

**To:** Commerce Township Board of Trustees

**From:** Commerce Township Planning Department  
David Campbell, AICP – Planning Director

**Date:** December 5, 2017

**RE:** December 2017 Monthly Planning Department Report  
(covering Nov. 8, 2017 through Dec. 4, 2017)

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### Development Proposals

- **Barrington Apartments (W side of Martin Parkway just north of Pontiac Trail)** – MM Commerce Martin Apartments, LLC (Jim Galbraith, Mickey Shapiro, and friends) received site plan approval for a 299-unit apartment development in September 2015. In August 2016, the developer applied for and received approval for an amendment to the site plan that increased the number of units to 308. Based on market projections, along with lease rates they're seeing at their ShearWater development at Beck and Maple, the developer is now seeking to revert the site plan back to the plan approved in 2015. The Planning Commission approved the amended site plan during their meeting on Dec. 4, 2017. Meanwhile, work continues on the deep sewer interceptor that will traverse through the Barrington site, connecting the Barrington project with the existing pump station at Martin Parkway and Library Drive while also allowing the pump station at Campbell Creek and Welch to be abandoned. Mass grading on the site is also ongoing.
- **Aikens mixed-use commercial development** – The Planning Department, the Township Attorney, the DDA, and representatives for Robert B. Aikens & Assoc. continue to formulate a strategy for Bruce Aikens' proposed mixed-use commercial development at the northeast corner of Martin Parkway and Pontiac Trail. Mr. Aikens' proposed development will be a combination of entertainment, dining, retail, gourmet grocery, and health & fitness uses, with Phase 1 totaling approximately 350,000 square feet of new commercial space. Mr. Aikens' development is expected to be applied for as a planned unit development (PUD), which would actually be a sub-PUD to the master PUD for the larger Commerce Towne Place development area. Mr. Aikens hopes to have the sub-PUD approved by May 2018, in time for the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) annual convention.
- **Comfort Care of Commerce (NE corner of 14M & Decker)** – 91-unit assisted living / memory care facility. The project was approved by both the Planning Commission and the Township Board as an amendment to a 1996 consent judgment. One of the signatories to that 1996 amendment was Singh Development, for whom the judgment was amended in '96 so they could develop Briarcliff Apartments. Singh has declined to sign the 2017 amendment to the consent judgment to allow the Comfort Care project, because Singh owns and operates the Waltonwood Twelve Oaks assisted living facility in Novi, and will not sign off on a competitor moving in 2 miles up the street. Comfort Care applied for a conditional rezoning of the property from its base zoning of R-1B

(Single Family) to RM (Multiple Family), conditional upon the Comfort Care site plan. On Dec. 4, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the conditional rezoning, and subsequently made a formal recommendation to approve the conditional rezoning. The conditional rezoning petition is expected to proceed to the Township Board for final approval on Dec. 12. If the rezoning is approved, the project would have to come back to the Planning Commission for site plan w/ special land use approval, potentially on January 8, 2018.

- **JR Senior & Associates (northeast corner of E. Commerce and Carroll Lake Roads)** – At their regular meeting on November 14, 2017, the Township Board by a unanimous vote denied the conditional rezoning petition of JR Senior & Assoc to rezone six properties at the corner of Commerce and Carroll Lake to B-3 (General Business) to construct a gas station with 8,000 sq ft retail building (a combination convenience store with secondary tenant). The Board agreed with the Planning Commission’s recommendation of December 2016, based on a finding that the proposed zoning and land use were inconsistent with the Township’s Master Plan.

#### **Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)**

- **Regular meeting November 16, 2017 CANCELLED** – The ZBA cancelled their regular meeting for Nov. 16, and replaced it with a special meeting on Nov. 21 at 5:30pm.
- **Special meeting Tuesday, November 21, 2017** – At their special meeting on Nov. 21, the ZBA took the following action:
  - Tabled any action on a sign exception for Wilson’s Marine service center (4266 Haggerty), for a new shared monument sign that will encroach on the 75-foot setback requirement from the centerline of Haggerty Road, because the location of the proposed sign was not properly staked on the site.
  - Sign exception granted for Benstein Grille (2435 Benstein), for a new monument sign that will encroach on the 75-foot setback requirement from the centerline of Benstein Road.
  - Recommended Township Board approval of the ZBA meeting calendar for 2018.
- Regular meeting of January 25, 2018 (date tentative until Twp Board approves final 2018 meeting calendars) – At their regular meeting tentatively scheduled for Jan. 25, the following is anticipated to be on the ZBA’s agenda:
  - Remove Wilson Marine’s sign exception application from the table
  - Possible variance application for a home on Lake Sherwood for an accessory building that would encroach on the waterfront setback
  - Election of officers for 2018, and review of ZBA Bylaws
  - Possible education / training session

#### **Planning Commission**

- **Regular meeting of Dec. 4, 2017** – At their regular meeting of Dec. 4, the Planning Commission:
  - Held a public hearing for the Comfort Care conditional rezoning, and recommended approval to the Township Board (described above)
  - Approved the amended site plan for Barrington Apartments (described above)
  - Recommended approval for an amendment to the Land Division Ordinance

- Elected the Planning Commission officers for 2018; Larry Haber – Chair, Russ Schinzing – Vice Chair, Brian Winkler - Secretary
- Recommended approval of the Planning Commission’s meeting calendar for 2018
- Reviewed and approved the Planning Commission Bylaws (with one minor amendment to move the annual election of officers from December to November).

**M-5 non-motorized bridge** – At their meeting on Nov. 14, the Township Board approved a contribution by the Township of \$1.13M toward an enhanced aesthetics package for the MDOT’s bridge over M-5. MDOT’s contribution is about \$3.9M, for a project total of almost \$5M. MDOT’s original intention was to build their standard highway overpass, but the Township Board felt the bridge should be enhanced to serve as a gateway into Commerce Township and the Commerce Towne Place development area. Enhancements include sails atop the two bridge abutments, perforated metal wave panel along both sides of the bridge, “Commerce Township” signage, medallions of the Township’s official seal, and color-changeable LED lighting. The bridge project was awarded by MDOT to Davis Construction of Lansing, who is expected to begin work as early as January with completion by August. The bridge’s construction is not anticipated to cause significant traffic interruptions along M-5. Until the M-5 bridge is completed, we can all enjoy the other new non-motorized pedestrian bridge the Township recently constructed along the pathway between the Commerce Community Library and the Dodge Park soccer fields.