

**Minutes of the regular meeting of the Georgetown Township Planning Commission, held
Wednesday, August 18, 2021**

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chairperson Bolhouse at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Absent: Josiah Samy

Also present: Victor Vuong, Zoning Administrator, Mannette Minier

#210818-01 – Planning Commission Agenda for August 18, 2021

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Donna Ferguson, to approve the agenda as submitted.

Yeas: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.

#210818-02 – Minutes of the July 21, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Donna Ferguson, to approve the minutes as presented.

Yeas: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.

#210818-03 – Public Hearing – (SUP2106) Association for Covenantal Reformed Christian Education (for First Reformed Protestant Church), 1675 Baldwin St., is requesting to have a K-12 school under Sec. 8.3(H), on a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-15-279-046, located at 1675 Baldwin St. in a Low Density Residential (LDR) district, Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, MI.

Jim Ens, Attorney with Miller Johnson, accompanied by representatives of the church, presented the request ([application](#), [supplement to application](#), [site plan](#)) with the following comments:

- The school is aligned with and affiliated with the church. It's a newly formed denomination. Due to unexpected developments after they purchased the property this summer, it was determined they needed to provide elementary and high school classes to students of their church. The school will likely not be licensed when they open, so they will just be hosting homeschool students to educate their children. Two nights ago, the Zoning Board of Appeals was asked to grant a variance. The Zoning Ordinance requires a high school to have 40 acres. They are only at 3.68 acres, but they were granted the variance. The Zoning Board of Appeals' rationale was that they would be a small, private Christian school teaching their children. No new buildings or athletic fields are proposed. The Zoning Board of Appeals determined 40 acres was not needed. The Zoning Board of Appeals determined an unfairness exists in the Zoning Ordinance by requiring standards

for private schools while public schools don't have to follow them. Sec 20.3 has four general standards for a special land use permit to be granted. The first standard is met because there will not be any new construction and people driving by wouldn't even know it exists. He said this location is better than the location of a lot of schools because the property is on a major arterial road. They don't anticipate more than 35 cars for pickup or drop off at any given time. They have sufficient parking. They will not have school and church function at the same time, but if they did, it would be the same parents, children, and families anyways so it wouldn't cause an increase in cars. They agreed to a cap of 118 students with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Zoning Administrator presented the [staff report](#) with the following additional information gathered from the applicant through conversation prior to the meeting: there will be 6 classrooms, there are currently 23 high school students in grades 9-12 and that number may grow to around 30 as they are receiving a few more students, the school will not use any space of the church as an auditorium or assembly hall, and the school will not be in session during church hours.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked Tom Healy to fill Planning Commission in on what was discussed at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting on Monday, August 16.

Tom Healy said the Zoning Board of Appeals reviewed the 7 standards of granting a variance individually and it was a pretty lengthy conversation. They concluded there was an unequal playing field among schools because private schools must follow local zoning ordinances while public schools don't. They came to the conclusion that Sec. 20.4(U)(1) needs to be addressed by the Planning Commission by modifying the ordinance to take into account that it's difficult to find a lot large enough to meet the minimum size requirement and no school actually meets that standard. Most churches conduct classes and they all have school functions to some extent. The property meets the standards because of the limited use and the frontage along Baldwin Street. If the school ever goes over the cap of 118 students, the school is in jeopardy. The Zoning Board of Appeals left the greenbelt question up to the Planning Commission because if a variance were to be granted, it's there in perpetuity. They felt it to be more appropriate being left for the Planning Commission because the greenbelt stays with the special land use.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked how did the origination of the minimum lot size of 20, 30, and 40 acres come about?

The Zoning Administrator said sometime before 1994, the Zoning Ordinance was amended to include the 4 specific special land use standards for K-12 schools. Before that, K-12 schools were listed as a special land use in the Township's zoning districts, but there were no specific standards so schools only had to meet the general special land use standards. The reason behind adding the 4 specific standards is because the Planning Commission and Township Board decided that schools should be located on arterial roads and most lots of those sizes are located on arterial roads in order to mitigate traffic from going through residential neighborhoods to get to the school.

Michael Moores asked since they are not expanding the footprint, does this also mean there will not be any playgrounds or recreational equipment for the children?

Jim Ens said there is no plan to add playground equipment.

Michael Moores asked what's the plan for ingress and egress? Will there be any bussing?

Jim Ens said there will be no bussing and there are 3 access points to the property.

Michael Moores asked what is the timeframe during the day for traffic?

Jim Ens said it will be 7:40 am to between 2:50 pm and 3:15 pm.

Gary Veldink said the precedent was set when he built portable classrooms at Cornerstone United Reformed Church for a Christian school years ago. He said the new Jenison Early Childhood Center building doesn't meet the minimum size standard in the ordinance either. He agrees with the Zoning Board of Appeals that the Zoning Ordinance places private schools at a disadvantage because public schools don't have to follow the Zoning Ordinance. As far as the greenbelt requirement, he said the landscaping is sufficient.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will the special land use stay with the land?

The Zoning Administrator said yes.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked are they allowed to apply since they are not the owner?

Jim Ens said they have to do it that way because of school law.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked is it correct that they acquired the property this year?

Jim Ens said yes, in May.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked how many members does the church have?

Steve Kamps, board member of the school, said 78 families.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked how many staff members does the church have?

Steve Kamps said there are less than 10.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will it be a standard school year from September to June?

Jim Ens said yes, it will be from September 7 to June.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will there be classes in the summer months?

Jim Ens said not at this time.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will it be normal school hours?

Jim Ens said yes, but before they are licensed, they will just be assisting homeschool students.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked are there separate teachers coming in?

Jim Ens said there will be separate teachers coming in with parents as aids.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked how many students, teachers, parents, and staff members are there?

Jim Ens said approximately 10 to 15. When they applied, it was 50 students. Then they offered a cap of 78. Now they're okay with a cap of 118. Their numbers are not at 118 students yet; they're at 78. He said there is a benefit to have schooling where worshipping takes place. When you have that nexus, there is an intellectual discipline that manifests itself naturally. A lot of these students will be working for 40 minutes where they don't have direct 1-on-1 interface, which kind of mirrors what happens in a homeschool setting.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will there be any extracurricular activities to allow some form of exercise?

Steve Kamps said they are open to what the Township will allow. They were concerned about asking for it and getting denied for that. So they are open to suggestions.

Jeannine Bolhouse said most churches with daycares have something outside for children.

Jim Ens said he appreciates that question being raised before public comments. They want to do something outside for the children while not jeopardizing the approval.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked is most of the boundary of the property fenced?

Jim Ens said yes, except for one property.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked should neighbors be concerned that students could request bussing?

Jim Ens said anyone could request bussing but that's not in the plans. The parents are very much invested in their children's education.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will children bring their own food or will food preparation be done at the school?

Steve Kamps said there will be hot lunch prepared at the school.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked will there be any signage?

Steve Kamps said the school will have its own sign.

Donna Ferguson said she doesn't think it's realistic to not have children outside from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. She said there needs to be more screening for the neighbors.

Jessica Ulberg said children should have outdoor time at school. She said the start and end times are earlier than Sandy Hill Elementary down the road so that traffic shouldn't overlap.

The Chairperson opened the public hearing.

John Moore, 1647 Baldwin St., said his home is currently enclosed by the property. He's concerned about the value of his home. He asked what plans will be implemented to address traffic. He said he spends a lot of time in his driveway before being able to get out. He said not all properties are fenced. His property has a chain linked fence. He loves the idea of having a playground, but his concerns are the traffic and noise because his home is his primary investment.

The Chairperson closed the public hearing.

Jim Ens said regarding the 4th standard, he pointed out the word “excessive”. He doesn’t think 26 cars or a cap of 118 students creates an excessive burden on the neighborhood.

Steve Kamps agreed that trees can be planted around the neighbors’ backyards. They are not opposed to planting more trees.

Tom Healy said he thinks there are options for traffic mitigation strategies. There are 2 access points on Baldwin Street. One can be an entrance and one could be an exit and the exit could be a right turn only. He thinks the greenbelt buffer is essential to preserving the character of the neighborhood that the neighbors who live there have come to experience overtime. Going from a church to a school increases the intensity of the use so he thinks the greenbelt is necessary. He thinks the ordinance should be revisited. He said outdoor recreational equipment should be considered, a greenbelt buffer mandated, and a student cap can be constructed in some fashion such as in relation to the square footage of building; they will better fit schools on smaller sized properties.

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Donna Ferguson, to adopt the staff report as finding of fact and to approve Special Land Use Permit (SUP2106) Association for Covenantal Reformed Christian Education (for First Reformed Protestant Church), 1675 Baldwin St., to have a K-12 school under Sec. 8.3(H), on a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-15-279-046, located at 1675 Baldwin St., in a Low Density Residential (LDR) district, Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, MI, based on the findings that all applicable standards of the ordinance have been met including the general special land use standards in Sec. 20.3 and the specific special land use standards in Sec. 20.4(U), and with the following conditions:

- 1. If added in the future, athletic fields shall not be located closer than two hundred (200) ft. from any property line abutting a residential zoning district.**
- 2. The hard cap for the K-12 school is to be 118 students, all of whom are affiliated with the church, as offered by the applicant and also accepted by the Zoning Board of Appeals.**
- 3. Any future site improvements or expansions of existing buildings/structures for the K-12 school are only permitted if they are used in conjunction with the church and may only be constructed, erected, moved, placed, maintained, reconstructed, used, extended, enlarged, or altered by the church.**

Yeas: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Donna Ferguson, to approve the GIS aerial and submittal materials, as presented, based on the findings that all applicable standards of the ordinance have been met, and with the items not shown on the plan as listed in Sec. 19.4 waived, for Association for Covenantal Reformed Christian Education (for First Reformed Protestant Church), 1675 Baldwin St., on a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-15-279-046, in a Low Density Residential (LDR) district, Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, MI, and with the following conditions:

1. **Submit a revised site plan that shows 10 trees in the streetscape along Baldwin Street per Sec. 3.11 to be administratively approved by the Zoning Administrator.**
2. **Submit a revised site plan that shows a greenbelt is provided as much as they can to be approved by the Zoning Administrator.**
3. **If an outdoor play area is desired by the applicant, submit a revised site plan showing the area to be administratively approved by the Zoning Administrator.**
4. **Must be in compliance with other local, county, and state ordinances and regulations.**

Yeas: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.

#210818-04 – Public Comments

Mike Dolce, 6801 Gettysburg Dr., provided comments and a letter to the Planning Commission regarding the Master Plan text on the 48th Ave. Corridor. He asked for the text to be removed that states no neighborhood commercial uses should expand to the south of the intersection of Bauer Rd. and 48th Ave. He said he's had many inquiries and offers for commercial use and zero offers for residential.

Rick Geenen, 8871 Cedar Lake Dr., provided comments on the proposed Master Plan text for possible future development at the intersection of 44th St. and 8th Ave. He said he was concerned about a gas station possibly being constructed on the property at the southeast corner of the intersection.

#210818-05 – Other Business – Draft 2021 Master Plan and Future Land Use Map Revisions

Attachments: [Master Plan 2021 Draft](#)
[Summary Proposed Text Revisions](#)
[Future Land Use Map Proposed Revisions](#)
[Future Land Use Map 2015](#)

Mannette Minier said regarding the property at the southeast corner of 44th St. and 8th Ave. that the DPW Director said it will be very difficult to bring sewer to the site and some areas in the Township are many, many years away from having sewer.

Gary Veldink said he's in agreement with the Master Plan draft. He said the Master Plan will be driven by sewer. He also said the capacity of the Township's lift stations is almost reached and the next 10 years may be very trying for development throughout the Township.

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Jessica Ulberg, to approve forwarding the 2021 draft Master Plan and proposed revisions to the Future Land Use Map to the Township Board for review, and for approval to distribute the draft plan to the neighboring municipalities and to Ottawa County for review and advisory comments, and to begin the time period for those entities to submit advisory comments.

Yeas: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.

#210818-06 – Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Yeas: Jeannine Bolhouse, Donna Ferguson, Michael Moores, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Gary Veldink

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.