



# Rochester Hills

## Minutes - Draft

### Planning Commission

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*Chairperson Deborah Brnabic, Vice Chairperson Greg Hooper*  
*Members: Ed Anzek, Gerard Dettloff, Nicholas O. Kaltsounis,*  
*Stephanie Morita, David A. Reece, C. Neall Schroeder, Ryan Schultz*

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Tuesday, October 17, 2017

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

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## CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Deborah Brnabic called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium.

## ROLL CALL

**Present** 5 - Deborah Brnabic, Greg Hooper, Nicholas Kaltsounis, Stephanie Morita and Ryan Schultz

**Excused** 4 - Ed Anzek, Gerard Dettloff, David Reece and C. Neall Schroeder

Quorum present.

Also present: Sara Roediger, Director of Planning and Economic Dev.  
Kristen Kapelanski, Manager of Planning  
Maureen Gentry, Recording Secretary

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2017-0463](#) September 19, 2017 Regular Meeting

**A motion was made by Kaltsounis, seconded by Morita, that this matter be Approved as Presented. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 5 - Brnabic, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Morita and Schultz

**Excused** 4 - Anzek, Dettloff, Reece and Schroeder

## COMMUNICATIONS

A) *Road Commission for Oakland County 2017 Strategic Plan*

## NEW BUSINESS

[2017-0466](#) Request for Site Plan Approval - City File No. 17-008 - Detroit Meeting Room - Brewster, for the renovation of a 1,300 s.f. home for a small congregation at

1167 Brewster, on .56-acre located on the west side of Brewster, north of Tienken, zoned R-1 One Family Residential, Parcel No. 15-05-327-016, Michael Gordon, Moiseev/Gordon Associates, Inc., Applicant

*(Reference: Staff Report prepared by Kristen Kapelanski, dated October 13, 2017 and site plan and elevations had been placed on file and by reference became part of the record thereof.)*

*Present for the applicant were Michael Gordon, Moiseev/Gordon Associates, Inc., 4351 Delemere Ct., Royal Oak, MI 48073, and Charles Truan, representing DMR, no address given.*

*Mr. Gordon stated that they were looking for approval for a small congregation. He noted that Detroit Meeting Rooms was an organization with multiple small meeting rooms throughout the area, and the services were on a very limited basis. Primarily, the people who would come there lived in the community. The applicants thought that it would be a great asset for the community. He indicated that the adaptation would stay looking like a house, and there would be no signage. It would only be used on Sundays and Mondays. It was designed because it was fluid for the organization. Somewhere down the road, they might leave, and it could easily be converted back to a house. He said that he would be happy to answer any questions.*

*Chairperson Brnabic asked Mr. Gordon if he had spoken to the neighbors. Mr. Gordon said that they tried to reach the neighbors on the north, south and west, and they were unable, over the past few weeks, to reach someone to the south. They spoke to the neighbors to the north and west. They had several questions, which he addressed. One neighbor wanted to make sure that the arborvitae were a certain height.*

*Ms. Kapelanski noted that the site was zoned R-1 One Family Residential, and it had been used as a single-family home. The applicant would be converting it for use as a religious meeting room. They were not proposing any changes to the exterior façade, but there were some site improvement proposed, including the installation of a 16-space, gravel parking lot. The spaces would be mostly located on the west and north sides of the site. There was one barrier-free space closer to Brewster. They would also install a one-way circular drive in front. The trees currently along Brewster would be preserved, and they were proposing to install additional trees and enhance existing vegetation along the north and east property lines to create a screen. There was an existing fence along the remaining property line. Staff recommended approval of the plan as it met all applicable regulations.*

*Chairperson Brnabic advised that as a site plan request, a notice was not required to be sent to the neighbors. She noticed that the hours of operation were Sundays from 5:30 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. and Mondays from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. She asked if there would be anyone at the home at other times.*

*Mr. Gordon said that there might be for maintenance or upkeep, but it would not be used otherwise. Chairperson Brnabic said that she had some concerns. The Sunday morning hours meant that people would probably show up before 5:30 a.m. and stay until after 7:00 a.m. She questioned starting at 5:30 a.m. with 40 people arriving. She indicated that creating a parking lot in that residential area was a little different. There were neighbors on both sides and in the rear, and that was a concern.*

*Mr. Gordon said that the one thing that held true for the organization was that they came in high occupancy vehicles. The parking lot was required per the Ordinance, but in several other communities, they had gotten relief from that, because the congregants came in cars with four or five people together. He stated that the 40 people really represented a limited number of cars.*

*Mr. Hooper asked if the height of the arborvitaes for the rear property line was six feet or eight feet. Mr. Gordon confirmed that they would be six to eight feet. Mr. Hooper asked if they would be planted on the southern and western property lines, which was also confirmed. He said that they would be adding impervious area for the parking lot, and he wondered if Engineering questioned the detention. Mr. Gordon said that because it was a gravel lot, it was not considered impervious. The only impervious portion would be in the front, which was a requirement of the Fire Department. They felt that because the frontage was on Brewster, the circular drive long-term would be a benefit to anyone who occupied the home. The impervious surface in the front would drain to the front. Engineering notes on the plans were required to state that they would not change the ecology in the area or impact any of the neighbors.*

*Mr. Hooper asked if the proposed handicap space would be on gravel. Mr. Gordon said that the handicap space would be at the front of the structure. Ms. Kapelanski added that the handicap space was proposed near Brewster Rd. near the circular drive, and it would be paved.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis commented that he did not know what to think about the proposal. It was something very different. He asked the applicants if they*

*had other, similar properties and if so, where they were.*

*Mr. Gordon said that there was one in Royal Oak on Campbell Rd.; another one was proposed on South Boulevard in Rochester Hills; one on Square Lake and Adams Rd. in Troy; and one proposed for Adams Rd. in Rochester Hills. He said that they were all in similar residential areas. Mr. Schultz asked if they could provide addresses, but they did not have them.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis wondered if two bathrooms were enough for 42 people. Mr. Gordon said that it met code. Ms. Roediger responded that the Building department also looked at the plan, in terms of maximum occupancy and the code. Mr. Kaltsounis said that it was obviously a small house that was being converted, and he questioned taking a house made for four people and “stuffing” in 42 people. Mr. Kaltsounis said that it met today’s codes, but codes were there because of issues. If there were 42 people on the back deck or in the front room, he thought that was excessive. In his home, he had to put in double joists for tile. He claimed that there could be 42 people in one corner of the house.*

*Mr. Gordon said that the applicable Building code was 100 lbs. per square-foot live load. That was people standing in a two-foot square and completely covering the entire house. He remarked that Mr. Kaltsounis had not been to his cocktail parties where there were 75 people in his living room. He reiterated that it met the codes, including the Fire code. The maximum occupancy was 49, and they had the right number of exits and bathrooms.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis questioned whether everything needed was looked at in an older house that was being repurposed. He did not want to see the deck collapse because there were too many people on it. Mr. Gordon said that as the Architect of Record, it was his job to make sure it was code compliant. Mr. Kaltsounis considered that once the building was done, the Architect of Record would not get in trouble - the organization would. Mr. Gordon disagreed, and said that he was responsible in perpetuity, even if the structure changed hands in the future.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis said that was his concern. If they had looked at everything and determined that the house could handle significantly more people, they would have to be satisfied. He said again that he just did not want to see 40 people on the back deck, standing or sitting on chairs, and have it collapse. He remarked that it would make the news.*

*Ms. Roediger said that as she had indicated, the plan had gone through reviews from Building, Fire, Engineering and Planning. As part of the Building permit, any improvements to the house would be reviewed for barrier-free access and all other current codes. Engineering looked at it from a storm water standpoint, and that was why the impervious surface was limited to the driveway in the front. Mr. Kaltsounis said that with such a drastic change to a house, he hoped no new codes would come along. Ms. Roediger knew that codes evolved frequently, and as new development happened, applicants were required to meet those standards as they changed.*

*Chairperson Brnabic asked if any resident would be permitted to have 16 parking spaces on their half-acre lot. Ms. Roediger said that there had been a lot of discussions at the City about parking on grass and in driveways and about the storage of vehicles. As long as vehicles were licensed and operable, it would be allowed. The City regulated junk vehicles more. There were a number of circular driveways in the community that parked multiple vehicles.*

*Ms. Morita stated that she was concerned about the impact the plan would have on the neighbors and having a circular drive without the arborvitae coming up closer to the front property line. If people showed up at 5:30 a.m. on a Sunday, when it was dark out, there would be lights. She would like to see the arborvitae extended forward to block the lights when people came through the circular driveway. She would also like to see a privacy fence in addition to the arborvitae. It looked like there was a chain link fence along the back property line and an existing wood fence on the north property line. It did not look like there was anything on the south property line. They all knew that deer really liked arborvitae. She had to constantly fight to keep the deer off of her plants. The arborvitae would be gone in the winter, and that was the worst time for the neighbors to see lights shining in their windows at 5:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning. She would like to see a privacy fence all the way around the property as far as it could be taken, and arborvitae added, especially towards the front property line to avoid headlights shining in the neighboring properties from people going up and down the driveway.*

*Ms. Morita asked if the placement of the circular drive was looked at by the Traffic Engineer in relation to the road across the street. She asked if it was looked at for potential conflicts. Ms. Roediger said that staff met with the applicant several times about options, and the drive was a result of the Fire department requirements. Engineering had also reviewed it, which included a traffic component. Mr. Gordon believed that was the*

*reason it was a one-way on the south end and two-way on the north. Ms. Morita asked Mr. Gordon if they would be amenable to putting in a privacy fence all the way around the property. Mr. Truan said that they would, but they would ask to be able to thin the landscaping. The arborvitae were proposed to be like a fence. He agreed about arborvitae getting eaten, so they would agree to a fence.*

*Ms. Morita asked if staff had an opinion about thinning the landscaping. Mr. Gordon said that the way the parking lot was designed, the last space was 50 feet from the south property line. There was plenty of room to buffer. Ms. Morita said that she appreciated that, but if there were ten cars showing up at 5:00 a.m. in the morning and people were slamming doors, it would wake up the neighbors, and they would not like that. If they could find a way to make it easier on the neighbors, she maintained that it would be in everyone's best interest.*

*Ms. Roediger said that historically, staff tried to use green screening, but it might be a unique circumstance because of the proximity of the neighbors and the hours of operation. Ms. Morita asked if staff had a preference. Ms. Roediger agreed that if they were going to require a fence, they could drop some of the landscaping. They would still want some greenery. Ms. Morita said that she just wanted to make sure that the lights were blocked all the time. The deer only ate from five or six feet down, which was right where the lights would be. She said that they needed to talk about how far forward the fence could be brought. When the cars came into the circular driveway, at some point, they would angle toward the neighbors' houses. Mr. Gordon said that there would be no parking in the circular drive. It would be strictly for the fire access and the barrier-free space. Ms. Morita clarified that no one would use the circular drive.*

*Mr. Truan said that he did not see a problem extending the fence. Mr. Gordon knew there was a cone of site, but they could get arborvitae within about five feet of the front property line. Ms. Morita felt that would work well to keep the lights out of the neighbors' houses.*

*Ms. Morita said that she also had a concern about the drainage. She realized that there would be gravel, but she wondered which way the property sloped. Mr. Gordon said that it was fairly low on the site. The back of the house was a walkout. It drained to the south, but there would be 50 feet of open grassland. They talked with Engineering, and that was how they got to the point they did. The upper driveway drained toward the street.*

*Mr. Schultz asked if all 40 people came on a typical Sunday. Mr. Truan said that was what they planned, but a lot of times there might be a mother and a couple of children that did not come. Mr. Schultz said that he understood that the use was permitted in the district. He considered the question of context, which they had dealt with at past meetings. He recalled looking at changing the zoning from Estate to R-1 and how much aggravation the board had. He looked at the proposal and thought that if his neighbors had a party with 40 people every Sunday, he would find that to be annoying at some point. He stated that it would be completely out of context, and since he had not seen one before the board, it was completely different to him. He worried that they would be changing the context of the community along that stretch, so he was having a hard time wrapping his head around it.*

*Mr. Hooper asked if Sundays and Mondays were the only time the property would be used. Mr. Truan said that was what they were proposing. Mr. Hooper asked if it would be 5:30 a.m. until noon. Mr. Truan said it would be 5:30 a.m. until 6:30 a.m. - one hour. Mr. Hooper confirmed that Mondays would be 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. He clarified that it would be a two-hour per week timeframe. He said that he was not familiar with the organization. Mr. Truan said that they had big churches, but for small communities, it was for prayer and study. Mr. Hooper said that to Ms. Morita's point about a fence, he knew that Mr. Truan had talked with the neighbor to the west, and Mr. Hooper asked about the concern about the trees. Mr. Truan said that they did not talk about a fence, because there was an existing cyclone fence. Mr. Hooper asked about a six-foot high, opaque fence per Ordinance. Mr. Truan said that would exist on the north side. Mr. Hooper asked if it would continue from the north to the west and south sides, which was confirmed. At the front lot line, the arborvitaes would be extended further east to a point where it did not conflict with the site distance for the pathway. Mr. Hooper summarized that the use was permitted by Ordinance, and to deny it, there had to be a legal reason, and he did not see a finding for that. He moved the following.*

**MOTION** by Hooper, seconded by Morita, in the matter of City File No. 17-008 (Detroit Meeting Room - Brewster) the Planning Commission **approves the Site Plan**, based on plans dated received by the Planning Department on September 26, 2017, with the following five (5) findings and subject to the following four (4) conditions.

**Findings**

1. *The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that all*

*applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, as well as other City Ordinances, standards, and requirements, can be met subject to the conditions noted below.*

- 2. The proposed project will be accessed from Brewster, thereby promoting safety and convenience of vehicular traffic both within the site and on adjoining streets. Walkways have been incorporated to promote safety and convenience of pedestrian traffic.*
- 3. Off-street parking areas have been designed to avoid common traffic problems and promote safety.*
- 4. The proposed improvements should have a satisfactory and harmonious relationship with the development on-site as well as existing development in the adjacent vicinity.*
- 5. The proposed development will not have an unreasonably detrimental or injurious effect upon the natural characteristics and features of the site or those of the surrounding area.*

Conditions

- 1. Provide a landscape bond for landscaping/trees in the amount of \$11,200.00, plus inspection fees, as adjusted as necessary by staff, prior to temporary grade certification being issued by Engineering.*
- 2. Address all applicable comments from other City departments and outside agency review letters, prior to final approval by staff.*
- 3. Add a six-foot high, opaque privacy fence along the west and south property lines and extend the arborvitae from the southern building line east towards the road so as to not conflict with site distance, to be approved by staff prior to final approval.*
- 4. If the fence on the north property line is not the property owner's and comes down, it must be replaced, and it must be maintained in good repair at all times.*

*Mr. Schultz said that he knew the applicant had mentioned that Sunday and Monday would be meeting days, but he considered that there would be nothing stopping them from meeting seven days a week. Ms. Roediger said that was correct; it was a permitted use by right, not a Conditional Use. The Planning Commission could add conditions, but she felt that it was fairly common for a place of worship to have something other days of the week. They might have a Wednesday or Saturday special service, so the members had to be careful that they were not restricting religious institutions from the freedom to celebrate their beliefs, and they had not traditionally delved that deep into different traditions and*

*services of other places of worship.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis asked the applicants if they were a separate organization from the religious organization running the meetings. He asked if they rented properties to others. Mr. Truan said that the church would own them as a 501 (c) (3). Mr. Truan noted that he was one of the congregants. Mr. Kaltsounis said that he had been on the Planning Commission for a while, and he had not seen something like the proposal. He understood that everything was approved by the rules, but he considered that rules could change. If the neighbors got slammed at 5:30 a.m. every day with doors and headlamps, the neighbors would complain endlessly. He was concerned about setting a precedent. He was part of a church organization, and they tried to fill meeting rooms as much as they could with different social groups, and he hoped that the applicants would be successful and fill up 24/7. However, that was the issue. He questioned whether the property location, in the middle of a subdivision, was appropriate. Brewster was not exactly a huge road, and that was what he was fighting with.*

*Mr. Gordon said that as the architect working with the organization on a number of sites, and he was not a member of the congregation, he asked them to think of it as a bible study. It would be a satellite. He was in the process of designing a 350-seat main body, and all of the big events would be held at the major worship facility. The subject site was not intended to grow; it was just to serve people within walking distance.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis said that he understood, but it was new to him, and he was still trying to grasp it and think about how his life would change if he lived by it. Mr. Gordon said that he backed up to the parking lot of a 500-seat church, and there was a church across the street from him. Mr. Kaltsounis remarked that they did not come at 5:30 in the morning.*

*Ms. Morita reminded that it was a site plan approval. All of the City's other Ordinances regarding noise complaints and nuisances still applied. If the neighbors started having problems, they had the right to make complaints, and the property owner would have to deal with it. They could not anticipate every potential issue. She would hope that the organization wanted to be good neighbors and try to keep things quiet at 5:30 in the morning. She commented that she was glad they were not moving in next to her, because she would be calling the City when people started showing up and slamming doors at 5:15 on a Sunday morning. She added that it was not her idea of a good time, and she would be the first one on the phone to the Sheriff's Department filing a complaint. She*

*agreed with Mr. Hooper that it was a permitted use. The request was not about the use per se, and they could not dictate how or when things were done. If the neighbors had a problem, they had other avenues for relief. It would be the same as with any other site plan they approved. As an example, when Tim Horton's was approved at Walton and Adams, there were neighbors concerned about the speaker box for the drive-through. If it got too loud, the neighbors had a right to complain, and Ordinance enforcement took care of it. They needed to look at the subject request the same way. It was not as if the Commissioners were allowing rocking parties every night without doing anything about it. If that happened, people would complain, and there would be citations.*

*Ms. Morita said that she looked into the company and at the Articles of Incorporation and the Annual Report that was on file with the Department of Consumer and Industry Services at the State. The Detroit Meeting Room was just a holding company for the realty, and the entity that owned the property was not the church per se but a separate corporation. Mr. Truan said that Detroit Meeting Rooms would own it. Ms. Morita said that according to the State, Detroit Meeting Rooms was a holding company for the realty. She wanted it clear that the church was another organization. Mr. Truan agreed.*

*Ms. Roediger said that some of the Commissioners were struggling as to how to apply the Ordinance. She reiterated that the use was legally permitted by right. If that was something they wanted to look at changing in the future, they could. She thought that in general, places of worship were treated as Conditional Uses in many communities. They would give a more discretionary review as was done for daycares. She advised the applicants that since there were only five Commissioners present, the vote needed to be approved by all five. She suggested that they could table for a full board or proceed with five Commissioners.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis thought that a place of worship was a Conditional Use. Ms. Roediger said that currently, they were permitted, but that could be changed in the future. If it were denied, it would be like denying a retail business in a B district. If a project met all the Ordinances and was permitted in a district, the City was essentially bound to uphold the Ordinances. Chairperson Brnabic questioned including residential dwellings, because most of the places of worship they had considered had been in a non-residential building or on large vacant parcels. It was the first instance she had seen, and she had no problems with congregations meeting, of something going in a residential house with close neighbors.*

*Mr. Hooper said that typically, all churches were on R-zoned properties. They were usually larger site plans and larger properties. What made the subject request unique was that it was in the middle of a subdivision and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the land was being used for parking. He said that people had small group studies in their homes all the time, so that was not unique. They did not typically put in a gravel parking lot in the back yard for a small group session at a house - people would park in the street. He called the question.*

*Mr. Truan asked if it would be best if they came back and drew in the fence and landscaping and came to a full board. He wondered if that would help. Ms. Roediger said that there was a motion on the table, and if the motion failed, they could seek a second option. Chairperson Brnabic called for a Roll Call vote:*

**A motion was made by Hooper, seconded by Morita, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 5 - Brnabic, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Morita and Schultz

**Excused** 4 - Anzek, Dettloff, Reece and Schroeder

*Mr. Hooper wished the applicants good luck.*

*Ms. Morita asked Ms. Roediger if she could please expedite looking at the Conditional Use option, especially for developed neighborhoods. Her concern was for the neighbors who bought there. They did not think they would have a more intense use going on, and she did not think it was necessarily fair. According to the applicants, there were more coming to the City.*

*Ms. Roediger said that there was an application in review for one on South Boulevard. It was a little different circumstance, and it was not surrounded by residential. Ms. Morita knew that the applicants said they would be good neighbors, but she could not imagine what the neighbors would think.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis agreed with Ms. Morita. It was something new and concerning to him. He thought about making changes to a house that was 30-40 years old, and he did not know what they would do outside of the site plan. The deck could be a problem, for example.*

*Ms. Roediger said that was why the Building department looked at the plan. She noted that homes had been repurposed for offices and other*

uses. Building had very extensive regulations for opening a facility to the general public. She was comfortable having Building and Fire look at those things. Regarding the character of the neighborhood, some were surprised that the use was permitted by right rather than as a Conditional Use, which was common in many communities. She noted that there were a series of amendments coming to the Planning Commission before the end of the year.

Ms. Morita felt that it would be worthwhile to take it to Council and ask for a moratorium to be placed on that type of development until the Ordinances were put in place. There could be five similar requests before that Ordinance came on board. Ms. Roediger explained that the other location - and the application was already in to the City - was on South Boulevard, right next to the Ye Olde Wine Shoppe, and it was vacant property facing South Boulevard. Ms. Morita claimed that there were residences behind it. She stated that it needed to come to Council for a moratorium while the Ordinance was being drafted.

**MOTION** by Hooper, seconded by Morita, the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby requests that City Council establish a moratorium on the conversion of existing residential uses into places of worship.

Mr. Kaltsounis said that the applicant came not as a place of worship but as a corporation with the intent of having a place of worship. Ms. Roediger said that the use of the building was for a religious place of worship. The City did not regulate ownership - whether space was leased, rented or owned. That was for Assessing to handle. Mr. Kaltsounis clarified that renting it as a banquet room would not be permitted, but it still bothered him.

Voice Vote:

Ayes: Brnabic, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Morita, Schultz

Nays: None

Absent: Anzek, Dettloff, Reece, Schroeder

**MOTION CARRIED**

Chairperson Brnabic stated for the record that the motion had passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION**

2017-0438 Sterling Townhomes PUD - a proposed 55-unit condominium development on 4.85 acres located near the northeast corner of Auburn and Livernois, zoned RM-1 Multiple Family Residential, Parcel No. 15-27-351-007, Mark Abanatha,

Alexander Bogaerts, Applicant

*(Reference: Memo prepared by Sara Roediger, dated October 13, 2017 and concept PUD plans had been placed on file and by reference became part of the record thereof.)*

*Present for the applicant were Sam Stafa, Owner, and Mark Abanatha, Alexander Bogaerts, 2445 Franklin, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302.*

*Mr. Abanatha said that they appreciated the Commission's time. They liked to have input with all their projects, and they met with staff before coming. They met with Engineering and had a long discussion with the Fire Marshall. He stated that it was an important project from a time and financial commitment, so they wanted to get the Commission's thoughts first. He noted that the project was on Auburn just east of Livernois. There was a lot of frontage on Auburn and a little bit of frontage on Livernois. There was 20 feet of fall from west to east. To the north was existing multiple-family, and there was commercial across the street and another religious institution to the south, so they thought it would be a great fit. The zoning, RM-1 Multiple Family Residential, was very restrictive and not feasible to develop how they would like due to density and height restrictions. There was an FB-1 Overlay, which would get it closer to a great use for the site, but the height was limited to 30 feet or two stories. The project was for a three-story townhouse development. They had been doing more and more of them, and recently got a similar project in Troy approved. He indicated that it was a unique product that was not very prevalent in the community. Barrington Park was similar (Auburn and Barclay Circle), although the proposal would be smaller, and that had been very successful. The project would allow people who wanted to live in a vibrant community like Rochester Hills, perhaps a young couple or empty nester, to come to the City. They were looking at the potential for an elevator option. He felt that the townhomes would meet a market demand that was not being met and bring more people into the community.*

*Mr. Abanatha said that as FB-1 encouraged, the buildings were pulled close to the street. He pointed out the public walkway and areas where there were pods and another walkway and small masonry piers across the streetscape to create privacy for the units. The units would front on Auburn, and he noted that there would be a great green space between the buildings. He felt that the project would act as a nice transition from Auburn to the multi-family. The units would be side-by-side townhouses with two-car garages in the rear to de-emphasize vehicles. The front would have a flex space on the first floor. There would be a foyer and a*

*stairway that went up to the living area on the second floor. In front of the garage on the first floor, there could be a den or additional living space. The second floor would have the great room, dining room and powder room. The third floor would have bedrooms. There would be two bedrooms in the interior units with the potential for three bedrooms on the ends. They were still exploring square footages but were in the 1,500 to 1,900 s.f. range. He tried to create diversity for the elevations so each one looked different from the next. There would be different materials, such as brick, horizontal siding, vertical siding, shake accents and varied window details, triple windows with stacked ransoms, which, he maintained would give the units a nice residential character.*

*Mr. Abanatha said that because they were not developing under RM-1 or FB-1 standards, they would like to develop using a PUD approach. That would give them the added six feet or more they would need to go to 36 feet to the mid-point of the roof and get three stories. The public benefits would include meeting the market niche that was not being fully served currently. It was a vacant site, and people would come in and add to the community by using the restaurants and other businesses in the area. They felt that there would be plenty of public benefit for the community.*

*In terms of circulation, Mr. Abanatha advised that the site could be accessed from Livernois for emergency vehicles, and there would be a boulevard entrance from Auburn. They would also offer emergency access on the east end. He said that he would be happy to answer questions.*

*Ms. Roediger said that the property had been talked about on and off for years. The FB Overlay was applied to the site to try to encourage development. She felt that what was being proposed was very similar to what was envisioned for the property. In looking at the way the market had evolved and the types of product out there, the three-story townhome was the direction a lot of the housing was going. There was a two-story maximum height in RM-1 and FB, which would not allow for the type of modern unit for which they were seeing a high demand. Staff felt that the project warranted some merit, but they wanted to bring it to the Planning Commission before the applicant proceeded.*

*Mr. Hooper felt that an attached townhouse was appropriate for the property, given the apartments behind it. He asked if they would be for purchase or rent. Mr. Abanatha said that at present, the units would be for purchase. Mr. Hooper thought that the proposed development was way too intense. He did not think they would ever get everything in. The site*

would be subject to the Wetlands and Tree Conservation Ordinances. Between those and detention requirements, he did not think they would get the intensity proposed.

Mr. Abanatha said that they looked at everything. It had been reviewed by the DEQ and the City, and there were no regulated wetlands. They would be doing underground detention in the area below the boulevard. When they looked at densities for other multi-family, they ranged anywhere from six to seven units per acre up to 50 units per acre. They were proposing 11 units per acre, which he felt was a very reasonable density for multi-family. As Ms. Roediger mentioned for FB-1 and what the community was looking for, and what they were doing a lot of, he felt that it was a very reasonable design with green space and would provide the market demand. They were very comfortable with it. They made sure that the site could be easily accessed by emergency vehicles.

Mr. Hooper commented that it took two to tangle, and to get approval of a PUD, there had to be an Agreement with the City. There had to be tradeoffs - some amenities, more green space - not just everything packed in that possibly could be. If they moved forward, that was what he would be looking for. He liked the concept of townhouses, and he felt it was appropriate for the area, but he would look for the tradeoffs and what the City would get in return. The proposed project was easily 1 ½ times the density of the apartment buildings to the north. They had to consider parking as well.

Mr. Abanatha said that they were very comfortable with parking. Each unit would have a two-car garage and apron. In the boulevard, there would be parallel spaces with green spaces, so there would be guest parking in the aprons and on the road. He acknowledged that the apartments were more of a traditional, low impact multiple-family development. The proposal was more of a new urbanism design. They thought it was what the community was looking for, and that was why they were there to talk. Mr. Hooper reiterated that he would be looking for amenities. If they came back, he would definitely want to see the elevation profiles, showing how the 36-foot height looked from the road to get a good idea of the visual impacts.

Mr. Kaltsounis thanked the applicants for bringing the plan as a concept. The Commissioners appreciated it, and they did not want people to invest too much and find out it was the wrong path. He said that he shared a lot of the same thoughts as Mr. Hooper. He listed some things the City would be giving in if approved as it was: trees, the four-story height of the

*buildings, the potential wetland, buildings too close to the road, minimal parking, smaller road width and intensity. He agreed with Mr. Hooper that amenities would have to be added. He was not against townhouses in the area, but he did not want to be left with a "Forester Square." The owners tried high density and did not do a good job with it in some areas. They were now putting in two-story buildings. Mr. Abanatha's rendering showed four stories, and Mr. Kaltsounis did not see the buildings being 36 feet high. Mr. Abanatha said that on a conceptual level, it was 36 feet to the mid-point of the roof and three-stories. Mr. Kaltsounis said that 36 feet to the mid-point could be 44 feet high to the top. Mr. Abanatha was not sure, but it would be somewhere in the 40-foot range. Mr. Kaltsounis commented that the verdict was out for Barrington Park. The height had been taken advantage of, but he realized that those were the rules. He said that if there was some work on the height and density, it might be good for the proposal. He was also concerned about marketability. There was a development down the street that was not doing well. He indicated that he was "on the fence with this one."*

*Ms. Morita thanked the applicants for coming to Rochester Hills and bringing the plan forward. They always liked to see development in the City. She thought that the townhomes looked great. She would love to see them come in to the City, but she had concerns about tradeoffs and density. Based on the City's engineering maps of the water, there was a drain that ran through the eastern part of the property that needed to be re-examined. She asked if there would be basements. Mr. Abanatha advised that the units would be on slabs. Ms. Morita asked if they considered putting in basements, which the applicants had not. Ms. Morita said that the rendering showed windows at the attic level. She asked if that would be accessible storage space for the units. Mr. Abanatha said that they had not looked at what to do in the attic space. The windows were decorative dormers. Ms. Morita asked if each unit would have a fire wall in the attic between each of the units, which was confirmed. She asked the price point. Mr. Abanatha advised that it would be \$250-300k. Ms. Morita questioned \$200 per square-foot for 1,500 s.f. Mr. Abanatha said that they were still evaluating. Ms. Morita said that she tended to agree with Mr. Kaltsounis that they could have trouble with the sales. She asked about the northeast corner of Auburn and Livernois.*

*Ms. Roediger said that it was previously a gas station. It was zoned B-1, and potentially, a brownfield might be involved in its redevelopment. They talked with the applicants about trying to acquire that piece, but there had not been any interest from the property owner. Ms. Morita suggested that if they were talking about tradeoffs and what would be*

*advantageous for the City, it would be getting that corner improved or somehow made a part of the project. It would not be a vacant lot sitting right next to new, beautiful, \$250k townhouses and would serve everyone pretty well. She recapped that she liked the look of the product, but she had concerns about the density and the wetlands. The water was draining off of Auburn Rd. and heading towards M-59 through that property.*

*Mr. Abanatha said that they sat with the Engineering department and evaluated. It was reviewed by the DEQ and ASTI, and it was his understanding that there were no wetland issues. He agreed that it was a tricky site, but they tried to do homework up front. It had not been fully engineered, and they would see what happened at that point.*

*Ms. Morita said that as a former townhouse owner, she would suggest providing any extra storage space they could, even if it was just half a basement. The people living there would appreciate it, because the homes would be narrow, and they could not have enough closets. If there was no basement or access to the attic, it could be problematic. One of the reasons she ended up selling her townhouse was a lack of storage.*

*Mr. Schultz said that his biggest concern would be the marketability. One of the basic tenets of new urbanism design was a walkable community. He thought that the site would be somewhat isolated, not necessarily in the fact that there was additional multi-family around it, but the amenities that supported new urbanism were not there. It was not close to a downtown or a shopping center that might service young professionals who targeted that type of living situation. He had seen other products in the area fail because of that. The product was also very dense, and there were no amenities proposed for the site itself. There was no pool or workout facility or things of that nature that might help the marketability. He would be concerned if they got too far down the road having a product that could not sell. It would not be good for the community or for the developer. He agreed that the renderings were beautiful, and he liked the product type, but he wanted to make sure it was the right product for the area.*

*Chairperson Brnabic asked the applicants if they had any further questions for the Planning Commission. Mr. Abanatha said that he did not; he just mainly wanted to present the project for the developer and see what the comments were, and the Commissioners had given them great feedback. Chairperson Brnabic added that she dittoed the comments about density.*

[2017-0464](#) 2018 Master Plan Update

*(Reference: Memo prepared by Sara Roediger, dated October 13, 2017 and Master Plan Proposal, prepared by Giffels Webster had been placed on file and by reference became part of the record thereof.)*

*Ms. Roediger indicated that she was very excited about starting the Master Plan update. It had been talked about on and off, but there was now actual progress, and the City had a signed contract with Giffels Webster to begin. She had included the proposal that Giffels Webster shared with staff and the Mayor. They worked together to tweak the process. Prior to Ms. Kapelanski joining the City, she had worked at Oakland County and had the benefit of reviewing Master Plans for other communities. She had seen the varieties - the good, bad and in-betweens. Ms. Roediger said that she was excited to guide the Master Plan process and get a Plan that was very forward-thinking that reflected the trends they were seeing. In the memo she provided, she had outlined some of the key things the Commission might be interested in. She and Ms. Kapelanski wanted to make sure there was good public involvement, and not just have meetings with the same ten faces showing up talking about the same thing. They would use social media, existing facilities, poster boards at Emagine Theater, OPC, The Village and other places people went. They would be directed to online surveys and polls.*

*Ms. Roediger stated that there were two key components to the Plan. There would be a strong economic development aspect. She reminded about working with Howard Kohn, who did the market study for the Auburn Rd. Corridor Study. He would expand that study to be a City-wide market analysis to be sure that the recommendations were based on market reality. There would be a focus on redevelopment of four key areas. Three of those were for the Planning Commission to determine to study further. Staff recommended looking at the landfill areas at the eastern edge of the City. There were a lot of phone calls and interest in the properties until people found out about the history. They would look at ways to get some of those properties cleaned up. Mr. Rod Arroyo of Giffels had worked on the City's behalf on some of the landfill court cases in the past. He was very familiar with the situation there and would work on ways to promote the area to possibly get more activity moving forward.*

*Ms. Roediger noted that one thing she liked was that the consultants really wanted to heavily involve the Planning Commission. Oftentimes during an update, the Planning Commission was brought on board in the beginning, the middle and at the end. They were proposing six meetings*

throughout the year. Instead of having meetings separate from regular PC meetings, they would like to have meetings from 6-7:00 p.m. before a regular meeting to discuss the update. The first meeting, however, would be a joint Planning Commission and City Council visioning session. They had one last January as part of the Auburn Rd. study. She and Ms. Morita had talked about the need to have more joint meetings, so she would like to have one on an annual basis in January. The Plan was intended to kick-off in November with adoption, hopefully, by next November. They really wanted to keep to the schedule and not drag out the process. She said that she would be happy to answer any questions.

Chairperson Brnabic said that she thought that the proposal was excellent and very well organized.

Mr. Hooper said that every time he walked the community, whether politicking for himself or for other members of City Council, he noticed that the manufactured home communities seemed to be half vacant. It did not seem as if they were used. Some people had been there 40 years, and then there were a lot of vacant homes. He asked if there had been consideration about looking at the future of the manufactured home communities.

Ms. Roediger recalled that the M-59 Corridor Study, which started the REC districts, talked about transferring some of the residential areas to office in the future. The park on Auburn recently came under new management. From what she understood, they brought in a lot of new units, and they were investing and upgrading. Mr. Hooper suggested that they probably needed an infusion of cash. He did not know what the big picture trend was for manufactured homes and whether they were still a viable housing alternative.

Ms. Roediger said that there were a couple of themes they wanted to weave throughout the entire Master Plan, and sustainability was one. Affordable housing for the aging population was another. A lot of times, manufactured homes provided affordability. The park on Auburn was for ages 55 and up. They would look at demographics and trends. In the planning world, they heard a lot about future demographic desires, which were not all for large lot, single-family homes. She considered that manufactured home parks could possibly become places for tiny homes.

Mr. Hooper said that there were a number of new assisted living units on line. They needed to determine the target for sustainability in the City. He did not want it to be known as the place for assisted living. He

*understood the need, but he did not think they needed a preponderance that put a burden on the City's emergency responders. The assisted living facilities accounted for a vast majority of their calls. Ms. Roediger said that was a concern she had heard in other communities. They were all feeling that pressure. Mr. Hooper thought they needed to take a fresh look and see what density should be projected for the next 25 years.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis mentioned that he was part of the last Master Plan committee. They had representatives from Council and the Planning Commission, and there were meetings at 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. They had a lot of them, because there was such a massive directional change. He asked if they were doing a Master Plan change "light" or "heavy" like before. Ms. Roediger said that the one in 2013 was handled in house, and McKenna prepared the 2007 Plan. For the current Plan, she believed that there would be a big change in the document, but not major policy changes. At the joint visioning session in January, they would determine where the Planning Commission and City Council wanted to head. They talked about having a steering committee, but they decided to keep it at the Planning Commission level with various options for public involvement throughout the process. The Planning Commission would really be steering the ship.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis said that he learned a lot from the last process. He was looking forward to being a part of it and seeing the ways in which they could mold the City.*

*Ms. Morita stated that she recently went through a series of salary studies for the City with multiple meetings. If their meetings were like those, she commented that she would lose her mind. There were several times at a meeting when she was there for 30 minutes, and she would ask "Why am I here?" People were just talking and not listening, so she questioned why she had to attend. She wanted to make sure that their meetings were productive, task-oriented, and that they were not regurgitating everything they did at a previous meeting.*

*Ms. Roediger wanted to meet with Council and the Planning Commission up front to set the stage and see if major policy changes should be made. Ms. Morita suggested that it might be worthwhile to bring in the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. She knew that they had not been meeting lately, but when she was on it, the BRA was very familiar with the properties that needed work. A lot of members had been on the Authority from the beginning.*

*Ms. Roediger asked the members to think about areas they thought might be worthwhile to study as part of the focus redevelopment strategy. They tackled the Brooklands area with the Auburn Rd. plan, but there were additional areas that needed a deeper dive.*

*Ms. Morita mentioned Adams Rd. traffic and how badly it backed up at times. Ms. Roediger pointed out that on the heels of the kick-off, in 2018 they would start the Thoroughfare Plan update. They needed to determine the direction to take from a land use standpoint and then apply the recommendations to see how to accommodate traffic on the major thoroughfares. She knew that traffic would come up as part of the Master Plan update, and they would incorporate those comments into the Thoroughfare Plan.*

*Chairperson Brnabic asked if they would do the Thoroughfare Plan in 2018 or after the Master Plan was completed in 2018. Ms. Roediger expected that it would be in late 2018, but the bulk of it would have to happen after the Master Plan was done. They could not really make recommendations until they understood the adopted Master Plan. She thought that A could be wrapping up while B was starting.*

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*Ms. Roediger said that staff had yet to see revised plans from Premier Academy. She knew that there was an article in the Oakland Press that stirred up some resident excitement. The applicants and staff met with the Road Commission. It was a very pleasant meeting, and everything the Road Commission asked, the applicant was willing to do. If they came back, she expected them to have addressed all the concerns from the Road Commission.*

*Chairperson Brnabic saw an article in the Rochester Post as well. They made the statement that they were extending the turn lane on Tienken and adding a right turn lane on Adams. As discussed, Ms. Roediger explained that the existing center turn lane for southbound Adams would be extended to the east. On Adams, there would be a dedicated right turn lane into the site. That had previously been an emergency entrance/exit only, and it would be proposed as a right in, right out only.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis announced that the strongest people in Rochester Hills (including himself) would be competing the upcoming weekend at the Rochester Performance Gym. He was also the announcer between lifts.*

*The location was behind the Speedway on Crooks and Star Batt, and he invited people to attend.*

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

Chairperson Brnabic reminded the Commissioners that the next Regular Meeting was scheduled for November 21, 2017.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing no further business to come before the Planning Commission and upon motion by Mr. Kaltsounis, seconded by Mr. Hooper, Chairperson Brnabic adjourned the Regular Meeting at 8:32 p.m.

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Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson  
Rochester Hills Planning Commission

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Nicholas O. Kaltsounis, Secretary