



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Sarah Pollyea, Chair
Michael Suriano, Vice Chair
Michael Greenberg
Elizabeth Laser
James Mako
Thomas Shapaka
Michael Tamarkin

Sophia McGuire, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL

Gahanna Planning Commission met in regular session on September 24, 2025. The agenda for this meeting was published on September 19, 2025. Chair Sarah Pollyea called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Elizabeth Laser.

Present 7 - James Mako, Chair Sarah Pollyea, Vice Chair Michael Suriano, Michael Tamarkin, Thomas W. Shapaka, Michael Greenberg, and Elizabeth Laser

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2025-0185 Planning Commission meeting minutes 9.10.2025

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Suriano, that the Minutes be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Tamarkin, Shapaka, Greenberg and Laser

D. SWEAR IN APPLICANTS & SPEAKERS

Assistant City Attorney Matt Roth administered an oath to those persons wishing to present testimony this evening.

E. APPLICATIONS - PUBLIC COMMENT

V-0023-2025 To consider a Variance Application to vary Sections 1107.01(d)(4) and

1107.01(g)(1) - City-Wide Design Standards, 1109.01(a)(1) - Parking, Access, and Circulation, 1109.04(c) - Buffers and Screening, and 1111.03 - Permanent Sign Standards of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 348 Granville Street; Parcel ID 025-014179; Current Zoning GC - General Commercial; Biggby Coffee; Steve Fox, applicant.

In accordance with Planning Commission Rules Section 7.4.1.1., if there is more than one application on the same project, they may be discussed as one.

Director of Planning Michael Blackford introduced the applications; see attached staff presentation for details. He shared a zoning map with the application site location indicated by a yellow star. He described the site as small, a total of 0.3 acres, and zoned General Commercial. The site is on Granville Street and is in an area of high traffic. He stated uses such as retail and restaurants with drive-thrus are allowed. Director Blackford recalled a previous meeting in which Northwest Bank applications were approved for a site on Granville Street, near the Biggby Coffee location. He noted it was a similar request as another commercial use project with a drive-thru. However, the Northwest Bank project required a Conditional Use Application due to its zoning in the Creekside-Mixed Use District. Director Blackford explained there are many different zonings and uses in the area. Directly to the east of the site is Dairy Queen, and to the west is the library. North of the site is a multifamily property under the same ownership of the proposed Biggby Coffee location.

Director Blackford explained that there are some variances that are necessary because of the small size of the property, adding that nearly any development of the site will require variances. However, he added that staff felt variances would be minimal. Director Blackford provided a street view image of the site as of 2024, which had a two-story building on the site at the time. However, the building has since been demolished. In 2022, the property was rezoned from Office to Community Commercial. When the Zoning Code was rewritten in 2024, the site became General Commercial. Last year, there was a subdivision without plat. So the lot was split, and variances became necessary.

Director Blackford explained there was a Major Development Plan and a variance. The proposed building is 445 square feet. There is a walk-up window, but the majority of customers are going to use the drive-thru. Director Blackford described the building as prefabricated and added there is a Biggby Coffee on North Hamilton Road just outside of the city, at Meijer. He understood the building design to be standard. There are five parking spaces required, and eight spaces are provided.

Adjustments were made to the proposal after considering traffic concerns on Granville Street. Director Blackford highlighted the parking areas in yellow on the site plan, adding that there is a new pedestrian walkway included in the plan, in addition to the pre-existing sidewalk on Granville Street. Director Blackford provided a landscape plan, which indicated landscaping in green. There are nine trees proposed on the site, four are required. The plan meets all screening requirements. Renderings of the building were then shared. Director Blackford noted architectural elements that were included.

Director Blackford stated that the project meets the Development Plan criteria. The criteria are:

- The development meets the applicable development standards of the Zoning Ordinance;
- The development is in accord with appropriate plans for the area;
- The development would not have undesirable effects on the surrounding area and;
- The development would be in keeping with the existing land use character and physical development of the area.

Director Blackford discussed the requested variances. One variance is for metal siding, which is prohibited as a primary material. A second variance is for facade transparency. The requirement cannot be met because the building is pre-fabricated. The primary facade proposed is 5.7% transparent glass, while the requirement is 25%. There is also a variance requested for parking, which cannot exceed past the front elevation of the primary building. The site is small, and the applicant is accommodating requests by staff to push the building back and extend the drive-thru. Therefore, parking must be placed in the front. A fourth variance is required for buffers and screening. There is a requirement for a 10-foot wide buffer with a six-foot high continuous screen and three trees between commercial and residential uses. There is no buffer or additional trees between the site and the property to the rear. However, there is an existing fence, and the sites are owned by the same owner. Finally, there is a variance for signage. The variance is necessary because the applicant would like to have two wall signs. However, one wall sign is permitted per frontage. Granville Street is a frontage, and Rocky Creek Drive is also adjacent to the property. However, Rocky Creek Drive does not function as a public road.

Staff feels all variance criteria are met. The variance criteria include:

- The variance is not likely to result in substantial damage to the essential character of the neighborhood;

The variance is not likely to result in damage to adjoining properties;
The variance is not likely to affect the delivery of government services;
The variance is not likely to result in environmental impacts greater than what is typical for other lots in the neighborhood;
The variance is necessary for the economical use of the property, and such economical use of the property cannot be achieved through another method and;
The variance is not likely to undermine the objectives of the land use plan.

Staff is fully supportive of all the project's requests.

Chair Pollyea opened public comment at 7:13 p.m.

Lou Bose of Prime AE Group introduced himself. He shared his appreciation for Director Blackford's presentation. He stated that a lot of hard work went into the project, when considering the issue of stacking and discharge, to ensure cars moved through the site.

Chair Pollyea closed public comment at 7:15 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka asked Director Blackford to show the differences between the two proposed signs. Director Blackford shared images of the signs, one of which is on the wall for a canopy, which Director Blackford described as small. Mr. Shapaka inquired about the existing fence to the north of the property, and wondered if a fence was planned to separate the lot from Dairy Queen's lot. Mr. Bose explained there was not a fence planned between the two properties, and noted there is a slope between them, with Dairy Queen's lot being higher. Mr. Shapaka wondered about the selection of materials, noting it is different from the site on North Hamilton. Alan Balen introduced himself to the Commission as the area representative for the Biggby Franchisees. He stated that the proposed design was intended to be a better aesthetic fit with the area. Mr. Shapaka asked Mr. Balen if the business would operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Mr. Balen stated they close at 9:00 p.m. and open between 6:00 and 7:00 in the morning.

Mr. Mako asked Director Blackford if the use is permitted in the current zoning and if it fits with the Land Use Plan. Director Blackford confirmed. Mr. Mako asked if the use could be characterized similarly to the neighboring Dairy Queen. Director Blackford confirmed, adding that from a zoning standpoint, they are the same. Mr. Mako asked whether Rocky Creek Drive was considered a private drive. Director Blackford confirmed, adding that it was helpful from a frontage standpoint, but hurts the applicant from a signage standpoint. Mr. Mako asked whether there

was parking in front of Dairy Queen. Director Blackford provided a street view, confirming there is angled parking at the front of Dairy Queen. Mr. Mako asked if the proposed development was different from other Biggby sites, as far as its location. Mr. Balen stated most of the sites are in Meijer lots. Mr. Mako was curious about lighting plans for the site. Director Blackford stated there are eight parking spaces on the site, and if there are ten or less, the lighting plan does not need to be included in the request. Mr. Mako noted the escape lane would cross the property line and wondered if an access agreement was necessary, acknowledging that both sites have the same owner. Mr. Balen explained that, based on his understanding, access would be granted by the landlord. Mr. Mako asked whether there would be redundant sidewalks, noting there is an existing sidewalk and one is proposed to the north. Mr. Balen explained that the proposed sidewalk is a walkway to access a walk-up window, where individuals can order coffee. Mr. Mako asked whether the existing sign between Dairy Queen and the proposed Biggby site will remain or be removed. Matt Von Barga of Rocky Fork Capital introduced himself as the owner of the site and the apartments behind it. The existing sign is a legacy sign showing the former business operating on the site. He stated it could be removed if needed, as the businesses no longer operated out of the site. He also reiterated, in regard to Mr. Mako's previous question regarding access, there would be no issues with access between the two sites they owned.

Mr. Suriano asked if the dumpsters can be considered similarly to the issue of the lanes crossing the property lines, and that they will be shared. Mr. Von Barga confirmed.

Ms. Laser asked Mr. Balen what Biggby Coffee's busiest times are in the morning. Mr. Balen explained that there is a morning rush. He added that the right-hand turn out exiting the site will be easier access for those heading to Interstate 270 in the morning. He added that Biggby does not have a heavy lunch business. Ms. Laser noted that due to proximity to the high school, they may have more lunch traffic than expected. She said that she has some concern regarding the preschool near the site, and the high school has many students in the area, in addition to the morning rush traffic. She wondered whether the exit lane was wide enough for two vehicles. Mr. Balen explained that they attempted to create a larger area for cars to stack as they come out. Ms. Laser asked whether there would be an outdoor seating area. Mr. Balen stated there is not a plan for one. If one was added, it would be small. Ms. Laser stated there may be more traffic and noise at this site compared to the previous businesses that occupied the site. She wondered if this posed any concerns for the residents in the apartments north of the site. Mr. Von Barga explained that the building immediately adjacent to the site was the leasing office,

which did not house residents.

Mr. Greenberg asked Assistant City Attorney Roth whether the city needed a letter or legal document showing that the project would go across property lines, even though both sites are owned by the same entity. Mr. Roth explained that it would be an issue amongst the property owners, and there is nothing the city needs. Mr. Greenberg asked the applicant whether the dumpster would be enclosed. Mr. Balen explained that there will be a fence or gate that can only be accessed by staff. Mr. Greenberg asked how tall the fence in the back was. Mr. Balen explained it was a six-foot fence. There would not be landscaping in the back. Mr. Greenberg wondered if Mr. Balen expected a lot of students before and after school, as well as whether they would be lining the sidewalk as vehicles enter the drive thru. Mr. Balen felt that coffee shops are not as busy in the afternoon. Mr. Greenberg wondered how many employees are typically in the building. Mr. Balen explained there are typically six to seven employees working at the same time.

Mr. Tamarkin asked Director Blackford what the reasoning for splitting the lot was, and whether it was split from the apartment. Director Blackford confirmed it was initiated by the property owner, split from the apartments, which left one-third of an acre. Mr. Tamarkin asked the applicant if there would be a menu board. Mr. Balen explained there would be a menu board. Director Blackford explained menu boards do not impact the signage allowed. Mr. Tamarkin clarified that the fence is existing and is right up against the apartments. The applicants confirmed.

Ms. Pollyea stated her understanding that the site is a walk-up only window and drive-thru, and customers are not able to go inside. Mr. Balen confirmed that to be the case for this site. Ms. Pollyea asked if their closing hours coincided with the Dairy Queen next door. Ms. Pollyea wondered about the barrier between the site and the Dairy Queen parcel. The applicants stated it is asphalt that is slightly sloped. Cars cannot drive between the sites. Ms. Pollyea wondered if there would be an easement between the two sites owned by Rocky Fork Capital. Mr. Von Bargen explained there is an easement agreement for Rocky Creek Drive, but not for the encroachments behind the site. He felt there was no need for an agreement.

Mr. Greenberg asked Director Blackford if, when the landscaping was planned to include three trees in the front, whether the plan was reviewed. Director Blackford explained that the process was handled by another department.

Mr. Mako wondered if the building pad would be leveled out. Mr. Bose

explained the site would be level when the building is complete. Mr. Mako then asked whether the portion of the sidewalk that intersects the drive line would be striped. The applicants confirmed it would be.

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Shapaka, that the Variance be Approved.

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Mako expressed support for the variances, adding that they were relatively minor in nature. He felt the variances were necessary to make the site work, and that the final product would look nice.

Mr. Suriano acknowledged the difficulty of managing a site the size of a third of an acre and stated that he would support the project.

Ms. Laser stated her support for the project.

Mr. Greenberg expressed excitement for the new projects happening on Granville Street, while noting the Commission must take care in considering future projects for the corridor.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Tamarkin, Shapaka, Greenberg and Laser

DP-0007-2025

To consider a Development Plan Application for property located at 348 Granville Street; Parcel ID 025-014179; Current Zoning GC - General Commercial; Biggby Coffee; Steve Fox, applicant. To consider a Development Plan Application for property located at 348 Granville Street; Parcel ID 025-014179; Current Zoning GC - General Commercial; Biggby Coffee; Steve Fox, applicant.

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Development Plan be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Tamarkin, Shapaka, Greenberg and Laser

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

G. NEW BUSINESS - None

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Council Liaison

Ms. Pollyea encouraged members to watch the most recent Committee of the Whole meeting, in which Economic Development Director Jeff

Gottke shared information on potential Creekside developments.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - None

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Mr. Tamarkin remarked on the proposed Creekside developments, including residences, a hotel, and restaurants.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.



Sophia McGuire
Deputy Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Planning Commission, this
22 day of *Oct.* 2025.



Sarah Pollyea
Chair