



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission

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Home Page:
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Chairperson Greg Hooper, Vice Chairperson Deborah Brnabic
Members: Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Marvie
Neubauer, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver
Youth Representatives: Janelle Hayes and Siddh Sheth

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

In compliance with the provisions of Michigan's Open Meetings Act, Public Act No. 267 of 1976, as amended, notice is hereby given that THE ROCHESTER HILLS PLANNING COMMISSION will hold a SPECIAL MEETING on Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Rochester Hills Municipal Offices, 1000 Rochester Hills Dr., Rochester Hills, Michigan 48309 to consider requests associated with plans for Castle Commercial Carpentry to construct an addition at 3600 W. Auburn Rd.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hooper called the May 6, 2025 Special Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 7 - Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Greg Hooper, Marvie Neubauer and Ben Weaver
Excused 2 - Dale Hetrick and Scott Struzik

Others Present:

Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

Mr. Hetrick and Mr. Struzik provided prior notice that they would not be in attendance and were excused.

Chairperson Hooper welcomed attendees to the May 6, 2025 Special Planning Commission meeting. He noted that if anyone would like to speak on an agenda item tonight or during Public Comment for non-agenda items to fill out a comment card, and hand that card to Ms. MacDonald.

Chairperson Hooper noted that the Commission received a communication from the City of Sterling Heights regarding their Draft Master Plan. Members also received the Michigan Planner Update and Magazine.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW BUSINESS

2025-0197

Request for Site Plan Approval - File No. PSP2024-0039 - for Castle Commercial Carpentry to construct an approximately 4,893 square foot addition for storage purposes to the existing office/light industrial building at 3600 W. Auburn Rd., located on the north side of Auburn Rd. and east of Adams Rd., Parcel ID 15-30-376-032, zoned EC Employment Center and R-4 One Family Residential; Maxwell Niedzwiecki, Castle Commercial Carpentry, Applicant *(Staff Report dated 4/30/25, Reviewed Plans, Environmental Impact Statement, Development Application, Wetland Application dated 3/3/25, Castle Carpentry Letter dated 3/25/25, photos of Current Site Landscaping, and Public Meeting Notice had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)*

Chairperson Hooper introduced this item, noting that Site Plan approval is requested for Castle Commercial Carpentry to construct an approximately 4,893 square foot addition for storage purposes onto the existing office-light industrial building at 3600 West Auburn Road. He invited the applicants forward to the presenters' table and asked for the staff report.

Present for the applicant was Max Niedzwiecki, owner of Castle Commercial Carpentry.

Mr. McLeod stated that tonight's request is for site plan removal and a tree removal permit for Castle Commercial Carpentry, for a building addition on the north side, the back of the building. He explained that the site is approximately 8.4 acres, and he reviewed the overall site layout. He mentioned that this was formerly the Humane Society building, and Castle took possession about a year ago. He pointed out that the applicant is requesting a landscape modification. He explained that the site is split-zoned with everything to the east EC Employment Center and everything to the west Residential. He noted that the actual addition itself is all within the EC and meets all of the EC setbacks; however, the area where there are single family lots that actually came from the parent parcel requires a larger buffer. The applicants are requesting that the existing landscaping is sufficient to provide the buffer in that area.

He stated that the current building footprint is approximately 9,400 square feet. He noted that a Buffer E is required to the residential, which is the most stringent. Based on the aerial, there is a pretty significant tree line and tree area within that section and for the most part the majority of the property. He noted that the building elevations proposed are designed to match the existing building, and he showed how a new dumpster location would extend into some of the parking area, and a new emergency access route would be around the backside of the building.

He pointed out the rectangular area which is proposed for the building addition, which will be designed for storage purposes. He explained that the building addition is about 118 feet away from the property line for the residential properties to the west, while the zoning district line is slightly different. He mentioned that the tree removal permit is for 32 trees, with zero specimen trees being removed; and the applicant is asking to pay into the Tree Fund for those

trees that are required to be replanted. He added that they are providing some landscape trees for the parking lot area and are proposing a total of six trees. He noted that one gap in the tree line is proposed to be filled in. He stated that the applicant is asking for a modification to the buffer, based on the existing conditions, proximity of the building, and the existing tree line.

He pointed out that the building elevations are painted CMU block and metal siding, and he explained that while these material combinations are not normally allowed, they are on the backside of the building and are designed to match the existing structure. He reviewed the elevations, the existing and proposed floor plan, and the warehouse area.

Mr. Niedzwiecki stated that they are a commercial industrial framing, drywall specialty, ceiling and door contractor with 31 employees and have been in existence since 2009. He explained that they have been leasing in Rochester Hills for about 10 years and it is time to make a change. He commented that this is a very unique property, and mentioned that it has a lot of history, noting that he even adopted a dog from the Humane Society there. He stated that the addition is to store materials, and he noted that the secluded piece of land makes it perfect for them. He pointed out that they do not do any fabrication on site, and all of their extra materials and equipment would be stored in the addition. He added that it is necessary and allows room for growth in the future.

He presented a number of photographs relating to the requested work and tree removal; and he mentioned that while the existing building consists of outdated materials by current standards, they do not want the addition to look like it is just added on the back. He reviewed the buffer zone and noted that the area of buffer cuts through an open sliver of the wetland area. He stressed that the site is heavily wooded and they are not touching any of the trees.

Chairperson Hooper noted the three adjacent residential lots that the applicant owns and asked if they were acquired after they purchased the property.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that they split the lots off once they acquired the property.

Chairperson Hooper asked if they planned to build homes on those lots.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded not for a couple of years.

Chairperson Hooper asked about the existing building, and asked if the update would be to paint it to a grayish color.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that there would be new windows with new aluminum frames. He noted that the walls in front were all old brown brick cladded over with siding, and new caps and new railings would be added. He stated that they are also looking into doing some sort of epoxy on the stairs. He commented that there is not much that can be done other than paint.

Chairperson Hooper opened Public Comment on this item, and seeing no one in attendance wishing to comment, he closed Public Comment and opened this

item up for Commission comments.

Mr. Dettloff thanked the applicant for his investment in Rochester Hills and commented that it looks like a great project. He asked how long they have been in business and if their work is primarily done in Michigan.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that they began operations in 2009, and that 95 percent of their work is in Michigan with a little bit out of state.

Mr. Dettloff commented that he once was a dog walker for the Humane Society and thought the applicant's history with the property was interesting.

Ms. Neubauer thanked the applicant for purchasing a property in Rochester Hills. She commented that she did not have a problem with this development either, and wanted to clarify that the addition is for storage and there will be no significant change in hours or number of employees.

Mr. Niedzwiecki confirmed that was correct.

Ms. Neubauer asked if the addition materials would match in material and color or just in color.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that it would match in material and color to look like it was always there.

Ms. Neubauer moved the motion in the packet for the site plan approval. Mr. Dettloff supported the motion.

Mr. Weaver commented that he is also in favor of this. He noted that while he is not one to prefer outdated materials, in this case it makes sense that it will look harmonious and like it has been there forever. He added that given the nature of the site, he did not think that anyone would ever see it or complain. He asked how the materials would be arriving on site and if they would be brought by semi or box truck.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that they have vans and stake trucks. He explained that this would include items left over from jobs, and supplies that they need to pre-purchase for jobs coming up and do not want to ship directly to a job site. He stressed that there would be no semi units coming.

Mr. Weaver noted that in the photos showing the foliage, the building cannot be seen.

Mr. Niedzwiecki showed where there was a small gap. He added that the photos were taken a week ago and noted that the site is very dense even in the winter. He mentioned that it is very viney with old growth and no one has touched it in 42 years.

Mr. Weaver commented that he does not have an issue with filling in gaps and not doing much else. He stated that he would rather it be left untouched than disrupted.

Ms. Brnabic noted that the hours of operation in the EIS were listed as 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and she asked if it was five days a week.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that it would be Monday through Friday, with an occasional but not regular Saturday.

Ms. Brnabic asked about the projected construction timeline.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that if all goes well, it would be in for permit next week. He commented that he needs to be in before the end of October. He added that they only had one fire hydrant up by the street, and this will bring two more hydrants onto the property. He commented that he thinks it is good for Rochester Hills and great for them. He stressed that they are not trying to cut corners with building materials and are just trying to make it look aesthetically like it was always there.

Mr. Weaver asked if they intended to build on the three residential lots or sell them.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that he did not know yet. He explained that they have a separate rental business, but all of their houses are in Waterford or Auburn Hills. He commented that it was not their intention to have residential lots in Rochester Hills, but it made sense given the way this property was zoned. He stated that as of right now, they would either sell or eventually develop; however, they have multiple properties in Auburn Hills that they are going to build first so this will be a couple of years down the road.

Mr. Weaver noted that there is a dense wooded area that if developed would potentially go away, and he asked if they might see any conflict of people complaining about buffers.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that there would be a goal to have the minimum setback off the street to keep the buffer intact. He mentioned that they have houses in Auburn Hills that have won beautification awards. He noted that it is in everyone's best interest including whoever will move there to keep as much woods as possible. He added that there is a walking trail back there.

Chairperson Hooper commented that he looked at the property before the meeting and stated that as long as they keep the treeline at the back of the lots he does not see any issue. He pointed out that one cannot even see the property from York. He mentioned that if they were building the homes themselves they should keep the existing vegetation buffer in place.

Ms. Brnabic asked about the zoning for the building area for the proposed addition.

Mr. McLeod noted the actual zoning line for the residential, and stated that the setback is to the zoning line for the EC District. He pointed out that there is an even more-than-substantial setback between the development and this building. He mentioned that when Castle started down this road, this is something they

had inquired about. He explained that they ultimately pursued the split since the lots are fully zoned residential.

Chairperson Hooper called for a vote on the motion to approve the Site Plan. After the vote, he announced that it passed unanimously.

Ms. Neubauer made a motion in the packet to grant the tree removal permit. The motion was supported by Ms. Brnabic.

Following the vote, Chairperson Hooper announced that the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. McLeod reviewed the next steps with the applicant, noting that they should correspond with the Engineering Department and submit for a conditions review and building permits.

Mr. Niedzwiecki noted that they have submitted for interior permits so far.

Mr. McLeod responded that they are fine to get building permits for the interior; however, they will need to coordinate Planning and Engineering for the addition to submit plans for the additional conditions review.

Mr. Niedzwiecki responded that they will have everything in to Mr. Boughton next week.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 7 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer and Weaver

Excused 2 - Hetrick and Struzik

Resolved, in the matter of City File No. PSP2024-0039 (Castle Commercial Carpentry at 3600 W. Auburn Rd.), the Planning Commission approves the Site Plan, based on plans received by the Planning Department on March 18, 2025, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions.

Findings

1. The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that the proposed development will promote the intent and purpose of the ordinance, as well as other City Ordinances, standards, and requirements; and those requirements can be met with the exception of the acceptable modifications shown below and subject to the conditions listed below.
2. The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that the proposed development will be designed, constructed, operated, maintained and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the character of the existing building onsite along with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, the natural environment, the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the land use, and the community as a whole. The proposed project will continue to be accessed from Auburn Rd., thereby promoting safety and convenience of vehicular traffic both within the site and on adjacent roadways. The preliminary plan represents a reasonable building and lot layout and orientation by limiting impacts to the existing trees onsite, not significantly impacting the existing wetland onsite and meeting all dimensional

requirements of the EC Employment Center District.

3. The development will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services, including a major roadway (Auburn Road), streets, police and fire protection (as represented by the Fire Department’s approval of the site plan), and drainageways, refuse disposal, and utilities as represented by the City’s DPS approval of the site plan.

4. The proposed development will not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses, persons, property or the public welfare since it represents a building expansion, specifically to house vehicles and materials which would otherwise be stored outside, potentially.

5. The proposed development will not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

6. The proposed modification to the required landscape buffer to the single family residential properties to the west to allow the existing vegetation to provide this buffer is found to be acceptable since the number of trees proposed onsite overall greatly increases the number of plantings onsite, the overall site aesthetic, and potential for tree canopy onsite, and the residential properties are located approximately 118 feet from the building addition onsite.

7. The proposed building materials are found to be appropriate since they will match the existing building materials.

Conditions

1. Address all applicable comments from other City departments and outside agency review letters.
2. Provide a landscape bond in the amount of \$9,250.00, plus the cost of inspection fees, as adjusted by staff as necessary, prior to the preconstruction meeting with Engineering.
3. Final wetland size to be verified by survey of wetland delineating markers, along with final determination of the regulatory authority of EGLE and the City.

2025-0198

Request for Tree Removal Permit Approval - File No. PTP2025-0006 - for Castle Commercial Carpentry to remove thirty-two (32) regulated trees and zero (0) specimen trees with twenty-five (25) replacement trees required and proposed to be paid into the City's Tree Fund, to construct an approximately 4,893 square foot addition for storage purposes to the existing office/light industrial building at 3600 W. Auburn Rd., located on the north side of Auburn Rd. and east of Adams Rd., Parcel ID 15-30-376-032, zoned EC Employment Center and R-4 One Family Residential; Maxwell Niedzwiecki, Castle Commercial Carpentry, Applicant

See Legislative File 2025-0197 for Discussion.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Brnabic, that this matter be Granted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 7 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer and Weaver

Excused 2 - Hetrick and Struzik

Resolved, in the matter of File No. PTP2025-0006 (Castle Commercial Carpentry at 3600 W. Auburn Rd.) the Planning Commission grants a Tree Removal Permit, based on plans received by the Planning Department on March 18, 2025, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

Findings

1. The proposed removal and replacement of regulated trees is in conformance with the City's Tree Conservation Ordinance.
2. The applicant is proposing to remove thirty-two (32) regulated trees and zero (0) specimen trees and to provide zero (0) replacement trees and to pay the required twenty-five (25) replacement trees to be paid into the City's Tree Fund.

Conditions

1. Tree protective fencing, as reviewed and approved by the City staff, shall be installed prior to temporary grade being issued by Engineering.
2. Provide the cost of twenty-five (25) trees (\$8,350) into the City's Tree Fund prior to a Land Improvement Permit being issued.
3. Address all applicable comments from other City departments and outside agency review letters, prior to final approval by staff including all comments noted on the site plans and staff reports contained within the Planning Commission packets.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- May 20, 2025 - 7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Planning Commission and upon motion by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, Chairperson Hooper adjourned the Regular Meeting at 7:25 p.m.

*Greg Hooper, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary