



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Sophia McGuire, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

6:30 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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

Gahanna Planning Commission met in regular session on February 11, 2026. The agenda for this meeting was published on February 6, 2026. Chair Sarah Pollyea called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Elizabeth Laser.

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

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2026-0026](#)

Planning Commission meeting minutes 1.14.2026

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

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

D. SWEAR IN APPLICANTS & SPEAKERS

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

E. APPLICATIONS - PUBLIC COMMENT

[V-0003-2026](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Section 1103.18 - Creekside Residential of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for

property located at 134 Short Street; Parcel ID 025-000078; Current Zoning CR - Creekside Residential; Erica Cook, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka introduced the application; see attached staff presentation. The residence is located at 134 Short Street, which is zoned Creekside Residential (CR). Capka shared a zoning map, indicating the surrounding area in a gray-blue color, all of which is zoned CR. Capka pointed out that the majority of the properties in the area are narrow and deep. Many have detached garages to the rear of the property, with alley access. The applicant requested a variance to allow a detached garage within the front yard setback. The site is a corner lot with two front yards along Short Street and Walnut Street.

The standard front yard setback for the Creekside Residential zone is 15 feet. The CR zone also has a zero-foot setback along the alley to accommodate all of the existing garages. The proposed garage is only one foot from the north property line, which is along an alley. The proposed garage is zero feet from the west property line, requiring a variance.

The existing detached garage was built in 1909 and encroaches over one foot into the right-of-way. The applicant states the existing garage is in disrepair, needs to be replaced, and fits only one vehicle. The proposed garage would no longer encroach into the right-of-way. It would be 708 square feet, nearly the same size of the existing garage, and would fit two cars. The garage would have gray metal siding and a gray roof. Capka shared a site plan, with the garage location indicated by a blue square. A red line indicated the 15-foot front yard setback. The existing house encroaches into the setback by about five feet and the garage encroaches into the setback by about 15 to 16 feet, if the right-of-way is included.

Capka shared elevations of the structure, as well as images of how it exists today. The images provided included visible tree roots from three existing mature trees in the backyard, close to the garage. The trees contribute to limitations on where a new garage could be placed. Capka then shared an aerial view of the site.

Capka explained that the proposed garage aligns more closely with code requirements. Staff stated the proposed garage remained in character with the neighborhood and approving the variance would not have any negative effects. Additionally, the Engineering Department reviewed the application and there were no sight triangle issues with the new garage.

Chair Pollyea opened public comment at 6:39 p.m.

Erica Cook introduced herself as the applicant. She noted that Short Street itself indicates 59 feet as a right-of-way. The street is about 15 feet wide, and the right-of-way extends onto what appears to be the front yard by 22 feet. She noted that in asking for approval of a variance for a zero-foot setback, it would still be 22 feet back because of the right-of-way.

Chair Pollyea closed public comment at 6:40 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka asked Ms. Cook about the condition of the existing garage. Ms. Cook explained there is a significant amount of original timber. There was also asphalt repaving done inside the garage with no buffer between the asphalt and timber, causing rot. She added that the only access point is the vehicle access. Any repairs would be more difficult than replacement. Mr. Shapaka noted the proposed building would be metal, and inquired why vinyl was not chosen. Ms. Cook explained that part of the planning process included discussions with arborists, who recommended installing a pole structure rather than having a full footer in order to be less disruptive to the tree roots. The garage will have pylons every 7.5 feet. The sides closest to the house and the alley would each have five pylons. There would be an additional pylon on each of the other sides. The structure would be a timber frame pole barn with metal siding on it.

Mr. Mako inquired with the administration, confirming that the property technically has two front yards, which creates challenges for the applicant. He also confirmed that the proposed structure would be built outside of the right-of-way, and that the project otherwise met code.

Ms. Laser inquired about existing and proposed colors of the garage. Ms. Cook explained that the garage and home currently match, and that the proposed garage will likely end up a slightly darker gray.

Mr. Tamarkin asked where the garage door on the new proposed garage would be located. Ms. Cook stated it would be in the same spot and would be wider than the existing doors. The garage door would open onto Short Street. It would be directly on the property line, but with a 22-foot easement in front of the asphalt for the garage. There would be room to pull a vehicle out without pulling out directly into traffic. There was uncertainty regarding whether the asphalt in front of the garage was on property owned by the applicant or by the City of Gahanna.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka stated his support for the Variance. He hoped the applicant would consider installing a structure that was more similar to the home, rather than metal, but acknowledged the building design was not part of the vote. He also noted that a fire rating was associated with having the structure on a zero-lot line, which could be worked out through the building permit process.

Mr. Suriano stated his support for the application.

Mr. Tamarkin also expressed support, noting that the new garage will be better aligned with code requirements and will improve the aesthetics of the area.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

V-0004-2026

To consider a Variance Application to vary Section 1111.03 - Permanent Sign Standards of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna property located at 825 Tech Center Drive; Parcel ID 025-011536; Current Zoning IM - Innovation & Manufacturing; Gahanna Municipal Building; Alex Barnett, Atlantic Sign Company, applicant.

This variance application is located at 825 Tech Center Drive, which is the location for the new Gahana Civic Center. It is zoned IM - Innovation and Manufacturing, and is located on the south side of Tech Center Drive. The applicant requested approval of a variance for five new wall signs for the site. The Zoning Code only allows one wall sign at 50 square feet or less. The total area of all proposed five wall signs is 98.34 square feet, with the largest proposed wall sign of the five being 65.81 square feet. A monument sign is also proposed for the site, though it meets all Zoning Code criteria and is not included in the Variance Application. With the inclusion of the monument sign, the total sign area is 123.66 square feet, which is below the maximum 400 square feet allowable.

The applicant stated that all five signs are necessary for the building because of the various departments and services that will be housed at the new Civic Center. These include the Senior Center, Event Center, Police, and all other city departments.

Capka shared a site plan showing the exact location of each sign. The sign closest to the right-of-way was the event center sign and was 4.8 square feet. The Senior Center sign, which would be positioned over the Senior Center entrance, would be six square feet. The main building sign would be 18.59 square feet. The Division of Police entrance sign would measure 3.1 square feet. The final and largest sign, the Police headquarters sign, measures 65.81 square feet, due to its two police shields.

Capka explained the two variances associated with the application; both were for Code Section 1111.03. First, sign code states that the maximum wall sign area is 50 square feet.

One wall sign was proposed above the 50 square foot limit, at 65.81 square feet. The total wall signage would exceed the sign code requirement at 98.24 square feet. The second variance would permit five wall signs on a single frontage, whereas only one sign is permitted per frontage, according to the sign code.

The standard variance criteria apply. They are:

- The Variance is not likely to result in substantial damage to the essential character of the neighborhood
- The Variance is not likely to result in damage to adjoining properties
- The Variance is not likely to affect the delivery of government services
- The Variance is not likely to result in environmental impacts greater than what is typical for other lots in the neighborhood
- The Variance is necessary for the economical use of the property, and such economical use of the property cannot be achieved through another method
- The Variance is not likely to undermine the objectives of the Land Use Plan
- Whether the Variance is substantial and is the minimum necessary to make possible the reasonable use of land or structures
- The practical difficulty could be eliminated by some other method, even if the solution is less convenient or more costly to achieve

Staff had no objection to the variances and did not believe there would be any negative impact from granting them.

Chair Pollyea opened the floor to public comment at 6:53 p.m. There being no public comment, the Chair closed public comment at 6:53 p.m.

Kevin Schultz, Director of Operations, stated he was available for questions and added that the vendor was also present and available to answer questions.

Mr. Shapaka asked if there was anticipation for other signs or path

wayfinding around the back of the building. Mr. Schultz explained there are two entrances to the property. In addition to the main entrance shown in the presentation, there will be a rear entrance which is not advertised as a public entrance but instead is an entrance for staff and Senior Center members and will be in a secured parking area.

Mr. Greenberg noted the color of the brick behind the Event Center sign on the rendering. Director Schultz explained that the brick itself would be a limestone color and the lettering would be a variety of gray. The same color palette would be on both sides of the building. Mr. Greenberg expressed concern about gray signage on a gray background. Mr. Schultz noted the background was more of a tan and would not be the same coloring as the signage.

Ms. Pollyea inquired about the Event Center sign and whether its placement was appropriate for wayfinding. Director Schultz confirmed its position at about one and a half stories, which is the appropriate elevation for signage. Ms. Pollyea wondered how the letters would sit. Director Schultz explained they would sit off the building itself.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Mako stated he would vote in favor of the application, given the nature of the building and wanting residents to find where to go when they visit City Hall.

Mr. Suriano concurred and stated that clear signage would be needed.

Chair Pollyea also stated she would be in favor of the application. She acknowledged the need for visibility at the site and noted similar variances were approved in the past.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

[Z-0001-2026](#)

To recommend approval to City Council, a Zoning Application for 2.26+/- acres of property located at 4530 N. Hamilton Road; Parcel ID 027-000002; Current Zoning NC - Neighborhood Commercial; Proposed Zoning GC - General Commercial; Hotel Development Project; Rebecca Mott, Plank Law Firm, applicant.

City Planner Maddie Capka introduced the application; see attached staff presentation. The application is for a rezoning at 4530 North Hamilton Road, which is currently zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC). Other sites in the area share the zoning district, indicated in pink on

the site plan. Brown areas indicated multi-unit residential areas, including apartments, attached condos, and duplexes. The Woods at Shagbark development is to the east of the site, and the Villas of Gahanna and Vista at Rocky Fork are across Hamilton Road. Single-family residential areas to the south were designated in yellow on the site plan. To the north were General Commercial (GC) zoned properties, indicated in red, which included Giant Eagle and Stoneridge Plaza.

Capka shared a history of the site. A single-family home existed on the property since 1955. In 2001, construction on the Woods at Shagbark began. In 2003, the site was annexed into the City of Gahanna. In 2013, permits were approved for the Firestone location south of the site. In 2021, similar applications were approved for the Valvoline. In May of 2024, the site was rezoned to Neighborhood Commercial from Estate Residential, during the Zoning Code update. The following month, a rezoning application was approved for the site to the south, which changed the zoning from Estate Residential to Multi-Unit Residential, with a limited overlay for the development of attached condos. The city has not received applications for that site since the rezoning.

The applicant proposed a rezoning from NC to GC. NC lots are specifically for commercial lots immediately adjacent to residential properties. The NC zoning does not permit higher intensity uses, such as hotels. The site was designated as NC due to the Residential (R) zoning districts around the property. All adjacent commercial properties were also designated as NC, including Valvoline and Firestone. NC zones do not allow auto services; when the sites are redeveloped, their use will be less intense.

Capka shared a table describing the differences between NC and GC zones. One difference includes setbacks. Setbacks for NC zones range from 10 to 20 feet, while setbacks for GC zones range from 20 to 35 feet. Setback distances depend on whether or not a property is adjacent to a residential area. The NC zone's building height can be up to 35 feet, while buildings in a GC zone can be up to 50 feet. Lot coverage is 70 and 75%, respectively. Capka also covered various uses permitted or conditional in GC zones that are not permitted in NC zones. This includes hotels, as well as auto sales and services. Additionally, bars are not permitted in NC zones but are permitted in GC zones. Large-scale retail services, such as grocery stores, may be permitted as a conditional use of a site zoned NC, but are permitted in GC zones. Small scale industrial operations are also permitted in GC zones.

The proposed use of the site, if rezoned to General Commercial, would be for future hotel development; however, rezoning applications only

approve the new zoning district designation. A project would not be approved at the time of a rezoning.

Hotel uses are only permitted in the following zoning designations: General Commercial, Innovation and Manufacturing, and Creekside Mixed Use. Hotels are conditional in Restricted Institutional and Conservation zones. The applicant was required to provide a conceptual site plan for the rezoning application, to ensure that the use can fit on the lot and meet the zoning code criteria. In the case of the proposed hotel, the building would be 60 feet high with 86 rooms, 86 parking spaces, and an outdoor pool.

The current site plan that was submitted requires variances for building height. The maximum height permitted is 50 feet, which the plan exceeds by 10 feet. A parking setback variance would be required due to the proposed parking in the front of the building. Additionally, at this time there are no electrical vehicle (EV) parking spaces shown in the lot. If future applications were submitted, additional variances may be identified at that time.

Regarding landscaping, there is 2300 square feet of new landscaping, 38 new trees, a hedge along the right-of-way for additional screening, and a six-foot-tall landscape screen between the hotel and the adjacent residential properties to the east. Capka shared a conceptual site plan. A green line indicated a 10-foot parking setback and buffer, and a blue line referenced the front parking setback. The hotel building itself would meet all setback requirements. The closest point to any property line would be 17.6 feet from a Neighborhood Commercial site to the north.

One criteria required for approval of a rezoning application is compatibility with the Land Use Plan and its recommendations. The Land Use Plan is not a regulatory document like the zoning code. It provides recommendations for development in the city including the city's future goals for development. The Land Use Plan includes a Future Land Use Map. This site is designated as a Mixed Use zone in the Future Land Use Map. Mixed Use zones permit retail, office, and residential uses and designate that buildings should be oriented toward the street with parking to the side and rear. It also emphasizes public amenities and green space. Of all the Future Land Use designations in the Land Use Plan, only the Community Commercial zone recommend hotels as a use. Capka explained that according to the Land Use Plan, Community Commercial is essentially the equivalent of the Zoning Code's General Commercial.

Capka outlined the project's next steps if it were approved by Planning

Commission. If the site is recommended to the City Council to be rezoned, the council would then vote on the Zoning Application. If approved, the applicant would submit a Major Development Plan application, prior to site development. At this time, a Variance Application would likely be required. Both applications only require Planning Commission approval. City Council would only see the project for the rezoning request. If the Zoning Application is not recommended to City Council, it would not proceed.

Capka shared the Rezoning criteria. Like Variance criteria, all criteria must be met in order for the application to be approved. They are:

- Consistency with the goals of the Land Use Plan. Capka noted that hotels are not listed as a permitted use, and the site layout does not fully match recommendations in the Land Use Plan.
- Compatibility of the area's environmental features with all potential uses allowed.
- Compatibility of all potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning. Capka noted that the site was specifically zoned NC, due to the proximity of multiple residential neighborhoods. NC zones only allow uses that are more compatible with R zones, and GC zones permit higher intensity, and larger scale uses that are not compatible with residential sites.
- Capacity of city infrastructure.
- Apparent demand for permitted uses and other available sites in the city that could accommodate the use. Capka stated that staff receive a few requests for hotel developments, but not as regularly as other uses. Many sites are zoned IM and GC, which are two zoning districts that permit hotels without a conditional use or rezoning.

Staff recommended disapproval of the application as submitted. They did not believe all rezoning criteria were met, particularly compatibility with the Land Use Plan and surrounding areas. Staff believed NC is the most appropriate zoning district for the site and is more compatible than GC.

Chair Pollyea opened public comment at 7:12 p.m. and invited the applicant to speak first.

Rebecca Mott of Plan Law Firm, 411 East Town Street, Columbus, introduced herself as the representative for the applicant. Ms. Mott

provided a zoning map displayed on an easel, noting all of the zoning classifications surrounding the property. She pointed out that the Giant Eagle is close to the site and is zoned GC , and noted surrounding areas that are zoned NC and R-4 (Multi Family Residential). She stated that the general character of the neighborhood is mixed use, including multifamily residences.

Ms. Mott reviewed the criteria for rezoning, the first of which is consistency with the goals, policies, and comprehensive Land Use Plan. Mott stated that the Land use Plan describes the area as a gateway to the City of Gahanna, with more intense developments that include connectivity and walkability between parcels. She added that the hotel would bring 20-30 employees to the site, noting these could be local community members, that would generate income tax in addition to the bed tax. She stated visitors would also likely bring additional business to the area. Ms. Mott also stated that the city's capacity for infrastructure and services was compatible with the project. She explained there would not be adverse effects on government services, including fire, police, refuse collection, or mail. Regarding the third zoning code criterion, Ms. Mott stated the project promotes the mixed-use development that the Land Use Plan calls for. Additionally, she noted that an 86-unit hotel would not be a dense project.

Ms. Mott shared that a traffic impact study was conducted, which added to the Planning Commission packet. There were no recommended public infrastructure improvements, which Ms. Mott highlighted as an important aspect of the project. She stated there would only be a right-in and right-out driveway access, due to a median strip on Hamilton Road, that will restrict left turns coming into the site. There would be no circulation to Shagbark Road to the south. Overall, a low traffic impact was anticipated.

Mott shared a handout of the Comfort Inn Suites prototype to provide the Commission with a general aesthetic of the project. She stated the hotel would be designed to complement the surrounding developments and upscale nature of the area. She described the proposed materials as modern, adding that there would be landscape buffers along the adjacent residential areas. Mott stated there would be no negative impact on property values, and indicated there could be an increase in property value.

Mott also explained that in relation to the area's environmental features, a hotel is an appropriate form of construction. The land is relatively flat, and the property is not within a floodplain or wetland area. All storm water regulations would be complied with and any runoff would be mitigated,

while preventing erosion to neighboring property areas. Additionally, an environmental assessment was conducted, and there were no conditions specified for remediation.

Mott then discussed the last criterion for approval of a variance, the apparent demand for the types of uses permitted in the requested zoning district. Mott stated that a market analysis was conducted, which indicated a strong demand for a hotel on North Hamilton Road, in the proposed corridor. She highlighted the proximity to Columbus airport and Easton Towne Center, and noted there is growth happening in the area and a lack of hotels to accommodate demand.

Ms. Mott summarized the proposal, stating that it was aligned with the city's zoning and planning objectives. She stated that the proposed use is not problematic, it simply is not permitted within the current zoning district. She continued, stating that the current zoning district would allow for businesses such as a small scale retail establishment or restaurant, which had potential for more traffic than a hotel. She also offered a potential compromise, the possibility of adding a limited overlay district, which would limit the development strictly to a hotel.

Ken Johnson introduced himself as a Woods at Shagbark resident. He noted that the hotel's plan included a 160-foot difference between Shagbark Road and the hotel ingress, which is too small for zoning and could result in congestion at Shagbark Road. He expressed reluctance to see an excess of curb cuts. Additionally, he felt the access to the Woods at Shagbark properties, which are landlocked, is severely compromised at present. He stated that Shagbark Road is the only wholly owned access to the condominiums. He suggested changes to the Planning Commission that included fewer curb cuts, among other changes. See "Communications submitted by neighbors" attachment in legislative file for details.

Bruce Brown, 1211 Shagbark Road. Mr. Brown stated the hotel could have significant impact on the daily lives of the families that live at Woods at Shagbark. He expressed that he was not opposed to development, but wanted to ensure that any development that occurred next to the neighborhood would be compatible and respectful of its residents. He did not feel a hotel would meet the standard for the following reasons:

A hotel is a 24-hour operation, so there are concerns about noise, late night arrivals, ride share traffic, mechanical noise, outdoor conversations, delivery trucks, and trash pickup.

The proposed parking lot runs alongside Shagbark Road, and four unit

owners are close to the proposed lot.

There is a bus stop for children who live in the development near the hotel's proposed driveway. Mr. Brown cited an increased potential for a transient population, adding that even with good management, the business could not control each guest's behavior.

Mr. Brown expressed that the neighborhood was not against growth, but hoped the growth would fit the scale, safety, and character of the community.

Bill Miller, 1198 Sanctuary Place, introduced himself as a retired architect of over 40 years. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Miller and his wife shared a packet for distribution to the Commission. Mr. Miller expressed his agreement with staff's recommendations for the parcel, stating the change from Neighborhood Commercial to General Commercial should not be approved. He recalled that the parcel was changed in 2024 from Estate Residential to Neighborhood Commercial. He expressed three primary concerns with the proposal:

First, Mr. Miller noted the height of the proposed structure, 60 feet, was in line with what is allowable in the Creekside Mixed Use District. Referencing Exhibit D in the packet he provided, he noted there are no other buildings approaching 50 to 60 feet along Hamilton Road, other than the Holiday Inn Express near Interstate-270 and Morrison Road. He explained that most buildings are under 35 feet, and the rezoning from Neighborhood Commercial to General Commercial would still require a variance for a 60-foot building, as the limit allowed is 50 feet. Mr. Miller noted there are two site plans proposed, one of which was in the application with one in the traffic study. He described the proposed building as one that would tower over Shagbark, limiting residents' privacy.

Mr. Miller described his second concern, which was lack of southbound ingress or egress from Hamilton Road due to the median. He noted most patrons of the hotel would come from the freeway off of Morse Road, and guests would have to make a u-turn or use other roads nearby to access the site.

Finally, Mr. Miller addressed the issue of suitability. He remarked on the increased possibility of crime with a hotel on the site, as well as hazards such as an outdoor pool. He stated parking lot lighting would spill into Shagbark residents' windows. He also shared concerns about the potential for the property to become blighted if the hotel fell through, adding that the property could then be used for automotive or other uses.

Mr. Miller closed by reiterating his support for staff's recommendation of a rejection of the proposed rezoning.

Jane Miller, 1198 Sanctuary Place, stated she and her husband, Mr. Miller, have lived in their home for nearly 21 years. She described it as beautiful, with a wooded area and a pond, that residents enjoy. She stated she is a retired attorney with experience in utility, environmental, and education law. She stated the purpose of the zoning code is to protect people and promote health, safety, and the comfort of the general welfare of the city's residents. Mrs. Miller remarked that the hotel rooms would cost about \$100 per night and stated that a low-cost hotel does not accomplish any goals or comply with the requirements of the zoning code. Mrs. Miller referenced exhibits provided by her and Mr. Miller; she addressed Comfort Inn hotels in nearby cities that ranged between three and four stories. Mrs. Miller stated the zoning districts promote harmony by putting limits on use, placement, and scale of structures. Mrs. Miller described the application as interfering with Shagbark's harmonious uses, evaluating that it did not properly scaled to the site. Mrs. Miller also noted she had data on security, stating that current data from Gahanna Police identified 151 theft incidents and 202 vandalism cases, and property damage. Additionally, she stated that through conversations with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, there is no need for a hotel.

George Mrus, 1217 Sanctuary Place, stated that he and his wife have lived in the Shagbark Woods for almost 20 years. He stated he is a trustee and current president of the Gahanna Community Improvement Corporation (CIC). He expressed awareness of the importance of prudent economic development. He asked that the Commission vote against the rezoning application for three reasons.

First, Mr. Mrus had concerns about property values of the Woods at Shagbark residences. He stated the development includes 118 units and represents highly valued property in Gahanna, at nearly \$45 million for five acres. He stated the community contributes nearly one million dollars in property taxes annually, as well as hundreds of thousands of dollars in income tax to support the community. The zoning changes would significantly diminish the overall value for unit owners.

Second, Mr. Mrus noted the property was rezoned in 2024, to a designation that was more appropriate for a lower intensity nature and considered compatible with surrounding parcels.

Finally, Mr. Mrus noted the rezoning, with a height variance, would permit a structure height incompatible with the goals in the most recent Land

Use Plan.

Mr. Mrus closed his remarks by reiterating that the rezoning would be inconsistent with the updated zoning code and asked the Planning Commission to deny the application.

With no other members of the public wishing to speak, Ms. Pollyea invited Ms. Mott to respond. Ms. Mott stated that she planned to meet with the Woods at Shagbark Board of Directors, but the meeting was rescheduled to a date after the Planning Commission meeting. She hoped they could meet to discuss their concerns, so they could be addressed early. She noted that the property was already zoned Commercial, and was not a residential tract, and would eventually be developed. She pointed out that a retail center could be placed there, which would be a more intense use than a hotel.

Ms. Mott then reviewed the site plan to speak to the concerns of Shagbark residents. She stated the proposed pool would be fenced in, and the dumpster enclosure would be in the back. She highlighted the landscaping plan, which met requirements of the Zoning Code. There would be trees, six-foot hedges, deciduous trees, as well as a hedge in the front. It would help to provide buffering between the site and its neighboring properties. She stated outdoor areas would not be open in the evening. People would typically park overnight and leave in the morning and deliveries would not take place throughout the day. A professional management staff would be on-site and it would be secure and safe. Mott stated the lighting would meet zoning code requirements and would be downlit so as to not spill into neighboring properties.

Mott closed by offering to answer questions of the Commission.

With there being no one else from the public wishing to speak at the time, Chair Pollyea closed public comment at 7:44 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka asked Director Blackford whether the city entertained the possibility of purchasing Shagbark Drive. Director Blackford stated he was not aware of any proposals to do so. He stated that private drives are built to different standards than public roadways, and explained the challenges of the city taking responsibility for private streets. Mr. Shapaka directed comments to the applicant. He appreciated fencing around the perimeter. He also inquired about the other parcels just north of the site. Ms. Mott explained she was not involved in the site selection process and was unaware whether those parcels were for sale. Mr. Shapaka inquired about the number of stories of the proposed building. Ms. Mott stated it would be a four-story building. Mr. Shapaka explained

that he liked the orientation of the building, noting that the room windows would be going north and south. He did not feel neighbors' privacy would be a concern due to the building's orientation. Mr. Shapaka asked whether Ms. Mott attempted to schedule a preliminary meeting with the Planning Commission in the form of a Workshop. Ms. Mott was not aware of the Workshop process, but stated she met with staff and the Engineering team about one and a half years ago, so that issues such as traffic impact could be addressed before the rezoning application. Mr. Shapaka asked whether Comfort Inn had a boutique style to cater to upscale clientele. Ms. Mott explained that the Comfort Inn & Suites was the higher end of the Comfort Inn chains. She noted it is not an extended stay hotel and is intended for overnight use. She therefore did not believe there would be negative impacts that residents were concerned about.

Mr. Mako directed questions to the administration. He asked whether the parcel was rezoned in 2024 as part of the comprehensive zoning code update. City staff confirmed, adding that the rezoned designation of Neighborhood Commercial reflected the goals and vision of the Land Use Plan. Mr. Mako noted that the Land Use Plan also discusses mixed uses for the corridor, where hotels are not a permitted use. He asked the administration to elaborate on permitted uses that fit within the mixed use designation and the Land Use Plan. Ms. Capka explained the Land Use Plan is broad. Recommended uses are retail, offices, and residential. The only time hotels are referenced in the Land Use Plan is in the Community Commercial Designation. Mr. Mako asked Ms. Capka to explain the buffering and screening requirement differences between GC and NC zones. Capka explained requirements are based on use rather than the zoning district. Any commercial use would have the same buffering and screening requirements. Mr. Mako asked for a reminder on which parcel was rezoned in 2025. Ms. Capka stated the parcel on the southern side of Shagbark Road, east of Firestone and Valvoline, was rezoned.

Mr. Suriano noted that mixed-use does not refer to the possibility of any use. Rather, it is about mixing uses together and having multiple uses on one site. Therefore, a hotel would not meet the criteria or goal of the Land Use Plan. He also expressed that he would keep his comments relative to rezoning, as the Commission would not be voting on what the hotel looks like, its height, or parking. Rather, the Commission would be voting on the site's potential use.

Mr. Greenberg inquired as to whether the site would permit semis on the property. Ms. Mott explained the applicant did not desire to have semi trucks on site. Mr. Greenberg noted there were 86 proposed parking spaces, 86 proposed rooms, and an anticipated 30 employees. He

expressed curiosity about whether there was sufficient parking. Mr. Greenberg also had concerns about adherence to the Land Use Plan.

Mr. Tamarkin acknowledged the Commission would vote on the zoning, not the hotel itself, but felt it was valuable to understand the proposed project. He noted there were discrepancies between two proposed site layouts provided in the application and traffic impact study. He clarified where the entry point would be. Ms. Mott explained a previous plan was discussed, and there would be no ingress or egress onto Shagbark Road. Mr. Tamarkin wondered what the pool hours would be. Ms. Mott was unsure but speculated it would close around dusk.

Ms. Pollyea asked how long the applicant worked on the concept of the project, to which Ms. Mott replied approximately a year. Ms. Pollyea inquired why there were no meetings with Shagbark residents during the planning process. Ms. Mott explained that she felt it was not respectful to do so without a concrete site plan, which the applicant did not have until September of 2025. Ms. Pollyea asked about the market analysis to determine demand for a hotel. Ms. Mott explained a development team conducted the analysis, which included aspects such as the airport and major corporate offices located within the area. It did not include a survey of residents. The market analysis included financial feasibility and whether it would be profitable.

A motion was made by Suriano, seconded by Tamarkin, that the Zoning be recommended to City Council.

Discussion on the motion:

Ms. Mott expressed a desire to understand the comments, adding that she may want to Table the item depending on feedback.

Mr. Shapaka noted the lot had been empty since he had been on the Commission. He thought a hotel could possibly work on the site if the community was more involved with it and a Workshop was held.

Mr. Mako shared his concerns about the application, and that he would not be in favor.

Mr. Suriano highlighted several concerns, including incompatibilities of intensity. He added additional variances would be required. He noted the zoning would stay with the land, opening the possibility for many types of uses. He expressed that he would not be in favor of the rezoning.

Ms. Laser expressed concerns with ingress and egress. She appreciated the plan but felt it would be more appropriate elsewhere.

Mr. Greenberg stated he would not be in favor of the rezoning.

Mr. Tamarkin felt hotels were good for the city but expressed concern about

changing the zoning code. He felt NC was appropriate for the neighborhood. He also voiced concerns about the proposed building's 60-foot height. He stated his intent to vote against the application.

Chair Pollyea stated she was not opposed to a hotel at the location, but questioned whether it aligned with the Land Use Plan. She also felt that communication with Shagbark residents could be improved. She stated she would not be in favor of the application.

Ms. Mott inquired about Tabling the application; Chair Pollyea denied the request.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 0

No: 7 - Mako, Chair Pollyea, Vice Chair Suriano, Shapaka, Greenberg, Laser and Tamarkin

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

G. NEW BUSINESS

[2026-0025](#)

To recommend approval to City Council a Stormwater Management Waiver requested by the Department of Engineering in accordance with Section 1113.02(e) of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; Parcel ID 025-004304; Academy Park.

Senior Utility Engineer Holly Boyer introduced herself. She recognized stormwater waivers are a rare application. She stated that City Code permits a waiver but only if there is no harmful increase in runoff caused by the project. She explained the project abuts Walnut Creek. Academy Park will be tearing down old facilities and building new ADA-compliant playgrounds, adding a concession facility, park expansion, trails and sidewalks, and a new storm water feature.

Boyer explained the analysis was submitted by the design engineer working on the project, which shows that after state-required detention is added, there would be no harmful increase and no functional changes to the site hydraulics. She provided waiver criteria. They are:

- Analysis shows the runoff to closely match existing conditions (less than 1% difference for all storm frequencies);
- The applicant proposes detention meeting the state requirements;
- A written request documenting no increase in run-off or flooding was provided;

- o The waiver is not likely to result in damage to the receiving stream;
- o The waiver is not likely to result in changed flood conditions;
- o The waiver is not likely to affect adjoining properties.

There were no objections from City staff on granting the waiver, which waives the water quantity provision of the City as opposed to the water quantity and quality from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She noted that it would not go beyond the state's requirements for the site.

Chair Pollyea offered time for questions from Commission members.

Mr. Shapaka inquired about the ability of the detention system to pick up extra water running off of a larger parking area, a larger building footprint, and possible playground area paving. Ms. Boyer directed attention to the analysis provided by the project's engineering team. Table 7 on page 5 showed the pre-developed and post-developed conditions for the site, as well as the change in site hydraulics at every return frequency is de minimis. The detention will be a pond, and there would not be underground tanks. Mr. Shapaka asked whether there was a 500-year or 100-year flood plain. Ms. Boyer directed attention to hatched lines on a site plan, which show the floodway, and blue highlighted the flood plain. A 500-year flood plain was shown in orange.

Mr. Mako asked for clarification, that proposed along with the detention was the installation of new catch basins with an 18-inch storm, which would go into the detention, and would be released by a six-inch storm into an existing six-inch storm, and then into the natural drainage. Boyer confirmed, noting she did not have the figures in front of her, but his assessment sounded correct. Mako then asked whether having a stamped hydraulic analysis by a Professional Engineer (PE) shielded the City from litigation. Assistant City Attorney Roth stated that what is proposed meets State of Ohio standards, and that the City of Gahanna's standards are more restrictive than the State's. He did not foresee any legal issues.

Mr. Suriano clarified with Ms. Boyer whether the project met the State's less restrictive stormwater standards, which Ms. Boyer confirmed. She

added that due to critical storm calculations, a considerably larger pond would have been required. With the close proximity to the flood plain and the large stream size, the larger pond is not warranted. She explained that it is better to pass the flows through before the peak of the storm. Mr. Suriano then asked whether stipulations for building within the flood plain would be met. Ms. Boyer stated there would be environmental site compliance plans that are reviewed by a Flood Plain Coordinator. A Flood Plain Use permit would be required.

Mr. Greenberg asked if the detention pond was dry or filled at all times. Ms. Boyer stated it would be dry detention. Mr. Greenberg asked if there were best management practices regarding stormwater. Ms. Boyer explained the City would meet state code requirements for water quantity and quality for redevelopment. The discharge would go into the river. There is a direct hydraulic connection from the pond to the Big Walnut Creek.

Mr. Shapaka clarified where the detention basin would be located in proximity to the playground. It was clarified that the basin would be to the southeast of the playground. He inquired about fencing. Ms. Boyer stated they are typically fenced. Curtis Eckleberry with Advanced Civil Design introduced himself. He said when fully inundated with water, the detention pond would be around three feet deep. There would be a catch basin that limits and draws down the water to meet water quality requirements of the Ohio EPA. A secondary pipe would help carry secondary flow. Mr. Shapaka asked if they would be grated. Mr. Eckleberry explained there is a grate on top of the catch basin.

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Greenberg, that the Waiver be Recommended to City Council.

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka recalled when stricter standards were passed for future growth of Gahanna. He felt it applied to many areas outside of the site in question. He felt the state regulations were acceptable in this scenario.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Director of Planning

Director Blackford expressed his appreciation to Planning Commission for their handling of the evening's applications. He shared information about applications anticipated for the upcoming March meeting, including applications for the Academy Park project. Code changes were also anticipated.

Council Liaison

Ms. Laser shared updates from City Council meetings, including the upcoming Creekside Chocolate Walk to be held February 15th, a celebration of Cora Thurman for Black History Month, and an up date on the Jazz and Blues Festival, scheduled for June 19th through 21st.

Mayor

Mayor Jadwin thanked the Commission for their work on the evening's applications. She shared an update on 825 Tech Center Drive, noting that the City is 60-75 days out from moving to its new city hall location. The move would happen over a four-week phased period. A ribbon cutting was anticipated for late April.

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

Mr. Shapaka expressed appreciation to staff for their work on the Land Use Plan, as well as to Ms. Pollyea for her firm decision to not allow the zoning issue to be tabled.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.