The Charter Township of Orion Planning Commission held a Joint Public Hearing with the Board of Trustees on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, at 7:05 p.m. at the Orion Township Municipality Complex Board Room, 2323 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, Michigan 48360.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:**
Scott Reynolds, Chairman  
Don Gross, Vice Chairman  
Kim Urbanowski, BOT Rep to PC  
James Cummins, Commissioner  
Joe St. Henry, Secretary  
Jessica Gingell, Commissioner

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:**  
Don Walker, PC Rep to ZBA

**BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**
Chris Barnett, Township Supervisor  
Kim Urbanowski, Treasurer  
Brian Birney, Trustee  
Julia Dalrymple, Trustee  
Matt Pfeiffer, Trustee

**BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**  
Penny Shults, Township Clerk  
Mike Flood, Trustee

**CONSULTANTS PRESENT:**
Alissa Starling (Township Planner) Carlisle Wortman Associates, LLC  
Mark Landis (Township Engineer) of Orchard, Hiltz, and McCliment, Inc.  
Tammy Girling, Township Planning & Zoning Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:**
Joe Latozas  
Scott Gabriel  
Steven Keltsch

The Board of Trustees opened their special meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Chairman Reynolds invited the applicant to make a presentation.

Mr. Roger Sherr with Sherr Development 31300 Orchard Lake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI, presented.

Mr. Sherr stated that he was representing Baldwin Maybee LLC in a proposal to develop 156 unit multi-family community at the NW corner of Baldwin and Maybee.

Mr. Sherr said that they present this proposal as a modification of an existing PUD that was approved prior to 2018. The earlier proposal consisted of 51 units configured as duplex-style buildings spread uniformly in a circular road throughout the site. The new proposal consists of 156 units configured in 3-story quad-style buildings that are selectively located on the site. The primary reason for this modification proposal to modify their existing PUD is that the topography on the site has made the existing PUD uneconomical to develop.

Mr. Sherr stated that also present was Peter Stuhlreyer of Designhaus. He added that Peter is going to help describe some of the issues they face here. The topography on the site is very challenging. There is a 40-ft. drop going from east to west as well as from south to north. After the current PUD was approved for 51 units the Baldwin corridor roundabout was installed at the corner of Baldwin and Maybee. It was one of the later roundabouts to be installed in that corridor, and in the process, they lowered Maybee Road.
by 15 feet. With the lowering of Maybee Road the grade differential between the elevation of Maybee and the high point on the property was even made more extreme, whatever grading issues they had before were made even more difficult with the installation of the current roundabout. They think that the proposed PUD that they have in front of them for 156 units overcomes the issues they face and makes the site plan economical in several ways.

Mr. Peter Stuhlreyer with Designhaus Architecture 3300 Auburn Rd., Auburn Hills, MI, presented.

Mr. Stuhlreye said he was there to give a brief overview. Mr. Sherr covered most of the big points, it is 156 units and 13 buildings spread around the property in kind of a resort layout. Based upon the topography that they inherited and maybe exasperated by the different road configurations changes over the last few years. This is a major amendment to the 2017 approval, and they think it is an improvement in an overall product offering for the community. It is about 14 units per acre density, a little less than what the Gingellville allowance would be for if they could meet the criteria which they think they will.

Mr. Stuhlreye stated that there are four major criteria to have an increase in density from the baseline of nine. Landscape or open space of 20% they are 25%, these are just metrics that they can meet. Visually they are quite nice, he showed the Board the retention area, the park amenities, a pocket park at the roundabout, a gazebo, and a pool. He added in terms of landscape and amenities he thought they could cover those criteria. They don’t have front-facing garages. The buildings are kind of four-sided but the front doors are not on the sides of the garage so they can conform to that criterion. One of the criteria is townhouse bungalows, small multiplex, triplex, quadplex, and duplex. They call what they have a stacked quadplex, so they are not large footprint buildings, such as common-hall, 3-story, 200-ft. long, or 160-ft. long in this case buildings. Although they do have plans in their submittal that show what that would look like had they proposed something like that which they would see in a slightly more urban environment. They think that they meet this criterion, and they are under 35 feet. He thought there was some confusion between their staff and administration about 35 feet being to the top of the deck versus the top of the highest parapet. That is not a problem for them to conform with the 35-ft., however, it is imaged in their code. They are 3-story, and they are all under 35 feet.

Mr. Stuhlreye said that this development indeed promotes the 15-minute walkable area which they are in the middle of. Giving people the opportunity to experience their neighbors and all kinds of commercial and retail offerings around the community. That is the brief 30-thousand-foot view of the project.

Chairman Reynolds asked if there were any citizens that would like to make public comments on this public hearing for the proposed project to make their way up to the podium and state their name and address for the record and keep comments to 3 minutes or less.

Ms. Ann Ketsch 3685 Hidden Forest Dr. in Rolling Meadows, the subdivision that’s directly across from the apartment complex that is being proposed. She was not in agreement with the proposed changes. She thought that changing from a 51-unit condo unit to a 156-unit apartment complex is going to have a huge effect on the residents in the area and their quality of life. She also felt that there is a big concern that it is going to substantially affect property value in the area too. There are many individuals that live in Rolling Meadows who have made significant improvements to their homes, which in her mind has helped to improve the community overall. If property values lower because of the increased traffic with 156 apartments they are going to add probably 300 individuals, very likely 300 cars in a very small area. She doesn’t know why people would want to keep investing in their homes and in the community if they are going to lose money on their property value. To her, that would affect the community at large. Those are her concerns. She asked what studies have been done if any on adding 150-unit complex, she did look at the plans, and it looked to her like a studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units. There is certainly a need for apartments, she understood that, but she thought that in that particular area that is going to be a huge difference in density and negatively impact the area. Her question was what studies have been done if any about how this will affect traffic in the area, and then also is there any concern about how it will affect property values?
Mr. Scott Gabriel 941 Joslyn Rd. asked the developers since they are going from a small number of units to many more units is the affordability of it. Can the two new firefighters that they just hired in the Township afford to live in these apartments? The last ones that they talked about a couple of months ago they could not. If somewhere in planning they could address that that would be appreciated.

Chairman Reynolds turned it over to the PC Members for any additional comments or questions during the public hearing portion.

Vice-Chairman Gross stated that they indicated that part of the problem with the townhouse development was the topography. He asked how the 151 units; more buildings address that topography issue.

Chairman Reynolds asked if the Board of Trustees had any comments.

Supervisor Barnett said they have been working with this developer for several years. He thanked the residents for coming in and sharing their opinions. He stated that it is a little unique, it is an approved plan they are asking them to amend. There will be something built there, residential likely, and this is the process that they have to go through, it is a major amendment. He is saying some of these things because a lot of times they have people that come here, and this is the first time ever being at a meeting like this and they are confused by the process.

Supervisor Barnett added that as soon as they are done with this they are going to get up and leave, not because they don’t care, but because this is how the process works. Once the Planning Commission is done with its work on this case, whether they refer it to them or not then it will come to their Board and ultimately be at a Monday night meeting. He didn’t have a lot of questions, he understood what they were looking to do and why personally, and they have met with this applicant multiple times over the last few years.

Mr. Steven Keltsch, 3685 Hidden Forest Dr. stated that he wanted to know why apartments, why couldn’t it just be condos, in a similar type of way, and why they have to be apartments.

Chairman Reynolds turned it back over to the petitioners to respond to some of these comments and questions that have been brought up. He wanted to start with Vice-Chairman Gross’s question about grad.

Mr. Stuhlreye stated that this summer Mr. Sherr and he met on the property, and it is raw land ungraded and very undulating. They discussed the plan that had been approved, and they had previously done some topographical analysis of the amount of earthmoving and removal that would have to be done to get to the point of the more conventional townhouse layout that was presented and approved in 2017. They walked through the land and cutaway through the brush, and he said if they didn’t have these long rows of conventional townhouses, duplexes, quadplex, and if they created modules and scattered them throughout where they made the most sense in terms of the topography, they could save all of that effort of removing the land, building giant retaining walls, and pumping stormwater. It really came out to work for their benefit. There are 12 units in each building’s single staircase, the first floor is fully accessible. A mix of all kinds of units, ones, twos, and studios, it even includes some interior parking. It just was a way to merge the topographical reality with a product and bring the product into the 2020s. A third of them are fully accessible including the ability to have a garage that attaches to your unit from the inside. That is something that they are not going to find everywhere, you see ranches and things like that sometimes but most often they are getting a product that is a 3-story or 2-story walkup townhouse, and a 1/3 of that debunks that and brings another offering.

Mr. Stuhlreye said in terms of affordability these are market-rate apartments, you would assume they would be anywhere from $2 to $2.65 based on the market rate per month, per square foot. He believed that there are units in this development that are affordable noting that the change of the offering and the
increase of density dilutes the cost per unit of earthwork and other expenses. It is their effort to make these affordable, they are not affordable housing but they are market rate, they just need to bring the cost per unit down, and this is their best way to do it. They didn’t push to 20 units per acre, they pushed to what would fit, what would park, and what they could sell in terms of today’s market.

Chairman Reynolds said there was a conversation about property value in a market study to lead them to where they are at. He thought that tied into an apartment versus condos which was one of the additional public comments. Mr. Stuhlreye said he could only use past precedence of projects they work on when they do these types of apartments. They study them, the analysts study them, they never reduce property values, they are a brand-new product, they are market rate they are not low income, and they are not going to bring a different crowd than the condominium buyer. He thought that ship sailed a few years ago with the kind of digital type of nomad people that move more often than they used to move. They have to serve that, they have to be one-two-three year tenants sometimes in this environment. Also, they have a shortage on its way if not already here in this region. He can speak from experience that their next-door neighbor in Auburn Hills has a severe shortage. He thought they had the right product.

Supervisor Barnett stated that one of the things just to note, as he had mentioned they have met with these folks many times. They have been pushing really hard and appreciate the pedestrian connections. The previous plan felt really segmented, and not really good connections. The goal of the Gingellville Overlay District and especially with the new corridor, when the original plan was approved there were no sidewalks at all on either side of the road, and the Township spent millions of dollars to make sure that they had very walkable welcoming pedestrian-friendly corridor through the road project. They are, at least from his perspective, glad to see those connections, they pushed that, they weren’t there when they first started meeting, and they have gone back to the drawing board a few times. That is a welcome change to see some of those connections for residents that will live there but also people passing through, as well as the look and feel of what they are pushing in that corridor.

Chairman Reynolds stated as Supervisor Barnett had mentioned it is an involved process because this project is a PUD, he is about to close the public hearing, and this project is not on their agenda this evening for further deliberation but will be on an upcoming agenda. The applicant is still working through the submittal process with their consultants. For anyone from the member of the public, this is just their formal public hearing process as required in a PUD or a rezone for that matter and that is why it is on the agenda this evening. It is a multi-phase process, so they are a recommending body as a Planning Commission and that involves the final approval from the Township Board in a multi-step process. There will be an opportunity for further discussion and especially when it comes back to the Planning Commission. This is just the public hearing portion to allow public comment. When there are, for example, motions on the table when they do deliberate there will be the opportunity for public comment when motions are made.

Chairman Reynolds closed the public hearing at 7:41 p.m.

Moved by Trustee Birney, seconded by Trustee Pfeiffer that the Board of Trustees adjourn their special meeting of the Township Board at 7:42 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Debra Walton
PC/ZBA Recording Secretary
Charter Township of Orion

March 15, 2023

Planning Commission Approval Date