



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Michael Suriano, Chair
Michael Greenberg, Vice Chair
Bobbie Burba
John Hicks
Thomas Shapaka
Michael Tamarkin
Thomas J. Wester

Krystal Gonchar, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Call in details: 513-306-4583, Conference ID: 537 673 54#. To speak during the meeting, at least one hour prior to the start of the meeting, you must email planningcommission@gahanna.gov and include: subject you wish to speak on, your name, address.

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

Gahanna Planning Commission met virtually for a Regular Session on Wednesday, October 28, 2020. The agenda for this meeting was published on October 23, 2020. Chair Michael Suriano called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present 7 - Thom Shapaka, Michael Suriano, Bobbie Burba, Michael Greenberg, John Hicks, Michael Tamarkin, and Thomas J. Wester

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA: None.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2020-173](#)

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from October 14, 2020.

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

Yes: 6 - Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

Abstain: 1 - Shapaka

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-026-2020](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Chapter 1165.09, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, to allow for a digital menu board for property located at 370 S. Hamilton Rd.; Parcel ID No. 025-003173; Current Zoning PUD; Tim Hortons; Kayla Wilson, applicant.

Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. Code considers digital menu boards to be electronic signs. The board size in the image will decrease when built; these are internal to the drive thru and not viewable from the roadway. This would be consistent with other recent approvals.

Chair opened public comment at 7:09 p.m.

Jen Wellman, applicant, nothing additional to add. Chair closed public comment at 7:09 p.m. and called for questions from the commission.

Wester: thinks this is a good addition; is consistent with what we are seeing across the industry; is an effective way of doing business.

Greenberg: asked if the location of the boards will be on the north side and to the rear. Applicant said they will be located in the same place as the current signs.

Suriano: asked how frequently the boards will change. Applicant said 3 times per day, to change with mealtime; the brightness increases during the day and decreases in the evening; that changes with the sunlight.

A motion was made by Burba, seconded by Greenberg, that the Variance be Approved.

Discussion on the motion: Suriano stated that this is consistent with the industry and one of the stipulations for the signs was due to flashing, etc. and this request is related to technology advances and will be in support due to practical purposes.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

[DR-020-2020](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for a site plan and building design for property located at 71-97 Stygler Rd.; Parcel ID No. 025-013757-00; Current Zoning CC; Royal Plaza; Brian Barker, applicant.

Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff

presentation. He stated that zoning determines what standards apply to design elements; this is in design review district 3; the improvements are to the east facing facade; will update with fresh paint and new materials; will keep some of the existing brick; this does not include Advanced Autoparts or School Day Uniforms. Staff recommends approval.

Chair opened public comment at 7:18 p.m.

Dave Pontia, applicant; will answer any questions; nothing to add to the presentation.

Jeannie Hoffman, 708 Waybaugh Dr.; is happy to see some investment into the building and welcomes the changes.

Chair closed public comment at 7:19 p.m. and called for questions from the commission.

Wester: asked about the timing for the work. Applicant said he will wrap up the permitting within the next few weeks; depending on the weather, early spring. Wester agrees with Hoffman, is good to see investment in this area.

Tamarkin: asked why there's no facelift to Advanced Auto and School Days. Applicant said they have a legacy lease, so they will get fresh paint, but due to lease, nothing additional at this time. Tamarkin said this plaza is well overdue for an upgrade; the drawings look great.

Shapaka: asked if we are doing away with the covered walkway for the entire facade. Applicant confirmed; said it is a separate structure. Shapaka said it is a great improvement. He asked Blackford if the recent traffic study called for a portion of this building to be removed to add a traffic lane. Blackford said a few years ago, 9 different designs for intersection improvements were proposed; some improvements would have greater impacts on the project than others; funding is needed and a final design needs to be approved; impacts are unknown; and would impact the parking area more so than the building. Shapaka said he would hate to see the applicant complete this and have to redo it.

Hicks: asked the applicant on the site plan, there is another property, are there improvements planned for that. Applicant said they have studied that in the past but no current changes to that are proposed. Hicks asked if the parking lot is in the scope of this project. Applicant said nothing planned for the parking lot at this time.

Burba: also wondered about the other building; appears that restaurant

needs sprucing up; the other buildings are aging. Applicant said the walkway in front of the facade will be redone.

Greenberg: commented that the upgrade is great and will benefit the area; is disappointed that Advanced Auto will not be a part of this and hopes it can be in the future.

A motion was made by Wester, seconded by Shapaka, that the Design Review be Approved.

Discussion on the motion: Suriano stated that he echoes the comments about improvements being warranted and needed and appreciates the changes; will be in support.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

Big Sky Realty (Postponed from 10/14/2020)

[Z-002-2020](#)

To recommend approval to Council, a Zoning Application for 2.65+/- acres of property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

Chair called on David Hodge, attorney for the applicant, to provide an update on the applications, and to provide any additional information since they were last before the commission.

David Hodge stated that this is our second time before you, as I know you all know, unfortunately, I had to be away at another meeting that evening and was not able to be here, but coming into it this evening, I understand that I've got some work to do and I'm certainly up to the challenge. And I am hopeful that we can all engage in a good discussion about the appropriateness of this rezoning and its associated variances and conditional use. I'm going to ask all of you tonight to do what I think is a difficult thing. And that is to set aside maybe some of your preconceived notions and to the extent possible, erase your recollection of the prior hearing, and I know that's hard to do and a big ask. I know you all know I do this pretty regularly and I always learn a little bit about myself every day. And as I do more and more of these and I know when I come into a situation like the one this evening, I can have a tendency to run a little bit hot. And tonight, I'm down two runs in the bottom of the ninth, I get it. I also have been accused of being lectionary or preachy and so I ask for all of you to extend to me some grace tonight if I do those things. You know, my goal is simple tonight. That's to be honest, to be open, to be transparent and to be earnest about the appropriateness, in my opinion, of the proposal before you this evening. I've dedicated my life to zoning

and real estate. So, I've spent obviously a tremendous amount of time studying it, practicing it and pondering it. And to me and I believe the law, it's the lens through which I view this process is that zoning is not about the government forbidding somebody, anybody that wants to make a reasonable use of their real estate. And I stand by the notion that our proposal before you this evening is infinitely reasonable.

Here you got a piece of property that is currently zoned, currently zoned in the community commercial district. What that means is that the owners of the property have the right without asking anybody's permission, to make use of the property for an assortment of retail uses, administrative office type uses, personal and consumer services type uses and day care centers. And among those uses are grocery stores. Restaurants of all types, tobacco stores, liquor stores, you can envision a retail strip sort of running north south on the property with individual tenant spaces, with different shops, with an assortment of uses. Today, we're dealing here with a property that, let's be honest, has seen better days. Aesthetically, it doesn't do anything at all to contribute to the Johnstown Road corridor. It's grossly underutilized for this location. It has a house, a couple of houses along the frontage. One of the houses has got a pet grooming place in it and a rental unit. There's another house on the property that's a rental. And behind the houses, somehow is an old auto mechanics shop. So that's what's there today. As it stands, that property does not at all conform to the existing district. You can't have houses in a commercial district. Maybe the auto mechanic, I don't know if that's on this list. But what's on the property there today has nothing at all to do with the district that it resides in. So, there are some things there today that are nonconforming under the law. If I came to Mr. Blackford and the administration and this planning commission and I wanted to create a new zoning to allow for a house with a pet grooming facility in the first floor and a rental above and a rental house next door and an auto mechanic shop to the south of it, you guys would all come to the conclusion that I have finally, officially gone insane. I'd like to talk with you a little bit about your comprehensive plan, was adopted a little over a year ago. I know the city, the previous administration, engaged professionals, worked with your capable staff, came to the planning commission, and was ultimately adopted by council sometime, I believe, around September of last year. That plan calls for, I believe, medium density residential here, which is a density of fifty-four units. I want to talk about that, fifty-four units, because we've got to be smarter than just talking about density in a vacuum. What we're talking about here and what we are proposing are 50 for one and two bedroom units. Now all of you know that if this were sixty one and two bedroom units, if we were here asking for fifty three bedroom units, that is a very different density and it would be have much more impact on the existing public

infrastructure here. So, we're asking for sixty one and two bedroom units which will have less impact on the schools. So I want to refer to your plan, and I hate doing this when I give presentations, because this can get dry and it can get boring, but I know that this plan is new and I understand that there was some discussion about this plan and the and the land use recommendation on this property at your last Planning Commission meeting. And I think the first thing that I'd like to mention about the current plan, and this is in a couple of different locations, it's first on page 70 where it talks about the focus areas, where this key West Side is focus area five in the plan. And what it says is when making future policy decisions, decisions, the city should allow for flexibility while staying true to the intent of the focus area plans. So, I'd like for you to think about that in the context of the argument I just made about the fifty-four, three bedrooms versus the sixty one and two bedrooms. The plan says allow for flexibility while staying true to the intent of the focus area plans. It also says that the future land use map and accompanying land use descriptions illustrate the development potential of the key focus areas and provide guidance on character and densities, which is both intuitively and technically informed. It's not really all that intuitive to talk about density in a vacuum. Fifty-four three-bedroom units versus sixty one and two bedroom units. The plan also says the city may fund additional projects and or strategies with which to achieve the desired goals and objectives. So, here's the strategy. Allow 60 units here supported by this company. The commitment that they're one and two bedroom units, as opposed to dictating that it be 50 for acceptable by your plan, three-bedroom units. I will go on through some other provisions of your comp plan that I believe support the proposal before you this evening. The plan says that the data seems to indicate that there's a shortage of rental housing in Gahanna, especially relevant for the future as the population ages and current homeowners potentially look to downsize or rent under existing conditions.

The plan says the age and condition of multifamily housing has significant implications on the city's ability to meet changing demographics and attract future residents. Increasing the diversity and improving the quality of housing options through new construction and redevelopment can help Gahanna remain competitive across the region and ensure a sustainable housing stock. There's been lots of discussion on this and other projects about Gahanna remaining competitive, and I guess I'll rest on what those other discussions have been. But Gahanna has been struggling, keeping up with some of its sister communities in the region. The plan also says while a mix of housing types do exist, the age and quality, as noted, is an important consideration for the city moving forward. Additionally, with only twenty one percent of structures containing three or more units, the level of diversity may not be reflective of the current household size and

projected changes in demographics and housing preferences. The plan says on page 19, newer multifamily development across the region is responding to market demand for attractive, high quality units with access to amenities and commercial uses. Johnstown Road is in a corridor that desperately needs some fresh investment, and this property is situated such that it has fantastic proximity to area amenities and commercial uses. This has great proximity to Creekside, great proximity to the airport. It's a great location. So, this portion of the comprehensive plan, I believe, supports what we're proposing. In your comprehensive plan, some criticisms of the status quo for the city were attitude toward change. Too cautious with rezoning and change in land use types, preserving the wrong things, some of the opportunities identified were infill and redevelopment and growth of business and development. For the focus area groups in the focus area, classifications of the land use plan, and again, we're focus area five, what the comprehensive plan says where respondents indicated new residential development to be appropriate, which is the property we're talking about tonight. There was a strong preference for medium or high density residential, such as apartments, town homes and senior living options, as opposed to low density residential.

Again, we're in the medium density residential. It allows an intensity of up to 20 units an acre. This request is a hair north of that, but ones and twos, not threes, therefore reducing the intensity than what is otherwise allowed or considered appropriate. I guess if you don't get creative and read just the words on the paper, in this current plan, in the medium density residential district, it says the multifamily is one of the recommended uses, per the comp plan and the respondents and the administration and the planners that were involved in that. And I assume this body and council as well for the focus areas, considered a couple of things. That's how these areas became focus areas. What it says is that the things that made this a focus area is that there is underutilized land and or buildings. Page 70 of the plan talks about public input and engagement. It talks about apartments, mixed use developments and senior housing were all identified as currently lacking in Gahanna. National statistics have cited a rise in renters over homeownership, especially in metropolitan regions. Single person households and other non-family households are far less common than average in Gahanna, owing in part to the current available housing stock. I mentioned this previously. I'm going to hit it again in developing the focus areas. It says when considering future development, the city should promote infill and development in focus areas prior to other undeveloped areas. When making future policy decisions, the city should allow for flexibility while staying true to the intent of the focus area plans. Again, our proposal, if anything in this plan, I want to be redundantly redundant about. When making future policy decisions, the

city should focus future investment in and around the focus areas with the goal of accommodating. I know the traffic was discussed in some great detail at the last meeting. We have gone back and asked our traffic engineer, great guy named Mark McGowan at Advanced Civil Design, to do some additional analysis. He did that analysis. He submitted it to John Moorehead, the city engineer. There's a letter in your package. I hope you've all had the opportunity to read that and Markman's analysis. Your city concludes this: Your memo clearly demonstrates that neither a left turn lane nor a right turn lane serving the development is warranted through ODC criteria. The consolidation of three existing access drives into a single drive. Opposing Green Meadows Drive West is a favorable design and is consistent with Gahanna's access management goals. Although no transportation improvements are warranted by this development's traffic. And we're giving the city the front edge here, the right of way. The project's dedication of public right of way and driveway location should serve to accommodate future capital work in the area. So that comes from the city's engineer, John Moorehead. We did make some revisions to the plan, and I don't know if Mr. Blackford is able to pull that up and put it on the screen. Hopefully you've all had the opportunity to review that, although the southern portion of this property is heavily landscaped and buffered, we're going to come down there and commit to the installation of a six-foot wooden privacy fence. Along that line, we have removed the accessory building that we previously shown, shifted that Northern 12 unit building a little bit to the east, which allowed us to bring that dog park up to the northern portion of the property so that it's more accessible for folks that want to use it. The other thing that this plan doesn't show but has been discussed and it's certainly supported by other portions of your comprehensive plan, we would love the opportunity to engage with the city engineer. I know there's a future improvement planned here for this section of Johnstown Road. If we can figure out how to do this and not have it tear it back out, we'll come in and do a sidewalk up along the Johnstown Road frontage. It would go in. It would go into the public right of way. And it doesn't look like there is any sidewalk here at all currently. And I've had clients in the past say, what the heck am I going to do a sidewalk for? It's going to be a sidewalk to nowhere. But the comprehensive plan calls for it. It calls for it for improving and increasing the pedestrian opportunities down here on Johnstown Road. I know it needs it. And so, we're willing to work with your city engineer and get that sidewalk in. And that way we hopefully start a trend that can continue and can get incorporated into other locations down in this section of Gahanna.

I want to talk a little bit about school impact, and this is one of those things that that is a little intuitive. Sometimes we draft up school impact analysis for applications. But let's say we had an application before you

that was fifty-four units and we were going to come in here and do 50 for three-bedroom units. Obviously, that's going to attract children. That's going to have an impact on the school here as we propose ones and twos, we're going to get young couples, seniors. There may end up being a few kids in here, but nothing anywhere close to what would be done in fifty-four, three-bedroom units. And therefore, this is a net huge positive to the Gahanna Jefferson School District. I said before, I'll say it again, we all know it, this area desperately needs some new and fresh investment. The last thing I'll mention, and then I'll stop talking and do my best to answer questions. There was a housing study, a housing strategy, I believe it is what it's called, that MORPC gave to your city council a week or two ago. I stayed on hand at that council meeting to watch that. And if any of you are regular readers of The Columbus Dispatch, you already know this. But our region is in the midst of a serious housing shortage. It's a wonderful thing that we are creating jobs in our region the way that we are. But our housing creation of all types, multifamily, single family, condo, townhouse, you name it, is not keeping pace with our job creation. What that means is housing prices all over the region are way up. I think the article in the paper a week or so ago said we were up 16 and a half percent. This is terrible for our region. It can have an impact on the continued job creation. It is creating issues of homelessness in our region. And so, all of us have a responsibility to work together to create responsible housing in the region. I'm thankful that you're very capable staff who knows the zoning code better than anybody, probably in the world, the Gahanna zoning code, who was with the city and involved in the creation of the comprehensive plan. I'm glad that they wrote a positive staff report for this project. I believe that your staff got it right. I believe your staff is thoughtful. And I'm grateful for the positive recommendation. I also understand and I don't want to put words in anybody's mouth, but I believe that in addition to the staff's support for this project, that the relatively new city administration is supportive of this project. It's a good one. What you're getting here is better than what you've got today. What you're getting here is better than what you might otherwise get as zoned in the existing district. We have additional work to do. Obviously, this project after Planning Commission goes on the city council. I'm not so naive to think that that's going to be simple in this case, but beyond that, it comes back to this Commission for Design Review and development plan, where we can get into additional details and discussions about the architecture and the materials and landscaping and all of the things that are at play in that portion of the process. But I stand beside the notion, that what we propose is a reasonable use of this real estate in light of its zoning, in light of its comprehensive plan recommendation and in light of the development that exists on the property today. With that, I'll stop and stay on and answer any questions that folks on the commission or from the community have about the project.

Chair opened public comment at 7:55 p.m.

Jeannie Hoffman, 708 Waybaugh Dr.; we can't see what you see, but my basic comments are that the land use plan, it's not a set-in stone document. It should still be the guiding document for decisions on projects. And this project doesn't seem to fit the area that calls for medium density housing. If you look at the land use plan, that page, we have to be careful and methodical about infill projects. And while there is a current housing shortage, driving 60 units on 2.6 acres without adequate parking and greenspace, is not good for an overall long-term plan. The project looks more like it belongs in a high-density housing area, and I know they have to get a certain number of units to turn a profit, but we're not here to make sure a developer turns a profit. We're here to make sure that the project is a best fit for the area and for the community. And I also wondered, I don't know if he'll answer questions, but the dog park, who will maintain it? How will residents know about it? Where will they park to enjoy the amenity? And then what is the projected rent and is money set aside for lower income?

Chair called on applicant to respond. Hodge stated I agree that the land use plan is the guiding document. I droned on there ad nauseum about why I believe that the land use plan does support our proposal. And I'll give some deference to your planning staff, who also believes that the proposal is consistent with that land use plan. I appreciate the question about parking. We do have a variance to that. The requirement for parking for development of this type is excessive, and it is a carryover of the suburban code that exists in the city of Gahanna. You guys are going to rewrite your code. I'd be willing to place a large wager that's one of the things that gets changed when you rewrite your code, one and a half per unit is the standard in the city of Columbus for development of this nature, that is more than ample. We are providing 1.75 spaces per unit. So certainly, with the unit mix here, it is more than adequate. Mr. Suriano is your chairman and is a practitioner in this realm, not to put a spotlight on him, but I know, you know, zoning in the city of Columbus and other places, and are involved in some local urban developments and two spaces per unit for a for a project of this nature is extraordinarily excessive. It is old school and it's not appropriate. With reference to maintenance of the dog park, that dog park will be maintained by the owner, Big Sky Realty. My client, in terms of how folks will know about the dog park, it's an excellent question. I don't know that I have a great answer for that. I would imagine that over time it would become word of mouth that people can come over and make use of this dog park and people that are dog owners, dog lovers. I've got one at my house. They found a way they like to get together, let the dogs play and run and roam.

And I know there's a very active social media presence among residents of the city of Gahanna. Maybe that would be an appropriate platform to let folks know that there's a dog park over here. In terms of providing accommodations for lower income residents and what the projected rents are, my client, Mitch Rubin, is here. He may want to he may want to jump in and discuss what the projected rents are. There is no subsidy here associated with this to provide for lower income. I don't know whether Mitch or anybody else has done any analysis about where those rents would fall in terms of average median income. I strongly suspect, though, that at least some of the rents in the building would be considered, by some criteria, affordable under the platform adopted by the city of Columbus.

Mitch Rubin said, if you let me jump in really quick, I'm happy to do the best I can. In regard to this development, we're really considering this workforce housing. Our rents for a two bedroom are projected at between two \$1,025 to eight \$1,050 a month and for a one bedroom, about \$860. Our requirements when we receive an application is going to be thirty percent for the gross income. Thirty percent or less can go towards the rent. So that being said, in regard to your specific question on the AMAI, this is market rate housing. However, if you look at Franklin County and the AMAI calculator, this would be considered, it's not affordable housing, it's workforce housing, but at 60 percent AMAI. A two bedroom in Franklin County is considered \$1,137 and \$1,050. We're very reasonably priced. In the developments we do, we put it in the higher end finishes as well. So, our residents who are hardworking, typically making between thirty-five and fifty thousand dollars per resident, they get stainless steel, they get the subway tile, they get granite. So, it's a very high-quality apartment at a reasonable price. So, we're really focused on workforce housing. Hopefully that answered your question.

Colleen Howland, 327 Johnstown Rd.; I called in last time. I saw that they moved the dog park from, it was up against our property and they moved it up, it's still on the same side. But in our driveway, are they planning a fence around the dog park because it abuts a driveway? I don't know that you want people crossing over. I am still concerned about additional traffic. That's a lot of apartments and such a small space. And there is a lot of pedestrian traffic on Johnstown Road.

Mitch commented that we don't have a final design, certainly the dog park would be fenced in, so hopefully that answers your question. For the parking, would be within the parking lot there. I wouldn't foresee anyone crossing over the property line there. And to David's point earlier, our hope is to go ahead and put in the sidewalk on Johnstown Road as well. So, if anything, I think that helps alleviate the concerns of pedestrians on

a busy road and hopefully that concurs with the future road improvement.

Chair closed public comment at 8:04 p.m. and called for questions from the commission.

Wester: This is a rhetorical question, but out of the 60 units you're going to put there, how many of those people are going to work in Gahanna. Hodge said that's an excellent question. I don't know the answer. I hope every one of them work in Gahanna. Wester said so does he, because it's the people that work in Gahanna, and the income taxes they pay, that keep Gahanna going. Mitch said to answer your question, on our experience so far with our other properties in Gahanna, I can tell you we've been surprised at how many individuals actually do work within the city. And it's several of them at establishments over there on Mill St. and throughout. And quite honestly, our two bedrooms, we are just filling up because we have so many individuals now actually renting two bedrooms to use the other one as an office. And so, you know how that works out exactly. With income tax, I think there might actually end up being an impact to some degree going forward here, because there our other properties, I can tell you that over 50 percent of our residents now work from home. And obviously when there's a vaccine, who really knows what's going to happen? But we think that trend will continue. I think there would be quite a benefit there. The other item, is a lot of these individuals are making good money and we're finding they're spending it on Mill St. They're going to the bars. They're going to the restaurants. Because, you know, we have people of all ages, but a lot of them are younger, hardworking people. And they're going down and spending money at the bars and restaurants on the weekends. So, I mean, we've seen that. It's real money being spent in the community with these. These are higher wage earners for workforce housing. So, when you have some with \$45,000 of income or \$38,000 in income, that they still want to spend that money and they do it locally.

Wester said the traffic study shows 439 trips a day, but it calls or references a 2040 design year ADT of 10,050 vehicles per day. How does that equate to 2020, to today's ADT? Hodge said that is a question he is ill equipped to answer. We'll just put that down as needing some follow up. For that number, engineer worked very closely with John Moorehead at the city. Wester said we haven't seen any conceptual drawings from the city as to what that road is going to look like, even with regards to mobility. I remember 10, 12 years ago I spoke before city or with members of city council talking about bike paths and whatnot. And if you go down Hamilton Road, that the Franklin County engineer led that project. It is surprising how those bike paths and the sidewalks are used. I have a disappointment, a big disappointment with the city not advancing

any conceptual drawings for that area. We spoke earlier today about Royal Plaza and the roadway that might be put in there. That whole intersection is on the table. Nobody knows what to do with it. There have been proposals for it. And that extends down to Johnstown Road. I have a concern with traffic on this. Should traffic into this development be limited to right in-right out? You know, I'm a mechanical engineer, I don't know much about access management, but I know real good people that did a lot of work with that. And I do have concerns with access management on this and whether or not the city is taking a proactive stance on it. I still have that concern about traffic and that pretty much wraps up my questions. Hodge said he understands the concern about traffic. It's not perfect. But I think it is worth reiterating that we are dedicating the front here. We're also closing frontage what is today three cuts and consolidating that down into one. And we, as we said earlier, are committed to working with your city engineer to install the sidewalk along the frontage. So, is it perfect? Probably not. Is it a heck of a lot better than what's there today? Absolutely. Wester said, you're closing three access points, opening one. But I'd be interested to know what the traffic through those three access points is. And again, that's rhetorical. Hodge said to Wester, what you're saying is that we are increasing the intensity of this development. And that's the truth. But we are increasing the intensity of the property less than is otherwise allowed by right. With a retail center or a liquor store or a grocery store or the other things that can go here on the CC zoned property as it exists today.

Hicks: Mr. Hodge, are you open to some feedback on your application? Hodge said yes. Hicks asked Blackford to put back up on the screen, the material you were showing earlier and specifically page five, where it's the spreadsheet showing comparable family multifamily units per acre. I've seen these in other presentations of yours, Hodge, and I appreciate having numbers. I'm a numbers guy, but I do have some feedback on some items on here that might or might not help the application. The first one of those developments is in Jefferson Township. And I don't feel that belongs in a comparison because I believe this code is more stringent than the township. That's my opinion. Three of the developments on this page are residential hotels. Those are accommodations, if you will, and I don't think belong on any potential development comparison for the city going forward. That leaves us with two developments from the 60s, four from the 70s, one from the 80s. And so really the only comparable development out of all of those 11 is there on Hamilton Road. I bring that up because there's no question that this property is blighted by any development and that on that parcel it will be an improvement. I wouldn't argue that it's nonconforming building right now. We also I can't argue that we're in desperate need of some new multifamily housing units. I just got done saying there's really only one comparable within the last 10

years on that sheet that we're looking at. So, again, we desperately need new housing stock. And I thank you and Mr. Rubin for bringing something forward. So, we're left with Mr. Hodge, as you pointed out, in the land use plan, flexibility. How flexible can we be as a commission? Being a numbers guy, I have to go back to our code. Our code provides by right, 12 units per acre. If we extrapolate that out to the property, that's thirty-two units. Through conditional use, we can allow an additional six units per acre, which would equate to 16 units. If we extrapolate it out, we're up to forty-eight. The Land Use Plan again tries to define the acceptable use for that area with an additional two units per acre, which again extrapolated out, that it would be five. So now we're just over 50. And I think that was a number you were throwing out. But then the application is asking for an additional three units per acre, extrapolate it out to eight over the property. So, again, as a commissioner, how flexible can we be, is kind of what I'm struggling with. That's my feedback. Hodge said good questions, fair questions, and interesting. I don't disagree that some of those are residential hotels and some of them are in Jefferson Township. And we're here to compare apples to apples, not apples to oranges. I agree with you. Part of your comments, you talked about these the other projects that you did think were comparable, being from the 60s, 70s and the 80s. Hicks said, he does not believe they are comparable. They were developed under different standards from a different age before most of us were born. Hodge said it's time we do something in Gahanna, something, anything. This is a this is a great spot for it. Going back to the density discussion you can call it 50, call it 60 units, but what your comprehensive plan failed to do was distinguish between density and intensity. The point that I tried to make earlier was to say that fifty three-bedroom units is a heck of a lot more intense than sixty one and two bedroom units. I stand by that argument. It's an argument I've made in other locations. I wish I could take credit for making it up, but in terms of, you know, fifty-four threes versus sixty ones and twos are very different intensities. One is terrible for your school. The one we propose is great for your school.

(due to character limits, continued discussion below, in text box under file CU-003-2020)

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Wester, that the Zoning be Recommended to Council for Approval.

Discussion on the motion:

Wester- I don't have any objection to the zoning. I think the rezoning is needed, but I think the city has to step up and define what it wants with regards to mobility, traffic, sidewalks, and the general area. To rezone a piece of property is not a big thing, but what's going to kick-start the development in that area? What's it going to look like? Will it be out of place with the rest of it? Is that going to be a business park or a residential area? I will support the

rezoning but I'm going to have a lot of questions following the other applications.

Hicks- I agree, that was a good discussion. I'm going to be opposed to the rezoning, and the reason for that, is that we cannot view this rezoning in a vacuum. We know the development that is going to go in there. I agree that a multi-family use in this area is appropriate but we know the specific development that's going in there. This does not meet my definition of medium-density. I know we have talked about flexibility and accommodations, but the numbers don't support my understanding of medium-density. This is fifteen percent over what the Land Use Plan defines as medium-density. We have an applicant who wants to invest and develop in Gahanna, which is great, and this area needs more of it. We aren't going to be doing any favors to the applicant, by approving a zoning and then denying any variances or the conditional use. The reason for my opposition is that my understanding is that it's not consistent with the goals of the comprehensive Land Use Plan. Another comment around the density versus intensity argument, that is not persuasive to me. The types of development we are going to have in Gahanna, are these in-fill type projects. We don't have big swaths of land to develop. So a school impact analysis on a 50 or 60 unit apartment building, to me, does not make a lot of sense. A school district should never be used as a barrier or to discourage development. If we had 400 single family units on a 400 acre parcel, that would be a different argument, but these types of projects cannot have a material impact on the schools. That's the opposite of how a school district and municipality should interact. Those are the reasons I won't be in support of the zoning application.

Suriano- for reasons stated previously, and as I look to the spirit of the Land Use Plan, while fifteen percent over what was recommended, I think taking into account the other categories of what that definition is for medium-density, I think it does qualify. For those reasons, I will be supporting the zoning.

Shapaka- I will too be in support of this. I do not want to punish the landowner for something that the city needs to address, regarding traffic. I think that would set a bad precedent. The traffic study presented appears to be reasonable. I too am in favor of the zoning. Also, I would like to thank the Chair on his clarity, that this is for the zoning and will come back to us to address other issues, even if the applicant may not be happy with those issues. He has stated that he will present almost what is identical to what is before us tonight. We need this. It was identified previously in the Land Use Plan and we need to make some progress on this.

Tamarkin- I also agree that even though this is dense, we should not hold a developer responsible for the traffic. I was very bothered after the last meeting, when this was presented. Afterwards, my thought process was that, as Mr. Hodge stated, if they took all the one bedroom units and cut them in half, and created three bedroom units, that would have a larger impact. You would end up with more people living there, than what is currently proposed, including more families, and children in the schools. I will be in support of these changes because I think Gahanna needs housing. I did listen to the MORPC presentation at City Council, and there is a need for this type of development if we want to have jobs and a vibrant community, we have to provide some place for them to live, at affordable rents. The rates Mr. Rubin described are moderate compared to some other housing stock we have in town, which is quite old. I will be in support. I do think the traffic is tight, but less so than having two and three bedroom units. This is an improvement to the property. It is quite blighted now. There's a repair shop that was vacated. It is almost a hazard to have that there. Thanked Mr. Rubin for agreeing to put up a fence

behind the property. We did hear from that landowner last time, and the residents here should not have access to that private property.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Shapaka, Suriano, Greenberg, Tamarkin and Wester

No: 2 - Burba and Hicks

[CU-003-2020](#)

To consider a Conditional Use Application to allow for a multi-family development, for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

(continued discussion from above, under file Z-002-2020)

Burba: I just want to go back to the dog park again. Now, I know you are asking to reduce the amount of parking that we normally require, but if you let people in there to use that as a public dog park, they will take a lot of spaces that should be open to the residents. Mitch said in regard to the parking, we would anticipate most of the use would be during the day, when they use the dog park and typically, we see more parking spaces are available during the day. We would not anticipate a major issue, and we're not asking for a major reduction. We're still going to have 107 parking spaces. Hodge said in response to that question, would be in support of the parking reduction, even though it's a code requirement, which I stand by the notion you have a very suburban code here, I don't think anybody would dispute that. The new comprehensive plan from last year talks about providing one to two per unit for this type of development. In terms of the code, it's under. In reality, it's over parked. I think we'll find that there is some excess parking in this parking lot all the time. Burba asked how big is the dog park itself? What are the dimensions of that? Mitch did not have the exact dimensions but would follow up on that.

Greenberg: I think you gave a great presentation, addressing a lot of the concerns from the last time we had this presented to us. I appreciate that dog park has been moved. I think that would give more access to the public than back in the back corner. I think the fence is also a good idea to differentiate the property from the residents behind it. Is there a bus stop, do we know, near this project so that residents that need to get downtown or in Gahanna, or over to Hamilton Road, have the ability to do that via public transportation? Mitch said he does not know the answer but believes there is one somewhere in the immediate proximity. Burba said that there is one over there at Advanced Auto, and there's a park and ride; there are buses that go up and down Johnstown Rd. Greenberg said that he is a planner and uses plans all the time for business. The comprehensive plan and the items here that you went through, to show that the community went through and found priorities for multifamily

housing. I think that's important for our community. As I look on several social media pages about Gahanna, there's a lot of discussion about multifamily. There's concerns about the schools. I think you addressed that as well. And I appreciate the discussion about the traffic. Having a grocery store on that property would be significantly more traffic going in and out than the apartment complex. I appreciate all that and I look forward to any other discussion by our commission members.

Suriano: I thought the presentation was thorough. I think one of the things we have to also consider in looking at the application is, you know, we're showing a plan for reference, but this isn't a final development plan, nor is it a design review. So, what we're really trying to evaluate is the appropriateness of the use and the intensity of the use. I want to encourage us all to kind of frame our thinking around what that is. It's not to disregard what's here. It's just to say that, things change, and so we have to be mindful of that. Asked Mitch if he has a sense of the mix for the units. Mitch said it's planned to be 12 one bedrooms and the 40 two bedrooms. Suriano asked if Mitch can tell him roughly what the building coverage is on the lot currently? Mitch said no, not off the top of his head. Suriano said he would echo some of the comments that have been made about traffic and intensity of traffic. We get comments on traffic, and I think, any new development, beyond a single-family home would probably trigger a discussion on traffic and how much it's going to increase. I think we ought to realize that anything with any value on a property is likely going to impact traffic in some way. And so, when I look at this compared to a community commercial, I would agree with Mr. Greenberg. You have to imagine that the ins and outs of a of a multifamily development in terms of trips, just intuitively seems like it would be a lot less than a shopping center or a grocery store or anything that's permitted by community commercial. That's why we rely on those reports. Also, it is our job as a commission member to evaluate the appropriateness of certain uses on a certain plot of land. And I go back to our land use plan, which we spent a lot of time and energy on, and some of the evaluations by MORPC. Asked of this would be 3 stories with a gable. Mitch confirmed. Suriano said it puts us at around the height dictated by medium density. Residential is about 40 feet. So, I'd imagine that puts it right in line with that character I was asking about. Said to Hodge the point about parking, in some of the downtown developments we do, I would like to get one space per unit. I think 1.75 in this area is a little excessive. So, the intensity we've already talked about with regard to units per acre, Mr. Hicks, thank you for illuminating that chart and some of the comparables. And I know it looks to be a shade higher. And previously in the last presentation, I think, you know, I felt that the intensity was a little bit high. But I think coming back to this to this and looking to what we deem as appropriate for medium density, I think the spirit and character of what

we're talking about is at the scale that we're talking about. I don't think we're talking about 250-300 units. I don't think this is super out of character. Overall, I appreciate the discussion with the commission this evening in terms of the plan. Hodge stated that we do commit here that what we come back through a development plan and design review process with would be substantially similar to what we are showing here. Certainly, subject to that, the other engineering and required reviews here with reference to the height, it does call for a max of 40. I think that what we would find here is going to be well below thirty-five feet. Based upon my experience with this product type in other jurisdictions. I think, you know, if you measure to the to the midpoint on a pitch, we're going to be somewhere around 30 feet here. Wester stated that it was a very good discussion, but there are certain things that need to be addressed in this, and sidewalks are one of them.

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Wester, that the Conditional Use be Approved.

Discussion on the motion:

Hicks- We heard tonight about following the spirit of a recommendation and law; we have to stick to some type of standard eventually, because in past applications before the Land Use Plan was out, we would look at the code when considering a variance, would ask ourselves what is the spirit of the project, and let's wait for our Land Use Plan to come about. Now it's out and we are kind of saying the same thing. If it were one unit over the medium-density definition, I could understand looking at the spirit, but I would still argue that it does not meet the definition. We have to rely on some standard to make our evaluation. I am going to oppose the conditional use. I'm fine with the variance to the public areas. I will be opposing the last variance.

Wester- I'm opposed to the conditional use for many of reasons Hicks said. Essentially, for density, but traffic, mobility, and also access management. Opposed to public area requirements and variance for reduced parking.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - Shapaka, Suriano, Greenberg and Tamarkin

No: 3 - Burba, Hicks and Wester

[V-017-2020](#)

To recommend approval to Council, a Variance Application, to vary section 1109.08- Public Areas, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, to reduce the public area requirement; for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

See attached staff presentation, and discussion above, under

Z-002-2020 & CU-003-2020.

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Wester, that the Variance be Recommended to Council for Approval. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Shapaka, Suriano, Greenberg, Hicks and Tamarkin

No: 2 - Burba and Wester

[V-018-2020](#)

To consider a Variance Application, to vary sections 1149.02- Conditional Uses, 1149.03- Development Standards, and 1163.02- Minimum Number of Parking Spaces Required, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

See attached staff presentation, and discussion above, under Z-002-2020 & CU-003-2020.

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Wester, that the Variance be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - Shapaka, Suriano, Greenberg and Tamarkin

No: 3 - Burba, Hicks and Wester

Mifflin Township Fire Department

[DR-021-2020](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for a site plan, for property located at 475-485 Rocky Fork Blvd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-003870 & 025-006927; Current Zoning RID; Mifflin Township Fire Department; Nancy White, applicant.

Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. Stated that this is a straightforward request. The applicant wants to make minor improvements to the parking lot.

Chair opened public comment at 8:53 p.m.

Nancy White, applicant, stated that the building was previously a bank; left the front parking area when converted to a fire station; have had issues with the road changing elevations somewhat, overtime; as large vehicles enter and exit, they bottom out; want to make repairs so that it does not continue in the future.

Chair closed public comment at 8:54 p.m. and called for questions from the commission.

Tamarkin: asked for the additional parking at the administration building,

is that going to be an area where there is currently grass; is this just for extra spaces. White said that parking will be to the side.

Shapaka: said moving the parking from the front to side is a good idea.

A motion was made by Shapaka, seconded by Burba, that the Design Review be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

[V-024-2020](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary section 1165.08(b)(9)-Permanent Signs, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, for property located at 422 McCutcheon Rd.; Parcel ID No. 025-007984; Current Zoning RID; Mifflin Fire Station 131; Nancy White, applicant.

See attached staff presentation.

A motion was made by Shapaka, seconded by Burba, that the Variance be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

5979 Havens Corners Rd.

[SWP-004-2020](#)

To consider a Subdivision Without Plat Application to split a 3.019 +/- acre lot, for property located at 5979 Havens Corners Road; Parcel ID No. 025-009244; Current Zoning ER-2; Matthew Souder, applicant.

Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. This is the eastern edge of the city; properties to the north and east are Jefferson Twp. Not many estate residential properties come before Planning Commission. They want to split this into a 1 acre lot and a 2 acre lot; but the property must have 150' of frontage; this is a flag shaped lot, and looking at various maps, there are quite a few of these larger lots in the city; some parts of lot don't meet the frontage requirements; there also must be a minimum of 1 acre, but if less than 1.5 acres, must be on water and sewer. The applicant is not served by central sewer, it is on a septic. These properties are difficult to configure to meet those requirements. City staff has reviewed this, and engineers have no concerns. There are no planned infrastructure improvements to this area; recommend approval. Those requirements really apply to new development.

Chair opened public comment at 9:05 p.m.

The Souders, applicants, said that the presentation was done well; their family has lived on the land for over 150 years; and happy to have the 7th generation of Souders live here.

Wester: asked if an estimate was prepared for what it would cost to extend that sewer. Applicant said no. Blackford said no analysis was performed by the city.

Tamarkin: said a new home would be built; asked who would live in the new home. Applicants said they would be. Tamarkin asked if it would be sold off. Applicants said no, it was for their own family.

Greenberg: asked who in the city ensures septic systems are installed appropriately. Blackford said a permit is submitted to water resources engineer in the service department.

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Burba, that the Subdivision Without Plat be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

[V-027-2020](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Chapters 1137.02 & 1137.07 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, for property located at 5979 Havens Corners Road; Parcel ID No. 025-009244-00; Current Zoning ER-2; Matthew Souder, applicant.

See attached staff presentation and discussion above, under SWP-004-2020.

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Burba, that the Variance be Approved.

Discussion on the motion: Hicks said he considered asking for a condition on the variance, that if the infrastructure was ever constructed that they be required to connect (to city sewer), but based on the area, it does not appear there will ever be sewer available out there; will be in support.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, Tamarkin and Wester

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

G. NEW BUSINESS: None.

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Assistant City Attorney

No report.

Planning & Development

Blackford reminded the commission that the next meeting will be held next week, and there is only one item scheduled. Reminded them to complete the design review code survey.

Council Liaison

Shapaka said that the Crescent Park rezoning was introduced at the Council meeting and will have a public hearing on December 7.

CIC Liaison

Hicks stated that they met last Tuesday. They are still working on the structure of the CIC moving forward, such as who makes appointments, terms, etc.

Chair

No report.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS: None.

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Hicks reiterated that the timing of the meetings change for November and December; they move to the 1st and 2nd week rather than 2nd and 4th, due to the holidays.

Suriano asked them to complete the design review code survey and to encourage others to do so. Appreciates everyone; Big Sky took up a bulk of the time; appreciates everyone weighing in with their insights; said he appreciates Hicks' sentiment about the letter of adherence; all those things are considered and it was a tough vote tonight; was a good discussion overall.

Greenberg said Suriano did a great job tonight; appreciates him being the chair; great discussion all. Wester said Suriano did a great job and agreed that it was a great discussion.

K. ADJOURNMENT

By Wester at 9:16 p.m.