

Rochester Township Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting: 01/11/22

Chair: Arthur Handelman

Members Present: Brad Lewis, Laura Laudon, Brian Zmolek, Jamie Nielsen, Arthur Hadelman

Guests: Bill Tointen, Roger Ihrke, Ian Keith, Four members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Jamie Nielsen made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

Brian Zmolek seconded the motion.

Vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Chair Arthur Handelman stated there was one item on the agenda for tonight's meeting, which is as follows: To consider an application for a General Development Plan (GDP) and Zone change for two tax parcels which is about 63.91 acres. The area is currently zoned A-3 (Agricultural District) and is within the Suburban Subdivision of Olmsted County and Rochester Township Land Use plans. A request is being made for a zone change to R-1 (Low Density Residential District).

Chair Arthur Handelman called on Mr. Marion Keith to speak who is the property developer. Mr. Keith stated he is now a trustee for the property previously owned by his deceased parents (Mary and Sandy Keith). Mr. Keith stated it's been his family's goal to develop this property for many years. He said he's very familiar with the property and recalled how it was farmland when he was young. He stated it would be a low density development, the wetlands would be maintained, etc.

Chair Arthur Handelman then asked Mr. William Tointen from WSE Engineering Services to speak. Mr. Tointen stated that this is the 5th plan for the Keith Property in the last five years. The previous plans never materialized. The main reason was there was no secondary access from Meadow Crossing Road to Bamber Valley Road SW. Mr. Tointen stated there is now a second access.

Mr. Tointen stated the overall density is one lot per 4.62 acres. The wetlands and Decorah shale were avoided. There will be no roads or homes in these areas. He said no variances are needed at this point and no Cul-de-Sacs need to be wider.

Mr. Tointen stated that all costs of development will be paid for by Mr. Marion Keith. The lots will have individual septic systems with five of them in ground systems. There will be two wells. Their Well Company did an assessment and determined 8 homes could share one well, the other 7 homes would share the other. Mr. Tointen stated that everything like stormwater, location of wells, etc has been reviewed and there are no issues.

Chair Arthur Handelman invited Mr. Roger Ihrke (Administrator, TCPA) to speak. Mr. Ihrke stated this property has been looked at for many years. He said Mr. Keith also served on the commission for Rochester Township in the past.

Mr. Ihrke stated the property in consideration for rezoning is already designated for suburban. There are 15 lots (two shared wells, individual septic systems).

Mr. Ihrke and others then began a discussion about traffic studies within this development. Given the 15 homes, there is an average of 8.6 vehicles per day, which amounts to 129 vehicles total the development would create.

The SHE Traffic Study done for Mayowood Estates has traffic at full build out of Mayo Estates and Mayo Woodlands of 1551 vehicles per day. For a local road that is rated “poor” for a local collector it is rated “good”. Meadow Crossing Road is listed as a local collector but built to a local road standard. The additional traffic of these 15 lots will increase the number to 1680 vehicles per day. Even with this increase, the roadways are still in the same category.

Chair Arthur Handelman then asked for any public comments.

Mr. Jeremy Folgensen was the first public speaker.

He asked how this development might affect future projects. He stated he supports Mr. Keith’s project, but he feels “blocked” by the traffic issues.

He asked how (or if) the road could be expanded. He stated road projects are expensive, so maybe tax residents who live on the road?

He also asked if it’s possible to have those purchasing lots to contribute \$5,000 (for example) that would be put in a trust fund for future road improvements.

Mr. Folgensen also asked if the Township Engineer could recommend a Stop sign at Glenwood Road. He also stated pedestrian traffic is another issue and stated there’s enough room on the North side for a walkway to continue. It was mentioned that Mr. Ed Clark already put in a walkway.

Mr. Folgensen also expressed concern about the speed of traffic on the hill (Meadow Crossing Road) which is an entrance and exit road to the neighborhood.

Melissa Niesen was the second public speaker.

She stated she lives at Meadow Crossing Road and Headland Court SW. She agreed with Jeremy’s comments. She said the cheapest way to reduce traffic would be to close some roads or reduce the connectivity of some roads?

Jamie Niesen (Commission Member) spoke.

He stated that cutting junctions off is not a good idea. He also said traffic patterns have been discussed. At some point when the Poire property gets developed, residents would use 40th Street SW. He feels most people would take the easiest way out of a neighborhood even if they drive a little further.

His only complaint is the speed of the vehicles. He feels the road is too narrow and there’s no shoulder. Mr. Niesen stated 20 years ago it was a different story, but now the area is growing.

Jean Lewis was the third public speaker.

She feels there is an “elephant in the room”. She feels there needs to be some recommendations because with the hill and pedestrians it’s a very tight spot. She said it’s not a collector road and we have a responsibility to think about a long term plan.

She said one could “sit at the junction of Meadow Crossing Road and County Road 8 to see what vehicles are going North or South.

The discussion continued with Chair Handelman stating we need to solve this now. There was a traffic impact study conducted by Brandon Theobald of WHKS (engineers, planners, land surveyors) in May of 2020.

Questions were raised about how much a Traffic Engineer would cost. Melissa Niesen wondered if vehicles like UPS or Fed Ex trucks were included in the trips per day calculations. Mr. Tointen said those are included.

Others commented that the Woodland Valley Estates is a good development and well thought out. The question for the board to decide is if a traffic study should be done. Some feel the need to make Meadow Crossing Road safer. Others stated that the road constructed by developer Ed Clark helped in that it’s wide enough for a nice pedestrian walkway, but there’s also been an increase in traffic.

Many feel the goal should be to keep traffic off Meadow Crossing Road.

The public comment period was closed at 8:52 PM.

There was then discussion among the Planning and Zoning Commission members. The question was raised if we should get an updated opinion from Brandon Theobald.

Brad Lewis moved that we get an updated review of the Traffic Impact Study with suggestions on how to improve safety for vehicle traffic and pedestrians. Mr. Handelman seconded the motion.

Mr. Lewis also suggested instead of open space, a wider road would be more favorable. It would not be formally called a pedestrian walkway though. The road would be wide enough to walk safely without sidewalks.

Brian Zmolek made a motion that we approve the GDP (General Development Plan) with staff findings. Laura Laudon seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

Brad Lewis made a motion to approve the zoning change to an RI. Brian Zmolek seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

Brad Lewis made a motion to create a wider road on the thru portion of the road-Meadow Crossing Lane SW to the Poire Property. Arthur Handelman seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Laudon