

Meeting Notes

Cascade Charter Township

Village Design Review Committee

Thursday, August 31, 2023

1:00 pm

ARTICLE 1: Call the meeting to order

Planning Director Brian Hilbrands called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

ARTICLE 2: Approve the agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Scott Rissi. Seconded by Ralph Moxley. Motion approved.

ARTICLE 3: Welcome and introductions

Scott Rissi is the Planning Commission representative. **Ralph Moxley** is the Zoning Board of Appeals representative. **Grace Lesperance** is the Supervisor and Board of Trustees representative. **Scott Preston** is the DDA representative (not in attendance). **Windy Korstange** is the Township Treasurer and 5th committee member. Also in attendance were Planning Director Hilbrands and Danielle Bouchard from McKenna.

ARTICLE 4: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

No visitors were in attendance.

ARTICLE 5: Discuss goals of the Committee

The **Village Design Review Committee** is a standing Committee of Cascade Charter Township that has been in existence since its creation in 2001. It was created to review site plan designs that do not meet all the requirements of the B-1 Village Business District in Section 8.08 (Building Design requirements).

Generally, the Committee met on an as-needed basis. The **Village Design Review Committee** is now being tasked with reviewing the existing Building Design requirements and the Strategic Plan to make recommendations to the Board for changes or modifications, as needed.

ARTICLE 6: Introduction to B-1 Zoning District and Building Design Requirements

Danielle (McKenna Associates) reviewed the work the DDA has been doing that relates to Building Design requirements. She gave the Planning Commission an update at their last meeting on goals of the Strategic Plan. Part of the presentation was defining the area being studied as “The Village”.

One goal is to define the overall look for buildings in this area. Consensus is that they should be lower scale (two story maximum) with a “cottage” feel, and not a retail brick facade look, or boxy look. Avoid mid-rise buildings. Create a walkable/bikeable feeling for streets and landscapes. Create a more organic or traditional look for a downtown area.

There is a development in Cape Cod called “Mashed Pea Commons” they have been evaluating for its creative cottage look. This project in Cascade Village is much smaller than “Mashed Pea Commons”. We would need to scale down the concept to fit our very limited downtown village area. Create a traditional, walkable area that avoids “crazy architecture” that is totally out of character for the Cascade area.

Now starting to have conversations with property owners at Thornapple Center (PUD-19) (Note: This development is not called “Thornapple Plaza”). What is their shared vision? Keep it two story or less, high quality, with sidewalk activity.

Windy asked if we should look at rezoning some limited areas so there is more continuity throughout this area.

PUD-19 is “Thornapple Center”, which is in a B-1 Zoning District. This has a residential component on the northeast side. Road access is off of Orange Ave.

The Pet Cemetery off of Orange Ave. is about 7 acres. This would be a good area for higher density residential development that would be very “walkable” into the business district along Cascade Road.

Windy asked that the curb cuts off of Cascade Road near the bank and the gas station be removed and closed off. The businesses in this area should open to the NE side and be accessible from the existing service drive next to the parking lot.

Old 28th Street needs careful study to define how to make it look more appealing and create a “Village” look rather than just a small strip mall look.

The Township had a requirement for sloped roofs and a “colonial” look for a long time. Thornapple Center roof lines are a result. Many developers were reluctant to come here because of that requirement for any new architecture. Walgreens building started a trend away from that look. That change started about the mid- 1990s. We just need the right developers that are willing to work with us to create the “cottage” look in the Village.

Ada defined a timeline for the look they wanted in the new buildings in their new downtown commercial buildings.

Danielle proposed that we have six different architectural styles that would be acceptable and the developers could choose from when they build. Many architects will push back because “they will design what they want to design.” Other developers will say “great” and will select one of the six parameters to work with. That way you will know it will be a look that you will accept and not have to fight with them to change it. Many chains will fight this approach because they have certain design looks that are used at all of their new stores. Due to this concern, we may want to avoid national chains, and focus more on boutique shops for Cascade.

Ice cream shops on Cascade Road are very good examples of the traditional colonial “cottage” look that we desire for the Village. The Gathering Place has a great look for the Village.

Thornapple Center has large parking lots that are underused. They should be redesigned to create more landscaped/park areas and less asphalt.

Owners of the gas station at the entrance to Thornapple Center are willing to redesign the site and building to make it more inviting to the public that is entering the development. The car wash portion on the backside is seldom used. The peaked roof is massive and can be seen from a long distance on Cascade Road. It would be good to turn the station 180 degrees so that the pumps are on the NE side instead of the SW side.

The United Bank branch at Thornapple Center is used by very few people in the area. It would be good to redesign the site to eliminate the parking lot on the west side of the site.

Removal of the two curb cuts along Cascade Road at gas station (south edge) and United Bank (south edge), and putting in new landscaping where those drives and parking were removed would do much to improve the Village look along the roadway. This will make Cascade Road more of a green boulevard.

ARTICLE 7: Goals of next meeting and requests for information

Danielle suggested different standards for various areas that are in the Village area. We should be very specific about what will be required in Old 28th Street area vs. Thornapple Center area vs. 28th Street area. We need to look at set-backs, signage, lighting, parking and landscaping carefully for each of those zones.

ARTICLE 8: Any other business

All members dislike roundabouts. Do not propose any for Cascade Township.

ARTICLE 9: Adjournment

Member Rissi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Treasurer Korstange seconded the motion. Motion approved by all members. Meeting adjourns at 2:23 pm.