

# BYRON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

## SPECIAL WORK SESSION

October 24, 2006

4:00 PM.

### MINUTES

#### CALL TO ORDER, ATTENDANCE & PRAYER

Chairman Seymour Gould called the special work session to order at 4:00 p.m., on Tuesday, October 24, 2006, at the Byron Township Offices, 8085 Byron Center Avenue SW, Byron Center, Michigan 49315.

Commission members present were: Seymour Gould, Dutch Zeinstra, Bernie Schuitema, Jeff Gritter, Carroll Elenbaas, John Stone and Tim Slot. Also present were Township Planner Larry Nix, Recording Secretary LaVonne Kuiper and Attorney Mark Van Alsburg.

Chairman Gould commented the reason for this special work session is to look at and discuss the Marlo Farms Planned Unit Development in connection with the Township Master plan along with a presentation by Spartan Stores to understand their design ideas. No decisions will be made at this meeting. This meeting only gives the applicant as well as the Planning Commission members a chance to share various ideas and thoughts.

Mr. Nix then gave an overview of the approved PUD which occurred in 1998. The corner of 84<sup>th</sup> & Burlingame has been discussed many times as to what we as a township would like to see located there. We felt it really was not a good location for single family houses. We decided to move with caution concerning this area. With the plan we have before us there are some concerns. The property is low and the curb cut on 84<sup>th</sup> St. is a concern. The site would have to be raised on the east side.

Chairman Gould asked if anyone had any question thus far.

Mr. Bill Sterk was present and commented that months of work went into the plan they presented to the Township back in 2004. They wished to see a unique and innovative development which would put aesthetics, nature and traffic circulation in concurrence with the Township Master Plan. On that plan the buffer zone was very important especially for the single family homes to the south. This new plan presented shows that buffer zone greatly reduced. He never envisioned a grocery store to be located on that site. He would like to see the buffer zone preserved. He also felt by placing the grocery store this far out of town it would have a negative affect on the downtown Byron Center area.

Mr. Jerry Felix of Felix Properties on behalf of Park West Development, Mr. Don DeGroot from Excel Engineering, Rick Stanley and Darlene Wethington from Spartan Stores were present.

Mr. Felix stated they are looking for a new design on this site. Mr. Sterk may like the buffer but if this plan is approved the buffer would be 200' away from the lot line and the neighboring homes. He felt we should not second guess Spartan Stores. They have done their home work and they know what they are doing. The stores have been very successful in the locations of where they are at. He stated this site is hard to work with and the options as to where to place the store are limited. But the way the plan is presented it is workable. Spartan is a good neighbor.

Don DeGroot stated that some of the issues that were a concern when this was presented at the October 16<sup>th</sup> meeting have been looked into. They checked into the site distance for the safety of people when entering and existing the site. There will be two drives across from the high school on Burlingame Ave., which the Kent County Road Commission has approved. The left turn lane will be extended further to the west for those who wish to enter the site off 84<sup>th</sup> St. The proposed office area would be serviced with a drive behind the retail. The out lots that are proposed will need separate site plan approval. The sign issue along with the sidewalks and public streets will be addressed as well.

Rick Stanley reminded everyone that Spartan Stores has been a part of the Township for a long time. Over the years the grocery industry changes due to competition. They hope to introduce the as a flagship store. This would include a one stop shopping center with drive-thru pharmacy/grocery store/convenient store & fuel store. They like this location and feel it is workable. Coming from US131 has good visibility. He stated they would like to adjust the parking spaces a little, but that's minor.

Darlene Wethington made a few additional comments. This store would be larger than the existing one. With the curb cuts we are sensitive to the safety of the public. Cross merchandising is good. To be able to stop and get groceries and fuel at the same time is an excellent concept. She stated they are concerned as well for the single family homes located to the south of this proposed site. They have taken most of the air condition units from off top of the buildings. The compacter unit will be in a sealed container. They want to keep the back of the store clean looking. There will be a green belt area to serve as a buffer along the back. Retaining walls will be used at the truck loading docks, which there are two proposed. They will be keeping all of truck traffic out of the parking lot area which again is safer for the consumer. Most of our consumers are female and may with children. So when they drive up to a store they like to see the door. With a clear span for the parking lot and a well lit door they feel safe. The concept of a c-store is everywhere. As we progress we have to keep up. Spartan stores have been in the township for many years and wish to leave our store here.

Jerry Felix again commented on the topography of the property and the plan they have presented is really the only place on the property for the buildings to be placed.

Bill Sterk again stated his concern about the barrier that will block the view of the stores.

Jerry Felix responded that stores are designed much differently today and the roof top units are being place down to the ground out of the view of the neighbors. Thinking about it commercial and office buildings being placed here should not be a big surprise to anyone.

Commission member Carroll Elenbaas suggested placing the grocery and c-stop on the west side of the property and the retail strip on the corner in a L-shape.

Commission member Bernie Schuitema voiced his concerns regarding placing a grocery store which sells beer & wine so close to a high school. Are there no laws against this? Here we try and make our schools drug free and then we allow this to be placed so close. As a township we have invested a lot in our schools. He also stated his concern about 24 hour trucking. They delivery all hours and if they pull in at 3:00 in the morning and the store doesn't open until 6:00 they will sit and wait with the reifers running.

Commission member Dutch Zeinstra is worried how this will affect the downtown area if the store is relocated to the proposed area. He is not opposed to moving the store to that location but a buffer must be addressed. Yes the lot is workable but it will take some time.

Commission Jeff Gritter asked the size of the existing store. He commented if this will be the flagship store it will not have anything more that what there is now. The new store would be 10,000 sq ft. more. It seems to work fine now. It is always busy! He stated the plan looks just like the old location just flipped over. The existing location will cease to exist if it looses it anchor store. He is concerned about the rear of the store and the residential houses behind it. He thought the parking lot could use some green in it or even some flowers.

Darlene responded saying that ends up a snow plower's nightmare.

Chairman Gould stated this location is workable. Yes it will do a number on the downtown area and will the strip mall survive without an anchor store. He stated Carroll had a good idea to try and move the store to the west of the lot and a L-shape strip mall. He is not comfortable with the drainage going across Burlingame to the east side.

Don DeGroot stated he spoke to Drain Commission today and culvert is adeqant to handle the run off. He stated he is expecting a letter from then concerning the drain issue. The layout of this proposed project is based on the detention area across Burlingame Ave. Expose and visibility is the key – the key anchor needs the view.

Carroll Elenbaas suggested we need something there that draws people from all directions.

Mr. Nix stated that in observation of this session he feels the key is exposure to be able to see the store no matter what direction you come from. If you come from the west you will not be able to see it. It's impossible. But when you come from the east it is visible. If we consider Carroll's idea you could get some great exposure. But we have this opportunity in front of us and we have the challenge to help come up with a usable plan. There has been excellent input offered.

A comment was made that the interior of this new store is going to wow the people. A lot of our stores are located around schools. We feel it is an excellent location and convenient for Mom who bring their kids to school for activities and she runs to the store while she waits. The long term durability of the existing store is not good at the present location. Is it good for Byron Center? Byron Center is an excellent community. Are you being to restrictive for us to have a partnership in your township?

Mr. Nix reminded the applicant that the first step for this project is to get the property rezoned. That information has to be in the Advance by noon tomorrow.

Supervisor Audrey Nevins informed everyone that the DDA just extended the boundaries to include the area of 84<sup>th</sup> & Burlingame in the Downtown Development area. They did this in anticipation of the store moving to this location.

Bill Bouma voiced his concern for the downtown area and what impact it would have on that area. Have they considered keeping the old store and totally revamping that building? There is plenty of room there with plenty of parking spaces. The Planning Commission should not scrape the idea of the c-stop being located there. Revisit this idea!

Bill a township resident who lives on Portadown St. stated he worked hard to build his dream home. He really does not want to look at the back of a store.

Roger – 8673 McGovern stated that he has lived at that location for 4 months. They choose building in Byron because of the small town atmosphere. He has a real concern for the community and the way things are changing.

Chairman Gould again commented that this can be worked out. He stated that it is not the Planning Commission's fault that the c-stop is not at the present location. The new location can be made to look nice. It will be a flag ship store and it will be dressed up.

No further comments were made.

Chairman Gould closed the meeting.

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Bernie Schuitema  
Planning Commission Secretary