



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, November 20, 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 November 20, 2024. The agenda for this meeting was published on November 15, 2024. Chair James Mako called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sarah Pollyea.

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

Absent 1 - Michael Suriano

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA - NONE

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2024-0233](#)

Planning Commission meeting minutes 11.6.2024

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

Yes: 5 - Greenberg, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

Abstain: 1 - Hicks

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-0030-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary section 1103.07(e) Development Standards of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 406 E Johnstown Rd; Parcel ID 025-001973; Current Zoning R-1 - Large Lot Residential; Dan Plucinski, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka provided an overview of the application; see attached staff presentation for details. This is a variance application at 406 East Johnstown Road. Ms. Capka provided a zoning map of the area. The site is located the east side of Johnstown Road and it is split into two parcels which total around two and a half acres. The adjacent properties to the north and south are also very large in size, and each of the homes on those lots have a large distance between one another. The applicant is requesting approval of a Variance to allow a carport to the side of the primary structure. The zoning code states that all accessory structures in residential districts must be located to the rear of the primary structure. The proposed carport is around 1,000 square feet and is 14 feet tall at its highest point. Its height is below the 15-foot limit. It is also 16 to 22 feet from the north property line, which meets the ten foot side yard setback. It is 160 feet from the edge of the right-of-way, which greatly exceeds the 35-foot front yard setback. There are solar panels on the roof of the carport. The applicant states that this limits where the carport can be placed, since the lot contains a lot of mature trees. There are also some mature trees on the surrounding properties as well. There were not many locations on the property where solar panels could be located. Capka shared a site plan of the property. She highlighted the proposed location of the carport in purple. She also noted that the carport does not extend past the front elevation of the home. It is located adjacent to the existing driveway.

Capka shared a rendering and elevations of the proposed carport, which provide additional measurements. An image provided by the applicant shows the approximate location of the carport in relation to the existing driveway and home. Another image shows the Google street view image from Johnstown Road. There are some mature trees along the front of the property that help screen the carport. The carport would likely still be visible farther south on Johnstown Road when traveling north. However, the trees screen a large portion of the proposed installation.

Capka shared the specific code chapter this variance is requested from. It falls within the Large Lot Residential section of code, which states that all accessory structures must be placed to the rear of the

primary structure. The proposed carport is to the side. Capka shared the standard variance criteria. The criteria are: the variance is not likely to result in substantial damage to the essential character of the neighborhood; the variance is not likely to result in damage to adjoining properties; the variance is not likely to affect the delivery of government services; the variance is not likely to result in environmental impacts greater than what is typical for other lots in the neighborhood; the variance is necessary for the economical use of the property, and such economical use of the property cannot be achieved through another method; and the variance is not likely to undermine the objectives of the land use plan.

Staff recommends approval of the variance ,as submitted as all criteria have been met.

Because of the lot size, the proposed location of the carport, and the screening by mature trees, staff believes there will be no detrimental effects in granting the variance.

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

Monica Plucinski, 406 East Johnstown Road. Ms. Plucinski thanked Ms. Capka for her presentation. Ms. Plucinski stated that the Engineering Department had a couple of notes for the Variance. First, the right-of-way that is currently 60 feet from the center of the road is going to be 80 feet, and that the applicant must donate an additional 10 feet of right-of-way. She said the only document she could locate with this specification was the 2019 thoroughfare plan. She said that there has only been one instance in which the owner was required to extend the right-of-way. She expressed some confusion as to why the stipulation was attached. A second note of the Engineering Department stated that the applicant-owner or successors may be required to install pedestrian or shared use path accommodations in the future. She stated that they were told that any permit on their property for any reason would have those two notes attached to it.

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

Mr. Shapaka asked Ms. Capka if it is a City requirement for two parcels to be combined before another structure is placed on the empty parcel. Capka stated it is usually recommended for commercial projects. She said that the only issue that having multiple parcels could cause is regarding setbacks. With a property line running between the parcels, a structure like a carport would have to be set back ten feet from both of the property lines, even though one goes through the middle of what is considered the entire property. Many times, lots will be combined to avoid such requirements, but it is not a requirement to combine them. Mr. Shapaka noted Ms. Plucinski's

explanation that the structure was not preferred to be placed in the back because it is a wooded area. He wondered if the need for the solar panels or the need for covered parking came first. Ms. Plucinski stated that they have two children coming up on driving age. She was not necessarily sure which need came first, but both form and function were considered. Shapaka wondered if it is not optimal for the solar panels to be on the house due to its orientation, which Ms. Plucinski confirmed.

Ms. Pollyea stated that she is not very familiar with solar panels. She clarified that there are no solar panels currently installed on the home's roof, and that the proposed location is the only one that would lend itself to the solar panels being able to service the home.

Mr. Hicks wondered if Ms. Plucinski intended to park cars under the structure. Ms. Plucinski confirmed. He also added, for clarification, that the Planning Commission does not have purview over any permitting. Any questions regarding the Engineering Department's comments would need to be resolved with staff.

Mr. Greenberg asked if the structure would be painted, to which Ms. Plucinski replied it would likely be left a natural wood color. He asked if the power obtained from the solar panels would be used to power vehicles. She stated part of what it would be powering would be vehicles in the garage. Lines will be run underground from the solar panels to the garage.

Mr. Tamarkin asked Ms. Capka if there was language regarding solar panels in the zoning code. Ms. Capka said it is in the new code. Mr. Tamarkin asked if they are in line with an accessory structure, noting that Planning Commission had not been presented with a solar panel case before. Capka said that staff first makes a distinction between ground mounted and roof mounted solar panels. She said that the solar panels in this application would be considered roof mounted. The only requirement is that it is located on a roof and does not extend a certain length beyond the edge of the roof. Tamarkin clarified that once it is on a roof, it falls within the accessory structure scope and must align with accessory structure criteria.

Chair Mako confirmed with Ms. Capka that the primary consideration is for an accessory structure, not necessarily solar panels, and that the code stipulates that the accessory structure be located in the back of the residence. He then asked the applicant if she had received any feedback from neighbors. Ms. Plucinski replied that there is only one neighbor that will see the structure and that they are fine with it. Chair Mako asked if the power generated from the solar panels would essentially go back to the grid, which Ms. Plucinski confirmed.

Ms. Pollyea asked if there were any other options considered for this project, instead of a carport. Ms. Plucinski replied that ground placement was considered for the panels, but the placement would have put them in the neighbor's backyard. This plan was developed considering the neighbor's needs as well.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka stated he is in favor of the Variance. He appreciated keeping trees when possible, and understood wanting to maintain use of the back yard. He also felt the lot was large enough to maintain enjoyment of the rest of the property.

Ms. Pollyea felt that the application seemed well-planned and also expressed her support for the project.

Mr. Hicks stated he felt torn on the decision, noting that all Variance criteria must be met in order to grant it. One of the criteria states that the Variance is necessary for the economical use of the property and such economical use is not easily achieved through some method other than a Variance. He understands the hardships that might be created by putting the panels in a different location. He agrees with the comments made by colleagues and staff, but the solar panels being mounted on an accessory structure is where his concern is.

Mr. Tamarkin stated that he had driven by the property and agreed that it was wooded and secluded. He expressed support for the Variance, indicating it is an appropriate use of the accessory structure and is well shielded by trees and setbacks.

Chair Mako also stated his support for the application.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Absent: 1 - Suriano

- F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE**

- G. NEW BUSINESS - NONE**

- H. OFFICIAL REPORTS**

- I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - NONE**

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Vice Chair Hicks shared his gratitude for the well wishes he recently received from Planning Commission members. He is healing well and is glad to be back with the Commission.

Chair Mako wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.