

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD  
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN  
DECEMBER 19, 2024, 7:30 P.M.**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The Planning Commission Regular Meeting was called to order by Chair Trafelet at 7:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present: Countegan, Grant, Mantey, Varga, Stimson, Trafelet, Ware (arrived 7:37pm)

Commissioners Absent: Aspinall, Brickner

Others Present: Staff Planner Canty, Planning Consultant Tangari (Giffels Webster), Engineering Division Representatives Devers and Emerson, City Attorney Schultz

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**MOTION by Stimson, support by Grant, to approve the agenda as published.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. AMEND PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) PLAN 2, 2021 INCLUDING REVISED SITE PLAN 59-5-2022**

LOCATION: 27400 Twelve Mile Road  
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-12-476-008  
PROPOSAL: Construction of site-built one-family detached dwelling units within RA-1B One Family Residential District  
ACTION REQUESTED: Recommendation to City Council  
APPLICANT: Robertson Brothers Homes  
OWNER: Evangelical Homes of Michigan

Chair Trafelet introduced this request to amend PUD 2, 2021, including revised site plan 59-5-2022, 24700 Twelve Mile Road, Villas at Pebble Creek. The requested action is a recommendation to City Council.

**Applicant Presentation**

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation and referencing the materials in tonight's packet, Tim Loughrin, Robertson Brothers Homes, made the following points:

- Robertson Brothers Homes had acquired the development rights for the entire Sarah Fisher site. The updated proposal submitted this evening focuses on creating a community of 75 age-targeted detached single-story ranch condominiums, eliminating the previously approved skilled nursing facility component. Some homes will have the option of being a Cape Cod style, with a second story bedroom.

- The historical significance of the site will be maintained. Robertson Brothers Homes has received approval from the Historic District Commission for a revised Certificate of Appropriateness, which includes preserving key historic features of the site and repurposing the chapel into a community space for residents. As part of the agreement with the HDC, some materials from the existing buildings will be integrated into the site, and the gates and the wall at the corner will be retained.
- Additionally, there will be four individual single-family lots along 12 Mile Road.
- The development of the approximately 36-acre site will include common areas as shown on the submitted schematics that will be maintained by the homeowner's association. This senior-targeted development will not have a pool or play area.
- The main entrance will be as shown at the center of the development on Inkster Road. Robertson Brothers Homes continued to advocate for a boulevard at this entrance, which will provide an approach that frames the chapel building and surrounding park area. A secondary entrance will be to the north, also on Inkster. There will no connection to Cheswick Road.

#### **Screening**

- Additional screening was being provided along Inkster Road. However, existing landscaping eliminates the need for additional buffering along the western boundary of the development. Mr. Loughrin had walked the area with representatives from the adjacent neighborhood, who agreed that there was a mature existing buffer along the western property that needed no improvement. The HOA was more concerned with the trees that were dead or dying along Cheswick, a public road which acts as a private entrance to the neighborhood. Robertson Brothers Homes had agreed to plant ten 12-foot evergreen trees along Cheswick.
- Robertson Brothers Homes was donating property along 12 Mile Road for the new city sewer lift station, to be constructed in 2025.

#### **Need for this housing type**

- Mr. Loughrin emphasized the value of the housing product now being offered, which was in great demand in Farmington Hills, and in the southeastern Michigan area generally. The development will be a walkable community with sidewalks and paths, with about 40% open space, and will provide a good transition from Inkster to the established neighborhoods to the west.
- SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) data suggests that Farmington Hills needs 100 housing units of this type per year. Targeted senior buyers will be downsizing, and by their nature will have less impact on utilities and traffic than traditional single family residential homes.
- The ranch homes will be between 1800sf and 2000sf, with the option of a finished basement and of upstairs cape cod bedrooms. Homes that include the upstairs bedrooms will be about 2100sf.
- The homeowners association will maintain the property and the community gathering area around the chapel, as well as the chapel building itself. The HOA will also maintain the landscaping, roofs, and siding throughout the development. Siding will be Hardee siding and other building materials will include brick and stone.

### **Response to engineering and fire department review comments**

Mr. Loughrin made the following points in response to engineering and fire department review comments:

- Robertson Brothers Homes was no longer proposing a CRD (Community Redevelopment District grant) as that had been proposed to support the previously approved nursing home facility. They will be submitting for Brownfield funds to help with the demolition.
- It was not economically feasible to provide a gravity sewer to the new lift station for the four single-family lots along Twelve Mile Road. They were instead requesting to provide a low pressure connection to the new lift station.
- Robertson Brothers Homes was asking that they not be required to provide a manhole at the Herndonwood intersection. This was part of the plan when the PUD included the skilled nursing facility, and the requirement did not seem appropriate to the development as now proposed.
- Again, they would like to keep the boulevard entrance but would remove it if so required.
- They will resolve issues regarding the emergency connection to the proposed driveway servicing the pump station on 12 Mile Road.
- The 50' turning radius for fire apparatus will be provided.
- The stub road to units 71-75 and unit 70 will be shortened, and Unit 71 will have a longer driveway.
- Unit 68 will have more of a landscaping buffer to the neighbors. Unit 68 will be a premium lot.
- Placing a shared service drive in front of the four units on 12 Mile Road would take up the entire front yard of those homes. Robertson Brothers Homes is proposing a T-turnaround for those units. If allowed by the Road Commission, each of the four units will have its own curb cut to 12 Mile Road.
- Robertson Brothers Homes proposed less storm infrastructure and manholes because this site no longer included the nursing home facility.
- Robertson Brothers Homes proposed not having rear catch basins and storm lines for units 71 through 75 because storm water would go directly into the adjacent detention pond without the addition of catch basins.

### **Discussion**

- In response to comments, City Attorney Schultz explained that the Planning Commission could weigh in on the entrance boulevard as that was a site plan issue, but that the other points made regarding the engineering and fire department review items could only be addressed by those departments, and those issues would be addressed as the amended PUD Agreement is formalized.
- In response to questions, Mr. Loughrin said that Robertson Brothers Homes would most likely build the four single-family units, but they also had the option to sell them as custom lots. They had not marketed anything in the project yet.
- Commissioner Grant noted there was a development between Inkster and Northwestern that was also named *The Villas at Pebble Creek*. Mr. Loughrin said he would follow up relative to this information.
- In response to questions, Mr. Loughrin added that the development would use municipal waste removal and private snow removal.

- Commissioner Stimson noted that relative to the four lots on 12 Mile, he was opposed to a single curb cut with the front of the homes then being connected by a common driveway, thereby increasing the pavement in those front yards.

**Consultant comments**

Referencing the November 13, 2024 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari highlighted the following points:

- As already stated by the applicant, the proposed PUD amendment would eliminate the approved 100-bed skilled nursing facility, and the development will now become 75 detached ranch homes targeted at seniors and four single-family lots along 12 Mile Road. The chapel that was to be preserved in the approved PUD plan will still be preserved and will be part of a common park area in the center of the development.
- This is a major amendment to the PUD, and the Planning Commission must set a public hearing on the amendment and make a recommendation to City Council. The public hearing is tonight.
- The net density of the full site by unit is 2.7 dwelling units per acre.
- The four split lots on 12 Mile Road meet the minimum size requirement but do not meet the minimum lot width requirement of the district. The proposed lot size is 31,080 square feet; the requirement is 26,000 square feet. The proposed lot width is 111 feet; the requirement is 140 feet. The lot width requires relief from ordinance standards.
- The applicant proposes 75 detached single-family ranch units in the 17.15-acre residential use area of the plan. The underlying RA-1B district requires minimum lot size of 26,000 square feet, or 1.675 units per acre. Proposed density is 4.4 units/acre within the portion of the site devoted to the ranch units. While this exceeds the underlying permitted density and requires relief from ordinance standards, the first approved version of this plan included 94 units in a 14-acre area (6.7 units/acre), and the most recently approved version had 51 units over 14 acres (3.6 units/acre).
- The dimensional standards of the district were met by the condominium development portion of the plan with the exception of the setback to Cheswick, which was 30 feet where 50 feet was required.
- The request to not add additional landscape buffer to the western property line would require relief from the ordinance.
- The proposal includes a sidewalk on only one side of the road through most of the development. The north end doesn't have any sidewalks.
- In summary, this proposal seeks relief from ordinance standards as follows:
  - a. Permit detached single-family at requested density of 75 units.
  - b. Permit reduced exterior side setback along Cheswick (30 feet).
  - c. Permit no installation of western buffer plantings.
  - d. 111-foot lot width for splits where 140 feet is required.
- The Planning Commission should weigh in on the boulevard entrance issue.

**Public Comment**

Chair Trafelet opened the meeting to public comment.

Scott Griffin, representing the Hickory Oaks Subdivision, said that they had met with the Robertson Brothers Homes representative a number of times and they had an agreement with

the developer regarding landscaping. They agreed with the plan. Mr. Griffin thanked the Planning Commission for taking the time to get the development to where it was.

As no other public indicated they wished to speak, Chair Trafelet closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Planning Commission for discussion and/or a motion.

#### **Discussion**

- In response to a suggestion that there be a separate PUD amendment for the four single-family lots, Mr. Loughrin said that another amendment for the four lots was not worth the cost, work and time. Robertson Brothers Homes thought it was important that the lots were included in the proposed amendment, and they believed the four lots were appropriate.
- Regarding the boulevard entrance off Inkster, there seemed to be general consensus among the Commissioners to support the boulevard.
- Commissioner Stimson suggested reducing the number of single family homes on 12 Mile to three, which would be more harmonious to other homes in the area, would be consistent with the goals of the Historic District, and would not require a variance.

Mr. Loughrin said that the lots met the minimum area, and that a 111-foot width was actually a very wide lot. Reducing the number of lots would increase the burden on the remaining three to cover the costs of the infrastructure there.

- Commissioner Mantey asked staff to consider whether they would like to suggest to City Council to shrink the back of the four lots, in order to increase the amount of land preservation there.
- Commissioner Countegan spoke to some of the history of this site, and the City's many attempts to encourage development there. He supported the four lots as being part of the current PUD.

After discussion and amendment, the following motion was offered:

**MOTION by Varga, support by Countegan, to RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL that the application to amend Planned Unit Development Plan 2, 2021, including Revised Site Plan 59-5-2022, dated October 17, 2024, and November 4, 2024, respectively, submitted by Robertson Brothers Homes, BE APPROVED, because the plans are consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Master Plan and applicable provisions of the Planned Unit Development Option in Section 34-3.20 of the Zoning Ordinance, SUBJECT TO:**

- **Modifications of Zoning Ordinance requirements as indicated on the proposed plan.**
- **Modifications of Zoning Ordinance requirements as identified in Giffels Webster's November 13, 2024, review.**
- **All outstanding issues identified in Giffels Webster's November 13, 2024, review shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner.**
- **All outstanding issues identified in the City Engineer's November 12, 2024, interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer.**
- **All outstanding issues identified in the Fire Marshal's November 11, 2024, interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.**

**Additionally, the Planning Commission recommends approval of:**

- **A longer driveway to Lot 71, as described by the applicant this evening.**
- **The boulevard as shown at the main entrance off of Inkster Road.**
- **Sidewalks on one side of the interior road, as shown.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

## **REGULAR MEETING**

### **A. SITE PLAN 59-9-2024**

LOCATION: 24300 Drake Road  
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-21-351-032  
PROPOSAL: Construction of vehicle wash within B-3 General Business District  
ACTION REQUESTED: Site plan approval  
APPLICANTS: BMW Kar Wash, LLC (Todd Gesund)  
OWNERS: Boxoffice Theaters, LLC

### **Applicant presentation**

Jim Butler, PEA Group, 1849 Pond Run, Auburn Hills, was present on behalf of this application for site plan approval. Steve Russo, traffic engineer, Collier's Engineering & Design, 20700 Civic Center Drive, Southfield, was also present.

Mr. Butler explained that at the October 17, 2024 Planning Commission meeting the applicant had asked for the application to be postponed and had since made revisions to the site plan, including:

- Added an access drive onto Drake in the area directly across from the shopping center so that the drives aligned.
- Added a two way drive on the north side of the property connecting the site to the future development to the east, and added a two way drive to the north that would service the Enterprise site.
- A traffic study had been completed and submitted but had not yet been reviewed.

Regarding the traffic study, Mr. Russo provided the following overview:

- Traffic counts were collected at the existing Busch's driveway on the west side of Drake Road; the right-in, right out drive by AutoZone; the existing McDonald's drive on Grand River; and the signalized intersection of Grand River and Drake Road.
- The one movement at the intersection of Grand River and Drake Road that didn't operate as well as desired was the southbound left turn movement from Drake Road onto Grand River. Providing some signal timing adjustments could mitigate the impact of the new development traffic and improve the movement at the intersection to an acceptable level.
- Traffic exiting out of the development driveway would operate acceptably.
- Analysis showed that maximum queuing on site relating to the car wash operation would be entirely contained on site and would not spill out onto Drake Road.
- Traffic exiting the car wash tunnel would be directed to Drake Road or drivers could continue to either AutoZone or McDonald's, to use the exit there.

- Grand River is an MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation) roadway; ultimately any improvements will go through MDOT.

### **Consultant Comments**

Referencing the December 9, 2024 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari highlighted the following information:

#### **Summary of issues for Planning Commission consideration:**

- The applicant proposes to construct a new 6,140sf automated car wash facility, with 17 vacuum spaces with frontage along Drake Road between Grand River Avenue and Indoplex Circle. The plans involve maintaining the existing curb cut along Drake, with additional marginal access to the site from access drives connecting to the businesses to the south and east. A stub street connecting to the north is also proposed.
- Most revisions to the plan revolve around the circulation on the site and the connections to Drake Road. Dead end off-street parking aisles are discouraged. Such parking aisles with more than 8 spaces are required to have sufficient space for vehicles to turn around. Two-way access provides a means for vehicles to turn around. The Planning Commission shall review this parking configuration and confirm whether it meets this requirement.
- A hedge is only provided along the northern half of the Drake Road frontage. The site includes existing trees along the road frontage which has a partial screening effect but may not adequately mitigate the impact as effectively as a knee wall or hedge. Planning Commission should review and confirm. There was a hedge along the northern half of the Drake Road frontage, but not the southern half.
- There was a portion of the site that was not being developed at present and pending future development the hedge might be left off that portion of the site.

#### **Summary of Issues for Administrative review:**

- Easement agreements were needed.
- A loading space was needed. The aisle to the south of the building could be used for loading during off-peak or closed hours.
- Egress stacking spaces beyond the washing bay should be added to the plan.
- The bypass and drive-through/pay lane exceed the required average to minimum illumination ratio.
- Building mounted entrance fixtures exceed 2,000 lumens per door.

In response to the City Planner's comments, Mr. Butler added the following:

- The applicant was willing to extend the hedge to the southern half of the Drake Road frontage as part of this development.
- The vacuum spaces in the dead-end aisle were 12 feet wide, leaving room to maneuver in and out.
- Loading activity mainly consisted of chemicals delivered by a small van. There were four employee parking spaces. The space on the far left could be expanded and marked for loading; the site plan would still meet parking requirements.

**MOTION by Grant, support by Stimson, that Site Plan 59-9-2024, dated September 18, 2024, submitted by BWM Kar Wash, LLC (Todd Gesund), BE APPROVED, because it appears to meet all applicable requirements of the Zoning Chapter, SUBJECT TO the following conditions:**

- **All outstanding issues identified in Giffels Webster’s December 11, 2024, review shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner;**
- **All outstanding issues identified in the City Engineer’s December 4, 2024, interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer; and**
- **All outstanding issues identified in the Fire Marshal’s December 4, 2024, interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**B. SITE PLAN 61-11-2024**

LOCATION: 29403 and 29455 Grand River Avenue  
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-35-431-016 and -017  
PROPOSAL: Construction of gasoline service center within B-3 General Business District  
ACTION REQUESTED: Site plan approval  
APPLICANT: Skilken Gold Development  
OWNER: Shakir Alkhafaji

**Consultant Comments**

Referencing the December 10, 2024 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari gave the background and review for this request for site plan approval.

**Summary of Proposal:**

The applicant proposes to demolish an existing commercial building and construct a new fueling station with 6 pumps/12 fueling positions, with the front of the building oriented toward Middlebelt. The 6,132sf proposed Sheetz store will include a convenience store and restaurant. No drive-through service is included as a part of this proposal.

**Summary of Issues for Planning Commission consideration:**

- Canopy trees are required throughout the paved area but were only provided along the perimeter of the parking lot. The Planning Commission shall consider whether this arrangement is sufficient to meet this requirement.

**Regarding Ordinance compliance:**

- Loading space shall be identified on the plans (970sf required)
- The dumpster enclosure must be relocated to an interior side or rear yard location. The ordinance also requires it to be located as far as practicable from adjacent residential. The height of the bins within the enclosure shall be provided. Enclosure height must be 1 foot above the dumpster height.
- The freestanding monument sign on Grand River Avenue appears to be within the driveway clearance triangle.

A list of items for administrative review was provided on p. 2 of the Giffels Webster review letter.

**Existing conditions:**



The site is 1.9 acres and zoned B-3.

The site is currently developed with a 2,257sf vacant automotive service facility (oil changes). Pavement from a previous use is also present.

Planning Consultant Tangari reviewed the proposal against ordinance standards. The following issues need to be addressed:

- Precise front setback distances to the building and canopy should be added to the plans. The applicant should correctly note setbacks on the plans for the west and south property lines.
- The applicant should confirm that the standard relative to parking of motor vehicles or the storage of trailers, campers or other such conveyances on the gasoline service station property shall be prohibited, except for those necessary to the operation of a gasoline service station.
- As already noted, the dumpster is located in the front yard and should be moved. The height information of all bins within the dumpster enclosure was not provided.
- The applicant needs to correct discrepancies on the plan, as outlined on p. 6 of the Planner's review.
- Signage needs to meet ordinance standards in terms of area, height, and corner clearance.
- Landscaping is broadly compliant, but some locational and spacing issues must be resolved. The Eastern Redbud on the southeastern portion of the site does not meet the minimum distance from the property line. Additionally, the row of 8 nyssa sylvatica along Middlebelt Road north of the driveway appears to show the trunks in the sidewalk. Other locational and spacing issues exist as outlined in the review letter.
- The site plan includes a screening wall and brick knee wall, referencing sheet A100 for details. However, only knee wall details are provided. Screening wall details are also required.
- There are outstanding lighting issues that must be resolved, listed on p. 8 of the review letter.

#### **Applicant Presentation**

David Bruckelmeyer, Sheetz, 39300 West 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, was present on behalf of this application for site plan approval. John Ackerman, Kimley Horn, 3000 Town Square, Southfield, and Pat Lennon, Honigman Law Firm, Bloomfield Hills, were also present.

Mr. Bruckelmeyer provided the following information:

- The new building will have four-sided, full brick architecture with planters added for aesthetic appeal.
- There was no possible location to place the dumpster that fit zoning ordinance requirements. The applicant acknowledged that a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals will be required.

In response to questions, Mr. Bruckelmeyer added the following information:

- There would be no drive-through at this location.
- The loading area would be east of the canopy along Middlebelt.
- Turning radiuses were designed to accommodate the applicant's largest trucks which would enter via Middlebelt and exit via Grand River Avenue.

- An old heating oil underground storage tank, and an associated underground storage tank would be removed from the site. There would be other remedial efforts, and the entire corner would be razed and completely leveled, assuming soil contamination.
- The store would be seven square feet smaller than Sheetz' typical prototype.
- This redevelopment project represented a minimum \$9 million investment.

Mr. Ackerman explained that shifting the building to accommodate the dumpster setback requirements would pose circulation problems. He noted the number of utility lines (overhead power lines, gas lines, storm lines) that run through this property.

After extensive discussion regarding possible solutions that might allow for correct placement of the dumpster without requiring a variance, Mr. Lennon asked the Planning Commission to approve the site plan contingent on either the applicant receiving a variance or providing a compliant plan.

**MOTION by Stimson, support by Grant, that Site Plan 61-11-2024, dated November 13, 2024, submitted by Skilken Gold Development, BE APPROVED, because it appears to meet all applicable requirements of the Zoning Chapter, SUBJECT TO the following conditions:**

- All outstanding issues identified in Giffels Webster's December 10, 2024, review shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner.
- All outstanding issues identified in the City Engineer's December 5, 2024, interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer.
- All outstanding issues identified in the Fire Marshal's December 4, 2024, interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.
- This approval is contingent on the Zoning Board of Appeals granting a variance for the dumpster location, or a minor amendment be approved to the plan which can accommodate the dumpster without requiring ZBA approval, subject to staff review.

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of November 21, 2024 Regular Meeting

**MOTION by Countegan, support by Varga, to approve the November 21, 2024 Regular Planning Commission meeting minutes with the following amendment:**

- Page 18 to read, ". . . key considerations ***offered by Commissioner Countegan*** included:"

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Betz King, 29580 Belfast, said that the proposed Sheetz gas station at Grand River and Middlebelt was extremely close to the Rouge River, and raised three points of concern:

##### **1. Flood Risk and Spill Concerns**

Ms. King highlighted the high risk of spills at gas stations, particularly during storm events. The Rouge River watershed is prone to flooding, which can carry petroleum products and other contaminants far beyond the spill site. These pollutants could enter residential basements and

yards in flood-prone neighborhoods, posing long-term health risks to residents. Furthermore, remediation of petroleum contamination is costly, often not fully covered by insurance, leaving homeowners with significant financial burdens.

2. **Water Quality and Pollution Risk**

The Rouge River already faces challenges with water quality, including high chloride levels from road salts and chronic pollution. Ms. King expressed concern that spills and stormwater runoff from the gas station could worsen these issues, introducing petroleum products and other toxic substances into the ecosystem.

3. **Habitat for Sensitive and Endangered Species**

The Rouge River serves as a critical habitat for sensitive species, including the state-endangered redbreast dace, a unique minnow that leaps from the water to feed on insects. Recent evidence shows successful reproduction of this species in the area. Ms. King warned that chemical runoff from the gas station could degrade this habitat, harming these fragile populations and reducing biodiversity.

Ms. King urged the City to prioritize its role as a steward of the Rouge River and to protect this vital resource. She recommended collaborating with Friends of the Rouge to ensure the safety of both the river and the residents. She also noted that other potential sites for the gas station do not pose the same environmental risks.

**COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENTS**

In response to public comment, Commissioner Mantey suggested a discussion should be held regarding moving public comment to the beginning of the meeting.

In response to public comment, Commissioner Countegan observed that the result of the remediation of older underground storage tanks usually resulted in a net positive for the community. Ms. King's comments will be part of the record of tonight's meeting.

January 2025 meetings will be January 16 – regular meeting, and January 23 – CIP.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Trafelet adjourned the meeting at 9:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristen Aspinall,  
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem