



# 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*

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Wednesday, May 14, 2025

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 May 14, 2025. The agenda for this meeting was published on May 9, 2025. Chair John Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sarah Pollyea.

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

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

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2025-0103](#) Planning Commission meeting minutes

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

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

#### 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-0013-2025](#) To consider a Variance Application to vary Section 1103.09(e) - Small Lot Residential of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for

property located at 307 Rivers End Road, Parcel ID 025-000666; Current Zoning R-3 - Small Lot Residential; Don Mack, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. The application is for a variance at 307 Rivers End Road. Capka provided a view of the zoning map showing the parcel along with its adjacent parcels, which are zoned R-3, Small Lot Residential. The applicant is requesting approval of a variance to allow a detached garage within a side yard setback. The garage is 900 square feet and located entirely to the rear of the existing house. For all properties zoned R-3, the side-yard setback is five feet, which is the lowest side yard setback for any zoning district. The garage is only three feet from the south property line, so it encroaches two feet into the required setback. There was a building permit approved for the garage, and the approved permit showed the garage at five feet from the side property line. When a foundation inspection was performed the inspector found that the garage was only three feet from the property line and the inspection failed because it did not match the approved plans. Because the garage is no longer compliant with the zoning code a variance application is required. The applicant states that the garage was built in the wrong location because they didn't notice the five-foot setback shown on the plans.

Capka then shared a site plan, highlighting the garage in purple. She then provided elevations of the garage. The top left elevation is the front and that is what faces the right-of-way. She then shared some images of the property, showing the current state of the garage. She noted that the foundation was installed very close to the fence. Another image showed the street view from July of 2024. The red box shows the approximate location of the garage, a portion of which would be visible from the right-of-way.

There is one variance associated with this application, which is for chapter 1103.09(e) which states that accessory structures must be at least five feet from the side property line. Capka provided the variance criteria that must be met in order for the application to be approved. One criteria of note is the very last one, which states the practical difficulty could be eliminated by some other method even if the solution is less convenient or more costly to achieve. One of the reasons that the applicant requested a variance is because they state that the project would be costly to move the garage. Capka noted cost cannot be taken into account when assessing a variance application.

Staff recommended disapproval of the variance as submitted. Since the garage was initially approved at five feet from the side property line, there is sufficient room on the site for the garage to meet all setback

requirements. The variance criteria was not met and cost is not a factor. However, the neighbor to the south stated that they support the variance and they are the neighbor closest to the garage.

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

Don Mack, 307 Rivers End Road. Mr. Mack explained that he purchased the home with the intent to live in Gahanna permanently. It was built in 1960 and required extensive renovation. He purchased the property in July of 2024 and began the garage project in August. He explained that in January of 2025 he fired the initial contractor, and hired a second contractor. Issues were caused due to a language barrier. Mr. Mack explained he was aware of a one-foot setback but not of the five-foot setback.

He noted that he would not have proceeded with the Variance if there were safety issues, but the fire and police departments signed off on the project, stating that having at least a three-foot setback is not a safety issue. Mr. Mack also stated his neighbor nearest the side of the construction, Caleb Redfern, supports the application.

Mr. Mack referenced the photos that staff shared. There were two large trees that were against the fence along the property line, which put leaves and debris into Mr. Redfern's yard. Mr. Mack stated that Mr. Redfern was pleased that Mr. Mack removed the trees in preparation for the garage.

Chair Hicks closed public comment at 7:11 p.m.

Mr. Greenberg asked if Mr. Mack was in contact with other neighbors regarding the project. Mr. Mack explained that he was in contact with neighbors in the process of cleaning up the lot, and all were pleased with the progress. Regarding the garage project, the other lots are outside the five-foot setback, and Mr. Mack did not receive feedback from those neighbors. Mr. Greenberg confirmed with the clerk that there was no other correspondence received from neighbors. Mr. Greenberg asked Mr. Mack when he realized the garage construction was out of compliance with city code. Mr. Mack explained that the City of Gahanna sent out someone to inspect the footer once it was in place. Building and Heating Inspector Mike Frey conducted the inspection and approved the footer. Later, an outside inspector for the foundation conducted an inspection and noted that the footer was too close to the property line. Afterward, he noticed the setback on the plans and submitted the Variance Application.

Mr. Suriano confirmed that the structure is in compliance with the rear setback. He wondered if the dimensions were correct and simply in the

wrong spot, or if the structure was too large. Mr. Mack confirmed the dimensions are correct. The garage is 30 feet by 30 feet. To be compliant with code, the entire structure needs to be moved two feet. Mr. Suriano asked if Mr. Mack discussed moving the structure with the contractor. Mr. Mack stated the contractor expressed that it would be time consuming and labor intensive, approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000 in cost, in addition to the delays. He recognized that cost is not a factor for the Planning Commission. Mr. Suriano wondered who made the mistake, and if the contractor did not read the drawings correctly, noting that a mistake on the contractor's part would not be the responsibility of the owner.

Mr. Tamarkin asked if the fence shown in the images was the neighbor's fence or Mr. Mack's fence. Mr. Mack stated the fence is the neighbor's. He added that there was a galvanized chain link fence on the property when he bought the property, which was against the neighbor's fence. The fence was removed when Mr. Mack purchased the property.

Mr. Shapaka inquired about the overall cost of the garage. Mr. Mack stated it is about \$60,000. Mr. Shapaka wondered about the possibility of simply shaving two feet off one side and moving one wall, and whether it would affect the operation of the overhead doors. Mr. Mack noted there is a solar panel planned for the garage roof, which factors into the design. Mr. Shapaka explained one reason for the five-foot setback requirement is to provide for the ability to clear debris. Mr. Shapaka wondered if Mr. Mack would be able to remove the six-foot fence along the side of the garage, noting that it would be easier to clean up debris if necessary. Mr. Mack noted that the fence is his neighbor's, and he would need permission to do so. Mr. Mack also stated the three-foot setback would allow him enough space to clean the area. Mr. Shapaka clarified that Mr. Mack did not intend to store anything between the garage and fence, which Mr. Mack confirmed.

Mr. Shapaka confirmed with Ms. Capka that this plan was approved for small lot residential. He then asked if the driveway required a variance, to which Ms. Capka replied there was only a one-foot setback for the driveway, so it met code requirements.

Mr. Mako asked the applicant whether the first contractor dug the foundation for the footer. Mr. Mack stated the second contractor dug the foundation and put the footer in, again highlighting the language barrier between himself and the contractor. Mr. Mako wondered if it was a fair assumption that the contractor was able to see that there was a five-foot setback on the property. Mr. Mack felt that while this was a fair assumption, he was unsure if the contractor understood the setback. Mr.

Mako then inquired with the administration as to whether the five-foot side yard setback was the smallest within the city for residential lots. Ms. Capka confirmed.

Ms. Pollyea asked Mr. Mack if the contractor planned to assume financial responsibility for moving the garage footing if needed. Mr. Mack stated he had not discussed that with the contractor yet. Ms. Pollyea asked if the contractor had insurance, and Mr. Mack stated the contractor was bonded. Ms. Pollyea wondered if there was an option to add gravel between the garage and the fence, and Mr. Mack stated that he would like to do so.

Chair Hicks remarked positively that Mr. Mack retained legal counsel.

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

**Discussion on the motion:**

**Mr. Suriano stated it is an unfortunate situation, and given the size of the garage and the tight side yard setback, he would not be in favor of the variance. He felt it would be the contractor's responsibility to fix, considering there were approved drawings.**

**Mr. Tamarkin expressed agreeance with Mr. Suriano. He stated that while the contractor made an error, he was hesitant to set a precedent to permit a three-foot side yard setback. For those reasons, he intended to vote no on the application.**

**Mr. Shapaka noted that the applicant obtained a permit up front, met all his obligations as a homeowner, and there will be no safety issues as a result of this project. He stated his intent to vote in favor of the application, as he did not want to penalize Mr. Mack, given the circumstances.**

**Mr. Mako empathized with the homeowner, noting this was a difficult situation to be in. He felt the variance criteria for the application had not been met, and stated the responsibility lies on the contractor, who made an error. He believed it was the contractor's duty to rectify the mistake. He stated he was not in support of the variance.**

**Ms. Pollyea agreed with Mr. Mako. She believed the issue was a legal one. She felt the only mistake Mr. Mack made was choosing the contractor. She suggested he could have done more due diligence, but overall expressed the mistake was not his fault. She noted that she sees issues like this frequently as a real estate attorney, and suggested he meet with his legal counsel to learn what his options may be. She stated she would not be in support of the issue.**

**Mr. Hicks also recommended that Mr. Mack pursue the discussion with his legal counsel.**

**The motion failed by the following vote:**

**Yes: 1 - Shapaka**

No: 6 - Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Suriano, Tamarkin and Greenberg

### One Church

#### [DP-0002-2025](#)

To consider a Development Plan Application for property located at 817 North Hamilton Road, Parcel ID 025-001918; Current Zoning RI - Restricted Institutional; One Church; Tony Torres, 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 Madde Capka provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. The project includes a major development plan and variance application. It is at 817 North Hamilton Road, which is the site of One Church. Capka provided a history of the applications for One Church. In June of 2017, there was a design review application for 219 new parking spaces on the site. Then, in April of 2023, there were design review and variance applications for the northeast parking lot with a condition added for some additional screening, which increased the total parking count on the site to 543 spaces which is where it sits today. In May 2024, there was a design review application for some exterior modifications to the building. That application did not include any parking changes. In June 2024, there were design review and variance applications for the temporary gravel lot, adding approximately 60 to 70 spaces in front of the main church building. The variance approval ended in December 2024. The applicant requested a continuance through another variance application in January of 2025, which was denied. In August of 2024 there were Final Development Plan, Design Review, and Variance applications for a new auditorium, around 342 new parking spaces, and the removal of 187 trees. Those applications were denied. Some of the reasons for the denial included screening between the parking lots and the adjacent residential properties, as well as some concerns from City of Gahanna staff on the reduced amount of parking lot landscaping. Since the new applications, there have also been some code changes. A new zoning code was adopted in May of 2024, and any applications filed after that date must comply with the new code. Since the previous applications from August of 2024 were denied, the applicant had to resubmit the applications under the new code. Therefore, there are some new zoning code requirements that apply to this project now that did not previously. One of those requirements is for buffering and screening. There are now additional screening requirements between institutional uses and residential uses. Previously there was only screening required between parking lots and residential properties. Now, screening is required around almost the entire perimeter of the property except for along Hamilton Road. There is also a new requirement for one

electric vehicle charging station per 25 parking spaces, which equates to 16 total electric vehicle charging stations. The applicant is requesting a variance for the required number of electric vehicle charging stations.

Another requirement stipulates there can be no new parking areas in front of the main building on the site. This proposal includes one new parking lot that will be to the front of the main building in the southeast corner of the lot.

The application includes a Major Development Plan and Variance for a new auditorium and parking lot expansion. The auditorium is approximately 19,500 square feet and will be attached to the front of the existing church building to the east. The primary colors for the addition are white and gray with an accent of chestnut siding. The total parking space count with this proposal is 785 spaces. The zoning code requires a minimum of 280 spaces for all uses on the site. The proposal exceeds the minimum. None of the existing parking areas are being modified except for the lot in the west, which is being removed and relocated.

Capka provided information on the landscaping proposed. There will be 61 trees located in the parking lot and around 11,000 square feet of parking lot landscaping. The proposal meets all interior landscaping requirements. The applicant is also providing an additional 186 caliper inches of trees for requirements in chapter 914 of Gahanna City Code, which is reviewed by the Parks Department. The applicant is also proposing a six-foot high white vinyl privacy fence around the entire exterior of the property except for along Hamilton Road. The proposal removes 65 existing trees for the new pond, south drive, and the northwest parking areas. However, 122 trees will still remain after the 65 are removed.

Capka provided a chart comparing the previous proposal from August 2024 to the current proposal. The total number of parking spaces with the previous application was 885, while the current proposal is 785. The total new parking area was previously 290,000 square feet, which included redoing the main parking area just north of the church. This is the primary reason for the large difference between the previous proposal and the current proposal of 119,000 square feet. The parking lot trees for the first proposal included 45 trees, which required a variance. The current proposal includes 61 trees in the parking lot. The parking lot landscape area is going from 16,000 to 11,000 square feet. Sixty-five trees will be removed with this application. The applicant previously planned to remove 187 trees. The size of the addition went from 22,000 ft to 19,500 feet.

Capka shared a presentation slide comparing the two site plans. Both showed parking areas in the southeast and northwest corners. However, there are fewer proposed parking spaces in those areas. Capka shared the site plan for the updated proposal. She showed the location of the new auditorium in between the existing building on Hamilton Road and two new parking areas. The parking area in the southeast corner requires a Variance because it is located to the front of the main church building. The parking area lines up with the northeast parking lot. Capka then shared a tree survey, showing which trees are being removed and which trees will remain on the site. She noted that the majority of trees remaining are located on the exterior of the site.

Capka then shared elevations of the auditorium, along with a rendering of what the site would look like after construction. The colors for the planned addition match the existing building colors.

Capka shared the Major Development Plan criteria that must be met in order for the application to be approved. They are:

1. The development meets the applicable development standards of the zoning ordinance
2. It is in accord with appropriate plans for the area
3. It would not have undesirable effects on the surrounding area
4. It would be in keeping with the existing land use character and physical development potential of the area

The Variance criteria are:

1. The variance is not likely to result in substantial damage to the essential character of the neighborhood
2. The variance is not likely to result in damage to adjoining properties
3. The variance is not likely to affect the delivery of government services
4. The variance is not likely to result in environmental impacts greater than what is typical for other lots in the neighborhood
5. The variance is necessary for the economical use of the property, and such economical use of the property cannot be achieved through another method
6. The variance is not likely to undermine the objectives of the land use plan

Capka added that these applications were filed before the two new variance criteria were added. There are three variances included with the variance application. The first is that parking areas cannot be closer to the front property line than the front of the primary building. There is one parking lot proposed to the front of the church, which is located 27 feet from the front property line. The next variance criteria is that there's one

electric vehicle charging station required per 25 new parking spaces, which would be a total of 16 spaces for this project. The applicant proposes zero electric vehicle charging stations and instead would like to install an electrical power pole location in case they have any electric vehicle charging needs in the future. The last criteria is for buffering and screening requirements, which states that there must be 55 trees within 10 feet from the property line to count toward buffer requirements. There are no new buffer trees proposed; however, as the tree survey highlights, many existing trees along the property line will remain.

Staff recommends approval of the major development plan as submitted. The application meets the criteria and was revised to address concerns from the community, planning commission, and City of Gahanna staff. Additionally, there will now be a privacy fence around the entire property and the parking lot landscaping and tree planting requirements are now met. Approximately 122 trees will remain on site, while the former application would have removed all of those trees. The addition is also compatible with the existing buildings on the site in both design and use and the auditorium is reduced by 3,000 square feet from the previous proposal.

Staff also recommends approval of all three variances. The parking lot to the front of the church building is in line with the existing northwest parking lot, and the applicant states that part of the parking area cannot be set back any further due to topography. Although there are no new trees being planted for buffering requirements, around 122 trees will remain, many of which are along the property lines. Capka noted that the trees that are remaining on the lot are not eligible for preservation credit because construction is occurring within 10 feet of the trees, so there is a chance that some could be damaged during construction. Additionally, there is the 6-foot high privacy fence, which will help mitigate negative effects of the parking lots. Additionally, the applicant states that electric vehicle charging stations are not compatible with the main use of the site since visiting vehicles are typically only parking for approximately one hour during church services. Additionally, they will have an electrical power pole location if any electric vehicle charging stations are desired in the future.

Chair Hicks opened public comment at 7:44 p.m.

Tony Torres, 106 West 4th Street, Santa Ana, California introduced himself as the architect and representative of the project. He acknowledged City Planner Capka's presentation and noted design changes made to address neighbors' concerns. Parking spaces were reduced by about 100 spaces. The auditorium was reduced in size. A six-foot vinyl fence is now surrounding the site, and all parking that is

facing the property line was removed. All parking now occurs within the planter islands. Mr. Torres stated that eight months ago, when the original application was denied, the church asked the architect, civil engineer, and the landscape architect to come back with the new design to address the neighbors' concerns, and he felt they did.

Pete Ferguson, 386 Castle Pines Drive, introduced himself as the president of the Castle Pines Condo Association. Mr. Ferguson stated he was speaking on behalf of the Association's Board of Directors. He highlighted positive things One Church recently did for neighbors, including installing new fencing to buffer the parking lot adjacent to the condominiums. Mr. Ferguson requested that One Church complete the new fencing sections by closing a gap that is 3-to-4 feet. He explained that there are two fences, one of which runs east and west from Hamilton Road to Building 9 on the site, and another that runs north and south from the existing parking lot up to Building 9. Mr. Ferguson stated there is a section of fencing that was not filled in when it was built, which resulted in church attendees using the space to cut through the condo association property to get to an adjoining parking lot. Additionally, Mr. Ferguson stated that the association would like to know if there is a different traffic plan than the existing one. He noted that a church member put a "Do not block driveway" sign out on attendance days, but most drivers do not respect the sign. He stated that many times homeowners have to wait to pull out onto Hamilton Road to go to their own churches, or other activities on Sunday mornings. Mr. Ferguson closed his comments by expressing concern for the planned location change of the pond. He stated the association felt the pond was important and should not be moved. They believe it is a spring fed pond that existed on that site for decades. Finally, Mr. Ferguson questioned how many parking spots were really necessary on the site.

Christy Nelson, 406 Castle Pines Drive. Mrs. Nelson presented three issues. First was her concern about sound. Mrs. Nelson stated that recently, a church band was practicing on an outdoor stage. The music was amplified, and was ultimately turned down after she called the church. She appreciated the church's response, but requested that the stage not be used for musical performances or other presentations using microphones, as it causes a disturbance. She stated the stage is about 65 feet to the association's closest condominiums. She requested that the new construction plans not be approved if they include any outside speakers or any connections for sound that amplify into the community. The second point Mrs. Nelson raised was regarding light and a large projection screen that faces the Castle Pines community. Mrs. Nelson shared a series of photos with the Commission; see legislative file for attachments. Mrs. Nelson stated the screen is typically on until about 9:00

p.m. Much of the light is currently blocked by other buildings on the site; however, the proposed plans remove the small buildings, and Mrs. Nelson anticipated more light entering the Castle Pines site. She stated that they (the Castle Pines Condominium Association) request that the fence along the area be taller than what is proposed in the new plan or that the projection screen be turned off at dusk rather than 9:00 p.m. Mrs. Nelson's third and final discussion point was related to traffic. She stated that due to the church's three services, there is a lot of traffic in the area until about 8:30 a.m. in the morning, until 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon. She stated that about two-thirds of all church traffic drives past the six units of Castle Pines. She requested on behalf of the condominium association that the new drive associated with the request either be denied or the fence along the area be made taller.

Char King, 305 Eastchester Court, expressed concern about drainage. She stated a sewer test was requested, and ultimately wants to be ensured that there will not be a water issue. Additionally, she expressed disappointment with the white fence that was added around the property, and stated her preference for a more natural-looking fence. She also noted that concrete will come right up to her fence, and that the plan discussed eliminating the trees behind her property. She requested that adequate screening or trees replace what is removed.

Lauren Spero, 313 Eastchester Court. Ms. Spero began by acknowledging the work that One Church did to improve communications and be more collaborative with neighbors. She stated that the August, 2024 Planning Commission meeting left her with three main concerns. The first was safety and security along the property line. The second was a row of parking spots that were planned to be just a few feet from the property line. The third was the plan to move the pond. Ms. Spero expressed that her first two concerns were addressed and again acknowledged One Church for their efforts. However, she expressed concern about moving the pond to a different area of the site. She felt there must be other ways to accomplish the goal of adding parking. She shared her concern that moving the pond will further exacerbate flooding in the area and eliminate critical green space. Ms. Spero then requested that if the Development Plan application is approved with the relocation of the pond, that the Commission not approve the Variance associated with screening. She stated that while there is now a fence around the property, it is for security purposes only and will not block any light or noise considering elevations. Ms. Spero expressed that the best screening for light and noise, both significant concerns, would be mature trees and ones that can grow to provide cover. She asked the Commission to require One Church to plant the 55 trees required by code for screening from light and noise. She closed by noting that her

advocacy is not personal, and she appreciates what One Church is trying to do for their parishioners, but she felt the plans would have a significant negative impact on the surrounding neighbors.

Josh Wiener, 313 Eastchester Court. Mr. Wiener introduced himself as Ms. Spero's husband. He expressed that he is opposed to the removal of the pond, as he, like his wife, believes it will have undesirable effects on the surrounding area. He acknowledged the church for doing a better job of communicating with the neighbors following the August 2024 Planning Commission meeting, and felt the church made changes in order to mitigate safety and privacy concerns, citing productive meetings with church officials. However, he felt that the removal of the pond would be a harmful mistake, noting specific concerns and questions he had for the church. First, he expressed concern that the removal of the pond would result in increased flooding and drainage issues on the property. The new plans show the location of the proposed new swell and depict how water will move through the system; however, he did not see a drainage exhibit included in the materials posted, and wondered to what extent the Planning staff and City Engineer reviewed the updated drainage plans. Second, he shared appreciation that the Church is no longer planning to remove many of the existing mature trees along the shared property line. He wondered what would happen if some of the existing trees along the property line are damaged beyond repair during construction and need to be removed, no longer providing the planned screening. He requested that the commission add a stipulation to require the church to plant new buffer trees to replace any existing trees along the property line that become damaged during construction. Mr. Wiener closed by again acknowledging the church's efforts to mitigate some of the neighbors' initial concerns, he again hoped a new parking plan could be considered.

Brian Hofmann, 295 Eastchester Court. He noted that the newly proposed plan contains several positive revisions from the proposal that was presented in August 2024. Mr. Hofmann stated that he still had concerns, similar to those heard when the previous plan was discussed. He noted that the church's land slopes downward from Hamilton Road, which cannot be discerned from the overhead, two-dimensional views of the plans. He said the properties sit above the church's property, so the six-foot privacy fence does not work as well as hoped. He conveyed that keeping the existing natural screening is important for this reason, adding that the most effective barrier is nature. He said there are currently older trees and some brush growth, which is effective screening for six months of the year. He also shared a concern that the church's property slope will be altered when the pond is moved. The pond is at a natural low point, allowing for drainage to where the new pond will go. Runoff from his property goes toward the existing pond. He said they

received a drainage plan from the church, but it raised questions, and he is unclear as to where the City Engineer is in approving the plan and how it may affect their properties. Mr. Hofmann also stated they are unclear about what will happen to existing trees as the pond is filled in, a new fence is installed, and what will happen if any trees are damaged during the construction process. He recalled the history of screening concerns of Castle Pines residents. He requested that the variance to not require the church to add trees along property edges be rejected. He also had concerns about how water is being managed through the installation of proposed swales. He said it was not in the plans presented at the meeting, and that there are some swales inside the fence on the church's property and there are some that are outside. He expressed uncertainty about how those swales will be installed without removing any existing trees. Mr. Hofmann closed by thanking the church for their efforts to work with neighbors, but asked that the Planning Commission take a serious look at the variance regarding trees bordering the property to ensure there are no detrimental effects regarding runoff.

David Depew, 317 Eastchester Court. Mr. Depew stated that he and his wife Marcy are against the pond being removed. They felt there was too much being done to the property, including too much parking, and the project was oversized. He described the site as often being noisy.

Jay Bohman 336 Vista Drive. Mr. Bohman stated his agreement with the section of the zoning code that requires parking lots to be no closer to the street than the building. He stated that such zoning helps to make public spaces in the city friendly to all, not just automobiles. However, he expressed support for the variance allowing parking in front of the building for this application, as it matches the existing conditions on the rest of the lot and would have been permitted under previous zoning code, under which the original submissions for this project were made. Similarly, he felt the variance regarding electric vehicle charging stations was appropriate.

Laura Newman, 795 Cherry Wood Place. Ms. Newman stated she lived on a cul-de-sac that backs up to the south end of the church for over 27 years. She stated that she currently sees woods when looking out the back of her home, adding that when a fence is placed there it will be white. She requested it be dark green or brown, stating that white would be an intrusive color.

Jill Martinowski, 376 Castle Pines Drive. Ms. Martinowski expressed concern for the right-of-way of emergency vehicles getting into Castle Pines on Sundays. She stated it is a safety issue for the Castle Pines community.

There being no further members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Hicks closed public comment at 8:10 p.m. and permitted the applicant to address comments.

Mr. Torres first addressed the continuation of the fencing. There will be fencing completely on the north west and south portions of the property line. The gap noted by Castle Pines residents will be closed. Mr. Torres stated he would defer to the church regarding accommodations that can be made for light pollution, and whether the large screen can be turned off at dusk. Regarding sound, Mr. Torres stated that the church is in compliance with noise ordinances, and concerns regarding amplified sound were addressed, which neighbors confirmed. Mr. Torres stated that regarding light poles, the zoning ordinance requires zero-foot candles at the property line, so light should not be cast into the neighbors' backyards. Mr. Torres also stated the worship center will move further to the east, away from the neighbors. Issues will be addressed to ensure noise does not carry to the neighboring properties. They feel the position of the building will address these concerns. Regarding parking requirements, they acknowledged that the zoning code requires a spot for every three individuals. Now, it is more likely that one spot is needed for every two people. Considering about 1,400 seats, the current parking load is appropriate. If adequate parking is not provided on the lot, Mr. Torres stated that the surrounding neighborhood would be impacted. Mr. Torres shifted to the fence color, suggesting that the church may be willing to work with neighbors on the color of the planned fence. He then acknowledged the concerns regarding the pond. Mr. Torres stated that as far as the civil engineer could tell, the pond was filled by runoff and not by a spring. It is not designed to keep water on site, while code states that the water must be kept on site. The new pond design is at a point where the site naturally drains to, on the southwest corner. It will help prevent water going off the property. Mr. Torres asked Deputy Clerk McGuire to share a presentation on the overhead projector. Mr. Torres stated there would be a new swale at the north part of the property, along with drain basins that will be installed to bring the water down to the pond. Mr. Torres invited Shawn Lanning, Verdantis Civil Engineer, to discuss the pond relocation. Mr. Lanning reiterated the understanding that the pond was man-made and it is unknown how long ago it was put in, but that it was on the site for many years. He stated that the southwest corner of the lot is the lowest point, which is where the new pond will go. Mr. Lanning noted there is an existing park with another pond just outside the southwest corner of the site. He stated the site was never previously engineered to drain properly, adding that any existing runoff from a large rain event would be fixed with the updated site plan. The new site plan has a swale all around it, which was marked in blue on the applicant's

presentation. The runoff will be collected into storm pipes and then distributed back out to the natural water course. Mr. Lanning offered assurances that no new drainage issues would occur. He also explained that the new parking lot will have dirt added to the area, because excess dirt from the auditorium construction will be put in the area of the new parking lot. So, it should increase the elevation slightly. He stated the fence should be a bit higher than the existing ground. Mr. Lanning explained that the engineering plans are about 60 days away from a resubmittal, because they are contingent upon the Planning Commission applications being approved. Mr. Torres closed the applicant's response to the comments by noting that the church improved its efforts to communicate with the neighboring property owners, and that the church wants to be a good neighbor.

Chair Hicks called a recess at 8:19 p.m. and returned from recess at 8:30 p.m.

Chair Hicks opened the floor for questions from the Commission.

Mr. Greenberg acknowledged the Church's efforts to be more communicative with residents. He asked Mr. Torres to point out the dumpsters on the screen. The dumpsters were notated in the southwest area of the site, and will be enclosed. Mr. Greenberg then inquired what level of flooding the site would be engineered to withstand, a 100 year flood, for example. Mr. Torres responded it is designed for a 100 year flood. Mr. Greenberg then asked Planning Department staff if the City Engineers were responsible for making sure that the pond is designed to adequately handle the drainage. Ms. Capka confirmed that the Engineering Department would review the plans, adding that engineered drawings are not required to be submitted as part of Planning Commission applications. Mr. Greenberg then clarified that the engineering of the parking lot is not a purview of the Planning Commission, which staff confirmed. Mr. Greenberg then noted that traffic is also a concern, and asked if a traffic study by the City of Gahanna would cover internal traffic on the property, and wondered if this was under the purview of the Planning Commission. Ms. Capka stated it was not the purview of the Planning Commission. Mr. Greenberg asked the applicant if the gap in the surrounding fence would be remedied. Mr. Torres confirmed it would be completely closed on the northwest and south portions of the site. Mr. Greenberg asked Ms. Capka what code required for fence height. Ms. Capka stated code limits fence height to six feet, so a variance would be needed to increase the fence height. Code would be met with the current application.

Mr. Tamarkin asked if the fence would have any gates. Mr. Torres stated

no gates are planned for the fence. Mr. Tamarkin then asked if the fence would be in the swale or inside the property line. Mr. Torres stated there will be portions of the fence on the inside of the swale as well as on the outside. Mr. Tamarkin confirmed with Mr. Torres that the swale is primarily there for drainage purposes, for anything that does not drain on the concrete through the drains. Mr. Tamarkin asked how many of the existing 122 trees are on the inside of the fence and on the outside of the fence. Mr. Torres stated about half of the trees are on each side of the fence. Mr. Tamarkin asked for clarification on why the applicant felt 55 trees were no longer needed, as one of the variances requested to not put in 55 trees required by code. Mr. Torres stated that the 55 trees are required for screening; however, the six-foot high fence essentially meets the screening requirements. Mr. Tamarkin noted there is a requirement of a three-foot hedge, and inquired whether the hedge would run continuously along Hamilton Road. Mr. Torres confirmed that the southeast corner would have a hedge installed as required per City of Gahanna code. Mr. Tamarkin asked if there were plans for signage in the future, which Mr. Torres confirmed. Mr. Tamarkin noted the applicant does not plan to redesign any of the existing parking. Mr. Torres stated the church did not feel there needed to be a redesign of that area. The only changes made will be to the areas where pedestrians will be maneuvering. Mr. Tamarkin asked if there was really no need for electric vehicle parking, or if there may be a need for a small number of spots. Mr. Torres explained those parking spots would not regularly be used, but they will be prepared for them in the future. Mr. Tamarkin concurred with the applicant. Mr. Tamarkin noted that water management is not necessarily under the purview of the Planning Commission, and will be handled by Engineering; however, many neighbors expressed concerns about flooding. Mr. Torres expressed confidence that the flooding situation would improve, and water management would be handled properly.

Mr. Shapaka asked if the pond was simply a pond, or was a detention basin. Mr. Torres said the current pond is a pond, but the one proposed in the plans will be a detention basin. It will not have standing water and will be designed to go out into another natural waterway. Mr. Shapaka noted a general rule of having property, is that property owners need to collect the water on their property. However, in this situation, he observed that water from the neighborhood is going onto the church's property, becoming their problem. He stated he has confidence in engineering for the problem to be addressed. Mr. Shapaka then asked about the cost of the parking lot. The estimated cost is about \$3,000,000 for parking lot improvements. Mr. Shapaka wondered how many parking spaces would be needed in the future, and what options would be. Pastor Greg Ford indicated that they would expand to another location in the future if

needed. Mr. Shapaka was curious if a parking garage would be possible, but Mr. Torres noted that there would continue to be drainage issues, and the parking lot would need to be reworked regardless, so that water that flows onto the site remains on the site. Mr. Torres did not feel a parking structure would increase their available parking spaces, and it would be an estimated double the cost. Mr. Shapaka was curious if the church would move to a new location if the parking plans are denied. Pastor Ford explained that the church would add another location, but would keep this site in Gahanna. Mr. Shapaka then asked where electric vehicle spaces would be, if they were required to install them. Mr. Torres said they would be placed near staff offices. Mr. Shapaka commended the applicant for working with the neighborhood. He suggested that in regard to traffic, the church should remind congregants to be considerate and leave space for the Castle Pines drive. He also suggested that a screen could be added to solve the issue of glare that neighbors see from the screen. He felt that many of the issues were solvable.

Mr. Mako had additional questions about the proposed drainage swale. He asked if it would be grass, rocks, or something else. Mr. Torres stated his understanding that it would be plants in the soil. Mr. Mako inquired as to whether the detention pond would be dry or wet, to which Mr. Torres replied it would be a wet pond, and there will be water in it at all times. Mr. Mako asked if the pond will be designed with safety benches, which Mr. Torres confirmed. Mr. Mako noted the far northe

**A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Development Plan be Approved.**

**Discussion on the motion:**

**Mr. Greenberg reiterated his appreciation of the Church to work with surrounding neighbors, stating he would support the project.**

**Mr. Suriano stated he would abstain from voting due to a conflict of interest; however, he provided some observations. First, he echoed Mr. Greenberg's sentiments regarding improved communication and outreach to neighbors. He noted that the fence meets code for height, and some taller fences could pose aesthetic and structural issues. He added that while it is not meant to block sound, it would likely add some sound buffer. He also acknowledged that while drainage is not the purview of the Planning Commission, he hoped to reinforce that a detention basin is an engineered solution, whereas a pond is not, and the basin would meet standards for runoff and stormwater collection. Finally, regarding the tree buffer, he noted the applicant reduced the amount of tree removal on the site, and felt that the privacy fence and maintaining some existing trees would provide a better buffer than new saplings would.**

**Mr. Tamarkin also acknowledged the improved communication, as well as the redesign of the parking lot compared to plans shared in August of 2024. He noted that while it removed around 100 parking spots that the previously proposed plan included, he hopes the proposed lot is sufficient to meet the church's needs, and patrons no longer have to park in other nearby parking**

lots. He understood residents' concerns about moving the pond, and removing trees, he noted the removal sometimes comes with growth and development. Mr. Tamarkin closed his comments by sharing his support of the application.

Mr. Shapaka said that One Church is a great institution for Gahanna to have. He wished they had more acreage to grow into. He expressed a concern with the detention basin, but believed the solution the engineer provided may be the best one for the site. He stated his support for the application, adding that the Development Plan Application meets code and the applicant is able to develop their property as they see fit.

Mr. Mako also acknowledged the applicant for improving outreach to the neighbors. He felt the Development Plan was significantly improved and stated his intent to vote in favor of the application.

Ms. Pollyea agreed with her fellow Commissioners, stating her support for the Development Plan Application. She appreciated the outreach to neighbors, and hoped One Church continued to be communicative with neighbors. She recalled that several neighbors expressed their appreciation to One Church's improved communications as well, and felt that no plan will satisfy every single concern.

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**Abstain, COI:** 2 - Hicks and Suriano

[V-0014-2025](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Sections 1109.01(a)(1) Location of Parking Areas, 1109.01(j) Electric Vehicle Charging, and 1109.04(c) Buffers and Screening of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, for property located at 817 North Hamilton Road, Parcel ID 025-001918; Current Zoning R-1 - Restricted Institutional; One Church; Tony Torres, applicant.

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

**Discussion on the motion:**

Mr. Suriano noted that there is a significant differential in grade compared to Hamilton Road and the eastern edge of the log. There is precedent for a landscape buffer just north of the property, similar to what is being proposed on One Church's application.

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**Abstain, COI:** 2 - Hicks and Suriano

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

**Discussion on the motion:**

**Mr. Shapaka stated that the logic of not installing any electric vehicle spaces, but having conduit available for future spaces made sense, and that One Church has shown their ability to adapt to situations. Therefore, he supported the Variance.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**Abstain, COI:** 2 - Hicks and Suriano

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

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

**Abstain, COI:** 2 - Hicks and Suriano

**F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE**

**G. NEW BUSINESS - NONE**

**H. OFFICIAL REPORTS**

**Director of Planning**

Director of Planning Michael Blackford noted there would be no items for a meeting on May 28th, so the next Planning Commission meeting would be held June 11, 2025. He noted there were multiple projects in the area of Tech Center Drive and The Crescent that would be coming forth. Director Blackford acknowledged concerns of the neighbors regarding traffic, specifically blocking driveways of the Castle Pines community. He stated he would discuss the issue with the Public Service Department to find out if the City could install "Do Not Block Drive" signage, or other improved signage in the area.

**Council Liaison**

Council Liaison Sarah Pollyea stated that a major source of discussion is a pre-annexation agreement that was approved by Council on May 5th and brings eight acres from Jefferson Township into the City. The site is 4722-4736 East Johnstown Road and is currently Growing Solutions Garden Center. It would potentially bring a mixed-use commercial and multifamily residential development into the area. She stated that the pre-annexation agreement is the first step of much more discussion and

additional public hearings. Additionally, there was discussion about elected official salaries at the most recent Committee of the Whole meeting, which can be watched on the City's YouTube channel. Chair Hicks noted that Planning Commission will not have any purview over the pre-annexation agreement, but wondered whether there may be concurrent zoning applications with it. Director Blackford stated project details would be figured out through the rezoning process. The goal of the developer is to have the annexation and rezoning happen at the same time. Per preliminary discussions with the developer, it would be a General Commercial zoning with a conditional use for Multifamily, and likely an overlay adopted as well. Planning Commission would see that project prior to anyone else.

Mr. Greenberg asked if other parcels beyond the Garden Center would be included in the future. Director Blackford said there may be one other small parcel adjacent to the site that is a township-owned parcel. He did not believe that there would be additional annexation initially, but noted there could be in the future.

Mr. Mako inquired about a pond on the site. Director Blackford stated there was a pond.

Mr. Hicks noted that prior pre-annexation discussions created quite a lot of attention in the community, and expressed curiosity about how this one would develop.

## **I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS**

Chair Hicks noted that any emails received regarding tonight's applications would be added to the legislative file.

## **J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT**

Mr. Shapaka shared recent weight loss success, and plans to travel to Machu Picchu, Peru, later this year. Members Mako and Greenberg shared that they will not be able to attend the next meeting.

## **K. ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.*