



# City of Gahanna

## Meeting Minutes

### Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

*James Mako, Chair*  
*John Hicks, Vice Chair*  
*Michael Greenberg*  
*Sarah Pollyea*  
*Thomas W. Shapaka*  
*Michael Suriano*  
*Michael Tamarkin*

*Sophia McGuire, Deputy Clerk of Council*

---

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

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 May 22, 2024. The agenda for this meeting was published on May 17, 2024. Chair John Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Michael Greenberg.*

**Present** 6 - Michael Greenberg, John Hicks, Sarah Pollyea, Thomas W. Shapaka, Michael Suriano, and Michael Tamarkin

**Absent** 1 - James Mako

#### B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA - NONE

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2024-0097](#)

Planning Commission Minutes 4.24.2024

**Motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Minutes be approved. Motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

**Absent:** 1 - Mako

[2024-0098](#)

Planning Commission Minutes 5.8.2024

**Motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Minutes be approved. Motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

**Absent:** 1 - Mako

**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****Stoneridge Plaza - Cinemark Movies 16**[V-0008-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary DR-0046-1995 Stoneridge Plaza Master Sign Plan for property located at 323 Stoneridge Ln; Parcel ID: 025-010785; Current Zoning CC-2; Stoneridge Plaza - Cinemark Movies 16; Grant Woods, applicant.

Director of Planning Michael Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation.

The site is zoned Community Commercial Modified, as the application was filed prior to the new zoning ordinance being adopted. Capka provided a brief history of the Stoneridge Plaza Master Sign Plan (MSP). In 1995, Phase 1 was approved. It contains signage requirements for Cinemark and the other anchor tenants. In 1996, Phase 2 was approved and contained requirements for tenants that weren't addressed in Phase 1. In 2018, a revised MSP was approved. The requirements in the new MSP superseded all the previous requirements except for anchor tenant signage. This is why the 1995 MSP still applies to Cinemark. The applicant is requesting approval of two variances to MSP requirements for the 1995 version. The 2018 MSP does not have any requirements that apply to this tenant space. The MSP requires that Cinemark have a 13 ft x 6 ft wall sign that is outlined in exposed neon and located 10 ft above finish grade. It also requires that Cinemark have a 60 square foot sign that reads "Movies 16." The applicant would like to permanently remove the "Movies 16" sign and replace the main wall sign with a new 140 sq ft wall sign. Both of these requests require variances since they do not align with the MSP. Capka shared an aerial view and photos of the property, showing the location of the existing signs and the proposed sign. The existing signs align exactly with the MSP, while the new sign is larger, a different shape, and contains the name of the business.

There are two variances being requested, both of which are on page 3 of the MSP. The first requirement is that Cinemark shall have a wall-mounted "Movies 16" sign 32 feet above finish floor with a letter height of 3 feet and a total signage area of 60 square feet. The applicant proposes removing this sign. The second requirement is that Cinemark

shall have a 13 feet x 6 feet sign with a clear plexiglass face at 10 feet above finish grade and the sign shall be outlined in exposed 15-millimeter neon. The applicant proposes replacing this sign with a 140 SF sign with a red plexiglass face. The new sign will be illuminated with internal LED sticks. Capka then shared the relevant variance criteria.

Staff has no objection to the variance. The MSP requirements for the Cinemark signs haven't been updated since 1995, while the majority of other tenants in the shopping plaza had their requirements updated in 2018. The requirements are very specific and difficult to meet if not installing a sign that is like-for-like. Additionally, the sign is not visible from the right-of-way and is only visible from within the shopping plaza itself. However, the proposed sign is greatly larger than what the MSP allows and also what standard code allows which is a total of 50 square ft for all wall signage on one site.

Chair opened public comment at 7:07 p.m.

Dan Leathery, Casto, 250 Civic Center Drive, Columbus. Mr. Leathery introduced himself and Mr. Grant Woods as representatives of the applicant. Mr. Leathery thanked staff for their time on the application, as well as Planning Commission for their time. He felt that the variance requested is a relatively small change in the total square footage from what currently exists on the building. It is not visible from any public right-of-way and should not be detrimental to public safety or welfare of the surrounding businesses. The MSP for this portion of the center, which hasn't been updated in almost 30 years, is being updated as part of this application. They are thrilled to see Cinemark reinvesting in the center and in the City of Gahanna. He noted the theater industry's constant evolution and challenges, and offered to answer questions the commission might have.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:09 p.m.

Chair called on questions from the Commission.

Mr. Greenberg asked if the branding proposed is consistent with all Cinemark branding. Leathery confirmed. Mr. Greenberg then asked if repairs would need to be made to the building when the old sign comes down. Leathery replied they will be minimal, including patching the facade to prevent water intrusion.

Mr. Suriano asked if, in lieu of the "Movies 16" sign, anything would replace it. Leathery replied it will just come down. Mr. Suriano then

expressed concern about putting a square cabinet into an architectural feature that is arched and rounded. He wondered if there is any precedent for Cinemark to have signage that is more rounded or is simply an expression of the “C” logo. Mr. Leathery replied this is consistent with Cinemark’s branding and was not aware of any precedent. Suriano added a rounded cabinet might alleviate the need for a variance.

Mr. Tamarkin pointed out the poster boxes on pillars underneath the main sign. He wondered if those signs qualify as part of the square footage required for the variance. Ms. Capka replied that the signs are in the MSP as well. To her understanding, they remain. There isn't any maximum size requirement in the MSP for this tenant. Mr. Tamarkin added that they would be grandfathered in with the original sign package.

Mr. Shapaka stated that the square sign in the archway is a dominant feature. It should be softened and round. He wondered if there had been any consideration to give the “C” its own individual box so that it would complement the archway. Mr. Leathery replied that, while it could be asked, they could not speak on behalf of the tenant. This was the plan that was proposed and requested. Mr. Shapaka felt that a freestanding “C” would help the issue of square footage, adding that it would be more favorable of an application if the archway were complemented.

Ms. Pollyea expressed similar concerns. She questioned if more thought went into how the signage would or would not complement the existing architecture. Mr. Leathery asked for clarification on the question. Pollyea asked if the tenant considered anything that would be a better fit, such as rounding the corners at the top. She wondered if there were ways to make it fit better in with the existing architecture. She noted that when the development was built, the buildings were designed for specific signs. While she had no objection to changing the signs, she wondered what else was considered. Mr. Leathery stated that as a part of the consolidation they are asking for more signage in a specific area. He felt that it helped by reducing the total square footage.

Mr. Hicks asked for clarification on the parties to the master sign plan, whether this was between Cinemark, the tenant, and Casto as the landlord. Mr. Leathery confirmed. Mr. Hicks asked for confirmation that Casto is comfortable with the tenant’s request, which Mr. Leathery confirmed.

**A motion was made by Suriano, seconded by Shapaka, that the Variance be approved.**

**Discussion on the motion:**

Mr. Suriano stated he fundamentally has no issue with the replacement of the sign and removal of "Movies 16." He shared that he was viewing different versions of Cinemark signage. He feels that the box is too large for the space. He said he would not be in favor of the variance and would prefer some of the other options Cinemark has on its other projects.

Mr. Tamarkin expressed an understanding of why the existing sign should be removed and replaced. He stated he is a proponent of branding and of letting tenants and vendors use their signs and their logos. He said he would vote in favor of the variance, though he agreed with the two architects on the panel that it is not a good fit.

Ms. Pollyea stated that while she is not an architect, she also feels the sign does not fit properly. She expressed excitement that Cinemark wants to reinvest in the plaza. She hoped that a better-looking sign could be presented, whether a variance is required or not. She shared that she will not vote in favor of the variance.

Mr. Shapaka felt that the person who designed the sign did not do so for this particular spot. He hoped that the designer could design something more complementary and shared he would not be in favor of the application.

Mr. Greenberg felt that the sign did not work with the space, noting his appreciation for comments shared by the architects on the commission. He concurred that he would not be in favor.

**The motion failed by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 2 - Hicks and Tamarkin

**No:** 4 - Greenberg, Pollyea, Shapaka and Suriano

**Absent:** 1 - Mako

**Stream's Edge Properties, LLC****[DR-0008-2024](#)**

To consider a Design Review Application for site plan and landscaping for 21.67 acres for property located at 1333 Research Rd; Parcel ID 025-011747; Current Zoning OCT; Stream's Edge Properties, LLC; Anthony Rocco, 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 provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation.

The property is zoned Office Commerce & Technology (OCT), meaning that the request was submitted before the new zoning code was adopted on May 1, 2024. Director Blackford provided a map of the area. For this request there are no buildings involved. It's a parking lot expansion for their employees along with their tractor and trailer spaces. There are also accessory types of activities such as landscaping improvements, lighting improvements, and storm water. The expansion is occurring on 10 acres. There are two phases. A future phase, which will consist of 81 trailer spaces and the initial phase of the project will be 55 employee spaces, 40 or more tractor spaces, and 87 trailer spaces.

Dayton Freight has come before Planning Commission in the past. In 2016 there was a was an addition. Per Director Blackford's memory, the northern portion of the site was new. In 2021 they did a minor parking lot expansion. In between the 2016 and 2021 applications there was an administrative approval for tree clearing, which occurred on the 10 acres under review for the new application.

Director Blackford reiterated that the 2024 request is all parking and again described the two phases. There are two variances that are necessary. The first is the parking setback. In this area, a 45-foot front yard parking setback is required. The application requests a 20-foot setback. The current code would require 20 feet. There are existing conditions on the property. One parking lot has a 24-foot setback. There are existing conditions on this property and on Blatt Boulevard with similar setbacks of less than 40 feet.

The second variance is related to chain link fences in the front yard. Commercial properties have a little bit more freedom for the type and height of fence used. However, code doesn't allow it to encroach in the front yard. The applicant states that a fence is necessary to provide some security. Director Blackford felt this made sense, considering all the materials and trucks on site. Staff visited the area and noted about five or six properties kind of in this corridor that have similar conditions.

Director Blackford remarked that Blatt Boulevard has green space between the actual pavement of the road and where the right-of-way ends. There is about 30 feet of pavement for right-of-way, then another 20 feet for a setback. In reality, from the pavement, there is about a 50-foot setback from the road.

Director Blackford shared an illustration of where the fence would be located on the property as well as a depiction of the fence. It is a chain link fence with barbed wire at the top. Barbed wire is permitted. There is no variance for the height or style. Really, the variance is the location

because it's a chain link fence in the front yard. Blackford reiterated that there were multiple properties in the area with similar conditions.

Director Blackford shared the Variance criteria for parking. They are as follows: there are special circumstances or conditionals applying to the land, building or use referred to in the application; the granting of the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of substantial property rights; the granting of the application will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in such neighborhood. Blackford felt the request was in character with existing developments in the area. There were no objections from additional departments that reviewed the request.

Blackford, sharing the Variance criteria for fences, noted that the new code will be changing to 20 feet. Fence variances include some similar criteria as the parking lot criteria, such as whether the variance would adversely affect the delivery of governmental services and whether the character of the neighborhood would be substantially altered.

Director Blackford reviewed the Design Review criteria and Design Review District 4 (DRD-4) standards. The DRD-4 standards contain some language relevant to parking lots. They shall accommodate employees and not degrade the appearance of the development. Blackford stated the request meets all landscaping criteria. Even though it is behind a fence, all necessary parking lot screening will be in place. Per code verbiage, Planning Commission should be concerned with screening of parking areas to minimize visual contact. A specific standard in DRD-4 states that Planning Commission may use more liberal standards to control development in the OCT area.

Staff recommends approval of the applications. Director Blackford recalled the purpose of previous tree clearing to create space for truck parking. The use is allowed by right, whether by OCT or in the new Innovation & Manufacturing district. Additionally, Variances appear to be in character with surrounding development. For those reasons, Planning staff recommends approval of the applications as submitted.

Chair opened public comment at 7:31 p.m.

Russell Henestofel, 5500 New Albany Rd., representing Streams Edge Properties. Mr. Henestofel thanked Planning staff for their consideration and their work. He wished to elaborate on the reasons for their expansion. Henestofel referenced the Etna Parkway area's growth, causing an increase in demand in trucking in the area. There will be a new tenant around the fourth quarter this year or first quarter of next year,

which required approximately 30 additional trailers to be installed at this location. The applicant needed to make sure they are ready for when that happens. The parking lot is a secured employee lot. Some of the drivers from different facilities and may arrive back to the site at night when it is dark. The goal is to ensure that they had a location where they could get to their vehicles from inside a fenced area and then exit a secure fence. The request for the additional parking lot is to ensure the security of the additional employees.

Mr. Henestofel explained that the fence is to go around the basin. Recently, there was a major rainstorm that occurred that resulted in about two to three inches of rain in the area. The road in front of the site flooded. It flooded partly due to the original construction in 1998. The storm water drainage was not adequate. The applicant is taking some of the existing terminal and relocating it. They are increasing the size of the basin to alleviate employees walking through water, and to alleviate some of the flooding that occurs on the roadway. Therefore, the fence around the basin must be pushed further out. They felt that a wet pond should be fenced for security purposes and safety. It is currently set at least 10 feet off of property line because there is a public easement. They wanted to make sure that the public easement was not impaired by this construction of this fence. Mr. Henestofel stated he is available for any questions the commission may have.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:35 p.m.

Mr. Greenberg noted a lot of parking space will be added and asked what material will be used. Mr. Henestofel stated the parking lot will be an asphalt on aggregate base. There will be curbed islands with rock mulch around the trees. Mr. Greenberg asked where the pond discharges, to which Mr. Henestofel replied it discharges into a 42-inch pipe that runs along the road. He said the entire site currently drains to a 12-inch pipe that goes underneath the roadway which the City roadway ties into as well. What is proposed removes about half of the existing site and puts it in the new basin. It will be detained further down because of the larger basin and released at a much lower rate into the 42-inch storm sewer. Greenberg asked Mr. Henestofel if he knew where this went. Mr. Henestofel replied that they both go to the same spot. After the 12-inch pipe, it turns into a 48-inch pipe. Mr. Greenberg wondered where they go from there. Mr. Henestofel stated the pipe runs south after that, but he was uncertain of where. It ties into the city sewer. Mr. Greenberg then confirmed with Mr. Henestofel that calculations were made for all parking areas for the trailers in anticipation of handling a larger storm event. Mr. Henestofel confirmed that it can handle a 100-year storm event all the way down to the pre-release rate for just that area. Water will be able to



settle for a 24-hour period in a wet pond.

Mr. Greenberg directed a question to Planning staff regarding landscaping. He noted the applicant will be putting in a lot of trees and inquired as to whether it was run by the Parks & Recreation Department. Mr. Blackford confirmed it was. He noted that the applicant was originally asking for a variance to landscaping that they didn't need. It was reviewed by Parks for appropriateness. Planning reviewed it for the number of plantings and determined it met code. Blackford confirmed it was reviewed by all necessary parties.

Mr. Tamarkin asked if the existing property already has fence all around it, and if this will be an extension of the existing fence. Mr. Henestofel confirmed, noting that the expanded site will be enclosed.

Mr. Shapaka noted the road is not well-traveled and commented on the Commission's typical reluctance to put a fence in the front of a property. He asked if the fence was decorative in any manner, or if it could be painted black. Henestofel replied that a black chain link fence could be put in, as it has been done for other projects. Mr. Shapaka expressed his wish for this to be considered, and Mr. Henestofel stated that they would agree for the fence that is parallel to Blatt Boulevard to be black, along with black barbed wire.

Ms. Pollyea asked if the chain link was due to security concerns. Mr. Henestofel confirmed. Ms. Pollyea asked if there were any other types of fencing that can be used. Mr. Henestofel stated that others have been tried. Aluminum does not have the strength, steel is problematic for maintenance purposes, so they continuously go back to the chain link fence. The material contained in the trailers is not Dayton Freight's. It is different companies' materials being shipped using Dayton Freight. The security of the material in the trailers is important.

Mr. Hicks asked what other types of security features are used. Mr. Henestofel said that gates have keypads and there are security cameras throughout, both internally and externally. While there are people around as well, there are no security staff.

**A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Pollyea, that the Design Review be Approved.**

**Discussion on the motion:**

**Mr. Shapaka stated he will be voting in favor. He feels the landscaping goes above and beyond what is required. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Henestofel for the knowledge he brought to answer the questions.**

Ms. Pollyea stated she will also be voting in favor. She felt the design was well planned and well thought out based on the applicant’s needs.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Mako

[V-0009-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary sections 1155.04(c)(1)(A) Parking Setback and 1171.03(g) Chain link fence prohibited in front yard; for property located at 1333 Research Rd; Parcel ID 025-011747; Current Zoning OCT; Stream's Edge Properties, LLC; Anthony Rocco, applicant.

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

Discussion on the motion

Mr. Tamarkin stated he believes expansion is good and hoped that creating parking space for 30-40 more employees of a new client also meant more employees for the City of Gahanna

Ms. Pollyea noted that while she does not like the look of a chain link fence in a property’s front yard on a main road, given security concerns brought to the Commission’s attention and that it was well-planned, she will also be voting in favor of the variance.

Mr. Hicks commented on his understanding of the code. He believed that a decorative open fence would be permitted but anything other than that would need a variance. Even if the material is altered, a variance would still be required. He believed the criteria for a variance were met and expressed his support for the application.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Mako

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

G. NEW BUSINESS - NONE

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Director of Planning

Director Blackford reported that the upcoming meeting will have more

applications. He reported that a Final Plat recently recommended to Council was approved, adding that there have been some construction activities and the medical building is coming along. They expect to start seeing additional work for the apartments soon.

**I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - NONE**

**J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT**

Mr. Greenberg and Mr. Suriano acknowledged Mr. Hicks for chairing the meeting.

Mr. Shapaka and Ms. Pollyea appreciated the Clerk reading the legislation. Mr. Hicks noted the idea came from City Council meetings, in which the Clerk reads legislation.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.