



# City of Gahanna

## Meeting Minutes

### Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

*Pam Ripley, Deputy Clerk of Council*

---

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

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 April 26, 2023. The agenda for this meeting was published on April 21, 2023. Chair Thomas Shapaka called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Mako.

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

#### B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2023-0075](#)

Planning Commission Workshop minutes 4.12.2023

**Motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Wester, that the Minutes from the April 12, 2023, Workshop be approved.**

**Motion carried by the following vote:**

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

[2023-0076](#)

Planning Commission minutes 4.12.2023

**Motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Wester, that the Minutes from the April 12, 2023, Regular meeting be approved.**

**Motion carried by the following vote:**

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

#### D. SWEAR IN APPLICANTS & SPEAKERS

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

## E. APPLICATIONS - PUBLIC COMMENT

### One Church

#### [V-0008-2023](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Chapter 1163.08(h) Interior Landscaping Requirements of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, for property located at 817 N. Hamilton Rd; Parcel ID: 025-004349; Current Zoning RID; One Church; David Domine, 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.

Director of Planning Michael Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. Blackford shared that the property is zoned Restricted Institutional District (RID). This property has come before the Commission before for some parking lot additions, signage variance and a few other requests. The request tonight is for a Design Review to expand the parking lot. There is 35,842 sq. ft. of pavement and 114 additional parking spaces. Total parking spaces to be 561. This proposed parking lot addition abuts residential properties. City code requires screening along residential properties of parking lots. This request does meet that screening standard. It must be 80 percent opacity and can be met by having plantings or a fence. They are planting 41 trees and shrubs along Hamilton Road. Blackford showed the landscape plan that shows the area where the screening is required and where they are proposing to plant the trees on the west side of the property. There is one variance request to 1163.08 which says when you have two rows of parking, you have to have a 10-foot-wide landscape island with shrubs. This is a code section that will be taken forward soon to council to change. Design Review Criteria to consider: Is the it compatible with existing structures? Does it contribute to the improvement of the design of the district? Does it contribute to the economic and community vitality of the district? Does it maintain, protect, and enhance physical surroundings? Design Review District 3 criteria to consider: Do the parking areas add visual interest to the development? Entrances and exits should be decorated and landscaped. Earth mounding and trees should be considered to reduce noise and impact. Generous use of vegetation encouraged to produce natural atmosphere and create a subtle transition of varying uses. The Variance Criteria to consider: Are there special circumstances or

conditions applying to the land, building? Granting of the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of substantial property rights. Granting the application will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in such neighborhood. The variance they are requesting is an internal landscaping variance and not the variance along the property line. Staff recommend approval of both applications.

Chair opened public comment at 7:12 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Kathy Schaffer-Fletcher, 785 N. Hamilton Rd., Gahanna, directed her comments to the applicant. She said there are posts on the south side and asked what they are doing there since they are putting in the parking lot up by Castle Pine Condos. There is gravel to go into the grass and then the post. She thought the parking lot was going in by her.

Blackford called for a point of order; the applicant, David Domine, needs to speak before the public comment portion of the meeting.

Shapaka asked for clarification from Schaffer-Fletcher so the applicant can address the question. Schaffer-Fletcher said there are posts on the south side where they can drive up onto gravel and then onto the grass.

Shapaka asked the applicant to approach.

Applicant Shane Hart, Operations Director, One Church, representing the applicant. Mr. Domine is unavailable to attend the meeting. Hart said the reason for wanting to expand the parking is as mentioned; they have grown. The average attendance since December has grown by 25 percent or about 400 people. They are having to do a lot of creative parking solutions, including parking off site. It is in the interest of the convenience for their members. It is also a safety issue as people are parking off-site in other locations and either walking, carpooling, or taking a shuttle bus across Hamilton Road to attend services. They will be parking people on site. It is a parking lot that will be used primarily on Sunday morning, rarely used on other days. He is available for questions.

Shapaka asked Schaffer-Fletcher to step back up to the podium. Shapaka asked if her questions to the applicant were answered in that they are not developing the south portion of the drive. She said correct. She understands they need parking. She watches people cross the street. She thought the parking lot was coming to the south side because

the post. She didn't realize it was going north.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Robert Genton, 381 Castle Pines Dr., Gahanna. Genton represents the Gahanna Village at Castle Pines. He is on the condominium board as their treasurer. The condo board has five concerns with the design they would like to address. They have no objection to putting in a parking lot. They know that One Church is expanding and needs more parking. There are concerns with how the spaces are arranged in the parking lot. The spaces for the most part face north-south. They would like those spaces to be redesigned to face east-west. The parking for spaces 21 through 45, if people park there at night, the vehicle lights will shine directly into the homes. On the other side of the right-of-way entryway are their bedrooms and living areas. There are concerns about the light pollution that may be caused. They are also concerned about the privacy issue with cars parked there. They are facing their condominium property for the most part. This is a concern of the residents. The second concern is the use of the barriers. There are trees along the west side and spacing on the north side. They would prefer to see a shrubbery barrier addressed on the east side to apply to both the west and north side. Lower trees, like arborvitaes, would block a lot of those headlights. On the west side spaces around spots 12 through 15 need to have arborvitaes to block the view of those sitting on their decks on the adjacent building. This is a privacy issue and concern to homeowners. The third item is drainage. They want to make sure it is proper and away from their property because of their cutting and filling and shaping of the parking lot. They want to make sure that there is no standing water because of the containment of elevation within the property and there is not standing water on their side of the property line. The fourth issue is that in the past [One Church] has installed outside loudspeakers. They want to make sure there are no additional loudspeakers. It became a noise issue, and the church has done a great job of abating that. The condo owners want to make sure that it stays that way. The last item is the lighting that is going to be installed in the new lot. They want to be sure that it will not infringe to the adjacent buildings.

Shapaka asked the applicant for a response to the comments. Shawn Lanning, 83 Shull Ave. Gahanna, Watcom Engineering. The variance is not the largest area of the parking lot. The main reason to request the variance is for snow removal and traffic flow in general. The landscaping that was supposed to be in that area is just outside the area. It is the same number of trees that are on the outside of that area. The north and south parking is the most efficient way to do it. They have worked with the city forester to add landscaping. There is already a significant

number of trees and brush along that north property line. They will put in everything they need to make sure that the neighbors are taken care of. The church has been a good neighbor and desires to be a good neighbor. They will do whatever it takes to make sure the neighbors are taken care of. If they install the landscaping and for some reason there are some complaints, they will address. The drainage is the next step in the final engineering plan for the parking lot. The drainage is not going to infringe on the neighbors at all. The condominiums' drainage goes into the pond on the church site. There are no additional outside audio speakers being installed. The lighting installed in the area is on a timer and will go off at 9:00 p.m. and is within city code. It will all be in the final engineering plans and reviewed by the city engineering staff.

Chair closed the public comment at 7:24 p.m.

Chair called on questions from the Commission: Hicks asked, outside of the Sunday morning worship, what are typical uses during the week. Hart said most of the time the events that take place are a couple hundred people versus several hundred to over a thousand. That level of parking is usually closer to the building. Groups meet four to five nights per week. There are a few larger events a year. Most of the time, the lot is used during the day and for the larger events which are primarily Sunday morning for services. Hicks asked Lanning if reorienting of the parking lot would cause them not to have as many parking spaces as needed for the project. Lanning said that is correct. It is maximized the way they are proposing it.

Wester said that when he looks at the west property line, were they planting arborvitae? Lanning said yes, that is what they are planting there. He has worked with the city forester, and they decided to offset with different kind of bushes. She told him which arborvitae and evergreens she wanted. Lanning said they decided they would offset those for more opacity. Wester said the plantings appear to be about eight or 10 feet tall. He asked what will be planted and how tall of an arborvitae. Lanning said they will be at a six-foot minimum at installation.

Mako asked if there is a lighting plan submitted. Lanning said that a light plan was completed. He is not sure if it is included in this packet. Mako asked if the plan shows there is not going to be any bleeding off into those adjacent properties. Lanning said it is within city code. Mako asked for clarification on the storm drainage. It was mentioned that it is going to be kept on site and draining into the pond. He asked if it will be going into an existing conduit system in the existing parking lot. Lanning said he did not work on the drainage; it was coordinated out for final engineering. It has been completed and submitted to the city. The city

engineering department will not review it until this plan gets approved.

Tamarkin said the lot is used mostly on Sunday mornings and every now and then for big events. He asked if they will be on separate meters that go on when you need to use the lot and off when the lot is not in use. Lanning said the current lot is banked into different meters. He has not seen the electrical plans on these, but his assumption and the conversations they have had internally are that yes this would be on its own circuit, separate bank. Tamarkin said based on Hart's comments earlier, if he was a neighbor, he is assuming that those lights might only be on a handful of nights a year. Hart said correct, it is rare that they would be on past 9:00 p.m. He has the lighting plan that was completed from Cooper Lighting Solutions. He cannot tell from it if the circuit is on a timer. If that is something that needs to be done, it is easy to put it on a separate timer and only turned on the nights needed. Tamarkin said that is only fair to the residents. Hart agreed. Tamarkin said it appears the existing trees are staying, and additional trees are being added. Lanning said that is correct. There are a couple of trees in the middle of the lot that have to be moved. The trees along the perimeter will not be removed. Tamarkin commented it was mentioned that they want to be a good neighbor and that they were willing to consider some additional screening on the north side. Lanning said they will install what they feel is correct. They will work with the city and the neighbors to work from there. The landscaper will fill in the open areas and add trees where needed to create the 80 percent opacity.

Shapaka asked if in the past if they have added trees or shrubbery at the request of the neighbors. Hart said since he has been in his current role, he is not aware of any request where they have been asked for additional shrubs. Shapaka likes the sentiment that if approved they will add additional shrubs being a good neighbor. Shapaka asked if the commission normally gets the lighting layout. Blackford said it is included in the application and meets code. Shapaka asked if there is any underground storage or collection for run off. Lanning said there is no underground storage. There are some catch basins in the main parking lot. Shapaka said the concerns of the neighbors need addressed. Lanning said they will not back up drainage on the neighboring property. Shapaka asked why the south end where people park on the grass is not being paved. Hart said the main reason for the parking on the south end is it remains dryer due to the ground being higher. As they continue to grow, they will look into it if the need arises to pave it. They are not prepared with those engineer drawings and submittal of that currently.

Blackford noted that during the discussion arborvitaes were discussed.

Arborvitaes are not shown on any landscape plan. There are spruce and deciduous trees. He does not want any confusion. Lanning said they were arborvitaes at first. Then, when working with the city forester, she wanted the evergreen trees because of their cone shaped canopy. The deciduous trees have an upper top canopy, and those two trees are offset so it creates a better wall. Blackford wanted to make sure the Commission was aware that it is not what is shown on the landscape plan and this plan is what gets approved.

Wester asked what is being planned. Lanning said the plan submitted says evergreens; he can't remember which ones the city forester chose. He was given two options for both the evergreens and deciduous trees; he has both options to be planted.

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

**Discussion:** Greenberg said there was discussion on the issue Tamarkin had, comments on lighting and comments on planting. He asked if there are any amendments that need added to the approval. Blackford said that the lighting does meet code. Greenberg asked about the plantings. Blackford said the variance can be approved with a condition to the screening requirements. Greenberg said that the city engineer reviews the drainage, and it is out of the commission's purview. Roth said if the commission wants to make a condition on the Design Review, they will need to do so before there is a motion.

**Motion carried with the following vote.**

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

[DR-0010-2023](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for landscaping, and other for 1.2 acres at 817 N. Hamilton Rd.; Parcel ID: 025-004349; Current Zoning RID; One Church; David Domine, 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.

The application was discussed under V-0008-2023. See attached staff presentation.

Shapaka asked if there is an amendment or condition that needs added to the motion for the design review. Greenberg said the discussion was adding arborvitaes to further block the headlights from coming into the condominiums to the north. Greenberg will make an amendment that the applicant works with the city to add that type of shrub for planting to block the lighting coming from the parking area. Shapaka said to clarify to use the screening that is on the west side of the lot that should also be

incorporated on the north side of the lot. Tamarkin said there is confusion on what is really on the west side of the lot. Shapaka said it is what the city is requiring. Tamarkin said it is the pine and spruce trees. Wester said he would like to add an amendment to specify that the plantings would include a minimum height of a six-foot arborvitae. Arborvitae is considerably different than a pine tree. Over time, they will grow to 20-foot high and provide nice screening. Shapaka said it would be on the west and north side, anywhere that there is head-in parking.

Shapaka asked for a motion for the Design Review Application as amended, requested by the commission for landscape screening to the north to complement what is currently shown on the west and to add arborvitae to create additional screening to the west and north.

Suriano said he is in favor of the motion and the additional landscaping. He doesn't know if it is necessary, assuming there were conversations with the applicant and the city around what was needed for appropriate screening. He doesn't think the additional landscaping is going to be a detriment, so he is in favor. Hicks said he thinks they need to have the motion to amend first.

Shapaka said he is asking for a motion to amend the Design Review Application.

**A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Wester, to amend the Design Review Application.**

**Discussion on the motion: Hicks said he is not in favor of amending the application. He feels it is not necessary. The applicant stated he worked with the city forester and changed their application to reflect what the city told them and for the commission to reverse that he thinks is inappropriate. Suriano agrees with Mr. Hicks.**

**Motion carried with the following vote:**

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

**No:** 2 - Hicks and Suriano

**A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Suriano, to approve the Design Review Application as amended with the condition of landscape screening to the north to complement what is currently shown on the west and to add arborvitae to create additional screening to the west and north.**

**Motion carried with the following vote:**

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



## Big Sky Realty

### [V-0009-2023](#)

To consider a Variance Application, to vary section 1149.03(k) Development Standards, screening provisions of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID No. 025-000849; Current Zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, 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.

Director of Planning Michael Blackford provided a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. Blackford said for clarification, the property was rezoned previously, and the variance V-0009-2023 should not include the rezoning language and it does not need referred to Council. Blackford said the property is zoned Multi-Family Residential District (MFRD). The east side of the property is only wide enough for a residential driveway. It is zoned residential. There is a screening requirement in code. The applicant is requesting to modify their previously approved design review. They are no longer requesting to provide a privacy fence in this area. It is a portion of the east property line, not the entirety of it. There is 55 feet of fencing and 13 spruce trees to be planted along on the east property line. It will provide partial screening. There is commercial property to the east; however, the little strip of land is a residential driveway for a large lot that goes back behind the applicant's property. The requested variance is for a 15-foot landscape buffer with continuous six-foot high screen that would have previously been met with a fence. This would have no detrimental effects on any surrounding properties. Staff recommend approval of both applications.

Chair opened public comment at 7:58 p.m.

Applicant Mitch Rubin, Big Sky Realty. He said the reason for the request is that a 550-foot-long fence has some aesthetic and long-term maintenance issues for them. With the lot being narrow and deep, a landscape buffer is better. Rubin said he communicated with the property owner of the residential driveway and lot, and he agrees and is not a fan of a fence. He feels it would make his drive feel very narrow. They will keep a small portion at the back end of the drive fence. It will align with the commercial property to the east.

PUBLIC COMMENT - one speaker's slip was received; however the speakers no longer wish to comment.

Chair closed the public comment at 8:00 p.m.

Chair called on questions from the Commission: Hicks asked if the commercial property owner to the east had any comments. Rubin said he didn't speak to them, but it is his understanding that code requires the variance due to the residential nature. They have a good relationship with the neighbors.

Mako asked what type of plants will be planted. Rubin said that in reviewing the landscape plan, it is a Spruce Norway. There is about 475-foot of equally spaced trees at about 35-foot apart.

**Motion was made by Suriano, seconded by Greenberg, that the Variance Application be approved.**

**Discussion: Suriano is in favor of the screening. He favors landscape screening in lieu of hard fencing, especially in conditions like this, and the applicant has discussed this with the neighbor.**

**Motion carried with the following vote:**

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

[DR-0011-2023](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for landscaping, for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID No. 025-000849; Current Zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, 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.

The application was discussed under V-0009-2023. See attached staff presentation.

**A motion was made by Suriano, seconded by Tamarkin, to approve the Design Review Application .**

**Motion carried with the following vote:**

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

**F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None**

**G. NEW BUSINESS - None**

Blackford said staff continues working with the consultant on the zoning code rewrite. They are making progress and anticipate a

workshop with Planning Commission and City Council in early to mid-June. The next meeting will have many applications on the agenda.

**H. OFFICIAL REPORTS**

**Director of Planning**

**Council Liaison**

Blackford said there were some zoning amendments taken forward for council for discussion. Blackford anticipates a workshop with council and planning commission early to mid-June. Once the code changes are taken to council they could be adopted and in effect 30 days later. He also shared with council on how the current zoning code works regarding zoning designations and permitted and conditional uses. There are 26 different zoning designations, 10 is residential and 16 are commercial. The goal of the zoning code rewrite is to condense it and possible cut that in half. It is a lot of zoning classifications for a city of the size of Gahanna.

**I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - None**

**J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT - None**

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

---

**Pam Ripley**  
Clerk

*APPROVED by the Planning Commission, this  
day of 2023.*

---

Thomas W. Shapaka