



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

John Hicks, Chair
Michael Suriano, Vice Chair
Bobbie Burba
Michael Greenberg
Thomas Shapaka
Michael Tamarkin
Thomas J. Wester

Krystal Gonchar, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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

Gahanna Planning Commission met in Regular Session in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 200 South Hamilton Road, Gahanna, Ohio, on Wednesday, December 4, 2019. The agenda for this meeting was published on November 21, 2019. Chair John Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Shapaka.

Present 7 - Thom Shapaka, Thomas J. Wester, Michael Suriano, John Hicks, Bobbie Burba, Michael Greenberg, and Michael Tamarkin

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA: None.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2019-0167](#)

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, November 20, 2019.

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

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

D. SWEAR IN APPLICANTS & SPEAKERS

Assistant City Attorney Kristin Rosan administered an oath to those persons wishing to present testimony this evening.

E. APPLICATIONS - PUBLIC COMMENT

[FDP-0008-2019](#)

To consider a Final Development Plan application for Lincoln Elementary School; for property located at 261 Helmbright Dr.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-005486, 025-008749, 025-005128, 025-009307, 025-008741, 025-008742, 025-008743, 025-008744, 025-008745, 025-008746, 025-008747, 025-008748; current zoning Restricted Institutional District(RID); Scott Lofton, applicant.

Interim Director of Planning & Development Michael Blackford provided a summary of the three applications, FDP-0008-2019, V-0017-2019, and DR-0024-2019; showed the location and zoning map; the RID does allow for schools by right, the surrounding properties are zoned PUD, which can be residential or commercial; this will be 2 stories and 82,500 sq. ft. and have 300 parking spaces; there was a previous FDP approved in December 2018, but the applicant did not break ground so that expires; this is a similar request from the last one, with some footprint changes; there were changes to the shape of the retention pond; the building is more or less in the same spot; parking will remain in the same area as well; showed images of the 2018 FDP that was approved; reviewed criteria to evaluate final development plans and design review applications; there was no design review submitted in 2018; materials will be brick and stone, wood and aluminum features; showed images that were submitted with the application; the variance is for the lighting; requested 1.0 foot candles versus .5 foot candles, due to safety; stated this is a code issue and would like to have that changed in the future; .5 foot candles are not bright enough for safety; reviewed criteria for evaluating variances; staff recommends approval for all three applications; engineering plans are in review; the city engineer is comfortable with the site layout; he does not foresee any negative changes to the land due to this proposal; there will be some traffic improvements as well but those are not yet identified.

Chair opened the Public Hearing at 7:17 p.m.

Jocelyn Krosky, Project Manager for Triad Architects, representative for the applicant; stated that construction would begin in February 2020, which was beyond the allowed one year timeline, which is why we are back here again; reiterated the proposed changes; the exterior of the school will be brick, showed images that are complimentary to the existing school; there is a metal panel on a portion of the building, located near the gym and cafeteria, as well as near where the media center will be; reiterated that the variance to lighting is for safety; this is for an elementary school and they have people coming and going during the early morning hours and in the evening hours; some lights have shields so that they don't interfere with neighbors.

Clinton Allen, 419 Shady Springs Dr.; the south end parking lot was removed, asked if the retention pond was removed as well; regarding the current lights at the middle school, is curious about the foot for that; asked if they are .5ft or 1ft; his concerns about light pollution seem to have been addressed; recommended that the name of the loop should be named after a teacher; asked if there will be security built in the school; also, stated that there's currently a lake back there; asked if that could just be expanded.

Mark Ford, 777 Tabon Ct.; said he a community leader in Akron and encouraged volunteerism in schools; stated that he is upset about the process; felt that there was not enough communication between the schools and the neighbors; stated that he moved into his home last August; was informed then by the realtor/previous homeowner/ that the landscaping and retaining walls that they put in was actually on the school's property; was told back then that the school's had not used that part of their property, so it would probably be fine in the future; now is being told that parts of the landscaping that was put in by the previous homeowner, which again, was on the school property, would now be removed for this project; does not feel that this was an open process; the school district and city should be more sensitive to property owners.

Kari Hawk, Tabon Ct.; huge supporter of the schools; was PTO president at Lincoln; husband works at the schools; pointed out the area of concern; referred to a large green space where kids practice sports and go sledding; the wildlife there is amazing; it is special to have that in a suburban area; afraid to lose the charm of living there; most of us on the street have lived there for years; don't think we need a basketball court there; there is a basketball court 2 blocks away; the only people who currently go to the basketball court are the ones that come around at 11:30 at night and make lots of noise; reiterated that she does not want a basketball court at the school.

Janna Ford, 777 Tabon Ct.; would be thrilled if that green space could remain; it is educational and a place for wildlife; asked if the new retaining pond will be in the same location as the current one; asked how close the construction will come to her property line.

Krosky introduced Dan Biru. Biru said to Mr. Allen, he can't respond to what the loop will be named, that's for the school to consider; there are security measures in place for the school but can't talk about that here;

regarding the retention pond, we are aware of the current pond and it is separate from this property; this property requires its own retention basin; this is an expansion though to one that is currently there. Allen asked if the lights can be dimmed during late night hours. Krosky said unsure. Biru said that is possible but not included in this project. Krosky said the retention pond is being enhanced; the construction team will not be going onto other property, they will remain on the school grounds; the loop has shifted to the east to have less impact on residences. Biru said the contractor may need to approach the property line, cannot speak to what the contractor will do; although we ask the construction team to not disturb closer than 10-15 feet to the lines. Hawk asked about what is happening to South. Biru showed where the basins are and where they will be expanded; said there are codes and regulations for stormwater that they must follow. Krosky and Scott Lofton said the middle school students enjoy playing basketball; especially on nicer days during winter months; this is a specific request from the schools.

Scott Lofton 1774 Harrison Pond Dr.; said there is currently a large area that has asphalt where students go out when the grass is too wet; the retention pond is taking that space away, we need another space for them to go.

Michael Thomas 775 Tabon Ct.; major concern is the noise of the basketball court; asked is the retention basin going to be fenced because part of it is not currently. Krosky said yes, it will be fenced. Biru said this will not be a wet pond, this is a dry basin; will only have water when there is a major storm event.

Ford asked how far from the property line is the fence going to go; hearing now that it will be up to the architects; steaking would be helpful. Krosky said looking at the trees, many of those existing trees will remain. Clinton asked if the soccer field will be gone, and what will go in its place. Krosky showed the large grassy area where kids can play sports; showed other areas where green space remains. Lofton said there is a track and field area so they asked people to go out and mark where pavement would be proposed.

Chair closed the PH at 7:56 pm.

Tamarkin asked about the strength of existing lights on the middle

school; said that had not been addressed. Krosky said she is unsure. Lofton said they were changed to LED so they may still be the half foot candles. Tamarkin said it is important to have continuity for the entire site. Krosky said all the lights will be new for the parking area; this is a football field away from the middle school building. Tamarkin said he concurs that basketball courts are loud and disruptive at night, so perhaps signs could be put up to ban the sport after a certain hour.

Shapaka spoke to the FDP; asked why the south parking lot had been abandoned. Krosky said partly because of cost constraints; tried to incorporate as much of that parking as possible into the current plan. Shapaka asked if there is currently parking behind the school. Krosky said no; we don't need an additional parking lot now. Shapaka suggested moving the basketball court to where the parking lot was going to be; said security is a concern for the school and is fine with the variance to lighting; asked what was the genesis for the design; what's there now is complimentary to the neighborhood; can't see anything on the roof; is pleasing to the eye; why put blocks up there on the roof. Krosky said the project can't afford false pitched roofs; needed to make tough choices so those were pulled off the design in order to maintain a nice school for the students. Shapaka asked if it was just an economic choice. Krosky said yes, the construction costs in central Ohio are going up. Shapaka said he is disappointed in losing green space and the design does not look like a school.

Greenberg asked if the basketball court will be lit. Krosky said no. Greenberg said that would deter kids playing at night. Asked if there will be fencing around the school for kids' safety. Krosky showed where the fencing would be. Greenberg asked about dumpsters. Krosky said they will be shielded.

Wester asked about drawing c101, detail b; where Helmbright meets Taylor Rd.; the intersection that is 2 lanes will be 3; hopes the City Engineer asks for widening and not a narrowing of the lanes; note 7 has shared costs; asked why is Gahanna incurring costs associated with this; a year ago this was before us and he voted no; voted no because the FDP seemed incomplete; discussing the same issues now; disappointing to hear this stuff and what I view as a lack of communication between the school board and community; had past experience when contractors said trees will be kept and then they cut them down with a chainsaw; should be up to the owner to save those things; can appreciate the charm and wildlife of the area; can appreciate comments about basketball courts; won't be supporting an incomplete

application.

Suriano asked if there are any underground detentions on the project. Biru said no. Suriano asked if there would be elevated fencing around the detention. Biru confirmed; explained what a dry basin looks like; said it will be planted with long grasses; and will appear as a lawn; overtime somethings will grow up. Suriano asked if there was a tree preservation plan for the project. Buzz Furasi said there is one prepared and in the packet; they follow city code; shows all trees intended to be removed and what will stay; is all documented. Suriano said to Ford that he may want to look at that. Krosky said all documents submitted to the city are already available. Lofton said we have met several times with Ford and the site was still under development, was difficult to give information when they were so early on; tried to communicate what we thought was going to happen. Suriano asked if the lights would be LED. Krosky confirmed. Suriano asked about brick. Krosky said it is just a band and takes on the texture and provides shadow relief. Suriano said that provides depth on the facade that helps the walls; said the split face CMU is a buff color; asked is the bottom band that cast stone. Krosky said no, that the design is to allow for relief; looks flat in photo but is not. Suriano asked if it is resilient based. Krosky said yes, the CMU will be more durable. Suriano asked about the metal panel, is it corrugated. Krosky said no.

Burba asked about a past discussion of children going through people's property; has that been addressed. Krosky said there is a fence that runs along that part of the property. Burba asked what kind of fence. Krosky said 6' high chain link.

Hicks asked Krosky for estimated completion. Krosky said June 2021, opening mid-august of 2021. Hicks said his daughter runs cross country route and uses the hill when it snows; nice to see that it will be maintained.

Shapaka asked about the base, asked about the material. Krosky said it will be split face CMU. Shapaka said it looks like a different color on the elevations. Krosky said it is the same; reviewed the elevations. Shapaka asked about the screening of the mechanical equipment, what are those. Krosky said metal panels, showed a sample. Shapaka asked if there is a change in elevation, or is it flush; seems like the field is lower than the road there. Biru showed highest point of site, showed the drop; site is

limited by properties and roadway; can't flatten that area. Shapaka said people will see more of the top when driving down; concerned about the look of that. Krosky said the panels don't go higher than the equipment up on the roof.

A motion was made by Wester, seconded by Suriano, that the Final Development Plan be Approved.

Discussion on the motion: Wester said he will not be in support; the design has progressed dramatically, but the communication with the public is lacking; worked with the Federal Highway Administration; there were times that he felt their communication with the public was overwhelming, but after a while he came to appreciate it because then people became aware of the details.

Suriano said he will be voting in favor of the plan; said we look at staff comments and presentations by staff, we are looking for that to determine the completeness of the application; was it vetted through city engineering, and development; by the time it gets in front of us, it is considered complete because that is what is required by the city scope; what he is looking at: is it a good fit, is it impactful to neighboring properties significantly, are they doing the best with what they have; have not been a design professional as long as Wester, but in today's environment, we do a lot of compromising; we look at costs, design parameters, things that are not readily available for discussion in a half hour conversation; with regard to tonight's discussion, there are visuals that wouldn't make sense to people who do not look at drawings every day; he is happy with some answers he received tonight and will be voting in favor.

Greenberg said he echoes Wester's comments about the lack of communication; will be supporting this tonight despite that; communication is critical for all projects.

Tamarkin will be supporting the project, but still bothered by the basketball court on the site and encourages cooperation of the schools.

Shapaka agrees with Suriano's comments; was not here a year ago when first plan was presented; leaning in favor of approving the FDP because it seems to have solved many problems and included compromise.

Burba will be in support and also agrees with the communication between the schools and neighbors; our tax dollars will be paying for the school.

Hicks said this is a unique development in the fact that it is not a developer putting up their money or investment money, this is tax payer money; a few years ago the community got behind the levy after many cups of coffee with the superintendent; the communication back then was great; the past year has been lacking in information; the city has an opportunity to increase communication; the city website can be difficult to navigate; does believe that the commission has enough information needed to make a decision about the FDP.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Shapaka, Suriano, Hicks, Burba, Greenberg and Tamarkin

No: 1 - Wester

[V-0017-2019](#)

To consider a Variance application to vary section 1163.06(a)- Lighting, Striping and Traffic Control, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; to allow for changes to lighting levels; for property located at 261 Helmbright Dr.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-005486, 025-008749, 025-005128, 025-009307, 025-008741, 025-008742, 025-008743, 025-008744, 025-008745, 025-008746, 025-008747, 025-008748; current zoning Restricted Institutional District(RID); Lincoln Elementary, Scott Lofton, applicant.

See discussion above, under FDP-0008-2019.

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

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

[DR-0024-2019](#)

To consider a Design Review application for a site plan, landscaping plan, building design, and demolition of a portion of the existing middle school site for a new elementary school; for property located at 261 Helmbright Dr.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-005486, 025-008749, 025-005128, 025-009307, 025-008741, 025-008742, 025-008743, 025-008744, 025-008745, 025-008746, 025-008747, 025-008748; current zoning Restricted Institutional District(RID); Lincoln Elementary, Scott Lofton, applicant.

See discussion above, under FDP-0008-2019.

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

Yes: 5 - Suriano, Hicks, Burba, Greenberg and Tamarkin

No: 2 - Shapaka and Wester

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

G. NEW BUSINESS: None.

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Assistant City Attorney

No report.

Planning & Development

No report.

Council Liaison

No report.

CIC Liaison

Hicks stated that the December meeting will be on the 3rd Tuesday, so there is nothing to report yet.

Chair

Hicks said he wanted to bring it to everyone's attention that at Monday's Council Meeting, they passed a Motion Resolution to refer the vacation of North St. and public right of way to the December 18 Planning Commission meeting; stay tuned for more information, but there will be some type of discussion at the next meeting, about the Mill St. development.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS: None.

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Tamarkin wished Burba a Happy Belated Birthday.

Suriano commented that it is difficult when presenting to commissions; there are a lot of resources used to convey projects; sometimes that gets lost because we don't have a good format; it is frustrating when we have the information but not the resources to convey that; we need to figure out a way to resolve that for these meetings; we should be able to be more fluid.

Hicks said in the past, we have had requests for 3d models; it is hard when you are not a designer, and trying to understand the visuals sometimes; thanked everyone for coming out tonight; hopes that even though the votes did not go the way they thought they would, that the residents felt heard.

K. ADJOURNMENT

at 8:44 p.m.