



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

John Hicks, Chair
Sarah Pollyea, Vice Chair
Michael Greenberg
James Mako
Thomas W. Shapaka
Michael Suriano
Michael Tamarkin

Sophia McGuire, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

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 Wednesday, February 26, 2025. The agenda for this meeting was published on February 21, 2025. Vice Chair Sarah Pollyea called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by James Mako.

Present 5 - James Mako, Sarah Pollyea, Michael Suriano, Thomas W. Shapaka, and Michael Greenberg

Absent 2 - John Hicks, and Michael Tamarkin

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2025-0046](#)

Planning Commission meeting minutes 2.12.2025

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

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

Absent: 2 - Hicks 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-0005-2025](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary The Hunter's Ridge and Kroger Master Sign Plan; for property located at 300 S. Hamilton Road; Parcel ID 025-001135; Current Zoning GC - General Commercial; Zack Cowan, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka introduced the application; see attached staff presentation for details. The application is for Kroger at 300 South Hamilton Road. Capka shared the location on a site map. It is located on the east side of Hamilton Road just south of Rocky Fork Boulevard. The applicant is requesting approval of a variance for a new larger wall sign. Kroger is a part of the Hunter's Ridge Shopping Center which has its own Master Sign Plan. There is a section within that sign plan that refers to regulations for Kroger. The main restriction for the primary Kroger wall sign is that it is limited to a maximum height of 72 inches. There was a sign permit approved for Kroger in October of 2024 and it was installed per the approved plans. The sign that was installed was too small. The sign that was on the building prior to October 2024 also met the 72-inch requirement. The proposed sign included with the application would replace the existing one and is 125 inches tall and around 235 square feet. This is 53 inches taller than what the master sign plan permits. Also, the total height of the sign band is 126 inches, so the proposed sign is only one inch smaller than the sign band. Additionally, the zoning code limits wall signs to 50 square feet. While the master sign plan does supersede zoning code requirements, the sign greatly exceeds these standard zoning code requirements as well, even though the master sign plan is more permissive.

Capka shared additional images with the exact location of the sign. An image in the top left corner showed the sign that is on the building currently. This is what was approved through the October sign permit is 72 inches tall. The image in the bottom left-hand corner is the original sign on the building, which met the 72-inch requirement. The master sign plan was created with that sign in mind. The image on the bottom right is the sign that's included with the variance application. This image shows that the sign goes to the extreme limits of the sign band area.

There is one variance included with the application. Capka shared the variance criteria that must be met for the application to be approved. There were some new code changes that went into effect January 2025, which included two new variance criteria. This application is the first application that was filed with the new criteria in effect. The new criteria are: 1) whether the variance is substantial and is the minimum necessary to make possible the reasonable use of land or structures and 2) the practical difficulty could be eliminated by some other method even if the solution is less convenient or more costly to achieve.

Staff recommends disapproval of the variance as submitted. The existing sign was installed as approved, and the new sign greatly exceeds Master Sign Plan and standard code requirements. Capka stated that when the applicant initially submitted their sign permit in October, they were proposing a sign at 121 inches and ended up reducing that in order to meet the master sign plan requirements. Because of the sign being larger than what they initially proposed, staff does not believe that the request is the minimum necessary. The sign could also be reworked to move the word "Marketplace" either behind the word Kroger or up to be in line with the lower part of the "G," and be closer to meeting the 72-inch requirement. However, the applicant has stated that the proposed sign is the new standard Kroger branding. Capka stated that if Planning Commission votes to approve the application, staff recommends adding a condition to reduce the sign height from 125 inches.

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

Rebecca Green, 74 Glen Drive, Worthington, introduced herself as a representative of Sign Vision, the sign company working on the project. Ms. Green said there were some changes that Kroger was willing to make regarding the sign, such as moving the "Marketplace" portion behind the letter G. The applicant provided graphics that Deputy Clerk McGuire shared. Ms. Green stated that the new proposed sign aligns with what staff suggested. It still needs a variance at 96 inches in height. It is a part of Kroger's new branding happening across the country. She noted that the store is set back quite a bit from Hamilton Road and they hope to make the sign a little bit larger. She said that Kroger has many different aspects to its business such as online shopping, an in-person and drive-thru pharmacy, Minute Clinic, Starbucks, and a liquor store. Thus, the branding must be unique to capture the many facets of Kroger's business. She apologized that the drawing was not submitted beforehand.

Vice Chair closed public comment at 7:12 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka asked if the logo's cart and letters were individual or if this was a box sign. Ms. Green stated they are individual channel letters. They are base illuminated white acrylic. Mr. Shapaka noted how small the existing sign is, which was put up in October of 2024. He asked Ms. Green how the issue of the sign being too small was brought to Kroger's attention. Ms. Green said there were multiple comments from customers. The entrance is a primary entrance for the store and there should be a larger landmark to indicate it as an entrance. She said the word "Marketplace" is typically kept underneath the word "Kroger" because it limits the area that the sign takes up.

Mr. Mako reiterated that the letters would be 96 inches. Ms. Green stated that it would be 96 inches from the bottom of the letter “g” to the top of the letter “K.” The original ask was for 125 inches. The new one will be a face-lit illuminated sign. Mr. Mako asked if the existing sign was illuminated. Ms. Green said it was similar to the proposed sign. It is face-lit white illuminated letters. Mr. Mako asked staff if this variance was specific to the Master Sign Plan rather than code, which Ms. Green confirmed.

Mr. Greenberg asked Ms. Green if Kroger would accept an amendment to the Variance to approve 96 inches. Ms. Green confirmed that although Kroger originally applied for a 125-inch sign, they were willing to modify it to the proposed 96 inches. Mr. Greenberg asked Ms. Capka if the Master Sign Plan could be amended. Ms. Capka said it could be, but the applicant would need to submit a new Master Sign Plan application. It would have to be filed by the landlord or property owner. Mr. Greenberg noted he drove by Kroger and felt the sign was small and a larger one would help.

Mr. Suriano agreed the existing sign was too small, judging from the photos. He acknowledged it was a rebranding campaign and a large expense went into it. He felt the “K” and “G” would cause issues if it was not reworked.

Vice Chair Pollyea asked Ms. Capka what the Master Sign Plan permitted. It permitted 72 inches in height. Capka explained that in the zoning code, wall signs are regulated by square feet and there is no maximum width or height, unless it is a multi-tenant development or the site has a Master Sign Plan. There is no maximum length or area for Kroger’s Master Sign Plan, though they are limited to 72 inches in height. Pollyea asked Ms. Green if there was any consideration to reduce the height of the sign to work it within the MSP. Ms. Green explained that an issue across Kroger in Ohio municipalities is that most measure area with an imaginary rectangle method, and the “K” and “G,” which are called ascenders and descenders, make the imaginary rectangle very large.

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Suriano, that the Variance be Approved with a condition that the sign is limited to 96 inches and the word "Marketplace" be positioned to the right of the "g" in "Kroger."

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Suriano stated his intent to vote in favor of the application with the amendment. He feels it makes the sign a more appropriate size and increases visibility in a positive way.

Mr. Shapaka also stated that he was in favor of the application. He felt the existing sign was a blur due to its size, and that Kroger would be penalized to adhere to the 72-inch requirement. He also felt moving the word “marketplace” to the side made it more dynamic.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Absent: 2 - Hicks and Tamarkin

[V-0007-2025](#)

To consider a Variance Application to amend V-0029-2024 for property located at 1070 Tech Center Dr.; Parcel ID 025-013634; Current Zoning IM - Innovation & Manufacturing; Burns & Scalo Roofing; Stephen Butsko, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka provided an overview of the application; see attached staff presentation. She stated that the applicant is seeking approval of a variance for a new monument sign. In November of last year, Planning Commission approved a variance for two wall signs at this site that exceeded zoning code requirements. The south front side was around 91.5 square feet and the east sign was 30.5 square feet. Planning Commission also added a condition of approval that a new variance application must be filed if the applicant wanted to place a monument sign on the site. The applicant is now requesting one monument sign to replace the proposed sign on the east side of the building. A variance application is required due to the previous condition.

The proposed sign is 78 inches tall, 32 square feet, and is 31 feet from the edge of the right-of-way. Capka shared a site plan of the property, showing the first two approved signs in orange. Sign 1 will still be installed but sign 2 is no longer proposed.

The one requested variance is technically an amendment to V-0029-2024, the previously approved variance application. Capka shared the variance criteria. Staff recommends approval of the variance as submitted. The monument sign meets all code requirements and having one wall sign and one monument sign aligns more closely with the code.

Vice Chair Pollyea opened public comment at 7:29 p.m.

Stephen Butsko, Branham Sign, 111 West Cumberland Street, Hebron. Mr. Butsko reiterated they would like to amend the previous variance so they can remove the east wall sign and replace it with a monument sign. The company felt the monument sign was a better option than an additional wall sign.

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

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

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

Absent: 2 - Hicks and Tamarkin

Taylor Commercial Park

[V-0006-2025](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Section 1155.04(b)(1) Site Planning of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 1641-1687 Taylor Road; Parcel ID 027-000008; Current Zoning OCT - Office, Commerce, and Technology; Taylor Industrial Park; Robert LeVeck, 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 Maddie Capka provided an overview of the application; see attached staff presentation. The project includes three applications and is located on the southern side of Taylor Road. These applications were filed under the former zoning code and the zoning district at that time was Office, Commerce, and Technology. The applicant is requesting approval of a final development plan, design review, and variance for a new industrial building. The building is 21,000 square feet and would be located in the front northwest corner of the Taylor Industrial Park site adjacent to Taylor Road. The proposed building matches the existing development on the site both in use and in exterior colors. The colors for the exterior materials are tumble weed and light tan with some stone accents. The project also includes 31 new parking spaces, around 840 square feet of landscaping, and some new parking lot trees. The site was approved for two flex industrial buildings, eight storage buildings, and one larger industrial building in 2021 with a total of around 250,000 square feet. The application proposes to develop the portion of the site that has no approvals yet.

Capka provided an aerial view of the entire site, which is outlined in red. The shaded area in the upper lefthand corner shows the scope of this project. Capka provided a zoomed-in site plan. The green area is the 21,000 square foot building, and blue shows the edge of the proposed right-of-way. The setback between the building and the right-of-way is around 40 feet. The new parking lot to the rear of the building is also visible. There are some new sidewalks proposed as well.

Capka shared elevations of the building. The top rendering shows the

front elevation that would face Taylor Road, showing the light tan color with the stone accents. The elevation on the bottom is the rear that would face the parking lot and it is made up of tan metal panels.

There is one variance included with this application, which is to chapter 1155.04(b)(1), which requires a front setback of 75 feet for all warehouse, manufacturing, and industrial uses. The proposed building is only setback 40 feet, so the variance, design review, and final development plan criteria are all from the former code.

Capka highlighted three applicable criteria. They are: compatibility with existing structures, the plan meets applicable development standards, and it's consistent with land use character and development of the area. Staff recommends approval of all three applications. The site is already mostly developed, and the proposed building matches the existing buildings in both use and appearance. Additionally, the variance would not be required under the current zoning code. The new setback for all sites zoned Innovation and Manufacturing is only 20 feet instead of the 75 feet that was required under the former zoning code. The applicant also states that there is a stream to the rear of the building which caused the plan to be shifted forward toward Taylor Road.

Vice Chair Pollyea opened public comment at 7:37 p.m.

Robert LeVeck, 625 Eastgate Parkway, Gahanna, introduced himself as the owner.

Mr. LeVeck stated that when he typically builds this style of building, the automobile parking will be in the front and the loading and unloading of the warehouse will be in the rear. Due to the constraints between the creek and Taylor Road itself, there isn't room to have parking in the front with loading in the rear, so those areas are combined in the proposed footprint. Additionally, flex-style warehouse space needs to be a certain depth for tenants to be able to utilize the space, so the building cannot be too shallow.

Vice Chair Pollyea closed public comment at 7:39 p.m.

Mr. Greenberg asked Ms. Capka if there is a requirement for sidewalks at this site. Capka explained that the Engineering Department requires sidewalks in the right-of-way. The zoning code has a minimum width for sidewalks and requires sidewalks from the parking lot to the entrances of the building, which is included in the proposal. Mr. LeVeck added that he put in a multi-use path along Taylor Road.

Mr. Shapaka asked if there was a tenant for the building. Mr. LeVeck replied there is not currently a tenant. Mr. Shapaka asked if there were many visitors, to which Mr. LeVeck replied that most of the businesses operate with employees that pick up company vehicles and work off-site, and he did not believe there were many visitors. Mr. Shapaka questioned if the access road to the east already existed, to which Mr. LeVeck replied it did. Mr. Shapaka wondered if there was also a landscape plan. Ms. Capka stated there was, and it was not part of her presentation but was included in the online application materials.

Mr. Mako asked if his assumption was correct that the flex warehouse space would essentially be a building shell and tenant finishes would be added as clients were acquired. Mr. LeVeck confirmed, stating that all these types of properties he has built have been on speculation. Mr. Mako noted that the storm water detention is on the west side and asked whether everything has been adequately sized and piped for the detention. Mr. LeVeck stated that everything north of the stream is currently running to the detention basin.

Ms. Pollyea asked what kind of tenants would be occupying the space. Mr. LeVeck shared some of his current tenants, including lawn care company ExperiGreen, a Taekwondo studio, PIRTEK, a food packaging company, and a goods repackaging company.

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

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

Absent: 2 - Hicks and Tamarkin

[DR-0001-2025](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for site plan, landscaping, and building design for 13 acres for property located at 1641-1687 Taylor Road; Parcel ID 027-000008; Current Zoning OCT - Office, Commerce, and Technology; Taylor Commercial Park; Robert LeVeck, applicant.

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

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

Absent: 2 - Hicks and Tamarkin

[FDP-0001-2025](#)

To consider a Final Development Plan Application for property located at 1641-1687 Taylor Road; Parcel ID 027-000008; Current Zoning OCT - Office, Commerce, and Technology; Taylor Commercial Park; Robert LeVeck, applicant.

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

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

Absent: 2 - Hicks and Tamarkin

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

G. NEW BUSINESS - NONE

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Director of Planning

Director Blackford reported that the Taylor Commercial Park applications were the last ones outstanding that were filed under the prior zoning code. A development plan for a site adjacent to Burns & Scalo was recently submitted and would be coming forward to Planning Commission. There are around a half dozen administratively approvable minor development plans in the office. Finally, the Planning team has been involved in outreach with parties interested in development beyond multi-family and industrial uses.

Council Liaison

Ms. Pollyea reported that the Sustainability 2050 initiative was discussed during recent council meetings. The initiative is a voluntary certification program to help local governments achieve sustainability goals. It relates to the regional sustainability agenda. Additional information can be found online.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - NONE

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Members of the Planning Commission commended Vice Chair Pollyea for successfully running her first meeting.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.