



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, August 28, 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 August 28, 2024. The agenda for this meeting was published on August 23, 2024. Chair James Mako called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by John Hicks.

Present 7 - Michael Greenberg, John Hicks, James Mako, Sarah Pollyea, Thomas W. Shapaka, Michael Suriano, and Michael Tamarkin

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA - NONE

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2024-0158](#)

Planning Commission meeting minutes 7.24.2024

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

Yes: 7 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

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-0019-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary sections 1109.05(e)(1)(A) and (B), Fences Location of the Codified Ordinances of The City of

Gahanna; for property located at 374 Muskingum Drive; Parcel ID 025-001741; Current Zoning R-3 Small Lot Residential; Kate McEachern, applicant.

Director Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. This item is a variance for a fence. Director Blackford provided an aerial map of the area. The area in brown is zoned R-3 under the new zoning code effective May 1, 2024. Director Blackford pointed out two relevant pieces of information related to fences: there is a 25-foot front yard setback in R-3 and the minimum lot size is 6,000 square feet. Director Blackford noted that the applicant's lot is around 10,000 square feet. Because of the configuration on a corner lot, there is space that is less usable than on a standard lot.

The request is for a fence in the front yard. Director Blackford provided a brief history of the allowance of fences in the front yard. Prior to 2021, fences were not permitted in the front or side yards. In 2021, after many variance applications, privacy fences in side yards were permitted. The required setback at this time was 35 feet. The new code, which went into effect on May 1, 2024, allows a 25-foot yard setback. But, due to an inadvertent omission by staff, the reduced setback was not carried forward for the second front yard of a corner lot. Fences are permitted at half the setback distance. So, a yard with a 35-foot setback could have a fence installed at 17.5 feet, and a yard with a 25-foot setback could have a fence installed at 12.5 feet. The request is for a fence at about 8.5 feet from the property line.

Director Blackford shared a site plan. The south side of the property is the front of the house and where the driveway is. From a zoning standpoint, the front yard is a side yard. In red is the approximate location of the setback and in yellow is the approximate location of the fence. Director Blackford noted that this application was the result of Code Enforcement action, as there was a complaint from an adjoining property. The caller was concerned about the site triangles created by the fence. Director Blackford stated that it has been reviewed by the Engineering team and it meets site triangles. Director Blackford then shared photos of the fence provided by the applicant in their application package.

The request covers variances for two sections of code, which are 1109.05(e)(1)(A) and (B), which state that privacy fences are prohibited in the front yard and cannot extend beyond the front of the house. The fence is both within the front yard and extends beyond the front of the house. Without a variance, the fence would have to be placed at the corner of the house, in line with the side of the house. Director Blackford

shared the criteria Planning Commission considers when granting a variance. They are as follows: the variance is not likely to result in damage to adjoining properties; the variance is not likely to result in substantial damage to the essential character of the neighborhood; 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 recommends approval of the variance application with a condition that the fence be located 12.5 feet from the west property line to align with previous Code. Director Blackford stated he is not familiar with any requests that have been granted at the eight or nine feet, which is what the applicant has requested. Director Blackford recalled another recent application in which an applicant requested a variance for eight or nine feet but was granted fifteen feet.

Chair opened public comment at 7:11 p.m.

Kate McEachern, 374 Muskingum Drive, greeted the Commission and expressed an apology for not following the process of obtaining a permit before beginning to install the fence. She stated that she feels lucky to have been able to purchase a home in Gahanna. They understood the yard to the side of their home to be a side yard, but learned during the process that it was a front lawn. The fence was purposefully not brought to the front of the house where the entrance is. There was also an attempt to keep it away from the sidewalk. Ms. McEachern also stated they wanted to have a fenced-in space for their dog and family. Additionally, she expressed that they had put hard work and money into installing the fence themselves. She stated the fence does not harm anyone, and there are other corner lots with fences. She again apologized for starting the process without a permit.

The Chair stated there had been one comment received via email and there were no speaker slips.

The Chair closed public comment at 7:14 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka asked Ms. McEachern how large of a dog she has. She replied that the dog is medium sized, about 50 lbs. Mr. Shapaka wondered if Ms. McEachern would be amenable to cutting the fence

down to four feet to make it more of a solid ornamental fence. Ms. McEachern replied that they would be willing to do that.

Ms. Pollyea asked if a contractor had been consulted before beginning the project. Ms. McEachern stated she had built some fences before and had also consulted YouTube.

Mr. Hicks noted that there were photos attached to the application and asked Ms. McEachern if she could elaborate on her intent in doing so. Ms. McEachern stated that prior to beginning the project, she drove around Gahanna to see where else corner lots had fences. Mr. Hicks noted that there have been a number of corner lots with this issue come before Planning Commission. He asked if she was opposed to increasing the setback. She stated she was opposed due to the amount of effort and money put into it so far and restated her preference to cut the fence down to four feet.

Mr. Suriano asked Mr. Blackford if the fence was cut down to four feet, would the same variances still apply. Mr. Blackford confirmed the same variances for the same location would still need to be granted.

Mr. Mako asked what type of cost was invested in the fence. Ms. McEachern stated around \$500, and possibly \$300-400 to obtain new materials. She stated the purpose of installing the fence herself was to save money. The variance application has dwindled the finances they are able to put into the fence. It took about two days to construct the fence. Mr. Mako asked if there had been any feedback from neighbors on the fence. Ms. McEachern stated that a neighbor had a fear of their dog, and asked that they build a fence. She stated that another neighbor appreciated the fence and the work that they have done with the house.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka stated he would like to put a condition on the variance. He is in favor of the fence where it is but would like to see it at the 12 ½ foot setback. He thinks it fits the lot, but would like to see it four feet tall where it comes into the side yard.

Ms. Pollyea agreed with Mr. Shapaka. She said that if they are going to vote to approve, she would prefer it be located at staff's recommendation of 12 ½ feet from the property line instead of the requested eight feet. She would also be in favor of lowering the height from four to six feet. She generally does not like to approve applications in which someone did not seek guidance from the City,

but understood that the applicant was a first-time home buyer.

Mr. Hicks stated that, in reviewing the criteria to grant a variance, the only one he struggled with was whether it was necessary. He stated the height matters less to him. Rather, he is interested in the administration's setback request of 12 ½ feet.

Mr. Greenberg stated he would be in favor of the City's setback. He recalled another meeting in which a reduction was made to the request and felt the Commission should be consistent so as not to set a precedent of having different setbacks.

Mr. Suriano stated his support for the 12 ½ foot condition.

Mr. Tamarkin seconded Mr. Greenberg's comments regarding consistency. He is not concerned about the height, as six foot privacy fences in the side yard have been granted before. He stated his support for the City's recommendation of 12 ½ feet.

Chair Mako expressed his support for a variance of 12 ½ feet as well.

Assistant City Attorney Roth stated that the motion would need to be withdrawn in order for a second motion to be made.

A motion made by Greenberg, second by Shapaka, to withdraw the first motion. All in favor. Motion withdrawn.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Shapaka, that the Variance be Approved with a condition that the fence be installed at 12 1/2 from the property line. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

[FP-0003-2024](#)

To recommend to City Council a Final Plat Application for 530 Tech Center Drive; consisting of 14.96+/- acres; Parcel ID 025-013767; Current Zoning GC General Commercial; Crescent Woods LLC, Griffin Caldwell, applicant.

Director Blackford introduced the Final Plat application as the Crescent at Central Park. The site was recently approved for a gas station. This application is a recommendation to City Council. There was a preliminary plat approved in 2023 and a final plat approved in 2024, which created a 3-acre lot and an 11-acre lot. The application would have been approved administratively; however, there is a loop road that will be a public road, and public roads require platting.

Director Blackford shared the criteria for Planning Commission to consider. He stated that Planning Commission shall recommend the plat

to Council unless any of the following conditions exist: Granting the application will adversely affect health and safety of people living/working in the area; granting the application will be detrimental to the public welfare; granting the application will be contradictory to existing development standards, zoning ordinances, or development plans of the City. He added that there are no unresolved staff comments, and Planning staff recommends approval.

Chair Mako opened public comment at 7:30 p.m.

Griffin Caldwell, 250 Civic Center Dr., introduced himself as an authorized representative of the developer. He had no additional comments and stated he was available for questions.

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

There were no comments from the Commission.

A motion was made by Suriano, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Final Plat be Recommended to Council for Approval. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

[V-0020-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary sections 1165.08(b)(8) Permanent Signs and 1165.09(a)(3)(C) Freestanding Signs of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 1195 Technology Drive; Parcel ID 025-008886; Current Zoning OCT; ROSEN USA, Inc.; Brian Brooks, Applicant.

Director Blackford introduced the item. The lot is in a cul-de-sac. There are four commercial entities in the location. The request is for approval of three variances to permit two monument signs, one existing and one new. Code allows one monument sign per 500 square feet of frontage. Based on the frontage of this site, only one sign is permitted. The signs are less than 15 feet from the right of way. One sign is just under 10 feet from the right of way, and the other is 2 ½ feet from the right of way. Another variance is for the landscaping requirement around a monument sign. There is a limited amount of space to plant around the sign, hence the variance request. Director Blackford stated the sign 2 ½ feet away is outside of the sight triangle. He noted there was a previous variance granted for parking to be in the specific location it is in. This location limits their ability to place the sign and have landscaping. The other monument sign, 10 feet from the right of way, is also outside of the sight triangle. Director Blackford shared renderings of the signs for Planning

Commission's awareness. They meet code requirements for size. Director Blackford stated that the right-of-way on this particular roadway does not function in the same way it would on a typical road, because of the limited access on this road. Pertinent variance criteria include whether the sign will be hazardous to traffic or detrimental to public safety. Staff does not object to the variances.

Chair Mako opened public comment at 7:38 pm.

Brian Brooks introduced himself as the building project manager with ROSEN USA. He elaborated on the purpose of the sign. They are building a 45,000 square foot facility. A requirement imposed by the Mifflin Township Fire Department was that there be a second address. In order to have an address label posted on Technology Drive, they need an additional monument sign. Regarding landscaping, there is only grass on the site. Therefore, they would like to put the monument sign on the grass with no additional landscaping.

There were no comments from the commission.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka felt the need for the sign had been well explained.

Mr. Suriano stated he would be in favor of the application, as there are no issues with sight triangles.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka, Suriano and Tamarkin

One Church

[V-0021-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary sections 1163.01(a) Parking Space Size, 1163.03(a) Width of Drive, and 1163.08(g) Interior Landscaping Requirements of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 817 N. Hamilton Rd; Parcel ID: 025-001918; Current Zoning RID, Restricted Institutional District; One Church; David Domine, 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 Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. These applications were filed under the previous zoning code. One Church has been to Planning Commission before for a gravel parking lot and accessory buildings. The site is zoned RID, Restricted Institutional District. Director Blackford pointed to different areas on a zoning map showing the adjacent residential development areas. The request is for a 22,000 square foot auditorium addition to the front of the existing main building, adding 341 parking spaces for a total of 885, 16,500 square feet of interior landscaping, and removal of 187 existing trees. The proposed auditorium colors are white and gray with an accent of chestnut siding. Regarding the requirement for parking spaces, code would require a total of 550 parking spaces for all uses on the site. One Church is seeking to have 355 spaces beyond what is required.

Director Blackford shared a site plan. The proposed auditorium was highlighted in red. It is near the intersection of N. Hamilton and E. Johnstown and would be viewable from the surrounding businesses. Areas highlighted in yellow show the proposed parking areas. One area is near the auditorium and is currently a gravel lot. Proposed parking spaces also line the perimeter to the south. Another area for proposed parking is the northwest area, where there is currently a retention pond. The retention pond is planned to be moved to the southwest area of the site. Essentially, an existing parking lot and retention pond are switching spaces. The remainder of the site is mostly unchanged.

The landscaping requirement includes 148 trees that are required to be planted within the parking lot. There is a variance request to locate 103 trees around the parking lot instead of within it. Director Blackford noted the large areas of gray on the screen showing where there is no landscaping. He stated that from a planner's standpoint, it is reminiscent of shopping centers that are heat islands and eyesores.

Blackford shared the auditorium elevations, including the east elevation viewable from Hamilton Road. The south elevation is adjacent to some single-family residences. The north elevation would be viewable from the Castle Pines neighborhood and on the north side of the property on Hamilton Road.

Design review criteria under the previous code includes as follows: compatibility with existing structures; contributes to the improvement of the design of the district and economic and community vitality of the

district; and maintains, protects, and enhances physical surroundings. There are additional design standards for RID properties. These are as follows: entrances and exits shall be well decorated and landscaped; parking in commercial areas shall add visual interest and enhance the development; small individual parking areas are preferred over large parking areas; landscape islands shall be in the center and at the perimeter of parking areas; and earth mounding and trees should be considered to reduce noise. Under previous code, RID sites next to residential do not require any buffering or screening. This was corrected in new code.

The Final Development Plan criteria include: the plan meets applicable development standards; it is in accord with appropriate plans for the area; it would not have undesirable effects on the area; and it is consistent with land use character and development of the area. The site does meet applicable development standards with the exception of three variances.

Staff recommends approval of the Design Review and Final Development Plan.

There are three requests for variances. The first is for the minimum parking space size. The minimum space is 10x20 feet, and 9x19 feet is being requested. Staff supports this variance and this is the requirement in the new code. Second, the access drive can be up to 35 feet. The request is for a 36-foot access drive. This is also supported by staff and this can be approved administratively in the new code. The third variance is for interior landscaping requirements. Parking lot trees must be in peninsulas and islands within parking areas. In the application, approximately 103 of the proposed trees are located around the exterior of the parking lots instead of in peninsulas or islands.

Variance criteria include the following: there are special circumstances or conditions 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; and the granting of the application will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in such neighborhood. Staff recommends approval for the parking lot size and access drive width variances. Staff recommends disapproval of the variance regarding interior landscaping. Parking lot trees are intended to mitigate negative effects of large parking areas. They provide shade, reduce wind, and increase attractiveness. If it is approved, Planning Commission may add

a condition to increase the number of trees within parking lots. There are painted islands shown on the site plan. Some of these could potentially be converted to real islands.

David Domine, 817 North Hamilton Road, Expansion Director at One Church. Mr. Domine thanked Mr. Blackford for his presentation. He noted that the purpose to locate additional trees on the perimeter of the site was to add to the buffer between the church and its neighbors. He added that they feel a sense of urgency to move through the process. They are working hard to serve the people who want to attend. There is a demand for services, and they currently utilize overflow parking. Mr. Domine introduced a civil engineer, landscape architect, and principal architect on the project as well.

Chair Mako opened public comment at 7:57 p.m.

Brent Allen, 561 East Johnstown Road. Mr. Allen stated that he and his wife moved to Gahanna about two years ago. A neighbor invited the couple to One Church. They continued to attend One Church and Mr. Allen took a job there. He stated that as a staff member, a key role has been to communicate with neighbors and answer their questions. Castle Pines residents have his phone number so they can contact him at any point. In moving to Gahanna, One Church was one of the reasons he and his wife decided to purchase a home here.

Charlene King, 305 Eastchester Court. Ms. King stated she lives adjacent to One Church, near the retention pond. Ms. King shared photos, see file attachments. She asked that Planning Commission not approve the proposed plans. The property is surrounded by residential homes. She stated the church has not been a good neighbor. They have dealt with noise and light pollution and she stated One Church has not been responsive. She is concerned about a parking lot packing up directly to her home. She expressed concern over potential drainage issues due to a large paved area. Her concerns included the foundation of her swimming pool, the livelihood of the trees buffering her property, and the potential undesirable effect of property values. One of the photos Ms. King shared showed light pollution. She also stated that due to her home's elevation, the proposed screening would not be sufficient. She asked that if Planning Commission approved the applications, they be approved with conditions that earth mounding and mature trees of six to nine feet be added. She expressed concern about removal of a fence that is owned by One Church. If removed, she would have to incur the cost of installing her own fence. She stated the screening at Castle Pines

is insufficient and has not been corrected. She hoped that One Church would consider offering services on another night of the week in addition to its Sunday services. She said there is also green space that could be used for parking without removing the pond or trees.

Josh Wiener, 313 Eastchester Court. Mr. Wiener lives in a property adjacent to One Church. He expressed significant concerns over the church's expansion plans. He stated he is not opposed to the church's desire to expand its programs and he is appreciative of its contributions to the community. However, he believes their plan does not meet the required criteria and would have undesirable effects on the surrounding area. He stated that church officials stated that moving the pond is the best way to accomplish its parking goals. He stated that this would cause new costs to be incurred among property owners. He also expressed concern about safety and security for his children, as the proposed parking lot will abut his property and will have very little screening. He stated church officials have not followed up regarding his concerns. Mr. Wiener also shared concerns about the removal of the pond situated at the northwest corner of the property. He stated it pre-dates the homes in his neighborhood and the adjacent Castle Pines community. He said the runoff from the properties flows into the pond, and he worries that if the pond is removed the proposed new drainage system will not be sufficient. He encouraged the Commission to reject the church's applications and for the church to put together a new proposal. He asked that if the applications are approved, conditions be added to do three things: to remove the northern most row of parking on the northwest corner lot to increase the distance between the parking lot edge and the neighboring properties; to install a fence or formal separation barrier; and to plant more trees along the property. He stated the residents around the project will have to experience the effects of it every day moving forward.

Tom King, 305 Eastchester Court. Mr. King asked that the Commission think about how residents will be affected. He proposed that if it is approved, that the Commission put a condition of removing the top row of parking spaces that Mr. Wiener mentioned. He stated it is 36 spaces, or about 10% of the proposed additional spaces. Additionally, he shared concerns about drainage with the new proposed plans.

David Haines, 285 Eastchester Court. Mr. Haines stated that the screening proposed is not sufficient. He stated the parking lot size would impact the enjoyment of residents' backyards. He is concerned about the drainage and wondered if there will be flooding issues with the new

proposed site plan. He supports removing at least the first row of the parking area and increasing plantings and screening, either through mounding or evergreens. He also noted there is wildlife that uses the existing pond. He stated it is more than just a retention pond, it is home for various wildlife species.

Pete Ferguson, 386 Castle Pines Drive. Mr. Ferguson provided an image that was projected onto the screen. See attachments. Mr. Ferguson stated he has lived in Gahanna many years and has watched Gahanna grow and raise a family. He is the president at Castle Pines condominiums. He asked that the Commission require One Church to build a fence along the perimeter adjacent to Castle Pines. He stated this proposal has been discussed before. He shared that in May of 2017, the condo association met with a One Church representative who stated a fence could be installed. In June of 2023, a fence was again requested, and the One Church representative stated that not building a fence was preferred. Mr. Ferguson stated that the trees that were planted are 4 to 6 inches in diameter. They are dogwoods and redbuds. There are some arborvitaes. He stated that they will not be sufficient to screen the parking lot, though. Current requirements are 80% or more all year round. They would like to see a fence built. He said it has been a conversation spanning seven years.

Christy Nelson, 406 Castle Pines Drive. Ms. Nelson stated there has been a history of complaints regarding sound coming from the church's auditorium. There were outdoor speakers that put sound out into the parking lot. Eventually, the sound levels were reduced but Nelson said this took about 15 months and the association involved law enforcement. About four months ago, plans were approved for a stage on the property. Ms. Nelson stated her understanding that the stage will be wired for sound. The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting on May 8, 2024, indicated that One Church was receptive to the idea of working on a plan to combat the sound issue. Ms. Nelson posed three questions to the Commission. First, have sound measurements for the west end of the stage been created as indicated in the minutes? Second, does the new expansion proposal include outside speakers, allowing services to be projected to the parking lot and neighborhood? And third, what measures are being taken to ensure that any sound generated in the new buildings will be contained within the buildings? She requests that the proposed plans not be approved until reasonable solutions for sound control are in place and documented.

Valerie Hofmann, 295 Eastchester Court. Ms. Hofmann prefaced her

comments by stating that One Church is doing amazing work in the community. She is an elementary school in the district and appreciates hearing about her students' experiences there. However, she is also a resident with a backyard that connects to the proposed parking lot. She expressed concerns about the parking lot being empty and vacant six days a week. She stated that when she shared this with One Church representatives, they were receptive to adding a gate at the entrance so the lot would not be accessible. Initially, her concerns were assuaged by these comments. However, she noticed that the plans show the dumpster at the back of the facility and questioned how the refuse vehicles will access the dumpsters if the gates are locked. She has concerns that they will not follow through with what they have said they'll do. Also, there are 36 parking spaces next to her backyard in the proposal. It upset her to think about the ability of strangers parking next to her backyard at all hours. She stated that there is already a barrier of trees that are proposed to be removed for the 36 parking spaces. Ms. Hofmann has concerns that her family's quality of life will be reduced if the project moves forward. She asked that the Commission at least deny those 36 parking spaces.

Bob Genton, 381 Castle Pines Drive. Mr. Genton wished to reiterate comments that other Castle Pines residents already made and asked that the Planning Commission reject the applications. He had concerns about screening and sound, as well as traffic. Traffic on Hamilton Road makes it difficult to get out of the Castle Pines development. In his opinion, this expansion will exacerbate the issue.

Lauren Spero, 313 Eastchester Court. Ms. Spero's property is adjacent to the proposed parking lot. Ms. Spero respectfully disagreed that the design review criteria had been met. Specifically, criteria three states that the project will not have undesirable effects on the surrounding area. She feels that the project will have undesirable effects on her, her family, and the neighborhood. There are an additional 341 parking spaces proposed, which will eliminate what Ms. Spero refers to as a natural underbrush, along with a fence, a pond, and green space. She stated this will be eliminated for a parking lot that will be empty six days per week. She felt there were solutions other than adding parking spaces to solve the problem that One Church faces and questioned the need for 885 parking spaces. She wondered if the plan was based on a perceived need rather than an actual need. Per the staff report, the need for parking was demonstrated. She wondered how it was demonstrated to staff. She acknowledges that One Church does positive work in the community and appreciates that work. However, she added that she and

her neighbors are also building a community by raising a family, teaching their children, contributing to the economy, and volunteering. She stated they are doing these things on a constant basis rather than for a few hours one day per week. She asked the Commission to reject the applications and consider the undesirable effects on the nearby community.

Brian Hofmann, 295 Eastchester Court. Mr. Hofmann lives behind the northwest parking lot. He requested that, at a minimum, the northwest row of parking be eliminated in order to increase the buffer between the parking lot and the neighborhood. He does not feel it would have a detrimental effect on the church's ability to grow and serve the community. He felt the buffer would be a good compromise.

Chair Mako confirmed with Clerk McGuire that there were three email correspondences that came in regarding the project.

David Domine stated his appreciation for the neighbors who came out to speak. He stated that he felt One Church has tried to reach out to neighbors and work with them. He felt they did a good job in that regard, and stated the church is growing rapidly. Much of their operations are carried out by volunteers, which may be the cause for some inconsistency. He shared his own presentation, which highlighted some of the key objections from neighbors and a resolution for each one. They included appearance, noise, light, and security. Solutions included maximizing setbacks, maximizing perimeter trees, improving the landscape design, minimizing night time parking, obey noise ordinances, and maintaining and replacing existing fences. Regarding drainage, the newer pond installed will be larger and at the lowest elevation. Domine stated the pond was installed in the 1950s with the intention of being used for recreation, but it has only ever served as a retention pond. He stated it is not a protected area. Additional improvements include an improved storm water system, a perimeter swale, and multiple engineer reviews. He stated the plans were submitted to the city in June and have been reviewed by all necessary staff. Regarding wetlands and wildlife, he stated that the existing wetlands is poor quality and will be replaced with an improved wetlands.

Mr. Domine stated that in order to combat light pollution, they intended to minimize using the parking lot at night. He said there will be better controls installed in the new lights, allowing them to be dimmed. Recalling the previous meeting discussion about noise created from the stage, he stressed that a sound barrier would be very difficult. He stated there were

detailed attendance counts to determine parking. It comes out to about 1.8 per car. The parking spaces are almost perfectly balanced for the number of seats. He asked Mr. Jim Finley to join the conversation.

Mr. Jim Finley introduced himself as the Civil Engineer with Verdantas. Mr. Finley stated the drainage coming from the north, in the Castle Pines area, will be piped across the parking lot through the new basin. It currently goes into the existing pond. To the west, a swale will be along the perimeter to capture any offsite drainage, bringing it onsite, and conveying it down through the dry basin that is in the existing park just south of the pond.

Mr. Domine asked Mr. Tony Torres to speak to the efforts being made to minimize sound. Mr. Torres noted that the auditorium is further away from where the residents live. The church has employed consultants to work on this issue. The auditorium is equipped to capture the sound inside the building. There are no proposed speakers outside the building. Mr. Torres stated all sound will be contained within the building itself.

Mr. Mako called one more speaker whose speaker slip was received late.

Jay Bohman, 336 Vista Drive, appreciated staff's recommendation for additional trees within the parking lot. He concurred with other comments regarding the traffic issues on Hamilton Road, and wondered if One Church had ever considered connecting to a multi-use trail in Gahanna and installing bike parking to give people more options to travel to services.

Mr. Domine replied that bicycle and pedestrian connectivity had not been considered. He noted some challenges related to topography. He added that there is a traffic impact study that has been conducted and submitted. Also, site engineers have helped to maximize how the parking lot works. He stated that they are committed to coming up with the best solution for screening. He hopes the request can be approved quickly so fair and equitable solutions can be implemented. He recalled previous conversations with the Castle Pines community about screening. He stated the church has invested in a lot of screening landscaping, and if there is a compromise that they make by adding fencing, he would like to navigate it in a way that the church can afford.

Chair Mako closed public comment at 8:40 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka asked Director Blackford if, regarding the variance for parking space size, current code is nine feet by 19 feet. Director Blackford replied that it is; however, this application was filed under the old code and therefore it requires a variance. Mr. Shapaka wondered if the current spots that exist are 10x20 feet. Director Blackford said there were some variables depending on the parking lot conditions and was unsure of the exact size of all spaces. Mr. Shapaka asked if the application is for a complete restriping, to which Director Blackford replied it is only for the new spaces. Mr. Domine stated that the entire parking lot would need to be restriped. Mr. Shapaka felt that the drainage issues would be handled by the City Engineer. Regarding light pollution, Mr. Shapaka wondered how the light fixtures are managed. Mr. Domine believed they were installed in the 1980s. The church staff does not have any controls over them. However, he stated they are getting replaced and light pollution would no longer be an issue.

Ms. Pollyea expressed concern about the 36 parking spots. She asked Mr. Domine why there is no other way to achieve the church's needs without those specific spaces that directly abuts neighboring properties. Mr. Domine stated that it was designed this way due to the size of the auditorium and the need for stormwater retention. It was not done to purposefully offend the neighbors. He said that if those spots are removed, they would have to redesign the lot. Ms. Pollyea shifted to questions regarding the screening at Castle Pines. She recalled residents stating their preference for a fence to provide screening and wondered why the church had not installed one. Mr. Domine felt this was a slight mischaracterization. He stated it was discussed in 2017, and from his recollection the church suggested they could achieve the same goals through installing trees for screening. They have invested in trees and to put up a fence would come at a cost, but he stated that they could go down that path. Ms. Pollyea asked if he would be willing with the residents to work out a better solution for that particular property, which Mr. Domine confirmed. Ms. Pollyea asked, if the Design Review is granted, how the church could work with the Eastchester Court residents who also expressed concerns. Mr. Domine stated he would be unsure of how to navigate that. He suggested there could be a council of neighbors that they work with to ensure all parties are in agreeance. He reiterated that there is a sense of urgency to move the project forward. Ms. Pollyea asked Mr. Domine to elaborate on that sense of urgency. Mr. Domine stated that there are currently attendees who are set up in overflow parking. They have a demand to attend that they cannot accommodate onsite. People are parking off campus and being shuttled to services. Mr. Domine expressed regret about the impact on the neighbors.

Mr. Hicks asked about the interior landscaping requirements. He recalled Mr. Domine stating that they would be willing to relocate trees to the interior to comply with code. Mr. Domine confirmed, but noted that he did not want to commit church resources to having trees inside as well as on the perimeter. Mr. Hicks asked, if each variance was considered separately and the landscaping variance was denied, would they be able to comply with code. Mr. Domine asked Dan Magly to come to the podium. Mr. Magly with G2 Planning introduced himself. He stated that if the variance is denied it will require them to put about 100 more trees within the parking lot. He reiterated that one of Mr. Domine's goals was to provide more perimeter screening for the neighbors. He stated there are over 50 trees within the parking lot and the canopy will be over the parking lot itself. He said it would be helpful if they could come to a compromise on the number of trees if the Commission wanted to deny this particular variance. Also, there is a row of staggered evergreens that will grow to be large, in addition to trees that will change color and provide additional textures. Some of these would need to be removed from the perimeter if the church is required to put more trees on the interior of the parking lot. Mr. Domine wondered if there was a way to compromise. Mr. Hicks stated that the options are approval, approval with modifications, or denial. Mr. Hicks recommended to Chair Mako that the variances be split out and voted on individually.

Mr. Greenberg asked Mr. Domine how many cars are parked onsite weekly at present. There are currently around 600 parking spaces, including the offsite parking. There are 300 extra spaces. Mr. Greenberg wondered why the 36 spaces abutting the neighboring residences were necessary. Mr. Domine stated that the additional spaces are necessary because of the extra seating that will be added by the auditorium. Over 700 can be seated. The number of parking spaces will match the seating capacity, based on their estimate of 1.8 people per car. Mr. Greenberg asked if there were any topics the residents posed during this meeting that were new issues to Mr. Domine. Mr. Domine felt that they did a better job of explaining some of the noise complaints. Mr. Greenberg asked if the church knew that the residents wanted a fence, to which Mr. Domine replied that they knew the residents wanted screening. They tried to achieve this with landscape screening. Mr. Domine added that if both landscape screening and a fence are required, this will increase the budget for that aspect of the project. Mr. Magly added that if the privacy fence went up, the trees would likely be eliminated because they would no longer be required. The fence would satisfy the requirement of six feet in height and 80% opacity. The trees would not be placed elsewhere on

the property. Mr. Greenberg inquired about the drainage plan. He wondered if the engineering plan had been shared with residents. Mr. Domine stated there was a meeting with the neighbors and he believed that information was sent to neighbors afterward. Mr. Greenberg recalled a previous Planning Commission meeting in which he advised Mr. Domine to have regular meetings with the neighbors. He felt they could be more easily resolved, and communication seems to be lacking. He again urged Mr. Domine to ensure the church stays consistent on their communication efforts.

Mr. Tamarkin asked Director Blackford if painted islands are part of code. Mr. Blackford said that there is no code for it, but that it is considered pavement. It may function as a parking area when the parking lot is busy. Mr. Blackford said that on newer developments, actual landscaping islands are a requirement. They do not need to be on the end caps of the parking rows, but the parking lot design does need to include them. Director Blackford used the row of 36 spaces as an example. A preferable design would break up those parking spaces with landscaping. Mr. Tamarkin felt the 36 parking spaces along the north could be relocated to the south, while eliminating a portion of them. He felt this would alleviate neighbors' concerns. Spots on the west side are likely a concern as well. He suspected that a few parking spaces could be added to each row of the proposed northwest corner lot and the west row could be eliminated. Mr. Domine stated that the west setback is much larger at 40 feet. Mr. Tamarkin noted that if this area is only used a handful of times of year during their busiest services, redesigning that area may alleviate some neighbor's concerns. Regarding a fence, Mr. Tamarkin asked Mr. Domine if the church would be receptive to building a fence along the entire west and north sides. Mr. Domine stated that is about 1,000 feet of fence, which is a large expense. It would be offset by fewer plantings. He asked if the need for a fence is weighed as heavily if the concerning perimeter spaces were reduced. Mr. Tamarkin expressed concerns that the previous lot that was approved for the northeast corner had an accompanying landscape plan that was not followed. Mr. Domine stated the landscaping now complies with the approved plan. Mr. Tamarkin shifted to lights. He wondered if every light would be replaced with new, modern lights. Mr. Domine said that the new parking lot already has new lighting. The west lot will all have brand new lights and have more controls. He felt there should be some level of safety lighting there at all times. The new lot will be gated at the top. There is a second entrance that Mr. Tamarkin felt should also be gated.

Chair Mako asked Mr. Domine to explain the rationale for moving the

pond. Mr. Domine stated that in order to accommodate requirements of adding hardscaping, they would have needed to make the north pond larger and add a second structure. Moving the pond would be a less expensive option that simultaneously solves their problems. Chair Mako asked Mr. Domine to elaborate on the storm water system that will be implemented. Mr. Finley said that they are picking up the Castle Pines storm sewer, taking it through the parking lot to the pond, and adding structures north of the pond to catch offsite flows and lower in the parking lot to pick up additional flows. Primarily, the lot will surface drain to the pond. Storm calculations have been run. It's been through one review with the City Engineer. There will be a safety bench in the pond. Mr. Mako inquired about the dumpster, including how it gets picked up. Mr. Domine stated trash is collected once a week. The gate will simply need to be opened. Chair Mako wondered if there would be adequate parking space if Planning Commission required the northwest perimeter spaces to be eliminated. Mr. Finley stated that they would lose around 60 spaces. The pond needs to be a certain size and can accommodate a 100-year storm event. They cannot lose capacity around the pond.

Mr. Shapaka noted the Design Review application was for a site plan, landscaping, and building design. He wondered, if the Final Development Plan application is not approved, would the Design Review application be affected? Mr. Blackford replied that the Design Review and Variances are not necessary without the Final Development Plan. If there is a change to the parking lot configuration, it is probably something that should go back through the process and come back to Planning Commission again. Mr. Shapaka stated that the City's calculations require 550 parking spaces. He wondered if there is a limit on the number of spaces they can have. Mr. Blackford replied there is not a parking lot maximum in the code, but there are limitations on landscaping, lot coverage, setbacks, and retention. This naturally sets some limits.

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Variance to vary section 1163.01(a) Parking Space Size of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Abstain, COI: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Variance to vary section 1163.03(a) Width of Drive of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Abstain, COI: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Variance to vary section 1163.08(g) Interior Landscaping Requirements of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna be Approved.

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka felt this issue is the root of many of the problems the church has with the neighbors. He would not be in approval of this variance.

Mr. Greenberg echoed Mr. Shapaka's concerns, stating he will not be in favor of this variance.

Mr. Tamarkin said he would like to see a different plan that alleviates some of the neighbors' concerns. He felt the perimeter trees would be more important than the parking lot trees if a fence is not installed. He hoped One Church would return for another presentation on this item.

Chair Mako also stated he would not be in favor of this variance and felt it was important for the church to be compliant with code on this item.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 0

No: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Abstain, COI: 1 - Suriano

[FDP-0007-2024](#)

To consider a Final Development Plan for property located at 817 N. Hamilton Rd.; Parcel ID 025-001918; Current Zoning RID, Restricted Institutional District; One Church; David Domine, applicant.

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Final Development Plan be Approved.

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka stated he will not be in favor of the Final Development Plan application. He noted some people will be happy with landscaping and others would prefer a fence. He would like to see more conversation and agreeance before approving this application.

Ms. Pollyea understood the needs of the church. However, she said there are too many concerns raised by neighbors that have not been addressed. She understands that not all parties will be pleased, but she would like to see more balanced solutions to support the neighbors.

Mr. Hicks stated that the Commission heard about site pollution, light pollution, noise pollution, and storm water management. He felt this was a situation in which the neighbors have an existing condition that will be eliminated if the development plan is approved. He is torn between the right of the property owner to develop their property in accordance with code, and the concern

from the residents that it will create an undue burden or unfair condition to them. He is reminded of similar applications in which the schools were involved. Middle School East had some parking lot additions in which adjacent neighbors had similar concerns involving light pollution. Similar concerns were also raised regarding the move of the high school's football stadium. His comments then are the same as they are now. The Planning Commission cannot ask the developer to fix the issue with fences or landscaping. What is there now will go away, and there is nothing that code says or that the Commission can require that will replace it. He stated he will be in support of the Final Development Plan because he felt it does not create an undesirable effect on neighboring properties. He believed there would be no conditions that could be put on the plan to prevent it from being developed. He hoped the property owners would continue working with the neighbors. He feels the criteria to approve a Final Development Plan have been met.

Mr. Greenberg appreciated Mr. Domine's apology that communications have not been sufficient. However, he stated he would not be in favor of the Final Development Plan.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Hicks

No: 5 - Greenberg, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Abstain, COI: 1 - Suriano

[DR-0011-2024](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for site plan, landscaping, building design, and demolition for property located at 817 N. Hamilton Rd; Parcel ID 025-001918; Current Zoning RID, Restricted Institutional District; One Church; David Domine, applicant.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka stated the building looks great. He would like to be in support of it; however, due to the landscaping and site plan, he cannot. He felt that the additional parking spaces were excessive and there was potential to eliminate parking spaces and solve lingering concerns.

Ms. Pollyea felt more could be done to assuage the neighbors' concerns.

Mr. Hicks felt the request for buffering by some neighbors was unreasonable. He expressed his support for the application.

Mr. Tamarkin stated his desire to see an updated plan.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Hicks

No: 5 - Greenberg, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Abstain, COI: 1 - Suriano

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

G. NEW BUSINESS - NONE

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Council Liaison

Director Blackford shared that the residential rezoning in the Shagbark area was approved by City Council. It will be several months before plans are reviewed by Planning Commission.

Mayor

Mayor Jadwin appreciated the residents who came out to speak on the application. She stated that this is the way the system is set up to work. She hoped there would be more opportunities for the residents and the applicant to communicate.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Mr. Shapaka appreciated the input from the public. He noted that if residents do not come out to speak, the Commission will not be aware of their concerns.

Ms. Pollyea stated that participation from the community is important. Meetings are an opportunity for the public to allow their voices to be heard, and she appreciated their input.

Chair Mako also expressed appreciation for the community's participation.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Sophia McGuire
Deputy Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Planning Commission, this
day of 2024.*

James Mako