



# City of Gahanna

## Meeting Minutes

### Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

*Thomas Shapaka, Chair*  
*James Mako, Vice Chair*  
*Michael Greenberg*  
*John Hicks*  
*Michael Suriano*  
*Michael Tamarkin*  
*Thomas J. Wester*

*Pam Ripley, Deputy Clerk of Council*

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Wednesday, December 6, 2023

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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

Gahanna Planning Commission met in regular session on December 6, 2023. The agenda for this meeting was published on December 1, 2023. Chair Thomas Shapaka called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mako.

**Present** 7 - John Hicks, Michael Greenberg, James Mako, Thomas W. Shapaka, Michael Suriano, Michael Tamarkin, and Thomas J. Wester

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

#### **C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

[2023-0210](#)

Planning Commission minutes 11.1.2023

**A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Minutes from November 1, 2023, be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

#### **D. SWEAR IN APPLICANTS & SPEAKERS**

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

#### **E. APPLICATIONS - PUBLIC COMMENT**

[V-0023-2023](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Chapter 1167.17(b) of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, to allow for a shed

installation on property located at 1036 Arcaro Dr.; Parcel ID: 025-008669; Current Zoning SF-3; Jason Worman, applicant.

Maddie Capka, Department of Planning provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. The property is zoned Single-Family Residential (SF-3). The variance request is to allow a shed to be located to the side of an existing home. There is a large pond located to the south of the site that takes up a portion of the site. Side yard setback for unattached accessory structures is 5-ft. The shed meets this setback as it is 14-ft. from the east property line. The variance is just for the location of the shed and not the setback. The applicant states that this is the best location for the shed due to the pond and an existing deck in the back backyard as well as the slope of the yard. Capka shared a site plan. There is one existing tree next to the garage that will partially screen the shed from Arcaro Drive. Without additional screening the shed will still be visible from the right-of-way.

Variance criteria that must be met to grant approval of a variance; are there special circumstances or conditions applying to the land, building or use. Is granting of the variance necessary for the preservation, and enjoyment of substantial property rights. The granting of the application will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in such neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted. Special circumstances exist due to the sloping of the lot and the pond. There are limited locations available for shed placement. The shed is partially screened by existing landscaping, but Planning Commission may add a condition for additional screening if desired. Neighbors to the east of the site submitted a comment voicing their approval for the shed variance. Multiple variances have been approved in the past for shed located to the side of a home.

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

Applicant Jason and Jillian Worman. Mr. Worman said Ms. Capka explained the application well. There are numerous sheds on the sides of houses in the neighborhood. He does not think that it will negatively impact the rest of the neighborhood.

Clerk confirmed there were no comments from the public.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:08 p.m.

Chair called on questions from the Commission. Hicks asked if construction has been started on the shed. Worman said they have not.

Mako asked if there were any type of utility easement that the utility companies have, probably cable going to that box in the yard. Worman said they had the yard marked and it was not near any of the cables that were marked or anything. Mako said more to protect the homeowner checking to make sure that they are not going to be encroaching on any recorded easements. The last thing he wants is to get your variances and everything and then find out that you are two feet into someone's easement, and they have the legal right to come rip it out.

Greenberg asked if there are any other trees or landscaping, they are going to add. Mrs. Worman said she is hoping on the back of the shed to add a trellis and put vines on the side of it.

Suriano asked if the shed has a foundation. Mr. Worman said it is on a slight slope. They will have to build any necessary skid to get it leveled. Suriano asked if there is a maximum size for a shed before it becomes something bigger. Capka said she believes it is 120 sq. ft. or less. Suriano asked if there is a minimum, this looks like an exterior closet. Capka said there is no minimum it would still be considered an unattached accessory structure and it would still have to be to the rear of the home.

Shapaka asked what the color palette will be. Mrs. Worman said they are hoping to paint the exterior of the house a different color and the shed would be painted that color. The shingles will match the house shingles.

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

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

## **Shepherd Church of the Nazarene**

### [DR-0019-2023](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for a site plan and building design for property located at 425 S. Hamilton Rd.; Parcel ID: 025-000406; Current Zoning RID; Shepherd Church of the Nazarene; Jeff Hutcheson, 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.

Maddie Capka, Department of Planning provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. There are two applications a Final Development Plan and a Design Review. The parcel is zoned Restricted Institutional District. It is located on the west side of South

Hamilton Road just north of I-270. Capka showed site map with the location of the modular classroom. There is dense vegetation to the south and west of the classroom. It is located behind all other structures already on the site and it will not be visible from any right of way. The applicant states that the classroom will be temporary and will be removed after 3 years or less. The size of the structure is 44 x 23 ft. and is 1,027 sq. ft. It is a pre-manufactured structure, and the exterior consists of hardy panel siding and vinyl skirt panels. The applicant has stated that design options are limited since it is a pre-manufactured structure. It is located to the rear of the existing school building from an existing drive. There will be no new drive constructed and it is not visible from any right-of-way. It will not be in the existing parking lot so there will be no parking spaces removed or added. Parking requirements will still be met after the construction of the building. The site is made up of multiple parcels. There are property lines that go through the middle of the site that still have setback requirements. Capka showed the site plan, there is a 25 ft. side yard setback on either side. The modular classroom is approximately 30 ft from that side yard setback. All setback requirements are met. Not all the design review criteria are applicable in this situation since it is a pre-manufactured building and is a temporary structure. Staff recommends approval of both applications. The applicant states that the modular classroom is necessary for the number of students and will be temporary. All applicable code requirements have been met and there are no variances required.

Chair opened public comment at 7:17 p.m.

Applicant Jeff Hutchinson, Architect with The McKnight Group, 3351 McDow Road Grove City, Ohio and Mike Fluhart, Principal Shepherd Christian School, 3295 Farmbrook Drive, Grove City, Ohio. They are available for questions.

Clerk confirmed there were no comments from the public.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:18 p.m.

Hicks asked about the temporary nature and intent of the modular. Fluhart said they are trying to buy a little bit of time. They have been blessed with some unbelievable growth over the last couple years and they are full so. They know at some point they will be coming back to build on. They must have enough room space for the next year while they work with the McKnight Group for additional plans for construction. This building buys three years to go through the planning time, approval time, and construction timeline. The unit they are buying is a nice unit. They are

using state funds to purchase the unit and in three years they can get the state to take it back. Hicks said he looks forward to them coming back to get a permanent structure. He is glad to hear that the intent is that the temporary structure will be removed at some point and a permanent structure will go into place. Fluhart said they do not desire to have the unit for years.

Wester asked if there is a schedule for the permanent structure, design time, bid time, start of construction, occupancy? Hutchinson said they have not finalized a schedule, typically in his experience you would have a year to try and do planning. Another year to submit drawings for zoning approval and planning and then starting the construction depending on the size of the building could be a year. That is where the three years come in. This is the first step in the process.

Mako asked the capacity of the temporary building. Fluhart said it is designed as one full classroom for up to 48 people. The intent is to use it as an intervention tutoring centers in the building. There will not be more than about 15 people in it at a time. Mako asked if they are going to do any type of expansion if it will be in the existing footprint. Fluhart said it would. The building was designed to expand on the east side of the building where the H is. The discussion is to go further out with the H. The discussion is to go further out with the H to add a total of eight more classrooms. They would move the playground so they could expand the building out that direction.

Tamarkin said this will not be visible to the neighbors or the road. Fluhart said most of the houses on the north side of the property are owned by the church. The neighbors are not going to see it, nor will it be visible from the road. Hutchinson said he believes to the south the property is owned by the City of Gahanna. Tamarkin asked if it is built over dirt. Hutchinson said there will be foundations dug in and concreted to hold it up. when the unit is going to be removed those will be extracted and smoothed over. Tamarkin said the drawing shown is an exact drawing, no windows. Hutchinson said that is correct, it is the information that we received from the manufacturer of the unit.

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

**Discussion: Suriano said if there is an option for windows, data suggest we all learn better when we have visuals to outside, natural light. It is on a wooded lot and there is a lot of beautiful stuff to look at. He is in support of the application.**

**Hicks said the church is a great asset to the community and the programming that they offer to families and children. Growth is a good problem to have and**

with the understanding that this is truly a temporary nature and that they have a bigger plan in mind he is in support of both applications.

Wester is in support of both applications and echoes what Mr. Hicks said. They run a great program.

Shapaka suggested that before they do the next addition, they combine the lots that have the property line running through the building. He wanted to echo what Mr. Suriano said, that quality of space, get some windows in it.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

#### [FDP-0007-2023](#)

To consider a Final Development Plan Application for a 35.7-acre tract at 425 S. Hamilton Road; Parcel ID: 025-000406; Current Zoning RID; Shepherd Church of the Nazarene, Jeff Hutcheson, 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.

This application was discussed under DR-0019-2023. See attached staff presentation.

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

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

### **McCorkle Park Project**

#### [CU-0005-2023](#)

To consider a Conditional Use Application for property located at 200 McCutcheon Rd; Parcel ID: 025-004340; Current Zoning SF-3; McCorkle Park Project; Alan Little, Gahanna Parks & Recreation, 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.

Planning Manager Logan Stang provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. The request is for a conditional use and design review for the installation of new playground equipment at McCorkle Park. It will be located where the existing playground area is. Part of the application will be the removal of the 4500-foot area and installation of approximately same size of pervious playground and several play structures which will complement existing playground structures that are on the north side of that park building. The location of it will meet all the setback requirements and will be located further from the property than the current Parks Building. The proposed playground

equipment will be red and silver which will match the existing equipment. The tallest play structure is just over 15-feet tall which does meet the height requirements of the SF-3 district. There are no additional lighting or landscaping requirements or proposed modifications with this application. The conditional use is for public parks in SF-3 and is required because there was no documentation on a prior approval for this site. It has operated as a park for a number of years. Based off of the four conditional use criteria, staff is recommending approval, and with regard to the design review based off of the criteria, staff supports the design review. Planning Commission does have the purview to request any additional modification to the design or materials of the structures.

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

Applicant Stephania Ferrell, Director of Parks & Recreation for the City of Gahanna, 631 Wittenberg Court Lancaster Ohio. Ferrell is available for questions.

Public Comments:

Jim McGrath, 205 McCutchen, Gahanna. He lives directly across the street from the park. At night there are teenagers that will congregate at the park. He suggested that there be a motion sensor light that comes on or something like that unless it is felt that having a light sometimes attracts the teenagers.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:33 p.m.

Questions from the Commission:

Mako asked what new playground equipment is proposed to be installed. Ferrell said the location of where the new equipment is placed is an improvement to just the use of the playground. Expanding the swing bay to add more swings and the ability to add accessible swings as well as partner swings. It helps add to the function of the play. Updated features to make the playground more entertaining and updated. More exciting and fun for youth ages two to 12. The web climber is pretty extravagant looking, it is trending well in the in parks industry.

Greenberg asked if any of the playground equipment is made from recycled material. Ferrell is not aware that it is. Greenberg suggested that for the future there are companies that make playground equipment out of recycle material.

Shapaka asked if the park is just used during football games when people are playing or is it used all day. Ferrell said it is used often. The usage does increase when there is scheduled practices or scheduled

games there. The volume is intensified with programmed space. The playground is used by residents and then also by individuals who purposefully attend. With any type of updated design of a playground you expect to see that participation only increase. Shapaka asked if it is considered a neighborhood playground and what is the policy for lighting. Ferrell couldn't speak on the policy for lighting. She stated the park closes at dusk; it is a park rule. The park is not open for public use after dusk. Shapaka asked if it gets any ambient light from any streetlights. Ferrell said in some cases yes, but not for the purpose of the use of the amenities within the park. Shapaka said it might be bright enough to keep people there a little bit longer after dusk. Ferrell said it is possible. Shapaka asked if it is a concern on her part if there is a gathering there or if there is a history of gathering. Ferrell said recognizing public comment from this evening, anytime that they understand activity that is not appropriate or not intended they contact the police department and let them know that there is activity there that is not appropriate, to increase visibility, there.

**A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Conditional Use be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

#### [DR-0020-2023](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for a site plan and playground for property located at 200 McCutcheon Rd.; Parcel ID: 025-004340; Current Zoning SF-3; McCorkle Park Playground Project, Alan Little, Gahanna Parks & Recreation, 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.

This application was discussed under CU-0005-2023. See attached staff presentation.

**A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Design Review be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

### **Ambassador Commons Park Project**

#### [CU-0006-2023](#)

To consider a Conditional Use Application for property located at 639 Highlands Dr.; Parcel ID: 025-009306; Current Zoning SF-3; Ambassador Commons Park Project; Alan Little, Gahanna Parks & Recreation, 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.

Planning Manager Logan Stang provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. The request of for a conditional use and design review for the removal and installation of new playground equipment at Ambassador Commons Park. Application details include the removal of the existing 3,000-foot existing playground area. Installation of several new play structures, which two will have shade canopies on the top, a new Ada sidewalk that would connect to the sidewalk along the southern side of Gahanna Highlands. The proposed play structures meet all setback requirements of the SF-3 district. The proposed equipment consists of primarily earth tone colors, greens, and browns. Both shade canopies are the tallest portions of the structures meet the height requirements of the SF-3 district and there is no additional lighting or landscaping that is proposed outside of the pervious play area. The conditional use is for public parks in SF-3 and is required because there was no documentation on a prior approval for this site. Based off the criteria staff is recommending approval of the conditional use and the design review. Planning Commission does have the purview to request any additional modification to the design or materials of the structures.

Chair opened public comment at 7:42 p.m.

Applicant Stephania Ferrell, Director of Parks & Recreation for the City of Gahanna, 631 Wittenberg Court Lancaster Ohio. Ferrell is available for questions.

Clerk confirmed there were no comments from the public.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:43 p.m.

Clerk confirmed there were several phone calls just requesting explanation on what was being added to the park. The callers were pleased that the playground is being redone.

Questions from the Commission:

Shapaka asked the life cycle for playgrounds. Ferrell said typically with playgrounds 18 to 20 years is identified for replacement. The city has a certified playground safety instructors that review the playground equipment annually. Any type of features that do not meet the standard requirements would be removed. Shapaka asked if there was a request for the ADA path. Ferrell this is something that they aim to improve with any type of improvements to parks. If they can make it easier for individuals who may have mobility challenges to access the play features

or any features within a park it is the city's best practice.

**A motion was made by Mako, seconded by Hicks, that the Conditional Use be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

[DR-0021-2023](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for landscaping, playground and new ADA path for property located at 639 Highlands Dr.; Parcel ID: 025-009306; Current Zoning SF-3; Ambassador Commons Park Project; Alan Little, Gahanna Parks & Recreation, 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.

This application was discussed under CU-0006-2023. See attached staff presentation.

**A motion was made by Mako, seconded by Hicks, that the Design Review be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE**

**G. NEW BUSINESS**

[2023-0208](#)

Zoning Code Discussion

Mr. Blackford, Director of Planning previously provided the attached draft of the zoning code to the commission. Blackford provided an overview of what they have been reviewing the last few years. The goal of the document is to accomplish and a little bit of what our next steps are. The goal is to give the commission time to review the document and have time for a Q&A session at the next meeting. The Land Use Plan was the catalyst for the changes in the rewrite to zoning code. The Land Use Plan had public engagements. It talked about the vision of the community, uses and architectural standards. A Land Use Plan is a document that recommends policies. It does not require certain standards be met, as discussed previously in the workshop. The zoning code is what makes the wish list into law. There have been about five formal drafts of the zoning code rewrite. Reviewing the zoning map is very tedious. One goal is minimizing confusion, and something that will minimize confusion is limiting the zoning designations from about 26 to about 13. The new document is more organized and modern. Terminology and formatting have changed. There are more graphs, charts, and tables in the new document. Rules and zoning districts are condensed. There is a use

table in the proposed code. There are two frequent kinds of calls, including residents wondering what they can do on their property, or business owners wondering where they can conduct business. A use chart will help determine this. For example, if someone wants to put in a restaurant, they will easily be able to determine where that restaurant can go.

Uses are changing, but not radically. Blackford estimated that about 60% of land use in Gahanna is single family homes. The established neighborhoods will not change. Tonight, there was some discussion about Neighborhood Commercial and Community Commercial. They are proposing to call this General Commercial. Staff looked at the zoning code and uses and found there is a lot of similarity between existing zoning districts. Meaning, if something was allowed in one it was probably going to be allowed in several of the districts. One challenge that they found, and what some of the community feedback reflects, is that neighborhood commercial uses should require more daytime operating uses, and fewer nighttime or 24/7. In considering a gas station or bar, those are allowed by right or conditional use right now in Neighborhood Commercial. Those are being elevated to more intense use categories like General Commercial or Innovation and Manufacturing. A goal was to be mindful of the established neighborhoods. When the zoning areas are adjacent to neighborhoods, they are mostly Neighborhood Commercial now. It was a mix before, and some zonings allowed a lot of intense uses. There will be more Neighborhood Commercial zonings adjacent to residential subdivisions. General Commercial is a little bit more of an intense commercial category found on major roadways and at major intersections. For the most part, the industrial area is still staying industrial with an Innovation and Manufacturing designation.

A major change is regarding design and architecture. Blackford said when he first came to the city, he immediately began hearing feedback on this, starting with Go Forward Gahanna. The initiative identified the need to have more. There was some public engagement that discussed this, and specific questions were asked during the online engagement. They considered this feedback and recommendations from the Land Use Plan. The proposed change is moving away from language such as “quality products and harmonious color palettes” to more specific language. Depending on the zoning, there are now certain materials that are allowed and certain materials that are prohibited. There are limitations on the number of colors that can be on the façade of the building. He believes the code says four. Materials, limits on colors, and windows and transparency are common elements of design code. Blackford stated these are high level things to be mindful of as Planning

Commission reviews the code.

Another aspect talked about is process, and how zoning code changes process. There was a goal to refine the process. The code is not radically changing the process, however there are two elements that stick out. First, plats currently require a pre-application and then an application. The pre-application doesn't seem to have a lot of value, so it is proposed to be eliminated. The plat would still come to Planning Commission and City Council. A second process change would be making some things administrative. Final development plans were discussed, with what could be done administratively. They would like to change final development plans to development plans and combine them with the design review application. They are essentially the same materials that Planning Commission review and there was not a lot of value in separating them. Previously, they had discussed some elements that Planning Commission would be less concerned about, to do an administrative approval. They hope to codify these. If they need to change course, Blackford hopes that the meeting on December 20th could be more of a Q&A opportunity to get feedback.

One thing Blackford wanted to share is what zoning does not do. There are misconceptions about what it does and does not do. It is not about liking code standards. It's about meeting requirements. They cannot stop an applicant or potential developer from coming before Planning Commission. Whether zoning code gets rewritten or not, it will not change property rights. He wants it to be emphasized that zoning code cannot prevent people from developing their property or making requests.

Blackford noted items that staff would like more guidance on. One of those is electronic signs. The existing code has not allowed for electronic signs at all. There was a request that went back and forth between Planning Commission and BZBA and was eventually approved. Planning felt that if everyone can be content with the sign, electronic signs can be written into code. The new standard is very limiting. It can change once per day and must be amber in color. Staff's question is now whether this is still an application and process that goes before Planning Commission or is it an administrative process. It was originally a Planning Commission request. An answer is not needed now, but Blackford hopes it is something the commission can consider. If something meets code, that is more of an administrative process rather than a public hearing process.

Additionally, temporary signs were not discussed much during the workshop. Staff would like more direction. If it is being brought up, that

means there is an issue. Blackford recalled Mr. Roth's previous comment that the only way to regulate temporary signs is probably to prohibit them. However, the needs and wants of the community must be balanced. Currently signs are permissive regarding the number and duration. Blackford would appreciate feedback on these items at the next meeting.

Hicks said he has looked at it and the first impressions are favorable. It is clean and easy to navigate. He noted the use table and pointed out the approval table, which shows the decision maker for reasoning. Regarding questions on administrative approvals, he likes the section on di minimis variances, showing the items that do not need to come before Planning Commission. He noted the approval criteria will change.

Blackford thanked Hicks for his feedback. He said it will not be perfect but hopes that the code rewrite will be adopted in the first quarter of 2024. Once it is updated, they believe many new requests will come in. They are trying to think of as many scenarios as possible.

Mr. Greenberg said it is a great document. The drawings help and are a great addition. He had a couple of questions. One, regarding prohibited items. He is familiar with section Q, all classes of landfills. He did not know if the word "classes" is the right word. Landfills are not classified; they are just named. Municipal solid waste and industrial are two classes. There are four classes for yard waste facilities. He felt it mixed the nomenclature and should be given more scrutiny. Blackford replied that they can look at that, however, that particular section was copied and pasted from the current prohibited use section. The language can be reviewed and updated. Greenberg also noted that Gahanna has a closed landfill, and language reflecting such sites should be included. There are many requirements to maintain the facility for 30 years after it closes. Blackford noted there were two closed facilities in Gahanna.

Greenberg pointed out the fines section. If you violate the code or approvals, it costs \$1,000. He asked if that was per violation, per day. Blackford said that is on their list of items to amend. He said that it is a legal issue and not up for the zoning code to determine the fine and frequency. He acknowledged it needed updated. There was discussion about having one penalty section. Previously, the Clerk of Courts provided information on what they wanted for a fine. Greenberg said the charts are great and help anyone going through the document, as well as the glossary.

Suriano echoed the previous comments. He felt the document was more robust and appreciated the visual examples. He said as the transition happens it will be something that is worked on. He pulled up the

Creekside Mixed Use District in light of the conversation that was had with Sheetz during the workshop. He feels it is an area that can be improved upon. He does not know how it was zoned that given what is currently there, but he feels that they know better today. The city should focus on maximizing the potential for that strip of land. It has the opportunity to attract or detract business opportunities.

Tamarkin noted that signs are personal to businesses. People put signs up for remodeling, elections, and civic functions. He feels it will be difficult to codify and enforce. There could be an entire document on signage. Blackford said if needed, they could carry forward what they have today and revisit it later. Tamarkin noted that when he owned a local restaurant, he had a banner up for nearly six years before he was informed, he needed to remove it.

Shapaka said tonight they were hit with zoning. Someone has a 30-year lease and came to Planning Commission. Tamarkin noted that ground leases are usually longer than 30-years. Shapaka said the owner of the property just spent a lot of money remodeling it and is now completely redeveloping it. He wondered how the city deals with educating others on what is desired for that area. He described it as his parade route. It is a staple of what Gahanna can be. But there is a landowner coming forward wanting to put a gas station in. Shapaka is wondering if there is an educational effort on the city's part, so that Planning Commission is not presented with those kinds of requests. Blackford said he is unsure of the landowner's involvement in the project. Sheetz approached the city with the project. Blackford said that whether the code changes or not, staff would not consider it an appropriate use for that location. With the Land Use Plan and the vision for the Granville corridor, there is a movement away from automotive uses. There have been 15-20 opportunities for public engagement. He has never heard of notices being sent to all the community about zoning code updates. Shapaka wondered how they would educate an identified area. He noted the owner of the land wanted a new business, but it does not fit with the city's vision, and so the owner should have stopped the project. Blackford said a good example would be the Creekside District Master Plan, which had engagement with property and business owners in the area to solicit their opinions. The zoning code rewrite engagement included that in the Creekside area, to get attention of folks who visit that area. There were targeted engagement opportunities for realtors and business owners. They don't use direct mailouts but do use websites and social media posts. Shapaka also noted that the zoning code draft looks good.

Tamarkin had one comment relating to Sheetz. He said that whoever owns the land looks at one thing, and that is dollars. They are looking at

what is best for their company, rather than the city's vision. He said it probably happened one of two ways. Either there was a sale agreement, or there is a ground lease where the owner leased the land to Sheetz and Sheetz will build the building. He disagreed with comments that were made earlier regarding the term of the ground lease, stating that ground leases are hugely long, sometimes 100 years. Language incorporates stipulations that if the ground is no longer used, it is given back to the owner for free. Ground leases are typical for gas stations, McDonald's, and WalMart.

Mako returned to the zoning code discussion. He appreciated the clean-up that Planning did. It is a step in the right direction. One specific note he saw was the inclusion of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). This will be a big deal going forward. With the housing situation the way it is now, it won't be a silver bullet, but a step in the right direction. Blackford agreed that they did not want to disrupt the existing character of a neighborhood but wanted to tackle that issue. Blackford appreciated Mr. Mako's sentiments.

## **H. OFFICIAL REPORTS**

### **Assistant City Attorney**

Mr. Roth shared with the commission that he will continue to be Planning Commission's legal counsel after the election of the new City Attorney.

### **Director of Planning**

Mr. Blackford noted that there is an upcoming application that will help Planning Commission understand the importance of the "di minimis" code language, as it deals with a 5" setback.

### **Council Liaison**

Director Blackford said it is budget season, with a vote on the budget to come on December 18, 2023.

### **Mayor**

Mayor Jadwin thanked the commission members for their comments, as well as Planning staff. She noted it has been about three years' worth of

work finally culminating. There had been a joint workshop with council, and she appreciated the commission's work and feedback. Having a better code that reflects the city's vision, with feedback from the community, is paramount in moving forward.

She noted that Planning Commission members may have received an invitation to Councilwoman Angelou's retirement celebration. She has left an indelible mark on the community and been a tireless advocate for the city, and the mayor looked forward to celebrating Ms. Angelou.

**I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - NONE**

**J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT**

Mr. Tamarkin added he will be absent at the next meeting.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.