

**MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER  
31555 11 MILE ROAD, FARMINGTON HILLS MI  
January 15, 2015**

Chair Topper called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on January 15, 2015.

Commissioners Present: Blizman, Mantey, McRae, Rae-O'Donnell, Stimson, Topper, Schwartz

Commissioners Absent: Fleischhacker, Orr

Others Present: Staff Planner Stec, City Attorney Schultz, Planning Consultant Stirling

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION by McRae, support by Rae-O'Donnell, to approve the agenda as published.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**REGULAR MEETING:**

**A. SITE PLAN 71-12-2014**

LOCATION: 21680 & 21700 Haggerty Rd.  
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-31-101-025  
PROPOSAL: Addition to existing building in OS-4, Office Research District  
ACTION REQUESTED: Site Plan approval by Planning Commission  
APPLICANT: Larry Bond of Gentherm Inc.  
OWNER: Westridge Haggerty LLC

Utilizing overhead slides showing aerial views, elevations, etc., Planning Consultant Stirling gave the background for this proposal, which was to construct a 6,700 square foot addition connecting two existing office/research buildings. The property was located on the east side of Haggerty Road adjacent to I-272 between 8 and 9 Mile Roads.

Planning Consultant Stirling summarized her findings as follows:

**Existing Conditions:**

1. Zoning: The property was zoned OS-4, Office Research District. The properties to the north were also zoned OS-4 with properties to the south zoned ES, Expressway Service.
2. Site Configuration: There were 674.93 feet of frontage on Haggerty Road with north and south lot lines measuring 563 feet and 459 feet, respectively. The lot contained 7.68 acres, and was improved with two one-story commercial buildings (Gentherm). Building A, containing 44,985 square feet, was located to the north and oriented north/south on the parcel. Building B, containing 40,356 square feet, was located south of building A and oriented east/west on the parcel. The buildings were separated by a 38.6-foot wide landscaped plaza.

The site was accessed from Haggerty Road in an approach aligned and signaled with High Pointe Boulevard to the west. A detention basin was located to the north of the access drive with internal drives and parking areas surrounding the buildings.

3. Dimensional Requirements: Dimensional requirements were met except:
  - The required setback from the rear property line (east) was 98 feet; the existing setback was only 73 feet. This was a nonconforming condition.
  - Lot coverage was shown at 25.4%; the ordinance required 20% maximum lot coverage. This was also a nonconforming condition.
  - Information regarding open space had not been submitted. The ordinance required 50% open space; additional information as outlined in the review letter was required.
  - Existing setback dimensions needed to be provided on Sheet C-200.
4. Parking: The existing site plan identified 338 off-street parking spaces located on the west, east and south sides of the buildings. Based on information provided, 291 parking spaces were required for the existing buildings/use. The applicant had calculated parking requirements for each building; combining the parking calculations would reduce the overall required parking to 281 spaces.
5. Loading/Unloading: There was no loading/unloading area. The existing building was required to have a loading space located in the rear or side yard. Also the site data on Sheet C-200 contained loading/unloading standards for the LI-1 district as opposed to those applied to OS-4. This information should be corrected and the location of the loading/unloading space shown on the site plan.
6. Landscaping: A landscape plan was not included in the submittal.
7. The existing lighting consisted of a combination of pole and wall mounted fixtures, and a photometric plan had been submitted

Proposed:

8. Proposed Use: The applicant proposed a 6,700 square foot one-story building addition that would connect the two commercial buildings. The floor plan showed a lobby/reception area, dining area, prep kitchen, restroom facilities and conference room. The proposed addition had access to both buildings through the reception area and cafeteria. The use was permitted in this zoning district.
9. Building Configuration: The applicant proposed to remove a landscaped plaza located between the buildings in order to construct a new building that would connect to both existing buildings. The new building height was proposed at 35.6 feet; the maximum building height in the OS-4 district was 40 feet. The portion of the building fronting Haggerty Road was comprised of metal exterior wall panels, a curtain wall (shown as windows), a standing seam metal roof and masonry planter walls. The portion of the building fronting I-275 was identified as masonry wall construction with the same standing seam metal roof.
10. Dimensional requirements: As noted under #3 above, rear yard setbacks and lot coverage did not comply with ordinance requirements. The proposed addition was set back 55.25 feet, thus

further encroaching into the rear yard setback. Also, the proposed building addition resulted in a total lot coverage of 27.5%, which added to the existing non-conforming lot coverage of 25.4% (20% maximum was allowed by ordinance).

Therefore, the applicant would need to seek variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals for the rear yard setback and lot coverage.

11. **Parking Design and Ratio:** The site plan identified approximately 346 proposed parking spaces, compared to 338 existing parking spaces. 303 spaces were required. The site data section of C-200 noted that the total number of parking spaces “counts new spaces plus (3) spaces once Key Plastics generator is removed.” With the additional parking spaces proposed, the site was in compliance with the standards of the ordinance; however, the proposed parking spaces should be noted on the plan for further review.
12. **Off-Street Loading and Unloading:** See item #5.
13. **Accessory Buildings and Structures:** A dumpster was located as required at the southeast corner of the property; this should be reflected on the site plan.
14. **Landscape Development:** There were no plans for removal or new trees on the site. The area between Haggerty Road and the parking spaces was improved with deciduous trees, and some shrubs and grass. While some of the parking areas appeared to be effectively screened with existing landscaping and berming, the central portion of the site did not appear to meet the ordinance standard for screening. It was recommended that the applicant add a two-foot high evergreen hedge (e.g. boxwood, yews) along the front lot line, integrating the hedge into the existing plantings to create a cohesive front greenbelt. A landscape plan should be submitted for review by the Planning Commission.
15. **Exterior lighting:** Per Section 34-5.3, all lighting used to illuminate any off-street parking area shall be installed in accordance with Section 34-5.16, Exterior Lighting. The applicant had submitted a photometric plan, but had not indicated if any of the lighting fixtures were being revised or if the existing lighting was being maintained. The pole lighting had been reflected on the Site Lighting Plan and consisted of perimeter and parking island lighting. No building lighting was shown on the plans. In addition, the height and type of fixture were not included. The applicant should provide additional information on the lighting fixtures for review and administrative approval.

Per Section 34-5.16.3.C, where a site abutted a nonresidential district, maximum illumination at the property line should not exceed one-third (0.3) foot-candles, though the Planning Commission could modify those levels if such modifications were deemed necessary and appropriate to protect public safety. It was recommended that the additional fixture information be included on the plan and the photometric plan be revised accordingly so the Planning Commission could determine compliance with the standard.

In response to a question from Commissioner Rae-O'Donnell, Staff Planner Stec explained that the landscaping on the existing site had been well maintained and no changes were proposed. All the parking lot trees were in place. If the applicant was willing to fill in the berm as suggested above, the Commission might consider waiving any future landscape plans for this site.

Commissioner Mantey initiated a discussion regarding the formula in the ordinance that provided required setbacks along the freeway; it seemed to him that the required setback was greater than necessary.

In response to a question from Commissioner Stimson, Staff Planner Stec said that there was no record of any variances granted for the existing nonconforming conditions. Going forward, the applicant should seek variances for the proposed enlargement of the nonconformances. Variances, if granted variances, would bring the buildings into ordinance compliance.

Larry Bond, Gentharm Inc., 21680 Haggerty Road, Farmington Hills, MI explained that the proposed addition was necessary in order to accommodate the company's growth. Key Plastics was vacating 21700 Haggerty Road in April, and Gentharm was taking over that building. In order to give their employees a safe, protected means to move in between the two buildings, as well as to give them a place to have lunch and to meet in conference, the proposed addition was being requested.

Michele Sargeant, of John Tagle Architects, 5455 Corporate Drive, Troy, MI further reiterated that the two buildings were changing from multi-tenant to one tenant. Therefore the proposed addition would create an identity through the common area, as well as provide access to both buildings. She explained the proposed design, which utilized the form of the existing arches to fill in the space, as well as using complementary colors and materials.

In response to a question from Commissioner Blizman, Ms. Sargeant said that they had been unaware of the existing nonconforming conditions when they started this project. They had thought the buildings were treated separately for setbacks and lot coverage and thus had previously met ordinance requirements.

In response to a question from Chair Topper, City Attorney Schultz said that the Commission could offer conditional approval if it was so inclined, based on variances being granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**MOTION by Rae-O'Donnell, support by Schwartz, that Site Plan No. 71-12-2014, dated December 17, 2014, submitted by Larry Bond of Gentharm Inc., be approved because it appears to meet all applicable requirements of the Zoning Chapter, subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. Appropriate variances be granted by Zoning Board of Appeals for:**
  - the rear yard setback deficiency.
  - the maximum lot coverage overage.
- 2. A revised site plan be submitted that includes the following:**
  - The dumpster location.
  - The loading zone.
  - A two-foot wall or hedgerow in the gap between the parking lot and Haggerty Road.
  - Details on the lighting fixtures as called out in the ClearZoning review letter of January 7, 2015.
  - Area(s) where additional parking spaces will be provided.

**Additionally, the motion notes that a landscape review by the Planning Commission will not be required as long as the two-foot wall or hedgerow is provided as noted above.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** December 18, 2014

**Motion by McRae, support by Rae-O'Donnell, to approve the minutes of December 18, 2014 as published.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Staff Planner Stec explained to the public present that the public hearing regarding the rezoning request at 13 Mile and Orchard Lake Road previously scheduled for this evening had been postponed at the request of the applicant to February 12, 2015.

**COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS:**

Commissioner McRae noted a letter from Civil Engineer Darnell in the Commissioners' packets regarding requested information about the traffic flow at the new Burger King at 12 Mile and Orchard Lake. He also noted that the West River Theater was being renovated.

Commissioner Blizman asked about the results of the use variance request for 31989 West 12 Mile Road. This request had appeared before the Planning Commission on November 20 in the form of a text amendment request. Staff Planner Stec said the ZBA had heard the case and granted a limited use variance, and also conditioned the variance on the existing structure remaining without modification.

Commissioner Schwartz thought that it was important for the Planning Commission to meet tonight to hear this single case.

Staff Planner Stec updated the Commission on ongoing projects in the City, noting that the new Burger King at 13 Mile and Orchard Lake Road was ready for a temporary certificate of occupancy, as was the Tim Hortons at 10 Mile Road west of Halsted, and the new Auto Zone at Drake and Grand River. The three projects would be granted permanent certificates of occupancy after landscaping was approved in the spring. The PUD project on Hamilton Court was completing their traffic study and would be before the Planning Commission in February or March. The new Craft Brew City at 12 Mile and Orchard Lake was very close to opening.

Commissioner Mantey suggested that the Planning Commission revisit the required setbacks along the freeway; perhaps these could be simplified and changed.

Commissioner Mantey said that he had attended the kick off event for the Farmington, Farmington Hills and Farmington Public Schools application for the Georgetown University Energy Prize of \$5 million. The Planning Commission should support this effort where possible.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Hearing no further comment, Chair Topper adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPROVED 2-12-2015

Steven Schwartz  
Planning Commission Secretary

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