

## MINUTES

Cascade Charter Township  
Planning Commission  
Monday, March 4, 2019  
7:00 P.M.

**ARTICLE 1.** Chairman Sperla called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.  
Members Present: Lewis, Johnson, Katsma, Noordyke, Pennington, Rissi, Krieter, Moxley, and Sperla.  
Members Absent: None  
Others Present: Community Development Director, Steve Peterson and those listed on the sign in sheet.

**ARTICLE 2. Pledge of Allegiance.**

**ARTICLE 3. Approve the current Agenda.**

**Motion was made by Member Lewis to approve the Agenda. Supported by Member Pennington. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 4. Approve the Minutes of the February 18, 2019 meeting.**

**Motion was made by Member Johnson to approve the minutes of February 19, 2018. Supported by Member Katsma. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 5. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.**

No visitors came forward.

**ARTICLE 6. Case #18-3471 Watermark Property LLC**

**Public Hearing**

**Property Address: 1611 Galbraith Avenue SE**

**Requested Action:** The Applicant is requesting a Preliminary Plan Approval for an amendment to the PUD for additional office space and a new swim center building.

Director Peterson started by overviewing the site plan for the Watermark Country Club, pointing out the Snap Fitness facility and swim center building. The Applicant would like to add around 5,000 sq ft to the existing swim center in order to relocate the Snap Fitness facility to that location. The Watermark offices would then be moved to the empty Snap Fitness building. Director Peterson stated that at the introductory meeting for this project, he was asked for additional/historical information about the original approval of the swim center building. He did include the minutes from those meetings in the packet for tonight.

Director Peterson started to walk through a chronological timeline of development of the area around Cascade Road and Galbraith.

The golf course was redeveloped in 1991, which allowed for the residential, club house, restaurant, and other development at that time. In 1997, the development that allowed for the office space along Cascade Road occurred as part of the Watermark Golf Course redevelopment; this is also when the incorporation of the standards from the 1994 Cascade Road Corridor Study started. A developer also came forward in 1997 to redevelop the old Lacks facility (called the Health Plex at the time) and that allowed for the old industrial plating facility to be redeveloped, along with several other offices along Cascade Road, and sprinkled throughout the entire site. The Health Plex development did not occur, so in 1999, the two projects were separated, and that's where the Golf View Development name came from. When those were separated, Golf View wanted to take all of the permitted office development and reallocate it into what is there today. There has been a lot of discussion since the original Health Plex as to how much office development would be permitted in this area, and the uses of those buildings. There were amendments to the original Watermark facility, extending some roads and adding some residential development. In 2000 the swim center was built, and in 2010 the Snap Fitness building was added. Referring back to the original minutes from 2010, Director Peterson pointed out that there was quite a bit of debate about the size and use of the building. The building was eventually built smaller than originally planned, half being used for tenant office space, and half being used for the Snap Fitness facility.

Director Peterson noted that staffs original position at that time (2010) was there was to be no additional office space in that area, but a compromise was reached to accommodate the Snap Fitness facility. The Applicants current request as far as the Site Plan is simple, with the building growing by a proposed 5,000 sq ft. There are a few issues with setbacks, but nothing unusual that hasn't been seen with other projects. Staffs position is not in support of the current PUD Amendment, with the feeling that the last reached compromise (2010) would be final. Director Peterson stated that the Engineers have looked at their plan and they have reached storm water requirements, with parking requirements being met as well.

Director Peterson advised that if denial was recommended to the Board, the recommendation would then go to the Township Board, and if the Board decided the project to be positive, the decision would then return to the Planning Commission. At that point the ordinance could be written if it were reconsidered, or upon another denial the Township Board would make the final decision. If approval of the project is recommended tonight, the next step would be to write the PUD ordinance and make a recommendation to the board with the site plan and ordinance as normal. At this point an elevation drawing for the swim center building has not been submitted, if the project is approved it will need to be provided.

Chairman Sperla invited the Applicant or Applicants consultants to come forward with any comments.

Kelly Kuiper came forward and introduced herself as the Project Manager with Nederveld. Ms. Kuiper started by noting that the Watermark Group is a successful group, not only at this country club, but across West Michigan, and has established their offices here in Cascade Township. Because of their success, they have found themselves in need of additional office space, leading to the necessary expansion of their pool facility. Primary updates to the pool facility would include a larger kitchen, and larger and updated locker rooms. During that expansion, the Snap Fitness facility would be moved to the pool facility building, going from a current 6,300 sq ft space, to a proposed 4,500 sq ft in the new location with a much more efficient use of space. The space vacated by Snap Fitness would be turned into office space exclusively for the Watermark group, not an additional or outside office user. This expansion will not have any visual impact on the Cascade Road corridor. Ms. Kuiper reiterated that they did get the Township Engineers approval for the storm water detention facility.

Steve Plakmeyer from Watermark Properties came forward to add that the demand for amenities like the swim center addition and remodel are growing, and that their office staff is currently in two separate buildings as they have run out of space in their preferred building. He states that being housed in one facility would help with daily operations for their staff. Member Kruiter asked Mr. Plakmeyer for a current number of members that use, or will use, the pool facility, he stated that number to be over 400. Mr. Plakmeyer noted that two complaints they receive is that there is no covered/shaded area for outdoor dining, and the food standard is not as expected due to a small kitchen. Their requested expansion would address both of these complaints. Mr. Plakmeyer was asked if there is a "Plan B" if the current proposal is denied, he stated there is not at this time. Mr. Plakmeyer was then asked about the intention of the Snap Fitness building should the facility be relocated, and he stated that building would become the sole office space for their Watermark Group staff.

Applicant offered no additional comments.

**Motion was made by Member Rissi to open public hearing. Supported by Member Krieter. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

Chairman Sperla invited others present to come forward with comment.

Mark DeWall, owner of the office space located directly behind the pool (Watermark Tech Center, Suite 302) came forward in support of the Applicants request. He has been a tenant for 14 years, and states the Watermark Group has been a great, responsible neighbor throughout those years, and believes they are an asset to the Cascade community.

John Postma, whom resides at 5503 Denali Woods Drive, and is a realtor in the Forest Hills area that has been selling homes for 41 years, came forward to state that a lot of the families he sells homes to at the development across the street (Manchester Hills) appreciate that they can use the Watermark facilities.

Mr. Plakmeyer was asked by Chairman Sperla if residents could have individual pool memberships, or if they needed to be grouped with golf or fitness memberships as well.

Mr. Plakmeyer stated that yes, individual pool memberships were given, and that 80-90 of the 400 memberships are for pool usage only.

**Motion was made by Member Rissi to close public hearing. Supported by Member Krieter. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

Member Rissi stated that after reading the history of the original proposal, it seems as though there was talk of the fitness facility eventually being part of the pool facility, and at that time the Planning Commission did support that proposal. Director Peterson stated that they wanted to support the recreational usage without additional office space being created at that time. Member Rissi then stated that with traffic concerns being an issue on Cascade Road, he believes the center turn lane has helped alleviate the heavy flow of traffic, and that as a business owner he can relate to a growing company needing more office space. He states this to be a good compromise.

Member Krieter agreed with Member Rissi that it seems to be a good compromise. She states that the expansion of the pool area, with a benefit of improving office space, would have a positive community impact of over 400+ families, and seemingly no negative impact to the neighborhood.

Member Pennington agreed and stated that he would not like to see the Watermark Group go somewhere else. He stated he would like to see a written agreement that the vacated fitness building could not be leased out to a third party, but used to expand the growing business as stated it would be.

Charman Sperla stated that there were a lot of concessions made all along during the initiation of the golf course and splitting up the site. He stated that most of those concessions were made with the strong indication that those would be final. Chairman Sperla stated that PUDs are not created for purposes of constant expansions and changing site uses. He then stated that Cascade Township engaged an independent consultant and had a study group that returned with a steadfast directive that they wanted to keep everything south of Spaulding residential, with any commercial building being one story tall, and similar to residential housing to blend into the community. Chariman Sperla continued on to say that he would like to see the business stay in Cascade Township as long as the proposed plan is complementary to the golf courses (two or three bed-sides Watermark; all administrative offices are housed here) and athletic facilities, and continues to be a business that is beneficial to the community. He also states that it will make a difference that all occupants of the office building be from the underlying business complex.

Director Peterson noted that the current tenants of the Snap Fitness building will remain there after the Snap Fitness facility relocates. Chairman Sperla listed the tenants as Watermark Offices, Highpoint Property Resources, Visser Design, Reliable Energy, and Watermark Red Water. Chairman Sperla then asked Mr. Plakmeyer to clarify his relationships with these businesses. Mr. Plakmeyer stated that Highpoint Property Resources is owned by partners Doug Bauer and Brian Sikkema, whom are both owners in Watermark Group. Jeff Visser designed the building, does other architectural work for the Watermark Group, and independent contract work; Reliable Energy has been a

tenant of the building since it was built, contributes work to the golf courses and other facilities, and contracts independent work. They all currently have existing leases. Mr. Plakmeyer clarified that the vacated Snap Fitness facility would house only Watermark Group offices, no additional outside businesses. Chairman Sperla then asked Mr. Plakmeyer to estimate the number of employees of each company. Mr. Plakmeyer guessed Visser Design to have 4-5 employees, Reliable Energy to have 3-4 employees, and the rest of the occupants are connected to Watermark Group. When asked by Chairman Sperla if they would be willing to proceed with the understanding that the vacated Snap Fitness area would not be used for any tenant or third party other than the Watermark Group, Mr. Plakmeyer said “yes”, and stated that is their intention.

Member Pennington made note about the Master Plan stating that no more office space is wanted on Cascade Road, but that this PUD amendment request is more of a unique situation, and noted the current office sits around 2,000 ft off of Cascade Road, with a fair amount of open space in between the road and building. He also stated that a PUD should not be negotiated every few years, and that he is in support of this request, he does believe the expansion would be a positive thing for the township.

Member Katsma asked Director Peterson if a written restriction on third party usage of unoccupied space can be put in to the amendment. Director Peterson highly recommended that be done if you support the request. Chairman Sperla suggested that it be a written condition of use as part of an approval.

Member Pennigton then asked Director Peterson if the fitness center were to be vacated, is there a contingency in place on what that space can be used for? Director Peterson stated that the current PUD ordinance limits it to only a fitness facility.

Chairman Sperla stated that either an acceptance or rejection of the proposal needed to be made to the board.

**Motion was made by Member Noordyke to approve Applicant’s request for a PUD Amendment with the condition that the use would be exclusive to Watermark or Watermark affiliates, current tenants will not be affected. Supported by Member Rissi. Motion carried 9-0.**

**ARTICLE 7. Case #18:3489 Lanterns**

**Public Hearing**

**Property Address: 3217 Thornapple River Drive**

**Requested Action:** The Applicant is requesting a Preliminary Plan Approval to rezone the property to PUD to accommodate a 21-unit single family detached condominium project.

Director Peterson started by showing on the provided map where this property is located, and explained that it would be a condominium, not site condominium, meaning that the whole area outside of the building themselves would be common area. Director Peterson stated that the Applicant is asking for two exceptions. One is to have setbacks closer to their internal road, which would allow them to pull some units further from adjoining property lines, and the second is to have one entrance. Director

Peterson stated that at 20 properties, two means of access are required on private streets. Director Peterson stated that one thing that is asked of developers asking for exceptions, is to produce a test plan that shows how they can develop the property meeting all of the requirements. Director Peterson points out on the test plan the one main entry drive from Thornapple River Drive, and then shows several home sites that have individual access to Thornapple River Drive as well. The location of the property is zoned R2, which is the smallest single-family lot zoning. The property is proposed to be developed as an open space project, which means 50% of the space would be dedicated as common open space for the development. Director Peterson stated that each lot size would be a minimum of 10,000 sq ft., with each unit being about 3,000 sq ft, which is well above the township requirement of 1,300 sq ft for a one story, and 1,600 sq ft. for a two story home. The developer did indicate the price point would be around \$600,000-\$700,000.

Director Peterson stated the development would be connected to sewer and water, with connections needing to be made to the adjoining development to the west, the Heathmoor Development. There is a letter from the President of that association agreeing to allow those connections, and some review comments from the City of Grand Rapids. The site plan does show significant landscaping plans, however Director Peterson noted that the Township does not regulate landscape requirements for residential developments. There is no new landscaping along the north of the site, as they would like to maintain the current vegetation. The stormwater retention pond is in that area as well, but most of that land would remain untouched.

Director Peterson continued on to state that the streets would be private, and the county did already approve street names, and provide an approval of addresses. The location of the curb cut has been changed; the county would like that to be right across the street from the church driveway. Traffic count numbers from the Thornapple River Drive area of Thornhills and 28<sup>th</sup> Street area is on average 5,600 trips, to further south at 36<sup>th</sup> Street is close to 9,000 trips. A single family development of 21 lots would typically add about 200 trips to that, keeping the trip count below the two lane road capacity of 10,000 per the Road Commission.

The Township Engineer has reviewed the project, and has no concerns at this time. There are no interior sidewalks in this project, but the Applicant has agreed to build a pathway connection that connects to the pedestrian pathway with a crosswalk at the light. There will be no pathway going south of the road since there is nothing to connect to, but the Applicant will provide an easement if/when needed there will be an easement in place for the pathway.

Director Peterson stated that the Township has received the Applicants condominium documents, and they have been reviewed by the Township Attorney to look for conflicts or inconsistencies with Township requirements. As with all residential projects, the Applicant will need an airport recognition statement. With this project being zoned R2, it does appear to meet objectives for Zoning and Master Plan standards.

Staff is recommending approval of this PUD rezoning. If approved, it will come back with the ordinance for recommendation to the board.

Chairman Sperla invited the Applicant to come forward with any comment.

Douglas DeHaan, from DeHaan Homes (located at 3299 Hudson Trails in Hudsonville), came forward to share that their goal is to change from an R2 to PUD, and that when the initial drawing for this project was submitted in September, it had two entries with a loop drive, but the Road Commission stated that they did not want two drives, and preferred the single drive across from the church entry. So he is asking for a waiver to the exception that the Township wants two entries, but the Road Commission wants just the one.

Mr. DeHaan stated that the sewer was intentionally kept from this property per request of the prior owners. The easement is 5 feet off the property, and the invert for the sewer is 10 feet from the property. When meeting with the Heathmoor Association, Mr. DeHaan said that he requested to be hooked up to the sewer, and link the water for a loop for pressure. The Board stated that they did not want to tie the two developments together, Mr. DeHaan stated that it was a must for this project.

Mr. DeHaan stated that there is an operating retention pond on the neighboring property that they agreed to clean up and put an easement together for the Heathmoor Condominium Association so they would not have to worry about it in the future.

While addressing the sewer needs and removing diseased/dead trees and scrub from the woods, Mr. DeHaan stated there would be a couple of "holes" in the woods that they intend to fill and/or cover with a perimeter of Evergreen, which will be a nice screening year round for all neighboring properties. There is also a fence at the end of the property that made snow removal difficult for Heathmoor, Mr. DeHaan stated that fence will be removed and landscaping will start about 15 ft back from the property line to allow the Heathmoor Association to push snow onto my development.

Mr. DeHaan described the vision of the project as a village, where each unit may look different, but they are cohesive and the vernacular is the same. The materials used will be cement, board, brick, and stone, all in a monochromatic color. There will be gas lanterns throughout, which is what the development was named after. Mr. DeHaan continued on to state that they did talk about a deceleration lane to give owners more time to slow down to turn into the development as the speed limit is 45mph in that area, and then also discussed having a one-way road in the development so all drivers circulate one way for added safety, and eliminates the need for a cul-de-sac. There will be a pedestrian walkway included throughout the property, and a pavilion in the front of the property with benches and a lantern underneath.

John Postma came forward to state that there is a growing need for "empty nester" housing, and that with the zero step main floor layout of this development, they are anticipating aging clientele as a main buyer. He stated he is excited and proud of the quality of product this development will be.

Don DeGroot with Excel Engineering came forward to state there are different options for the proposed bike path should they need to be explored. He then stated that the stormwater management pond is designed to take advantage of the sites sandy soil, and the water will be looped to provide enhanced quality to the dead end on Heathmoor Ct.

**Motion was made by Member Rissi to open public hearing. Supported by Member Krieter. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

Randy Butcher, 6269 Heathmoor Court, came forward to ask for more clarity on the landscaping, snow removal, and disturbance while putting in the sewer. Douglas DeHaan stated that the property needs to be crossed to get to the water line and sewer connection, so a fence will be removed, as well as some foliage. Trees will be implanted to offset and improve that landscaping disturbance. Mr. DeHaan stated that the snow removed from the end of Heathmoor Court will be allowed to be pushed onto the Lanterns property, giving them an easement for snow. Mr. DeHaan also stated that the landscaping budget of \$250,000, which includes close to 50 large Evergreen trees for privacy around the development.

Jenny Waney, 6255 Heathmoor Ct, stated that there is a huge amount of invasive species, especially oriental bittersweet, in the woods, and that they tend to love disturbance. She stated that she would like to see a focus on eliminating those invasive species as landscaping is done.

David Korff, 3191 Thornapple River Drive, stated that traffic on Thornapple River Drive has increased significantly. He also stated that the view from his home is where the pathway will connect, and the lack of proposed landscaping at that spot concerns him. Chairman Sperla mentioned that his concerns have both been previously addressed.

Nancy Goff, Thornhills Ct. states that she is in support of the bike path being maintained on the east side of the street.

Dan Kryaski, 3593 Charlevoix Drive, inquired about the proposed open space at the edge of his property (that meets the project property), and wondered if any landscaping was being done there. The Applicant shook his head "no".

Andrew Ramsahoi, 6347 Glenstone Drive, stated his concern of the length of setbacks on the southern side of the property. The Applicant stated that they are maintaining the minimum of 25 ft setbacks, and the closest unit would have a 33 ft setback. Mr. Ramsahoi also stated his concern regarding the landscaping on that side of the property, specifically the planting of trees. The Applicant stated that the trees would be 12-14 ft tall, and would be 15-16 ft deep on the project property.

Tom Hackett, 6379 Glenstone Drive, came forward to state his concerns for the following: large vehicles (moving vehicles, trash trucks, etc.) coming and going, and if they'd have enough turn space; the location of the lanterns through the property and if they were natural gas; mailbox placement; storage sheds and out buildings being added to the property; and where visitors will park. The Applicant stated that trash will be picked up by a single hauler in a medium sized truck, mailboxes will all be located in the

entry drive, there are park outs located on the site plan for visitors, the lanterns will be natural gas, and located on the units themselves; no sheds will be allowed on the properties.

**Motion was made by Member Rissi to close public hearing. Supported by Member Johnson. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

**Motion was made by Member Pennington to approve the Applicants Preliminary Plan Approval to rezone the property to PUD. Supported by Member Krieter. Motion carried 9 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 8. Case # 17-3392 Freedom Reigns Farm**

**Property Address: 8613 52<sup>nd</sup> St.**

**Requested Action:** The Applicant is requesting a Tentative Preliminary Approval to develop a 12 unit detached single family site condominium project.

Director Peterson started by stating that this property is about 43 acres, so will have a significant amount of common open space, some being undevelopable wetlands. This property is zoned Agricultural, Master Plan suburban residential. The area would be served by well and septic. Director Peterson stated that they have received their driveway permit from the Road Commission, and have their DEQ permits. Director Peterson did note that the street named has changed since the last plan was submitted, and will need to get recorded. The Applicant has chosen to do a 50% open space project, so a minimum of 50,000 sq ft lots will be required. No exceptions by the Applicant are being asked for at this time. An airport recognition statement will need to be provided with their Master Deed still. No light poles or street trees have been indicated, they are not required by the Township in this area. The Engineer has reviewed and approved the stormwater plan. A Tentative Preliminary Approval will guarantee a lot layout to the developer for one year.

Chairman Sperla invited the Applicant to come forward with any comment.

Doug Lee came forward and introduced himself as the property owner. He lives on an adjacent property. Mr. Lee stated that as far as street lights, they may do posts on the property, but being that this property is more in a country setting, he would like to see as much night sky as possible. Mr. Lee stated that each lot would be between 50,000-60,000 sq ft., some with wetlands on the lot. Mr. Lee noted that he would place signs on the property regarding wetland rules and regulations.

**Motion was made by Member Pennington to approve the Applicants Tentative Preliminary Approval with the seven conditions identified in the Staff Report. Supported by Member Lewis. Motion carried 9-0.**

**ARTICLE 9. Any other business**

None.

**ARTICLE 10. Adjournment**

**Motion was made by Member Rissi to adjourn. Supported by Member Krieter.  
Motion carried 9 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Phil Johnson, Secretary