advising the Township Board on development matters and zoning amendments. The meeting schedule allows the Planning Commission to hear, review and decide on projects during the first meeting and to advance the interests of the community by holding a work session during the second meeting of the month. This schedule will continue throughout 2016 as the Commission works to finalize its Master Plan review.

New Garfield Township Zoning Ordinance

Following several years of work by the Planning Commission, the new Garfield Township Zoning Ordinance is officially adopted and in effect. The Planning Commission took a proactive approach by gathering input from residents, local businesses, engineers and realtors to ensure everyone's concerns were addressed as they worked their way through the document. This approach led to several uneventful public hearings where those in attendance thanked the Planning Commission for their outreach and vision moving forward.

Master Plan

A community survey was drafted and mailed to a random sampling of Garfield Township residents to solicit public opinion on how we are growing and where we are heading. The information received will assist our Planning Commission in creating and supporting current and future Master Plan goals and objectives. In addition to public opinion it is very important to collaborate with community leaders, emergency services, schools and other public service entities to understand how their future plans coincide with ours.

Staff has an ongoing discussion with community stakeholders such as TCAPS, BATA, Cherry Capital Airport, GT Metro Fire, and the Sherriff's Office to understand each agency's current and future infrastructure needs and how each need relates to our community now and into the future. In addition to the Master Plan survey, the Planning Commission discussed the current Future Land Use Map and made adjustments to encourage infill of dilapidated or underutilized properties rather than encouraging the outward growth of our community. Corridor Planning was a big topic of discussion this year as was residential growth and density.

Development Reviews

The Planning Commission reviewed and approved numerous projects in 2015, which included Site Plan Reviews, Planned Unit Developments, Special Use Permits and zoning text and map amendments. A brief description of those reviews follows.

SUP – 2014-01 Culver Meadows Assisted Living Apartments (Denied 2015)

An 88 unit senior apartment building was proposed on Silver Lake Road in the R-1B single family residential district. From the onset, the Planning Commission expressed concern regarding the incompatibility between the large apartment building and surrounding single family homes. Although the applicant modified the two-story building to lower the density, it was clear that the applicant could not meet the compatibility requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and still accomplish what he desired to build in that district. Following several attempts to work through the issues, the Planning Commission denied the applicant's request for a senior apartment building in that location. Following the denial of the project, the applicant appealed the Planning Commission's decision to Circuit Court and requested that the decision be overturned. The Courts, upon reviewing the procedure, facts and decision, concurred with the Planning Commission's decision to deny the request. This project has since been appealed to the Michigan Court of Appeals.

SUP 1991-10 (K) – Crown PUD – (denied 2015)

The applicants request was to amend an approved sign package to allow an LED changeable letter sign within the Crown PUD and along the unlit Silver Lake Roadway. The Planning Commission has historically denied requests to establish commercially-oriented LED signs within Planned Unit Developments out of incompatibility concerns with surrounding residential and agricultural districts. In addition, the area is absent street lighting raising safety concerns due to sign illumination and distraction. The Crown PUD already benefits from an increased number of signs and an increase in sign size over most PUDs. The request was denied by the Planning Commission for the second time in 5 years. The Applicant disagreed with the Planning Commission's decision and appealed to Circuit Court. The Circuit Court, upon review of the procedure, facts and decision, concurred with the Planning Commission and denied the applicants appeal.

SUP 2015-01 - The Ridges at 45 – LaFranier Road – (approved)

The applicant was approved for a 232 unit Multi-Family Residential project along LaFranier Road. The market rate project incorporates a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units to serve future Garfield Township residents. The applicant worked amicably with the Township and GTCRC to incorporate a bike path along the property and add a center turn lane to LaFranier Road to address both non-motorized and vehicular safety. The applicant will begin construction in the spring of 2016.

PUD 2014-02-A TC Center Partners - (approved)

Following construction of the new 14 screen theatre complex, which includes an IMAX Theater an application to the Planning Commission was submitted for sign approval as all PUD's are required to have signage reviewed to ensure compatibility with adjacent properties.

PUD 2009-01 Brookside Commons – (approved)

During construction of the Brookside Commons project, located at the corner of Zimmerman and N. Long Lake Roads, the WODA Group requested a reduction in hard surface parking, modification to a rain garden location, trail surface upgrade to concrete and to rectify a parcel boundary line issue, which was inadvertently left off the approved plans. All modifications were approved.

Zoning Ordinance Text & Map Amendments**Amendment #312 – LaFranier Road – (approved)**

The application was unanimously approved by the Township Board following a unanimous recommendation by the Planning Commission. The request involved the rezoning of approximately 30-acres of land from the A-1 Agricultural District to the R1-M Multi-Family Residential District. Subsequently, this land was the subject of the Ridges at 45 apartment development.

Amendment # 313 – 3100 Keystone Road – (approved)

The applicant made a request to conditionally rezone property from Commercial to Industrial General in an effort to accommodate a juice modification business. The application was approved unanimously due to compliance with the Master Plan. The business, which takes fruit juice, modifies it to extract the sugars and create low calorie drinks, has since moved in and is in full operation.

Conceptual reviews

Conceptual reviews were established in 2010 to allow developers and applicants the ability to appear before the Planning Commission with little more than a concept and basic site plan. This procedure provides the applicant with valuable feedback to gauge the Planning Commission's interest in the project before an application is submitted. This procedure has been very useful to developers as they are able to discuss a potential project without having to first secure a planner, engineer, surveyor, etc. to complete an application. The following projects were brought before the Planning Commission for discussion in 2015:

- **Traverse Medical Properties LLC** – This project located within the Lone Tree Planned Unit Development came before the Planning Commission on numerous occasions with different scenarios of development. Following a positive review by the Planning Commission the property was purchased and a medical office (Crystal Lake Medical) is anticipated to break ground in 2016.
- **North Country Drive Apartments** – The request for property located between US31 and Hartmann Road did not meet the standards of the zoning district in which it was located, however, the application prompted discussion regarding additional housing needs and opportunities. Since that time, the Planning Commission has made a recommendation to allow apartments within commercial zoning districts. It is currently up for public hearing at the Township Board level.

Approved Project - Progress Update

PUD – 2014 -02 - Buffalo Ridge Center (approved 2015)

This application involved a commercial PUD (redevelopment) project on approximately 34 acres of commercially-zoned property, formerly the site of Horizon Outlet Mall. The northern portion of the site has redeveloped into a 14-screen theatre complex including an IMAX movie theater, and additionally they are working on the second phase of the project, which involves the redevelopment of the old theater to a new organic food market called Lucky's. This project is a good example of how a PUD's flexibility can assist in the redevelopment of a dilapidated commercial property in a prime location rather than development of a greenfield site outside of the urban core. Lucky's is anticipating a remodel of the structure in spring of 2016.

SUP – 2014-03 - Grand Traverse Timbers (approved 2015)

Grand Traverse Timbers was granted a Special Use Permit to establish an enclosed sawmill operation and associated warehousing within two existing buildings on a 1.5-acre parcel located at 5111 Cedar Run Road. The property is currently zoned A-1 Agricultural and is the site of the former Ken's Landfill, which was decommissioned in 2012. This project is currently in operation and is doing well establishing itself in the timber frame market.

SUP 2003-06(D) – Premier Manor (approved 2015)

This request was for a major amendment to the approved mixed-residential **Premier Place PUD** located along Premier Street, Woodmere Avenue, and Boardman Lake. The project was first approved in 2003 and is presently approved for a 72-unit multi-family structure called Premier Manor. The applicant had requested to replace the approved 72 unit structure with an alternate, larger structure. This application was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and approved by the Township Board in early 2015. Construction has yet to commence on the project but is anticipated to break ground in 2016.

SUP 2002 – 06 (C) - Kensington Park (approved 2013)

A request for a major amendment to the Kensington Park Planned Unit Residential Development (behind Arby's) west of the Cherryland Mall was approved with conditions. The project will incorporate five (5), two-story, multi-family buildings, constituting a total of 36 dwelling units. The project is intended to provide permanent supportive housing for residents of the community who may otherwise be at risk of homelessness. Following various funding delays this project is currently being constructed.

SUP 2009 – 01 - Brookside Commons (approved 2009 extended until 2014)

Approved in 2009 and following numerous extensions the Brookside Commons mixed use PUD, located at N. Long Lake Road and Zimmerman Roads, which consists of 3 commercial lots and nine, 8-unit residential structures totaling 72 units is near completion and currently being occupied. As with all Planned Unit Developments the developer was required to provide a community benefit to compensate for additional densities and uses not otherwise permitted in the district. In this particular project the owner was required to build a Zimmerman Road extension to the north and rebuild the intersection at N. Long Lake Road and Zimmerman Roads as their public benefit.

Parks & Recreation

Buffalo Ridge Trail - After years of anticipation, the Township secured all necessary easements and approvals to build Phase II of the Buffalo Ridge Trail. After an unsatisfactory bid result for summer of 2015 construction, this project was rebid and will be under construction in 2016. Many thanks are due to partners such as the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA, Oleson Foundation, Great Wolf Lodge, TART, and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy in making this trail a success.

Boardman Lake Trail - The Township worked with the City of Traverse City, Grand Traverse County, and TART to secure a Coastal Zone Management Grant to plan and design the final leg of this trail, which will start at 14th Street and extend south along the western shore to Logan's Landing. When finished, this project will complete the loop around the Boardman Lake Trail and provide enhanced access to the trails

farther south along the Boardman River. Planning began in 2015 and will continue into 2016, culminating in approved design plans and cost projections. The date of construction is unknown at this time.

Grand Traverse Commons - following an earlier forest management plan, a hazardous tree assessment was completed to identify fall hazards to trail users. A tree service was contracted to remove nearly 500 of these trees, and this work was completed in early 2016.

There is also a lot of momentum to begin a comprehensive park planning process for the Grand Traverse Commons. We envision a multi-use, regional attraction featuring sustainable hiking and biking trails, including greatly improved wayfinding. With the groundwork and budgeting set for this process in 2015, it will get underway in 2016.

Also, with the help of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Township submitted a public use deed to the Michigan DNR to acquire a parcel commonly known as the "State 40." This property abuts the west line of the Township's 140 acre Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area. Though not known by many members of the public, it is an intrinsic part of the Commons park and trail network. The future public use of this property became imperiled when the DNR placed it on a real-estate "dispose of" list. We have yet to hear back from the DNR but are cautiously optimistic that the application will be approved.

Silver Lake Recreation Area -The Park is located at 1785 N. East Silver Lake Road between Silver Pines and W. Silver Lake Roads. The irrigation system which was installed in 2014 was dialed in, and two years of grass development has led to beautiful turf for the most part. We anticipate being able to allow field play on the multi-purpose athletic field for the first time in 2016.

Additionally, a contractor was hired to install a small network of sidewalks connecting the parking areas with existing pathways, the restroom, picnic pavilions, and dog park. These improvements were meant to enhance access to and enjoyment of the park for all users and ability levels, and are already greatly appreciated.

The dog park which was installed in 2014 continues to be a great success, and we are in discussions to install a professionally designed disc golf course at the park in 2016.

Boardman Valley Nature Preserve (BVNP)- This property is located along the Boardman River south of S.Airport Road. The Township closed on two grant-assisted property additions to this park, including the peninsula of land behind Verizon Wireless on S. Airport Road, and a parcel on Keystone Road which will provide access to the land already owned on the east riverbank. The Township also hired a consultant to prepare a conceptual park plan for the new Keystone property. In addition to simply being a parking area and trailhead, this parcel has the potential to be developed into a gem of a recreation area to serve residents on the eastern side of the Township.

Additionally, a new Trust Fund grant request for improvements to the BVNP in the vicinity of the "Boardman Y" scored 4th highest out of all development applications in the state. This grant is a development project at the BVNP to enhance public access to and enjoyment of the Boardman River and to provide a trailhead for the Boardman River Trail. The trailhead will serve both as a water trailhead and a non-motorized trailhead. All improvements will be universally accessible and include parking, paths,

floating kayak dock/launch, picnic pavilion, changing building and modern vault restroom, interpretive signs and trail maps and renovation of the existing pickleball courts.

Miller Creek Nature Preserve - the Township hired a consultant to prepare a conceptual design for a new trailhead and attention-grabbing features for land owned near the Aldi store on South Airport Road. We believe that public awareness and enjoyment of this beautiful 90-acre park is still lacking, so the new trailhead is intended to draw people in and alert them of this park that is located right behind the Grand Traverse Crossings Mall. The conceptual plan included some really interesting ideas that we can begin to implement in 2016, including landscape buffering to shield from South Airport Road traffic noise, a pergola/seating area intended to draw the eye, additional trail/boardwalk improvements to allow for quick jaunts through beautiful wetlands, and better access to a small fishing pond.

Additionally, some trail rerouting was completed to move the trail farther away from the backyards of some of the Emerald Ridge condominiums.

Hickory Hills / Hickory Meadows - Staff continued to meet with stakeholder groups involved in planning and management for these two parks, which are owned by Traverse City (HH) and the Joint Recreational Authority (HM) but are located in Garfield Township at the west end of Randolph Street.

Perhaps most notably, a comprehensive redevelopment plan for Hickory Hills was prepared to guide this community's ski hill into the 21st century. The redevelopment plan calls for a new lodge, revised layout, and multi-use trails to make this a 4-season destination. The stakeholder group is actively seeking funding to implement this plan.

As a part of the Hickory Hills plan, efforts were also made to coordinate trail planning and routing between the two parks, as well as establishing easements to build a connector trail south to the Grand Traverse Commons. Taken in sum, the three parks may be able to eventually offer a truly remarkable trail system near the core of the Traverse City urban area.

Together, the above achievements reflect ongoing efforts of the Parks and Recreation Commission to implement the goals of the 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. With a number of great parks now established, we continue the push to enhance these resources and to allow people to reach their parks by bike. Those interested in learning more about ongoing efforts are encouraged to visit the Planning Department, where we have a number of maps and documents to explore.

Joint Traverse City & Garfield Township Planning Commission

Staff continues to meet with Traverse City's Planning Department to continue polishing the draft Grand Traverse Commons Zoning Ordinance. This form-based code will regulate the specific Commons area campus and will be separate from the Township's regular Zoning Ordinance. The Joint Planning Commission is comprised of City and Township residents, appointed from their respective Planning Commissions and a mutually appointed member of the public. Two of Garfield Township's longest serving Planning Commission members John Racine and Terry Clark serve as Township Representatives on the Commission and staff representatives from both municipalities assist commissioners. The

Commission continues to review ordinance drafts and recommend changes as work towards the Ordinance's completion progresses. Meetings with individual stakeholder groups are ongoing following a public hearing on the Ordinance.

Infrastructure Update (NW Corner)

Water storage has been limited in the northwest portion of the township due to changes at the MDEQ level and high growth rate in that area. The township has worked diligently to rectify the water storage issue so that growth can continue without concern. These efforts included coordinating utility projects with the GTCRC road improvements along Cedar Run, Harris and Zimmerman Roads to lower water and sewer installation costs.

The townships ability to secure a high elevation parcel presented another cost saving opportunity as we were able to utilize a ground level tank rather than the more expensive elevated tank alternative. Construction on the tank and final utility installation is anticipated to begin summer of 2016.

Vacation Home Rentals (Sections 30 & 31)

A Vacation Home Rental (VHR) survey was drafted and mailed to all residents and property owners surrounding Silver Lake, having access to Silver Lake or who reside in Sections 30 and 31. The survey's intent was to garner opinion from the residents on VHR's and to inform them of a small group of landlords who had requested that the Board allow VHR's as a permitted use in the R-1 Single-family Residential district. Following several public meetings at both the Planning Commission and Township Board meetings, research into other communities and ordinances, evaluating the survey results, zoning ordinance and master plan, the change to allow a commercial type use in our residential district was not supported. The original cottage resorts that were in place prior to the zoning ordinance adoption will be able to continue as they have for decades rented to people on a short term basis.

At the request of members from the Silver Lake Association, staff is in the process of researching septic inspection ordinances from communities in Grand Traverse County. These ordinances require the home owner to have their septic system inspected prior to the sale of a property and a report on the systems condition at the time of closing. These types of ordinances are becoming more popular as lakefront residents are looking to protect their investment by protecting the water.

Garfield Township Planning Recognition

2015 Roger Williams Planner Award

Garfield Township's Deputy Planner, Brian VanDenBrand, was the recipient of the 2015 Roger Williams Planner Award for his vision and achievements in park planning and non-motorized trails. Brian successfully collaborated with surrounding municipalities, TART and other entities to expand, connect, and implement non-motorized trails in and around our community. In addition to his trail planning efforts he has obtained over \$2,500,000.00 in grants for the expansion and improvements to our non-motorized trail and park system. Brian's efforts have increased our parks system by more than 120 acres of land since 2012, the majority of which is located along the Boardman River and Miller Creek and preserved for current and future anglers, kayakers and hikers to enjoy.

TART Trail

Garfield Township was named this year's TART Trails' Community Partner for our efforts in planning, developing, and maintaining non-motorized trails, including the Historic Barns Trail (grant funded and constructed in 2013), Buffalo Ridge Trail (grant funded and to be constructed in 2016), and the Boardman Lake and Boardman River Trail (recent recipient of Coastal Zone Management for planning and Trust Fund dollars for trailhead development). Each of these trails are part of a growing network of regional trails, and intended to provide recreation and alternate transportation opportunities to our residents, visitors, and workers.

eCities Recognition

Each year, the University of Michigan-Dearborn completes a survey of local governmental units across the State of Michigan. The purpose of the survey is to track economic development efforts and allow municipal governments to evaluate their performance relative to other communities. Communities that achieve high overall rankings, comprising the top 10% of Michigan communities for business are awarded status as a (1-5) Star Community. As a result of our zoning ordinance standards, flexibility in land use and economic incentives to attract and retain businesses in our community, Garfield Township was recognized as a 2015 4-Star Community.

Conclusion

2016 should be a very busy and exciting year as we anticipate adoption of the new Garfield Township Master Plan and Grand Traverse Commons Form Based Zoning Ordinance. Following the adoption of the above mentioned documents the Planning Commission will likely be shifting focus to implementing the goals of the Master Plan and identifying roadways in our community most in need of a corridor plan. It is also expected that development projects will continue to increase.