

**ALLENDALE CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

February 15, 2021

7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom Software

1. Meeting called to order
2. Roll Call
Present: Westerling, Adams, Schut, Kelley, Zeinstra, Longcore
Absent: Zuniga
Staff Present: Greg Ransford
Other Guests Present: Brett Butler, Kim Cannata, Betty Culbertson, Jason Howland, Kelli McGovern, Patrick Morrow, Joel Paauwe, Lora Richmond, Cathy Schmidt, Catherine Seaver, Brian Sikma, Mike Tiesma
3. Received for information: no information received.
4. Motion by Schut to approve the February 1, 2021 meeting minutes. Seconded by Adams.
Approval 6-0
5. Motion by Longcore to approve the February 15, 2021 Planning Commission Agenda as presented. Seconded by Zeinstra. **Approval 6-0**
6. Public Comments for *non-public hearing items*:
Chairperson Longcore opened the public comment section for non-public hearing items. Kelli McGovern facilitated the public comments beginning with the callers, proceeding to participants using the web or app. After all comments were finished, Chairperson Longcore closed the public comment section.
 1. Brett Butler, representative of Metro Health – No comment
 2. Brian Sikma, representative of Metro Health – No comment
 3. Catherine Seaver, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley
 4. Jason Howland – Comments to Planning Commission regarding purpose of Public Comments
 5. Cathy Schmidt, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley and Park Statues
 6. Joel Paauwe, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley
 7. Kim Cannata, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley and purpose of Public Comments
 8. Mike Tiesma, representative of Midwest Sign – No comment
 9. Patrick Morrow: No comment
7. Public Hearings: no public hearings were scheduled.
8. Site Plan Review: no site plans were scheduled for review.
9. Old Business:
 - a. Metro Health Signage—4830 Becker Drive
Planner Ransford briefed the Commission for the purpose of the public present that Metro Health medical facility had been approved for a location on the northwest corner

of 48th Avenue and Lake Michigan Drive, part of the University Park Planned Development. Discussions were ongoing and the applicant had submitted signage specifications that exceeded current zoning ordinance regulations. The Planning Commission had offered two alternatives:

- 1) Compliance with the current zoning regulations
- 2) Return with mockups from different vantage points to prove that an amendment would be appropriate.

Mr. Steve Witte of Nederveld was unavailable to present as in previous meetings. Mr. Brett Butler, a representative of Metro Health introduced Mr. Mike Tiesma, the Account Representative with Midwest Sign to present an update a package of three mock-ups to the Commission:

- **Sign A:** a large monument sign proposed for the corner of 48th Avenue and Lake Michigan Drive, drawn at their desired 150 square foot size.
- **Sign B:** second option, a scaled back version drawn 50 square feet smaller.
- **Sign X:** a version drawn following the guidelines of the ordinance.

Mr. Tiesma summarized the smaller sign was difficult to see when travelling east and west and urged Commissioners to consider the proposed 10'x15' sign as an appropriate size given the set-back location, speed of traffic, and visibility issues of the Lake Michigan Drive area.

Mr. Zeinstra reviewed the current definition of height and how the sign was measured, and Mr. Butler reiterated the visibility challenge from the east bound traffic side and the sign needing to clear the height of the guardrail. Mr. Tiesma provided some view options, again noting that the smaller sign disappeared behind the guardrail on the eastbound traffic decision point.

Planner Ransford and Mr. Zeinstra discussed where the 10' height was measured from, and Mr. Zeinstra voiced concerned that a sign on M-45 would possibly obstruct the view of drivers looking for a road or drive to turn down when looking for the building. He was not opposed to Sign B but thought that Sign A seemed too large.

Mr. Brian Sikma, also a representative of Metro Health, noted their unique situation, attributing to why the applicant was asking for larger sizes for three of the five signs. His reasoning involved: 1.) the site having three road frontages, 2.) the building front unable to be on the main road, 3.) the site topography requiring the building to be set off a substantial distance, and 4.) the location being on a high-speed road. He suggested that the PUD made it possible for the Commission to have more latitude but understood their concern about setting a precedent. He expressed significant time had been spent to make the signage fit within the guidelines and encouraged the Commission to consider the study done examining the patient base and demographics to determine their proposed and desired sizes.

Mr. Westerling agreed with Sign B being too small, but Sign A being too large.

Planner Ransford checked earlier information and clarified that both the ground mounted signs had exceeded the maximum height allowed which was also a consideration in the meeting.

It was suggested by Mr. Schut that sign height might be gained from gradual grade or berming to increase visibility. He also asked if the Metro Health building could be considered multi-tenant as a possible means to allow expanding the size of the sign.

Mr. Butler agreed to pursuing the option of elevation but noted some concerns relative to the location. He explained some communities included different types of service on their signage, but their chosen sign was not multi-tenant. He considered it a way finding sign not an advertising sign. He was open to considering the advertising type sign, so long as the signage size could stay at the proposed size and agreed to Mr. Tiesma to creating another concept for the Commission.

Mr. Tiesma gave an example of a highway billboard at 14'x48' vs. the Metro Health sign drawn at 10'x15'. By comparison, he believed the sign size to be very appropriate given the distance off the road. He noted that the renderings were also drawn close to scale and fit the space.

Mr. Schut clarified he envisioned a nicely elevated and landscaped raised grade to gain visibility. His understanding was that the only way for the Commission to allow the requested change was to amend the PUD. Planner Ransford confirmed Mr. Schut was correct in that the PUD by default simply said the signage had to meet the ordinance, and the PUD itself would have to allow for those variations. In addition, there was a short list of criteria for the applicant to consider deviations if an amendment to the PUD is pursued.

Chairperson Longcore shared his preference for the Commission to control the signage rather than the ZBA. He agreed with Mr. Westerling and Mr. Zeinstra that Sign A was too large and recommended raising Sign B through grade elevation as a sufficient solution. Mr. Adams disagreed, believing the ordinance size to be sufficient particularly with the well-recognized logo branding and that Sign B did not need increased size or elevation.

Mr. Butler responded that the logo was "unofficially" in the process of being modified and desired continued focus on the sign size not the brand for effective way finding. He acknowledged he would be willing to work with Mr. Tiesma and Mr. Witte to work on a variation and redesign of Sign B.

Mr. Adams again stated that Sign B was twice as large as the current ordinance and would not have a problem of visibility, even without landscaped elevation. Mr. Kelley agreed.

Mr. Tiesma explained that Sign B would be adequate on a normal parcel of land, however, with the building sitting a significant distance away from the sign, it necessitated the larger sign to attract patients driving in any direction to not miss the second driveway if they missed the first entrance. Mr. Butler verified the address of 4830 Becker Drive at Mr. Schut's request adding it was not a well-known road, thus the larger sign request.

Mr. Kelley inquired if patients making appointments were given address verification and location. Mr. Butler explained a protocol was followed, but patients still struggled to find locations. He explained that the city of Wyoming had made changes to their PUD and had allowed additional signage on overhead street signs and poles to increase navigation. He agreed with Mr. Kelley's assessment perfect results were impossible, but that even small changes helped. He gave the example that the number of phone calls from patients asking for directions to the Metro Health hospital decreased after the changes in Wyoming had been implemented.

Mr. Sikma again reminded the Commission that the building was a valuable entity within the community and did not feel the sign would set a precedent for future businesses. Mr. Zeinstra voiced his support for Sign B and the height, measured from the center line off the road.

There was discussion and clarification among the Commissioners, Mr. Butler, and Mr. Tiesma that the sign needed to be 72' off the edge of the road due to the right of way. The Metro Health sign measurement was compared to other signs that were typically about 25 to 30 feet off the road. Mr. Westerling voiced his support for Sign B.

Mr. Kelley asked Planner Ransford if the PUD were amended would other areas in the vicinity also be allowed similar sized signage. Planner Ransford explained it would be at the discretion of the Commission. If the applicant submitted it, they could be limited to the scope of their property. If the Commission felt it was appropriate to address the entirety of the PUD, then it could be more than just a particular parcel within the University Park PUD.

Mr. Kelley affirmed that if it were defined only for that location, he would support Sign B, while Mr. Schut said he was not opposed to Sign B. Mr. Zeinstra said that a review of the PUD indicated that this was the only area that the ravine and extra right of way would impact, applying only to that parcel.

Mr. Adams remained opposed due to the large size of the building and sign, stating that the ordinance requirements provided sufficient visibility. Chairperson Longcore suggested discussing the building sign rendering visibility from Lake Michigan Drive.

Mr. Butler explained it would be seen more quickly by westbound travelers as all obstruction had been removed on the northeast corner of 48th Avenue and Lake Michigan Drive. The heavily wooded ravine in front would exclude visibility until much closer to the intersection of 48th Avenue. The intent was for the sign to be visible early enough to make the roundabout turn, entering through University Parkway rather than going past 48th Avenue to Boulevard turn, coming back to 48th Avenue and back to the building.

Mr. Adams concluded he could still not justify the larger sign per Mr. Butler's explanation. Mr. Butler explained travelling from an east bound direction would require almost being on top of the site and passing 48th Avenue before seeing building signage. In either direction, the goal was to allow enough time for drivers to slow down and prepare to turn without congesting the boulevard turn and impacting traffic efficiency,

safety, and patient appointment/treatment timing. Mr. Adams expressed that any delay in that instance would be minute.

Mr. Sikma commented that the monument sign was important to connecting it to the building. Mr. Tiesma added it had been challenging simply to get an unblocked photo for their renderings because of the heavier traffic, and Mr. Butler affirmed their desire to decrease the amount of turns for the safety of their patients based on their past successful experiences of opening facilities.

Both Mr. Sikma and Mr. Butler reiterated they had a wide scope of patients, but that the goal for all was patient safety. Mr. Butler cited their Cascade location being moved one-half block from the highway for safer transmission entering and exiting. Mr. Butler acknowledged he was supportive of making compromises to improve safety and way finding while still maintaining the standards and process of the Commission.

During the discussion, Mr. Schut identified an error in the calculations for the dimensions of the south sign. He referred to Sleep Inn and asked if that project had set any precedent that would help with the current Metro Health project but still felt that an exception should not be permitted.

Chairperson Longcore and Mr. Schut briefly discussed whether Family Fare was a precedent and considered that it was larger, multi-tenant, but were somewhat uncertain, as it preceded their time on the Commission.

Planner Ransford then verified he had found a discrepancy in one of the site plan numbers and worked to verify the floor plan.

Mr. Westerling asked which of the Metro Health wall signs were compliant with the ordinance, and Mr. Butler confirmed that their north and east signs on the building were compliant. Chairperson Longcore asked Mr. Westerling if he was referring to Sign X being compliant, and Mr. Westerling mentioned that by the 232 sq. ft measurement it was but would not be based on the new calculation.

Planner Ransford said that his calculation was 171 ½ square feet to Mr. Schut's rounded up calculation of 173 square feet. With calculation changes, Mr. Westerling asked if that meant all three wall signs were compliant. Mr. Schut said he believed the north wall to be compliant and the east wall to be slightly over but close. He also questioned if the blueprint showing future expansion would change the calculations. Planner Ransford confirmed it would allow for another 22 square feet on the south and north sides.

Mr. Tiesma asked for clarification on the 173 square feet being allowable on the north and south sides of the building and Planner Ransford confirmed.

Mr. Sikma asked if the additional square footage not being used on the north side might be able to be utilized on the opposite side of the building on the south elevation, but Mr. Schut was concerned it would mean changing the ordinance or amending the PUD. Chairperson Longcore acknowledged the PUD could be amended, and according to Planner Ransford the parcel could be site specific. Planner Ransford confirmed to the Commission that if the PUD were amended it would require a public hearing following the same process for a new PUD.

Mr. Adams asked for clarification stating that he believed the south sign on the building was larger than what the ordinance allowed and based on the current information he could not support the change.

Mr. Butler then asked if amending the request to go with Sign B on M-45, the less than compliant sign shown on the north side, the compliant sign on the east side of the building, the larger sign on the south side of the building and dropping the size of the monument sign on the Becker side to the ordinance size or slightly smaller, would be an adequate compromise.

Mr. Zeinstra, Chairperson Longcore, Mr. Westerling, and Mr. Kelley agreed to the options given by Mr. Butler. Mr. Schut remained opposed and proposed Metro Health build the structure first with temporary signage, then amend the PUD for the Commission to first see the structure in relation to the size of the sign. Both Mr. Tiesma and Mr. Sikma expressed concern about the timing issue of the whole process and avoiding the look of any temporary signage. Mr. Tiesma reiterated the sign renderings on the building were precise, drawn-to-scale, and an accurate depiction of the final product, however, Mr. Schut remained apprehensive about future exceptions. Mr. Butler affirmed he understood their position, but that the location had been chosen due to proximity of the university and the bus line and asked for additional consideration.

Mr. Adams pointed out that the Commission had not yet seen the monument sign rendering in compliance with the ordinance and preferred to see one before finalizing a decision. In response, Mr. Butler reminded the Commission they had been working somewhat within the parameters of incorrect information.

Chairperson Longcore explained that while several of the Commissioners were supportive of some of the aspects of their suggested compromises, the Commission still needed to see renderings drawn according to ordinance requirements.

Mr. Butler thanked Chairperson Longcore and asked for an overview of the process for the PUD amendment to the Planning Commission. Planner Ransford detailed the steps and the Commission asked Planner Ransford to proceed with setting up a public hearing. Mr. Butler, Mr. Sikma, and Mr. Tiesma thanked the Commission for their time and listening to their request. In closing, Planner Ransford sought clarification that once corrections were made to the south façade and materials updated, the hearing would be scheduled. Chairperson Longcore confirmed that was correct.

10. Work Program – Tree Preservation Language

Planner Ransford summarized for the public an ordinance adopted by Park Township in Ottawa County. He reiterated nothing had been scheduled for a public hearing and the Commission was reviewing revisions made in the last meeting to the language for Allendale Township.

Mr. Schut raised concerns about some of the language restricting any tree cutting prior to submitting a plan. Mr. Ransford provided an explanation and court case example.

The Commissioners discussed the proposed language, how to address non-compliance, and language on tree stands and tree canopies being preserved “to the extent possible.”

Additional discussion involved possible setting a percentage of trees that must remain, and how to address trees removed years prior without the new owner's knowledge.

Mr. Zeinstra agreed clear cutting the site was not the answer, but rather incorporating them into their design where possible with proof if the argument were than none could be saved. Chairperson Longcore agreed the goal was not to prevent property owners from doing work on their property, but not clear cutting their property in preparation for development, then having to re-forest and re-plant.

Planner Ransford agreed to prepare revisions to the language for the Commission to review based on comments provided.

11. Section 24.06H – Standards for Approval of Waste Disposal Facilities

Planner Ransford recapped the need to reexamine the language regarding dumpster enclosures to have a certain width whether, or not, it contained one or two dumpsters, as well as an aesthetic enclosure matching the building. He explained the current language requiring a drive approach of a certain length for the truck to service it and requiring an all-enclosure. Concerns have been raised to the Commission over time and the discussion has come about to re-examine and see if any changes are necessary.

Mr. Zeinstra raised a question about the language including an exception for storage building areas on commercial and industrial properties which are fenced and screened not requiring a separate enclosure. Mr. Westerling agreed. Mr. Schutt added that the existing storage fencing would need to include the concrete reinforced 6" bollards and other items consistent with the language already proposed.

Planner Ransford agreed to prepare revisions to the language for the Commission to review based on comments provided.

12. Section 24.06 J. Standards of Approval on Building Appearance.

Mr. Ransford explained that Section 24.06J had certain minimum requirements for commercial and industrial architecture, as well as multi-family developments. The Planning Commission had made a note in months past to this work program about the maximum of 40% glass for a commercial building, a current provision in the zoning ordinance. Recent site plans had used Spandrel glass or similar material that is not a genuine window that one would typically see, so the question was raised if aesthetically proper buildings could be achieved with more than 40% glass, and that some clarity might be needed in how the current language reads.

Chairperson Longcore recommended language indicating at least a minimum of 10% glass, not windows on building frontage. Mr. Westerling, Mr. Schut, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Kelly agreed.

Planner Ransford agreed to prepare revisions to the language for the Commission to review based on comments provided.

13. Second Public Comment

Chairperson Longcore opened the public comment section for non-public hearing items. Kelli McGovern facilitated the public comments, beginning with the callers, proceeding to participants using the web or app. After all comments were finished, Chairperson Longcore closed the second public comment section.

1. Catherine Seaver, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley
2. Cathy, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley
3. Joel Paauwe, Allendale – Comments regarding Commissioner Kelley
4. Kim Cannata, Allendale – Comments regarding the Metro Health Signage

14. Township Board Reports

Bruce Zeinstra reported that they had a Sheriff's update regarding community policing and assigned liaisons to the various boards and committees.

15. Commissioner and Staff Comments

Planner Ransford reminded the Commission of Allendale Baptist Church and the requirements they had been asked to meet one year ago. He asked if the Commission would prefer to schedule a hearing or have a meeting prior to the hearing. Upon the recommendation of Mr. Zeinstra, it was decided to schedule a public hearing, but to review the applicant information prior to the public hearing.

16. Chairperson Longcore adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Next meeting Monday, March 1, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission Minutes respectfully submitted by Lora Richmond