

**FINAL
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, May 5, 2025
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Parel called the meeting to order at 6:59pm.

ROLL CALL: Present:

Brian Parel, Chairperson
Joe Loskill, Secretary
Bill McKeever
George Weber

Absent: Caitlin Bearer
Brian Winkler, Vice Chairperson (excused)
Brady Phillips (excused)

Also Present: Dave Campbell, Township Planning Director
Paula Lankford, Senior Planner
Debbie Watson, DDA Director

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Weber, to approve the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Agenda of May 5, 2025.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairperson Parel – I think Brian Winkler had no comments.

Dave Campbell – He did not have any corrections to the minutes, and if he didn't find anything wrong, then they must be perfect.

MOTION by Loskill, supported by McKeever, to approve the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of April 7, 2025, as written.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

D. UPDATE OF ACTIVITIES

Bill McKeever – Zoning Board of Appeals

- We did not meet last month.

George Weber – Township Board of Trustees

- The most recent Trustee meeting was April 8th. A couple of items of note.
- We recognized two residents of Commerce Township:
 - First, Barb Garbutt, who has been not only a long-term resident, but an advocate on our Library Board for over 30 years. In addition to that, she was principal at one of our elementary schools going back probably 40 years ago. She has done a tremendous amount for the community, both in official and non-official capacities.
 - We also recognized Pete Lesner. Pete is the “Grandfather” of the Commerce Lakes Hawks Football Team. Pete built the football stadium and football field at Hickory Glen. In fact, he took out a second mortgage on his house to build that, I'll call it a stadium, but to build the field, the scoreboard and the stands. Some of his former players created a tribute video of him. He had been coaching little league football since inception until he retired this year. The amount of youth he has impacted in his tenure is a long line.

- We also had a presentation from Bruce Aikens on Five & Main. Obviously we're moving forward with the Dort Credit Union, and the next item to be completed will be the shoppette, which is also along Pontiac Trail, just west of Dort. From there, we hope we have continued momentum that will take us into the restaurants, the hotel and ultimately the downtown center.
- We had a fairly lengthy legal discussion where we had a massage parlor within Commerce Township that was part of a chain of parlors that were closed by the OCSD in Farmington, and I believe in Livonia as well. The Sheriffs found evidence of human trafficking and prostitution. All of those massage parlors, including the one that was on Commerce and Union Lake Road have been closed, and the two principals have been arrested. The ladies that were caught up in this business have been provided with a significant amount of help to get them the help and resources they need to get back on their feet.
- We had the Kroger store at 14 Mile and Haggerty Road at the April 8th meeting and the Trustees voted against the PUD amendment. It's my understanding that there is more work being done and that this will be on the agenda again where we will see if that does get approved. There were a number of concerns that the individual Trustees had. Is there anything you want to add to that, Dave?

Dave Campbell – It doesn't sound like it needs to come back to the Planning Commission. It doesn't sound like they were making significant changes to the site plan itself, the layout and the design. Unless they do make those kinds of changes that warrant it coming back to the Planning Commission, it will continue to be a consideration of the Township Board.

Weber – My view to the Board was that it should not come back to the Planning Commission. This is now in the Board's hands. The Commission has done all that it could do and voted unanimously to move forward.

Dave Campbell – I think we had enough meetings on it.

Chairperson Parel – From my perspective, we've made a recommendation to approve it as is. As long as they improve it in the right direction, I don't see that it's necessary for it to come back to us. Do you feel optimistic about Kroger?

Weber – I'm an optimist generally. With more time for the Trustees to investigate some of the issues and concerns they had on their own, I think it has a better chance.

Dave Campbell – I think one of the lessons we learned to is from a scheduling standpoint. This is one of the instances where the Planning Commission met on Monday night, and the Township Board met the following Tuesday night. Paula and I discussed this with Supervisor Gray, and with a project of this magnitude, we should avoid having that one-day turnaround sequence. We should push it to the following month to give the Trustees an opportunity to better digest the recommendation.

Weber – I would also say that an additional lesson learned is that when we have an issue of this complexity and size, with some of the contentious issues that we had with it, I think there is a better opportunity for me to communicate formally with the Board on ongoing progress, questions and issues that the Planning Commission is addressing so that they have time to ask the questions and to be able to digest the scope of it.

Chairperson Parel – Thank you, George. Deb?

Debbie Watson – Downtown Development Authority

- The last DDA meeting was on April 15th. That was an informational meeting which is required by the statute.
- Bruce Aikens was in attendance and provided an update on the Five & Main project. George covered much of that because he had the same update at the Township Board.
 - Bruce noted that he would like to schedule a ribbon cutting this summer for the commercial groundbreaking.
 - He will be attending the ICSC show in May, and then he plans to update the DDA Board again in June.
- Randy Thomas of Insite Commercial reported an uptick in calls regarding available properties, which is typical for April.
- As part of the informational portion of our meeting, we reviewed a PowerPoint covering the history of the DDA's investments in the community.
- Engineer, Jason Mayer, updated us on water main phasing at the Springs at Five & Main apartments. He also noted that the Haggerty Road pump station abandonment will soon be underway as the contract was awarded.
- Jose Mirkin of the Public Relations Committee discussed the Walled Lake Schools Art Exhibit which will be on display at the Township Library starting this Friday, May 9th, through Sunday, May 18th.

E. PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON MATTERS FOR WHICH THERE IS NO PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED

Chairperson Parel opened to Public Discussion on matters for which there is no public hearing scheduled.

Dave Campbell – Paula will pass out a letter that we got late today. This is from the Homestead Industrial Park Association regarding Unit 19, which is on the southwest corner of Richardson and Pioneer. This is where the doctor owns the practice on the east side of Pioneer. She bought the vacant lot on the west side of Pioneer. She wants to build the first phase of a future medical building, with that first phase being a parking lot which she would use as overflow parking for her employees in the interim, until such time as she's ready to build her medical building and build the rest of the parking lot. The association's bylaws require that, in addition to Township approval, they also need association approval. What I think they're stating in that letter is that the Township should not have approved what the doctor proposed without her first getting association approval. I'm not an attorney, but we did discuss this with the Township attorney back when this was going on. Our answer to the association then, and our answer to the association today would be, *we are not a party to your association. We are not a party to your master deed and your bylaws. So, if you want to deny this project, you would be doing so privately. You would be doing so outside of the Township zoning and municipal authority.* This letter did come in today and it is addressed to you all, so I wanted to provide you with a copy.

Weber – I'm assuming you're going to send a copy to Hans.

Paula Lankford – We did.

Chairperson Parel – Okay. Any other comments on this?

Dave Campbell – I think their closing request is that we require a wall of arborvitaes along Pioneer Drive, which is what the approved site plan shows. I don't know that it's a wall necessarily, but it's a pretty solid row of arborvitae, or at least an evergreen along Pioneer.

Chairperson Parel – That's on the new lot?

Dave Campbell – Yes, which again, the doctor will be doing in phases. Just a portion of the parking lot now, and then hopefully within the next couple years, a new medical building with the rest of the parking lot.

Chairperson Parel closed Public Discussion on matters for which there is no public hearing scheduled.

F. TABLED ITEMS

None.

G. OLD BUSINESS

None.

H. SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

I. NEW BUSINESS

ITEM I.1. PSP25-04 – LAFONTAINE MITSUBISHI

LAG Walled Lake, LLC (LaFontaine Automotive Group) of Highland, MI is requesting site plan approval to partially demolish and construct an addition onto an existing automobile dealership to include a new Mitsubishi Motors showroom located at 2195 Haggerty Road. PIN# 17-24-476-044

Dave Campbell – I will bring up the aerial of the site. I strategically brought up the aerial from July 2022 so that everyone can appreciate what the site once looked like. This is the northwest corner of Haggerty and Walnut Lake Road, the former Dick Morris Chevrolet. As you can see as recently as July 2022, the roof had daylight coming in. The parking lot was in pretty rough shape. Around this time is when LaFontaine acquired this property, which was also around the same time that they were seeking PUD approval for their Hyundai/Genesis site further north at the corner of Haggerty and Pontiac Trail. I assume all of us have seen that site under construction. This latest aerial is from October of 2024, and this is the progress they had made to that point. Going back down now and looking at the condition of tonight's subject site, back to the former Dick Morris; after acquiring this property originally, LaFontaine wanted to use it as a pre-owned vehicle sales center, and also a service center. They repurposed and reinvested in the site. The reinvestment included the new sidewalks along Walnut Lake Road and along Pontiac Trail, connecting with the existing sidewalks to the west with the credit union, and to the north with Tim Horton's, along with a new parking lot and landscape islands. If we were to go back and look at the older aerial, those parking lot islands had not yet existed.

Obviously the parking lot got repaved, the roof got redone on the building, and there's a new dumpster enclosure. What the Township and the Planning Department were trying to do was work with LaFontaine to bring the site into compliance with what we would require if they were building a new dealership from scratch today. So that's where we talk about the sidewalks and landscaping. They put in new landscaping along the frontages of both Walnut Lake and Haggerty Road.

Shortly after Lafontaine made this reinvestment, they made an arrangement with Acura for a portion of the existing building to serve as a new Acura dealership. So, half of the building would be the Acura dealership and the other half would remain LaFontaine pre-owned. What brings us here this evening is they now have another manufacturer who wants to occupy the other half of the site, and that would be Mitsubishi. I'll go to their building elevations. What's being proposed is this southerly portion of the building; a portion of the existing building would be demolished and it would be replaced with a new showroom for a Mitsubishi new sales, and then it would be an extension or an expansion of the existing service center, bringing it out more toward Haggerty Road, provide a second overhead service door where currently there is only one. So, what's being proposed is a partial demolition and an addition, for the purpose of the Mitsubishi dealership.

Because it is an expansion and new construction on a commercial site, it does require site plan approval from the Planning Commission. The repurposing of the building and occupying with Acura did not warrant coming to the Planning Commission as they were using the same building with the use that it has historically had, going back to when it was the Dick Morris dealership, going all the way back to I think 1972. So, the refurbishing, the reinvestment and repurposing of the dealership went through an administrative approval with the Planning Department.

But now since we're talking about new construction, that's where it triggers site plan approval from the Planning Commission. If we go to the proposed site plan, you can see they've indicated which portion of the building would be demolished. If we go to the next page, it would be replaced by the aforementioned showroom and an expansion of the service area.

The review from the Planning Department goes into the history of the site and the history of the use of the site. If this were being built today under current zoning standards, a new car dealership with outdoor display and outdoor sales would be a Special Land Use in the B-3 zoning district, which is what the property is currently zoned. However, based on the history of the property, again going back to its approval in 1972 as the Chevrolet dealership, and its continual use in that regard, even after Dick Morris Chevrolet vacated around 2009 or 2010, during the great dealership purge of the Great Recession, it continued to be used through the years as a used car dealer, until around 2018 when it went dark, and that's where you can see the deterioration to the site and to the building until LaFontaine repurposed it about two years ago.

As I mentioned, the site plan approval for the building addition is required. A lot of the types of improvements that the Planning Commission would typically want to see in a scenario like this, where an existing site is being repurposed and reinvested in, a lot of those improvements have been made. Again, the sidewalks, the landscaping, the improvements to the building facade and building materials, the addition of the dumpster enclosure and the landscape islands. Those are the types of things that the Planning Commission typically wants to see in an existing nonconforming site in an effort to bring it into reasonable compliance with the current standards of the zoning ordinance. But, there's a fair argument that a lot of those improvements have already been made. If the Planning Commission sees additional improvements that they would

want to see as a condition of the site plan approval, that's what could be a point of discussion here this evening.

A fair chunk of the Planning Department's review letter has to do with the proposed signage on the building. Now, signage typically goes through the Building Department based on the standards of Article 31 of the Zoning Ordinance. The challenge that we in the Planning Department see with what's being proposed is the quantity of wall signs. So, I just want to bring that up for the purpose of discussion tonight. Typically, what's permitted is one wall sign along your building's frontage, and if you were on a corner lot, which in this case they are, you are entitled to a second wall sign. What is being proposed this evening is a total of four wall signs. You've got the Acura sign, and then the LaFontaine around the corner of Acura. And then you've got the Mitsubishi sign and the LaFontaine sign next to Mitsubishi. So, four wall signs are being proposed, where by Zoning Ordinance, only two would be permitted.

This isn't typically a role the Planning Commission to review and approve signage, whether it be wall signage or freestanding signage, but what's recommended by staff and as a potential condition that could be offered by the Planning Commission, is to condition site plan approval on a reasonable effort by LaFontaine to find a way to combine or condense their proposed wall signage to comply with the sign standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance.

It would be very challenging to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals to seek a variance for additional signage because there are very strict parameters within our sign regulations of what qualifies for a sign variance. Specifically, there has to be a visual obstruction of a permitted sign. It might be challenging to make an argument that LaFontaine is seeking this additional signage based on the vision obstruction. So, I think a variance would be challenging. I think the Planning Commission could maybe give LaFontaine some direction or some encouragement to find a way to comply with the signage regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Like most communities, there are limits to how many signs you're permitted to have, and that's to avoid sign clutter and buildings being over signage. The role of the Building Department is to make sure that we're complying with those sign regulations as they review and issue sign permits. I'm trying to think if there's anything else.

Paula Lankford – The sales trailer.

Dave Campbell – The sales trailer. If the site plan were to be approved, and while the Mitsubishi addition is being constructed, they hope to have a sales trailer at the corner. This is the more updated rendering that I think the Planning Commission received after our agenda packet went out. They made some upgrades on the materials proposed to make it more consistent with the imaging and branding that Mitsubishi is known for. I know Mr. Loskill brought up some concerns with the accessibility of the trailer while the addition is under construction; that there would be a challenge of circulating through the existing Walnut Lake Road driveway, given the construction area for the proposed addition and given the location of the trailer.

So, what we're recommending is that the location and the duration of the trailer be something that the Planning Department, the Building Department and the Fire Department can look at administratively and finalize the final location and duration of that sales trailer. I think it's reasonable for Mitsubishi to want to get their operations up and running while their building addition is under construction, but obviously we don't want a sales trailer there indefinitely. We want there to be some sort of a shot clock on how long that trailer could reasonably be in its location.

As you can see from the rendering, there's some nice landscaping shown around it. I think that's something we would actually want to have them do in the interim, is some temporary landscaping around the sales trailer to have more of a finished look. We speak to that in our recommended motion language, that conditioning administrative approval of that sales trailer as part of site plan approval if that's what the Planning Commission opts to do.

I think beyond that, looking at the proposed building elevations, it's the types of materials that the Planning Commission has seen, for example, in the Hyundai/Genesis dealership that obviously this Planning Commission spent a lot of time reviewing and evaluating. A lot of those same materials are being proposed; the glass and the metal panels. I'm sure LaFontaine would be interested to hear any opinions the Planning Commission might have on that. Obviously Mitsubishi has their own requirement standards for the types of materials that are to be used on their facilities. From a building materials and aesthetics standpoint, from my eye, it certainly appears to be what the Planning Commission would usually want to see with new commercial construction. I'll take a pause there and see if there's any questions for me. Gary and Elizabeth are here to speak on LaFontaine's behalf if there are any questions for them.

Chairperson Parel – Are there any questions from the Commissioners?

Loskill – Not right now.

Chairperson Parel – We welcome you if you'd like to come up and speak.

Elizabeth Marchese – I'm with LaFontaine Automotive Group Development, 4000 West Highland Road, Highland, MI 48357. Dave did a fabulous job of putting together what we were looking to do. Dave, I think you need to go into car sales because you rock at this.

I think the only other thought process we had was, yes, we understand there is a sign issue and we will work with the two different brands. These brands have agreed to work together. They have agreed to be co-located for service and sales. I think it's a good fit for the community. Haggerty is turning into the automotive corridor. We will have four, and now you've got Subi just down the street. Then down by Novi Road, you've got another collection. Do you have any questions for us?

Commission Comments:

McKeever – I have no comments.

Weber – I do. I appreciate the level of detail Dave put into the write-up, specifically as it goes into the zoning and permitted uses. I think that history was valuable and I do appreciate what you've done with ... I don't want to call it the Dick Morris site anymore, but with the new LaFontaine used vehicle and Acura site. As Bill McKeever mentioned prior to the meeting, it truly was blight before this.

You mentioned it's turning into auto alley, and when we had the original discussion on Hyundai/Genesis, that was one thing we said we specifically didn't want, was an automotive alley. But, the design you put forth on Hyundai and Genesis, and what you were going to do to the Dick Morris site for your used vehicles, and parts and service, that package made it a great benefit to the community.

But now it has changed substantially. It has gone from two new vehicle franchises to now a request for four. My concerns are the intensity associated with four new vehicle

manufacturers. I'm assuming you are not going to use this site for parts and service operations for Hyundai and Genesis anymore, but I wanted to ask that question.

Elizabeth Marchese – Correct.

Weber – Okay, so is this also going to be used vehicle sales?

Elizabeth Marchese – All dealerships within the LaFontaine family are new and used sales.

Weber – But I guess, originally, it was going to be exclusively used vehicle sales for LaFontaine. Then with the advent of Acura, I'm assuming that cut into used vehicle inventory. So now I'm just not sure what is the mix of new and used, or if you know what the planned mix between new and used will be, in terms of inventory.

Elizabeth Marchese – I'm not privy to that. That's at the leadership level. But, for your knowledge, we have established used car hubs, reconditioning hubs for turnaround, because the used car market in the United States is not diminishing in terms of demand any time soon. So, we need to be able to intake a vehicle for those people who are trading it in, repurpose it, do the safety checks and get it out to another dealership for sales. We have several of those around the state. This facility, as well as Hyundai/Genesis, will be serviced by our Farmington Hills site.

Weber – So, used vehicle prep is going to be handled at Farmington Hills.

Elizabeth Marchese – Correct.

Weber – We have a little bit different take on Mitsubishi. So, where was the franchise previously located? Wasn't there a Mitsubishi franchise on ...

Elizabeth Marchese – On M-59 at Airport Road in Waterford, yes. We did not purchase that point.

Weber – Okay, but that point closed.

Elizabeth Marchese – As far as I know, yes.

Weber – So, just help me understand Mitsubishi. I know last year was a good year for Mitsubishi. I think it was the first year they sold 100,000 vehicles in the U.S. in a long time. What's the advantage to Commerce of having a Mitsubishi franchise?

Elizabeth Marchese – I will say Mitsubishi has pivoted in terms of their marketing game plan. Before, they could be A and B dealers. They've changed that. It's now only going to be A dealers that they will partner with. That could also be the reason why Waterford went out. They now have four different models. They're looking at doing a hybrid within the next two years. From our perspective, having a Mitsubishi partnered with an Acura, you're targeting two different demographics. Mom and Dad are going to come in and buy that Acura because they want the luxury sedan SUV. Junior needs a car, and they don't want him to get a used car. This is the perfect entry level type dealership. And, it

doesn't compete directly with our Hyundai up the street. They are complementary to each other.

Weber – Are you planning to park any vehicles for sale along Haggerty Road in the parking spots that you have identified here, or any of those lots that border the sidewalk? Are any of those parking spaces to be to promote new or used vehicles?

Elizabeth Marchese – My understanding is that those are currently being used for customers and new vehicles for Acura, inventory for new and used is in the back, as well as service vehicles and employee parking.

Weber – So, I see in front of the showroom where you have space dedicated to vehicle display, but you're saying you're also going to use the parking spaces along the sidewalk for new or used vehicle display?

Elizabeth Marchese – Those will be customer parking.

Weber – Customer only?

Elizabeth Marchese – Correct. There's not a lot of parking up front along Haggerty Road where the customers are going to want to come in, so they'll be maintained.

Weber – That was kind of my question. And again, also, I am concerned with it turning into automotive alley along that quarter mile stretch of road. I think the elevations look great and I don't have an issue with that. My concern is the increased intensity of the location and really a pretty big paradigm shift from what we originally talked about with Hyundai and Genesis. That's all I have.

Chairperson Parel – Thank you, sir. Joe?

Loskill – I will play devil's advocate. I like what you're doing. I like that you're cleaning up the site. I don't particularly have an issue seeing two new car dealerships here, rather than a used car dealership. I think that's a positive for both the view along Haggerty, and for Commerce Township in a business sense.

My only concern is that if you go back and look at your temporary sales trailer and where that's going to fit in with actually constructing that site. It's going to be a little tight there. You're probably going to have to close off that southern drive in order to make this work so you have enough room to make this thing function. That was really my only concern.

Elizabeth Marchese – Okay, thank you.

Bearer – I have no questions.

Chairperson Parel – Thank you. I just have a few things. I'll try not to reiterate. Dave, I know you weren't around, and I think some other folks were. When this was the Dick Morris dealership, and you mentioned it closed in 2010, what were they doing there? Were they selling new, or was it all used?

Dave Campbell – I think it was mostly new. The area that's being demoed, which is right in here on the new site plan, but on the existing building if we go back to the aerial, my understanding was that was actually the showroom, the sales floor for Dick Morris used cars.

Chairperson Parel – So they were operating a full service showroom with new cars. They had cars parked out here. What you'd see for a typical dealership of that nature.

Dave Campbell – If you look at Google Maps, you can go all the way back to street view from, in this case, October of 2008. Here is Dick Morris Chevrolet still in operation. It's a little fuzzy, but it's pretty apparent that those are new vehicle sales and displays. One of the suggested conditions of approval would be to only have vehicle display on the paved portions of the site. In other words, not on the grass, not between the sidewalk and the road.

Chairperson Parel – I guess I have a couple comments about this. Obviously we wouldn't allow cars parked on the grass. To me, it appears that in that street view, there's a lot more cars in front of the old dealership, whether they were customers' parked cars or new vehicles, as opposed to what's shown on the site plan that LaFontaine is coming in with. I think that's important to note. I think we already noted Bill's comment, which George reiterated that this did look like blight for several years. I would say, obviously we would condition it upon "no parking on the grass", but if it's something we could look at, I'd like to put something in there as well that says that there can't be anything in the windows. If you have the cars parked in the few spots outside that George mentioned that are for new car sales, I don't know if we can really do anything with that, but the spots that are on Haggerty, I'm trying to avoid driving down Haggerty and seeing a lot of cars for sale. Dave, is that something that we can condition?

Dave Campbell – In the recommended motion language in the report, one of our recommendations is, *Prohibition of temporary signs, feather signs, inflatables, streamers, banners, etc.* If you want to add some specificity there about the signs that are propped up in the hoods of vehicles.

Chairperson Parel – Well, obviously not propped up on the vehicles, but maybe also in the windshields.

Weber – What was relayed was that the parking spaces along the sidewalk are customer space only because of some of the constrictions. The new vehicle, or used vehicle displays are actually identified up next to the showroom. It wasn't clear to me on the new Mitsubishi side, but I'm assuming something would be similar where there would be a couple of car pads. Or, maybe not; maybe the Mitsubishi is in the showroom only. But I think, Brian, if those spaces along the sidewalk are for customer parking only ...

Chairperson Parel – We're not going to have an issue.

Weber – Then we're not going to have an issue.

Chairperson Parel – As long as it stays that way.

Weber – And then we put that in and add that specificity to the language you've already got, Dave. There's still going to be reasonable signage on or in vehicles, but if those vehicles are only next to the showroom, and we're not having the big, inflatable gorillas and the rest of that ...

Chairperson Parel – Does that make sense, Dave? Was that clear?

Dave Campbell – Yes. And, it did remind me of something as we're speaking of parking. This is going to be the new Mitsubishi showroom. Based on ADA standards, there needs to be a barrier-free, handicapped parking space in close proximity, accessible to the Mitsubishi showroom, in addition to the Acura showroom. I wondered if one of these parking spaces would need to be ADA compliant accessible spaces rather than standard spaces. That's something we can look at administratively as a condition of site plan approval.

Weber – I thought they had that actually identified on one of the plans.

Elizabeth Marchese – We have two barrier-free shown.

Dave Campbell – There are two shown up near Acura. I want to double check the ADA standards. Because this is a separate business with a separate point of access, there may need to be a barrier-free space closer to the front door of Mitsubishi.

Chairperson Parel – It sounds like that could be resolved administratively afterwards. Do you know how long you anticipate having the trailer out there, best guess?

Elizabeth Marchese – Best guess, 10-12 months.

Chairperson Parel – That's what I figured. Okay, thank you. Dave, I think I understand what you're looking for as far as wall signage and our function for that. The signs on the frontage; the LaFontaine, Mitsubishi, Acura. I don't see how you get away with reducing. You can't lose the Acura and you can't lose the Mitsubishi. I understand that may not be per code, but I would think that alone would be a reasonable modification that we could allow.

Dave Campbell – As I mentioned, to be able to have four wall signs, which is what they're asking for ... The service sign could be considered a directional sign, so I think we can ignore that one, but your sign has to be able to fit into a rectangle that's 32 square feet, right Paula?

Paula Lankford – No, it's based on ...

Dave Campbell – It depends on the width of your building. So, let's say it's 50 square feet. Mitsubishi Motors and the logo would have to fit in a rectangle that's no more than 50 square feet. And, because this is a two tenant building, Acura and Mitsubishi would each get one wall sign. The challenge is that you've got the two LaFontaine wall signs. So now they have four wall signs and they're only allowed two.

Chairperson Parel – They would also be allowed one on the corner.

Dave Campbell – No matter if you treat it as a corner building or a multi-tenant building, they're still only allowed to have two wall signs.

Chairperson Parel – Even with two tenants?

Dave Campbell – Yes.

Chairperson Parel – Got it. Okay.

Dave Campbell – The challenge is the LaFontaine aspect. It creates four wall signs. If there was a way to combine them so they fit into the same 50 square foot rectangle, then that's what we're hoping they can look into.

Chairperson Parel – So, that's what you're hoping they'd look into outside of this Commission.

Dave Campbell – Yes, typically ...

Weber – And that's up to them.

McKeever – I don't think we have the ability to approve four signs.

Dave Campbell – No, I'm not saying the Planning Commission would.

McKeever – No, I know. It would have to go to the ZBA.

Dave Campbell – And the only criteria by which the ZBA can approve a sign variance is based on an obstruction, and I don't think there's a visual obstruction case here. I mean they certainly have the right to go to the ZBA, but I know it would be very challenging.

Discussion continued regarding signage. Dave Campbell clarified that the Planning Commission is not approving the signs, however, they could offer wisdom and coaching to reinforce that the signs should be reduced to two.

Chairperson Parel – Okay, would anyone care to make a motion? And I didn't see the length of this motion, but maybe it's possible ...

Dave Campbell – It's very well-written I thought.

Chairperson Parel – If the petitioner is okay with the language that's included in Dave's report, maybe we can just summarize it.

Gary Laundroche – Sure.

Weber – I would just say though, under conditions, #2, we want to add that, "no for-sale vehicles will be in the parking spots designated as customer on the site plan". Those are the ones that are along the sidewalk.

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Bearer, to approve Item PSP25-04, LaFontaine Mitsubishi, the request by LAG Walled Lake, LLC (LaFontaine Automotive Group) of Highland, MI for site plan approval to partially demolish and construct an addition onto an existing automobile dealership to include a new Mitsubishi Motors showroom located at 2195 Haggerty Road. PIN# 17-24-476-044

Move to approve PSP#25-04, a site plan by LAG Walled Lake LLC (LaFontaine Automotive Group) for a partial demolition and 4,270 sq ft building addition to house a Mitsubishi Motors dealership of new and used vehicles, at the southeast corner of the existing building at 2195 Haggerty Road.

Site plan approval is based on the following findings by the Planning

Commission:

1. Sales of new and used vehicles was a principal permitted use on the subject site when Dick Morris Chevrolet was approved by Commerce Township in 1972, and Commerce Township has never made a formal determination that the use has ceased, such that automobile sales – which based on current Zoning Ordinance standards are a special land use in the B-3 zoning district – remains a permitted use on the site as an inferred special land use;
2. The inferred special land use is not being expanded and/or intensified as a result of the proposed demolition & expansion;
3. Recent site improvements including sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, dumpster enclosure, façade improvements, etc. are in reasonable proportion to the scale of the building addition proposed.

Site plan approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Review and approval of engineered construction plans by the Township Engineer, Fire Marshal, and Building Department;
2. Vehicles shall only be parked/stored/displayed within designated spaces as shown on the site plan, and never on unpaved/lawn areas, particularly the lawn areas between the sidewalk and the road; and, there should be no signage in vehicles along Haggerty Road, and no for-sale vehicles will be in the parking spots designated as customer parking on the site plan.
3. Wall signs and ground sign to be reviewed by the Building Department under separate Sign Permit subject to Article 30 of the Zoning Ordinance, with a reasonable effort by LaFontaine, Mitsubishi, and Acura to combine/consolidate their proposed wall signs to that permitted by Article 30 in recognition of the challenges in receiving a variance for additional wall signs from the Township's Zoning Board of Appeals;
4. The Planning Department shall administratively review & approve the location, duration, and design of a temporary Mitsubishi sales trailer, and further conditional upon all necessary approvals for occupancy of a temporary structure from the Commerce Township Building Department and Fire Department (electrical service, water connection, building anchoring, emergency access, fire extinguishers, etc.);
5. Prohibition of temporary signs, feather signs, inflatables, streamers, banners, etc. unless in compliance with the applicable standards of Article 30 of the Zoning Ordinance;
6. Revised site plan to be submitted for administrative review and approval with the following revisions:
 - a. The addition of an additional barrier free parking space near the Mitsubishi entrance.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Weber – What is the ballpark timing for Hyundai/Genesis?

Gary Laundroche – We're pushing for the end of August for Genesis. Hyundai is probably two to three months behind them.

J: OTHER MATTERS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

None.

K: PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2025 AT 7:00PM.

- I think our folks in the back of the room are interested to see if there's any discussion of the northeast corner of Commerce and Carey Road. I have nothing new on that one. The last meeting I had with the owner and prospective developer was several months ago.
- As Mr. Weber mentioned, it sounds like Midtown on Haggerty and Kroger might come back up with the Township Board. We will be interested to see what happens there.
- The other thing that came up at the Board's quarterly meeting last week Tuesday was discussion by Trustee Sovel, who sits on the ZBA, regarding a conversation held with the ZBA at their March meeting of potentially amending the Zoning Ordinance and amending the standards by which the ZBA considers a variance. Not a sign variance, because signs are their own animal, but a dimensional variance; setbacks, heights, things like that. Mr. Sovel wants the ZBA to have potential for more flexibility in how they review and consider dimensional variances. The Township Board approved a budget for the Township Attorney to work on that amendment. Assuming that amendment moves forward, it will come to this Planning Commission for a public hearing, like any Zoning Ordinance amendment. So, depending on the schedule Mr. Sovel is giving the Township Attorney, it might be some time in the next month or two that the Planning Commission sees that amendment.

Chairperson Parel – What about the anniversary party we're having in the Village?

Dave Campbell – The Bicentennial celebration is Saturday, June 14th.

Paula Lankford – From 9am to 10pm.

Dave Campbell – Music, food, a beer tent, pony rides.

Mr. Weber and Dave Campbell discussed potential future development at Bay Pointe Golf Course.

Mr. Weber inquired about the Crumb Road Townhomes and whether Mr. Loskill met with the developer regarding the elevations. Dave Campbell stated that the engineered construction plans were recently submitted to the Township Engineer and they are in the process of their review, looking at grades and underground utilities. There will be a follow-up with Mr. Loskill to ensure that his concerns are addressed.

Chairperson Parel inquired about the status of the Union Lake Golf Course. Dave Campbell had nothing new to report.

L: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Weber, to adjourn the meeting at 7:56pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Joe Loskill, Secretary