



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Sarah Pollyea, Chair
Michael Suriano, Vice Chair
Michael Greenberg
Elizabeth Laser
James Mako
Thomas Shapaka
Michael Tamarkin

Sophia McGuire, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, July 8, 2026

6:30 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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

Gahanna Planning Commission met in regular session on July 8, 2026. The agenda for this meeting was published on July 1, 2026. Chair Sarah Pollyea called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by James Mako.

Present 7 - James Mako, Chair Sarah Pollyea, Vice Chair Michael Suriano, Thomas W. Shapaka, Michael Greenberg, Elizabeth Laser, and Michael Tamarkin

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2026-0136](#) Planning Commission meeting minutes 6.10.2026

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-0011-2026](#) To consider a Variance application to vary section 1103.07 - Large Lot Residential of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for an all seasons room addition for property located at 1105 Arcaro Drive; Parcel ID 025-013261; Current Zoning R-1 - Large Lot Residential; Jon Handler, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka presented the staff report. She explained that the property is zoned R-1, Large Lot Residential, although the lot is substantially smaller than the minimum lot size required for the district. She stated that the proposed 144-square-foot sunroom would be located entirely behind the existing residence and would not be visible from the public right-of-way. The addition would sit eight feet from the south property line, while the required side-yard setback is 15 feet. She noted that the existing house already encroaches farther into the setback than the proposed addition. Capka explained that a neighborhood overlay adopted in 2007 previously permitted a five-foot side-yard setback but that the overlay was eliminated during the zoning code rewrite.

Capka provided an aerial view of the home as well as proposed elevations of the addition. She also provided the Variance Criteria, which 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 the 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.
- The variance is not likely to undermine the objectives of the Land Use Plan.
- Whether the variance is substantial and is the minimum necessary to make possible the reasonable use of land or structures.
- The practical difficulty could be eliminated by some other method, even if the solution is less convenient or more costly to achieve.

Staff recommended approval because the addition would remain farther from the property line than the existing home, the lot's small size created practical setback constraints, and the addition would not be visible from

the street.

Staff recommended approval because the addition would remain farther from the property line than the existing home, the lot's small size created practical setback constraints, and the addition would not be visible from the street.

Chair Pollyea opened the Public Hearing at 6:39p.m.

Applicant John Handler stated that he owned the property and agreed that the staff presentation accurately described the project. He did not offer any additional comments. No other members of the public spoke, and Chair Pollyea closed the Public Hearing at 6:40 p.m.

During Commission discussion, Commissioner Shapaka asked about drainage conditions behind the house. Handler explained that the property experienced drainage issues in the past, however, French drains resolved the problems. Shapaka also asked why the property was designated as Large Lot Residential. Capka explained that the zoning code rewrite assigned zoning by neighborhood, causing some smaller lots to be grouped within the R-1 district. She added that the City of Gahanna reduced setback requirements for accessory structures on similar lots, but those changes did not apply to additions to principal structures.

Commissioner Mako asked why the applicant placed the sunroom on the south side of the home instead of another location that would not require a variance. Handler explained that the existing sliding door dictated the location and that relocating it would create significant structural complications.

Commissioner Laser asked whether the adjoining property owner to the south expressed any concerns, or whether any comment was received from the public. Handler stated that the neighbor was aware of the project and supported it. Deputy Clerk McGuire stated she received no comments on the application.

Commissioner Greenberg asked about existing screening in the backyard. Handler explained that an existing fence enclosed the rear yard.

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

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Shapaka, Greenberg, Laser and Tamarkin

[V-0012-2026](#)

To consider a Variance application to vary section 1103.09 - Small Lot Residential of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for a garage addition for property located at 718 Mistletoe Street; Parcel ID 025-006272; Current Zoning R-3 - Small Lot Residential; Eddie Jewell, applicant.

City Planner Capka presented the staff report. She explained that the corner lot is zoned R-3, Small Lot Residential and that the applicant proposed constructing a 312-square-foot attached single-car garage. She noted that the original garage was previously converted into living space by former owners. The proposed garage would match the existing home's height, roofing, siding, and exterior materials. Capka explained that both the front and rear setbacks for principal structures in the district are 25 feet, while the proposed garage would be located 12 feet from the rear property line. She stated that the narrow buildable area on the lot prevented construction of an attached garage without a variance because shifting the garage forward would create a front-yard setback encroachment. She also noted that the existing house already encroaches into the rear-yard setback and that the existing patio and awning extend even closer to the rear property line. Although a detached garage could meet setback requirements because accessory structures require only a five-foot setback, the applicant preferred an attached garage.

Capka shared an aerial view that depicted the setback issues, along with elevations of the proposed garage. She also provided the variance criteria.

Staff recommended approval because the proposal matched the existing home, the surrounding neighborhood primarily contained attached garages, and the site could not reasonably accommodate an attached garage without a variance.

Chair Pollyea opened the Public Hearing at 6:49 p.m.

Ben Armstrong identified himself as the homeowner and explained that

he and his family had lived at the property for approximately four years. He stated that they expected a second child and needed additional storage space, as well as a garage for a vehicle. He also explained that the side yard served as an ideal play area for his young child, and he wished to preserve that open space.

No other members of the public spoke. The contractor stated that he could answer questions if needed. Chair Pollyea closed the public hearing at 6:50 p.m.

During Commission discussion, Commissioner Shapaka asked whether parking was permitted in front of the house and whether the current owner converted the original garage into living space. Armstrong stated that the previous owner completed the conversion and that he currently parked vehicles along the side of the house and in front. Shapaka confirmed that the proposed addition would match the existing siding and roof pitch.

Commissioner Greenberg asked whether any neighboring property owners submitted comments. Deputy Clerk McGuire replied that none had.

Chair Pollyea asked whether Armstrong considered converting the existing living space back into a garage. Armstrong explained that the area was completely finished before he purchased the home, was marketed as living space, and currently functioned as the family's living room and dining area. He stated that he preferred to preserve that space. Chair Pollyea also asked why the applicant preferred an attached garage over a detached garage. Armstrong responded that the existing concrete beside the house provided the most practical location and easiest access. He added that the proposed garage would accommodate one vehicle, while the family's second vehicle would continue to park on the driveway or elsewhere on the property.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Commissioner Shapaka acknowledged that the property presented a unique situation. Although space existed beside the home, he understood the inconvenience that a detached garage would create and stated that he supported the request.

Commissioner Mako stated that he supported the variance because the corner lot presented a difficult configuration that required fitting the proposed garage into a constrained area. He concluded that the circumstances justified the variance.

Vice Chair Suriano also supported the request. He stated that setting the addition slightly behind the front face of the home represented an appropriate design choice. He explained that a detached garage would create inefficiencies within the yard and that attaching the garage to the existing home made sense given the time and expense involved in construction.

Commissioner Laser stated that she supported the variance because the attached garage would create a unified appearance and the existing driveway already accommodated the proposed location.

Chair Pollyea stated that she also supported the variance. She believed the application satisfied most of the required variance criteria. She noted that the garage was converted to living space when the applicant purchased the home, leaving few alternatives other than constructing another garage. She agreed that the applicant should construct an attached garage rather than a detached garage given the time, effort, and expense involved.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Shapaka, Greenberg, Laser and Tamarkin

Imperial Drive Accessory Dwelling Unit

[CU-0001-2026](#)

To consider a Conditional Use application to allow for an Accessory Dwelling Unit for property located at 337 Imperial Drive; Parcel ID 025-002672; Current Zoning R-3 - Small Lot Residential; Andrew Northern, 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.

City Planner Capka presented the staff report. She explained that the applicant requested approval of a conditional use and variance for a detached accessory dwelling unit that would encroach into the required rear-yard setback. She noted that the city added accessory dwelling units to the zoning code during the rewrite two years earlier and established regulations specific to those structures.

Capka explained that principal structure setbacks applied to accessory dwelling units rather than accessory structure setbacks. The zoning code

required a 25-foot rear-yard setback, while the proposed accessory dwelling unit would sit 10 feet from the rear property line.

The proposed accessory dwelling unit would contain 804 square feet, stand one story and 18 feet tall, and include vertical aluminum siding in a blue-gray color with black roof shingles. The design included a small front porch and an accessible ramp leading to the front door. The applicant also proposed extending the existing driveway to the front of the accessory dwelling unit. An existing six-foot privacy fence extended along three property lines, and the applicant proposed adding fencing near the front of the existing house.

Capka reviewed the standards applicable to accessory dwelling units. She stated that the principal dwelling must remain owner-occupied for as long as the accessory dwelling unit exists. The applicants intend for family members, including an elderly parent and eventually their daughter, to occupy the accessory dwelling unit while the principal residence remained owner-occupied.

Capka explained that an accessory dwelling unit could not exceed the footprint of the principal residence or 1,000 square feet, whichever was less. The principal residence contained 1,036 square feet, while the proposed accessory dwelling unit contained 804 square feet and therefore met the requirement.

The zoning code also required at least one additional off-street parking space for the accessory dwelling unit. Capka stated that the proposal satisfied all parking requirements and included an extension of the driveway. She also noted that the property did not contain another accessory dwelling unit, that the applicant proposed only one, and that the site lacked room for an additional unit in the future.

Capka explained that detached accessory dwelling units must sit behind the principal residence and comply with principal structure setbacks. The proposed structure would sit entirely behind the existing home but would encroach 15 feet into the required 25-foot rear-yard setback. The applicant therefore requested a variance.

Capka also reviewed the requirement that an accessory dwelling unit remain architecturally consistent with the principal residence. She stated

that both structures would use similar siding, although the existing home featured horizontal siding while the accessory dwelling unit would feature vertical siding. The proposed blue-gray siding would match accent materials on the principal residence; both structures would use similarly colored roofing, and the windows would have comparable shapes, sizes, and colors.

Capka reviewed the site plan and stated that the accessory dwelling unit would sit 10 feet from the eastern rear property line, while satisfying the five-foot side-yard setbacks required in the R-3 district. She explained that the residence behind the subject property would remain more than 40 feet from the rear of the proposed accessory dwelling unit. The structure would replace the general area near the existing shed.

Capka reviewed the elevations and renderings and stated that the proposed materials complemented the existing home. She reiterated that the variance involved the reduction of the rear-yard setback from 25 feet to 10 feet.

Capka then reviewed the conditional use criteria. She stated that the proposal would not substantially alter the essential character of the neighborhood, harm adjoining properties, place a substantial burden on government services, undermine the objectives of the Land Use Plan, or fail to address an economic or cultural need within the city.

Staff recommended approval of the variance. Capka explained that the proposal continued to satisfy lot coverage and side-yard setback requirements. The existing privacy fence would provide screening and would extend toward the front of the property. She reiterated that the neighboring residence would remain more than 40 feet from the proposed structure. She also stated that moving the accessory dwelling unit forward to meet the required setback would eliminate most of the usable backyard.

Staff also recommended approval of the conditional use. Capka concluded that the application satisfied all accessory dwelling unit regulations, except the rear-yard setback, and met the conditional use criteria.

Chair Pollyea opened public comment at 7:03 p.m.

Andrew Northern identified himself as the owner and occupant of 337 Imperial Drive. He explained that the project supported multigenerational living by allowing his wife's parents to live on the property while maintaining their independence. He added that the family also envisioned their autistic daughter living in the accessory dwelling unit in the future. Northern stated that the detached structure would allow family members to remain independent while keeping their primary caregivers nearby. He explained that his in-laws currently lived in Westerville and that traveling between the two properties created challenges when they needed assistance.

Mr. Northern's partner, Amanda Thomas, agreed with Northern's comments. She stated that the family owned the home for nearly 12 years and wanted to create this type of living arrangement since purchasing the property. She explained that the family envisioned using the space for either her parents or their daughter. Thomas stated that the 25-foot rear-yard setback would place the accessory dwelling unit near the back door of the existing home and eliminate most of the usable yard. She noted that four of the adults who would use the property relied on mobility devices, including walkers or wheelchairs. The family therefore requested the variance to move the structure farther into the rear yard while preserving accessible outdoor space. Thomas emphasized that the family wanted to remain in Gahanna for as long as possible and described the project as a long-term goal.

Chair Pollyea closed public comment at 7:05 p.m., after receiving no additional comments.

Commissioner Shapaka expressed concern that approving the request could establish expectations for accessory dwelling units on other small lots. He stated that he believed the city originally envisioned accessory dwelling units on larger properties that could accommodate the required 25-foot setback. He questioned whether the city should reconsider the setback or lot coverage standards for accessory dwelling units on small lots.

Commissioner Shapaka also asked whether the accessory dwelling unit would require separate electric, water, and sanitary utility services. City Planner Capka stated that the zoning code did not address utility

connections and that other city departments would possibly regulate those requirements.

Northern stated that the applicants considered utility costs and connection options while developing the plans. He explained that they might connect utilities near the front door of the existing house. He also noted that the family planned to replace the deteriorated driveway as part of the project, which could provide an opportunity to complete utility work.

Commissioner Shapaka stated that the Engineering Department would address those details during its review. He noted that accessory dwelling units often required separate utility connections and that those costs sometimes discouraged similar projects. He concluded he had no further questions.

Commissioner Mako asked whether the accessory dwelling unit would receive a separate address. City Planner Capka explained that the Engineering Department assigned addresses after the Planning Commission and building permit processes began. She assumed that the accessory dwelling unit would receive a separate address but clarified that her department did not make that determination.

Commissioner Mako asked whether the zoning code permitted accessory dwelling units as conditional uses in every residential district. Capka confirmed that it did.

Commissioner Mako then asked whether the conditional use approval would remain with the property if the owners sold it. Capka explained that the accessory dwelling unit could remain and continue operating as such after a sale. She stated that the owner-occupancy requirement would prevent future owners from using the property in a manner inconsistent with the zoning code. If the structure remained, the conditional use would remain active for the site.

Commissioner Laser asked whether the owners of the property behind the applicants expressed any opinion about the project. Northern stated that they had not provided any comments. When Commissioner Laser asked whether they knew about the proposal, Northern stated that he had not discussed it with them directly. Deputy Clerk McGuire stated that the neighboring property owners would have received notification letters. The

applicant added that the neighboring owners purchased the property less than two years earlier.

Commissioner Laser asked whether the existing shed would remain. Northern explained that the accessory dwelling unit would essentially replace the shed.

Commissioner Laser then asked about the gate shown across the driveway in the renderings. Amanda Thomas explained that a small dog fence currently stood in that location and could open fully to allow vehicle access. She stated that the applicants planned to install a privacy fence closer to the front of the property, similar to a neighboring fence, to contain their dogs and reduce activity near the accessory dwelling unit. She explained that the fence would also help protect her parents, who had limited mobility, from animals entering the area.

Commissioner Laser asked whether the applicants intended to open the gate whenever they parked a vehicle behind it. Thomas stated that they previously parked near the back door until they learned that doing so violated the zoning code. She explained that she had spinal damage and mobility limitations and that parking near the back door helped her access the lower-level bedroom after surgeries. The applicants planned to extend the driveway to the accessory dwelling unit so that one vehicle could continue parking in the rear. Thomas added that the vehicle would accommodate a wheelchair and that the family also installed a lift on another vehicle. She stated that the proposed rear parking arrangement complied with the zoning code.

Commissioner Greenberg asked whether the owner-occupancy requirement would continue to apply if the property changed ownership in the future. He asked whether a future owner would need to live on the property and whether an absentee owner could rent both dwelling units.

Director Blackford confirmed that the principal dwelling had to remain owner-occupied. She explained that a violation would become a code enforcement matter and that staff would investigate upon receiving a complaint. She noted that owner-occupancy was a significant consideration when the city developed its accessory dwelling unit regulations.

Mr. Tamarkin asked whether the accessory dwelling unit had to be occupied by a family member. He understood that the principal dwelling had to remain owner-occupied but questioned whether the owner could rent the accessory dwelling unit to a non-relative.

City Planner Capka confirmed that the zoning code did not require a relative to occupy the accessory dwelling unit. She stated that the regulations resulted largely from recommendations made by City Council.

Mr. Tamarkin stated that he had no further questions. He advised the applicants that the zoning code contained numerous fence regulations and that they might need to return to the Commission if they proposed fencing near the front yard.

Thomas stated that the applicants understood they would need to submit another application for the fence. She explained that they wanted to secure approval of the accessory dwelling unit before returning with the fence proposal.

Chair Pollyea asked how the applicants selected the blue-gray color for the accessory dwelling unit and how it related to the principal residence. Thomas explained that the paint on the existing house was peeling and that the applicants already planned to repaint it. She stated that they intended to use a blue-gray color on both structures rather than the navy blue commonly used on other homes in the area. Chair Pollyea confirmed that the applicants planned to repaint the principal residence to match the accessory dwelling unit. Thomas confirmed that they did.

Chair Pollyea asked about the difference between the horizontal siding on the principal residence and the vertical siding proposed for the accessory dwelling unit. Thomas explained that only the front of the existing house had horizontal siding, while the sides and rear already had vertical siding. She stated that the design matched the portions of the house most visible from the accessory dwelling unit and created a complementary appearance. Thomas added that a previous owner renovated the house and installed different siding on the front while retaining the original metal siding on the remaining elevations. Amanda Thomas stated that the design would complement the existing home when viewed from the street, referring to a photograph that showed the

existing vertical siding on the side of the house.

Chair Pollyea asked about the layout of the accessory dwelling unit. Thomas stated that it would include two bedrooms and one and one-half bathrooms. Andrew Northern explained that the structure would be a single-story building constructed on a slab. Thomas added that the building would sit slightly higher to accommodate an accessible ramp and would include features to allow wheelchair users to move throughout the home.

Chair Pollyea confirmed that two people would initially occupy the accessory dwelling unit and that the applicants' daughter might live there in the future. Thomas stated that another possibility would involve her and her husband moving into the accessory dwelling unit if her mobility declined. She explained that there was a high likelihood she would eventually require a wheelchair.

Chair Pollyea asked whether future additions to the accessory dwelling unit would require further approvals. City Planner Capka stated that future expansions could proceed if they continued to meet all accessory dwelling unit requirements. She explained that the structure could not exceed 1,000 square feet and that any expansion requiring additional variances would need Commission approval. Otherwise, only a building permit would be required.

Chair Pollyea asked whether Commissioners had any additional questions.

Vice Chair Suriano asked whether a detached accessory dwelling unit on a small-lot residential property would return to the Planning Commission for final development plan or design review approval. City Planner Capka replied that it would not.

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Suriano, that the Conditional Use be Approved.

Discussion on the motion:

During discussion, Commissioner Shapaka stated that he believed accessory dwelling units fulfilled an important community need and supported Gahanna's decision to permit them. Although he expressed some hesitation about approving one on a small lot, he supported both the conditional use and the

variance.

Commissioner Mako stated that this represented the Commission's first accessory dwelling unit application and expected the process would involve continued discussion and learning. He concluded that the application satisfied the required conditions and recognized the challenges of fitting an accessory dwelling unit on a small lot. He also noted that the Royal Manor neighborhood contained a variety of housing styles and sizes and believed the proposal fit the character of the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Suriano stated that the requested rear-yard setback sounded more significant than its actual impact because of the distance to the neighboring home and the existing six-foot privacy fence. While acknowledging Commissioner Shapaka's concerns about setting precedent, he emphasized that the Commission evaluated each variance independently based on its unique circumstances. He believed the proposed setback created a reasonable balance by preserving usable yard space while maintaining adequate separation between structures and stated that he supported both the conditional use and the variance.

Commissioner Laser stated that she initially had concerns about accessory dwelling units but believed the proposal fit the neighborhood well because many nearby homes included detached garages while this property did not. She stated that the proposal represented a good long-term use of the property, appreciated the applicants' multi-generational plans, and supported preserving usable yard space between the structures. She stated that she would support the application.

Commissioner Greenberg stated that he supported the application and offered no additional comments.

Mr. Tamarkin agreed with the previous comments and stated that he believed the proposal represented the right decision for both Gahanna and its residents. He also commended City Council for its foresight in adopting the zoning code changes that allowed accessory dwelling units.

Chair Pollyea stated that one of her strongest memories from the 2024 Zoning Code rewrite involved the discussion of accessory dwelling units. She recalled that one of her primary concerns at the time was the potential use of accessory dwelling units as short-term rentals. She stated that the proposed multi-generational housing arrangement, with the applicants' parents and daughter, reflected the type of use she envisioned when the Commission considered allowing accessory dwelling units. She expressed her support for both the conditional use and the variance.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Shapaka, Greenberg, Laser and Tamarkin

[V-0013-2026](#)

To consider a Variance application to vary section 1103.09 - Small Lot Residential of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for an Accessory Dwelling Unit for property located at 337 Imperial Drive; Parcel ID 025-002672; Current Zoning R-3 - Small Lot Residential; Andrew Northern, applicant.

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Suriano, that the Variance be

Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Shapaka, Greenberg, Laser and Tamarkin

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

G. NEW BUSINESS - None

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Director of Planning

Director Blackford presented an update on several development projects previously approved by the Planning Commission. He explained that he wanted to provide Commissioners with progress reports on projects they regularly saw throughout the city.

Director Blackford reported that construction resumed at the Elliott Park development after the site remained inactive for several years. He noted that the approximately 14-acre, 251-unit residential project, located off Morse Road east of Hamilton Road, was progressing rapidly. He shared approved renderings as well as progress photos.

Director Blackford next reviewed the Johnstown Road Apartments project, a residential development of approximately 150 units. He stated that construction advanced significantly and that the Chief Building Official anticipated issuing occupancy permits for some buildings within the next few months.

Director Blackford also provided an update on the Crescent Central Park retail development, noting that construction of the approximately 17,000-square-foot retail portion was progressing well. He added that the approved medical office building associated with the project had not yet begun construction.

Director Blackford then reported that redevelopment of the former PNC Bank building into Northwest Bank continued to progress using much of the existing building footprint.

Director Blackford updated the Commission on the Biggby Coffee

project near the library and Clark Hall. He explained that the previous building was demolished and that the project was nearing completion of the engineering review process, with staff resolving final drive-through details before construction could begin.

Director Blackford then provided an update on the Gahanna Logistics Center at Tech Center Drive and Science Boulevard. He explained that although the site was previously cleared, the project did not proceed after City Council declined to approve requested incentives. He reported that a new developer recently expressed interest in the property and stated that the Planning Commission could see a similar development proposal later in the year.

Director Blackford stated that the city approved a tree-clearing permit and that crews cleared the site during late winter or spring 2025. Vegetation had since begun growing back. He explained that Planning Commission approved the project and its variances, but City Council later declined to approve the requested incentives. The developer continued exploring ways to make the project financially feasible but had not succeeded, leaving the site vacant. Director Blackford reported that another party recently expressed interest in the property and that he had spoken with the interested party earlier that day. He anticipated that Planning Commission could receive an application for a similar development in the fall.

Director Blackford then provided an update on the One Church property across from Heartland Bank on Hamilton Road. He explained that the approved project included a parking area on the west side of the property, relocation of the pond, and a large auditorium addition near the front of the site. He stated that much of the work occurred within the interior of the property and remained difficult to see from the street, although extensive site clearing occurred. He anticipated that Planning Commission could receive another application in the coming months to address inconsistencies on the site.

Director Blackford explained that he wanted to update the Commission on projects it approved because Commissioners might not regularly travel through every area of the city. He noted that he and City Planner Capka did not always remain closely involved during physical construction but offered to answer questions about the projects

presented or other developments.

Mr. Greenberg asked about the retail development in front of Sheetz, noting that residents asked what businesses would occupy the building. Director Blackford stated that the building would likely contain retail or restaurant uses with approximately four or five tenant spaces. He compared the development to the Shops at Rocky Fork, which included a mixture of restaurant and service businesses. He noted that City Planner Capka may have reviewed a related sign permit but stated that he had not reviewed it and therefore could not provide additional tenant information.

Chair Pollyea thanked Director Blackford for the presentation and stated that she found the updates informative. She then asked about the Northwest Bank project. She recalled that the applicant had indicated it would preserve the existing building rather than demolish it. Director Blackford agreed that he had remembered the proposal similarly. Chair Pollyea observed that only a portion of the existing structure appeared to remain and asked whether crews had demolished and reconstructed the walls or retained the original walls. Director Blackford confirmed that the remaining walls came from the previous building. Chair Pollyea stated that the amount of the building preserved appeared more limited than the Commission anticipated.

Director Blackford explained that the changes did not violate any zoning requirements. He acknowledged that he also expected the applicant to retain more of the original structure.

Chair Pollyea noted that the Commission had approved several variances for the site, including one related to the drive-through teller window and vehicle access. She asked whether the applicant would need to comply fully with the zoning code if demolition changed the project and eliminated the need for the previously approved variances. Director Blackford stated that, generally, the variances would remain valid if the completed project retained the same site plan, building appearance, materials, and colors approved by Planning Commission. He explained that the reasons supporting a variance informed staff's recommendation and the Commission's decision, but the approved site plan ultimately controlled what the applicant could construct.

Director Blackford used the Gahanna Logistics Center as an example. He stated that a future developer would likely need to submit a new variance application, even for a similar project, because the previously approved development had not been constructed. He explained that variances ran with the land only when a future project continued to match the approved plan. If the completed project remained consistent with the variances and site plan approved by Planning Commission, staff would generally consider the approvals valid.

Director Blackford offered to review the specific variances approved for the Northwest Bank project. He cautioned that the 2024 Zoning Code rewrite introduced numerous provisions that could apply differently depending on the circumstances. He believed the general rule he described applied but acknowledged that exceptions could exist.

Chair Pollyea thanked Director Blackford for the presentation.

Council Liaison

Ms. Laser reported that the August 12 , 2026, Planning Commission meeting would be the Commission's final meeting in the current building. She also reported that City Council adopted a resolution seeking grant funding for removable temporary flood barriers at Creekside. The barriers would replace the existing stop logs and would primarily serve during significant flood events.

Ms. Laser also reported that the Charter Review Commission recommended eliminating the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals and transferring certain zoning, building, and landscaping matters to the Planning Commission.

Chair Pollyea added that another proposed Charter amendment would eliminate the existing attendance requirement and allow the Planning Commission to establish its own attendance rules. She explained that, if voters approved the amendment, the Commission could adopt those rules at its next organizational meeting. Chair Pollyea noted that she and Deputy Clerk McGuire worked on the proposal.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - None**J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT**

Mr. Shapaka thanked City Planner Capka and Director Blackford for preparing the meeting materials and stated that the information was helpful.

Mr. Mako agreed and complimented their work.

Mr. Tamarkin asked whether the Planning Commission would hear appeals of its own decisions if the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals were eliminated.

Assistant City Attorney Roth clarified that appeals of Planning Commission decisions would proceed to court under Chapter 2506. He explained that matters over which the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals held original jurisdiction would transfer to the Planning Commission.

Chair Pollyea observed that the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals met infrequently. Mr. Roth stated that the Board generally held an organizational meeting and approximately one additional meeting each year.

Chair Pollyea wished everyone a pleasant summer, commented on the recent heat, and hoped everyone enjoyed the Fourth of July. Hearing no additional comments, she requested a motion to adjourn.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.