

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF YPSILANTI
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, November 26, 2024
6:30 pm**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Bill Sinkule, Chair
Elizabeth El-Assadi, Vice Chair
Gloria Peterson
Larry Doe
Darrell T. Kirby

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Bianca Tyson

STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

Fletcher Reyher, Planning and Development Coordinator
Sally Elimger, Carlise Wortman Associates
Dennis McLain, Township Attorney

- **CALL TO ORDER/ESTABLISH QUORUM**

MOTION: Mr. Sinkule called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

- **ROLL CALL**

The roll call was taken by Mr. Sinkule. All Commissioners, with the exception of Ms. Tyson were present.

- **APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 8, 2024, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

MOTION: Ms. El-Assadi **MOVED** to approve the October 8, 2024, regular meeting minutes. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Doe and **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

- **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION: Mr. Doe **MOVED** to approve the agenda. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. El-Assadi and **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

- **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

CLASS A DESIGNATION – LOS AMIGOS PROPERTY, LCC – 2851 EAST MICHIGAN AVENUE– PARCEL K-11-01-310-001 – TO CONSIDER THE CLASS A CONFORMING DESIGNATION APPLICATION OF LOS

AMIGOS PROPERTY, LLC TO PERMIT THE SIGN COPY CHANGE OF THE EXISTING LEGAL NON-CONFORMING POLE/PYLON SIGN.

Mr. Fletcher Reyher, Planning and Development Coordinator, presented to the Commission a Class A conforming designation application. Mr. Reyher presented an aerial image of the property, noting that it was a popular Mexican cuisine establishment. He presented the sign in question, reporting that it was legally established under a previous zoning ordinance, but the current zoning ordinance did not allow a sign to be erected. The sign copy that said "Los Amigos" would be changed. Mr. Reyher presented the new sign copy. The size and height would remain the same, but the logo and advertisement would change. Part of granting a Class A designation was reviewing a set of criteria of Article 16. Seven items needed to be considered before the designation could be granted, which included the structure was non-conforming, such as those lawfully erected prior to the ordinance, that the non-conformity did not significantly suppress the value of nearby properties, that the non-conformity was not contrary to public health, the presence did not obstruct visibility of vehicular traffic, no useful purpose would be served by the strict application of requirements for the non-conformity, the sign served both regional and local traffic, the signage needed to be in compliance with Article 15, a plan for site improvements, and other conditions could be attached to approval to ensure that the structure or use of land was not contrary to the ordinance.

The current requirements required called for a 32 square-foot sign area, and the existing sign was 40 square feet. The maximum height was six feet, and the current sign was 20 feet. The current required setback was two feet from the right-of-way, and the existing was 13 feet from the sidewalk. The current ordinance required one square foot of landscaping per one square foot of sign area. There was landscaping in the area, but the current standards required more. It was believed that the non-conformity of the sign would suppress the value of nearby properties. The continuation of the sign would not affect public health or the public welfare. There were no signs of wear and tear of the sign or any indication that the sign would collapse in a wind event. Enforcement of the strict application of requirements would require the applicants to remove or replace the existing sign despite the sign's historical compliance. The non-conforming sign continued to meet the needs of the business. The sign was legally erected even though it did not meet the height and size requirements, and granting the Class A designation would allow for the owner to not make structural alterations. The applicant should submit any plans for site improvements, including landscaping around the sign, to align with Article 15's standards. Mr. Reyher suggested considering adding language to the motion to require additional landscaping around the sign. The Planning Commission could require additional conditions, such as regular maintenance of the sign or lighting.

Commissioner Kirby asked for additional information on the usage. Mr. Reyher stated that since it was not impacting the public, it could be considered okay as it was. The sign did follow the requirements of the zoning ordinance in 2006, and the owner at the time pulled all of the proper permits. Since 2006, the zoning ordinance changed, and the sign would not meet the new standards. Since they wanted to modify the non-conforming sign, they needed approval from the Planning Commission.

Commissioner El-Assadi asked for confirmation that the sign was structurally sound. Mr. Reyher stated that the only way to be certain was to have an engineer perform an analysis, but there were no signs of rust or holes in the poles or any indication that it was not structurally sound.

Will, who was representing the owner and applicant, reported that they performed a technical survey and found that there were no structural issues. The sign was under 20 years old, and it was still in good shape. He reported that the signs should last 30 to 40 years before they showed significant wear and tear. He explained that the face would have a digitally printed vinyl applied to it.

Commissioner Peterson asked if the owner was aware of the conditions that would be followed up on, such as the landscaping and maintenance. She also asked for information on the additional landscaping and what the owners would do. Will stated he was unaware, but he believed maintenance and repair would be expected. Regarding landscaping, he stated he was not sure. Mr. Reyher noted that a significant amount of landscaping was recently added when they updated the parking lot, so there was a lot of landscaping around the building.

It was asked if additional landscaping would still be required. Mr. Reyher pulled up a street view of the current building and landscaping, which was from July 2024. Mr. Reyher stated that additional landscaping to shield the pole could be challenging.

Commissioner Doe asked if the sign was two-faced. It was confirmed that it was.

It was stated that the landscaping likely met the 40 square foot requirement and believed that the trees likely met other requirements and should not be replaced.

Commissioner Peterson asked if there were windows behind the tall trees. It was confirmed that there were not, it was just a brick wall.

Commissioner Doe asked how long ago the parking lot was done. Mr. Reyher reported that it was done four years ago, and the trees were required to be put in.

Commissioner Peterson asked if the name of the business would still be included. Mr. Reyher that the name of the restaurant was being changed to El Trompo.

The public hearing was opened at 6:56 pm.

There were no public comments, and the public hearing was closed at 6:56 pm.

MOTION: Ms. El-Assadi **MOVED** to approve the Class A non-confirming designation design application to permit the sign copy change of the existing legal non-confirming pole/pylon sign for Los Amigos Property, LLC, located at 2851 EAST MICHIGAN AVENUE, Parcel K-11-01-310-001, with the following conditions:

- The property owner shall comply with all current Township ordinance standards regarding the maintenance and repair of the sign structure.
- The property owner shall maintain the current landscaping around the sign base.

The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Doe

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Kirby (Yes); Ms. Peterson (Yes); Ms. El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. Doe (Yes); Mr. Sinkule (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

- **OLD BUSINESS**

None

- **NEW BUSINESS**

PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN – HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS – 350 & 460 JOE HALL DRIVE – PARCEL K-11-38-363-029 & K-11-38-363-003 – TO CONSIDER THE PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN APPLICATION OF ANDY PATEL TO PERMIT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 93-ROOM, 4-STORY HOTEL FOR A 4.68-ACRE SITE ZONED I-T, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY.

Mr. Fletcher Reyher, Planning and Development Coordinator, presented to the Commission a Preliminary Site Plan Application from the Holiday Inn Express developer Andy Patel for a proposed 93-room, 4-story hotel at the intersection of 350 and 460 Joe Hall Drive. The site was currently vacant and was made up of two parcels. The two parcels would be combined if approved. The 2040 Master Plan designated the site as the Township core, which was intended to be the central core of the Township and meant to host a mix of uses. There was also a special area of plan that would serve as a gathering plan. The area was centrally located and already well-served with infrastructure and public transportation. The build-out would be market-responsive with a variety of uses, including regional, civic, local, and commercial hotels and restaurants, offices, and multiple-family houses to meet the daily needs of Township residents. Mr. Reyher presented an aerial image and the nearby strip mall that was directly east of the proposed development. The Township and outside agencies reviewed the preliminary site plan. Carlisle Wortman reviewed the preliminary site plan and recommended that the Commission discuss several items. The applicant was seeking a height variance of 14 feet and 8.5 inches. The Planning Commission was present on November 26, 2024, to consider the application but not to make a formal application until the applicant had a chance to seek the variance. The Township Engineer, OHM, recommended approval on November 11, 2024, and provided the applicant and their engineer with preliminary, detailed engineering comments. WCUA recommended conditional approval on June 25, 2024. The Ypsilanti Fire Department recommended conditional approval on June 24, 2024. The Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission offered the applicant four items to address, which would be addressed during the final site plan review. The Washtenaw County Road Commission provided a review letter on November 1, 2024, requiring the installation of a traffic signal based on the traffic impact study provided by the applicant.

Sally Elmiger reported that she had suggested that the motion from the Planning Commission be agreed to. She reported that the Wortman office did a review of the site plan, and the outstanding items included that the building was 14 feet and 8.5 inches too tall, and a variance would be required. She noted that the process included the applicant coming before

the Planning Commission and the ZBA regarding the variance before a formal decision could be made. The other outstanding items included that there was no identified loading zone, which could be waived if the applicant did not require it, calculations regarding the amount of finish materials were needed because no more than 75% of the building could be finished with EIFS, and the elevations provided on color and black and white did not match.

MOTION: Ms. El-Assadi **MOVED** to postpone the request for the Preliminary Site Plan for the construction of a 93-room, four-story hotel located at 350 and 460 Joe Hall Drive, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48192, Parcels K-11-38-363-029 and K-11-38-363-003 to allow the applicant time to obtain the required variance as outlined in the staff report.

The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Kirby.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Kirby (Yes); Ms. Peterson (Yes); Ms. El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. Doe (Yes); Mr. Sinkule (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

- **ADOPTION OF REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATES FOR THE 2025 CALENDAR YEAR**

Mr. Fletcher Reyher, Planning and Development Coordinator, presented to the Commission the proposed calendar for the regular meetings in 2025. He stated that there was one more meeting for 2024, on December 10, 2024. He presented the list of dates, which fell on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, ensuring that the dates presented did not conflict with any major holidays.

MOTION: Ms. El-Assadi **MOVED** to adopt the proposed regular meeting schedule for the 2025 calendar year. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Peterson.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Kirby (Yes); Ms. Peterson (Yes); Ms. El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. Doe (Yes); Mr. Sinkule (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

- **OPEN DISCUSSIONS FOR ISSUES NOT ON AGENDA**

- a. **Correspondence received**

Mr. Fletcher Reyher informed the Commission that he sent an email on November 25, 2024, to the Commission regarding the landscaping for the Los Amigos property.

- b. **Planning Commission members**

None to Report.

c. Members of the audience

None to Report.

- TOWNSHIP BOARD REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None to Report.

- ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None to Report.

- PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORT

None to Report.

- OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business.

- ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Kirby **MOVED** to adjourn at 7:11 pm. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Doe and **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

Respectively Submitted by Minutes Services.