



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Sophia McGuire, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

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 December 18, 2024. The agenda for this meeting was published on December 13, 2024. Chair James Mako called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sarah Pollyea.

Present 6 - Michael Greenberg, John Hicks, James Mako, Sarah Pollyea, Thomas W. Shapaka, and Michael Tamarkin

Absent 1 - Michael Suriano

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA - NONE

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2024-0264](#)

Planning Commission meeting minutes 12.4.2024

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

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

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

Avenue Partners

[DP-0003-2024](#)

To consider a Development Plan Application for property located at 175 Johnstown Road; Parcel ID Numbers 025-000890, 025-000808, 025-000855, and 025-000798; Current Zoning R-4 - Multi-Unit Residential; Avenue Partners Acquisitions, LLC; Paul Pardi, 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 shared a summary of the application; see attached staff presentation. DP shared a location map indicating the location of the site. The applications are for a Development Plan and Variance at 6.5 acres just south of the Olde Ridenour and Johnstown Road intersection. The subject property is zoned R-4, which is Multi-Unit Residential. There are other R-4 properties in the area, along with Commercial. There are four total parcels within the 6.5 acres. They are all zoned R-4, so no rezoning is required. A portion of Creekside Green is associated with the project, along with a former senior living facility that has been non-operating for about a decade.

The proposed project includes 182 units, of which about 2/3 are one bedroom and 1/3 are two bedroom. This equals a density of about 28.5 units per acre. Prior to the zoning code update that went into effect May 1, 2024, the zoning equivalent of R-4 allowed 12 units per acre by right and up to 18 with a Conditional Use. After considering development trends in Gahanna, the new zoning code permits 25 units per acre. The proposal has a building height of 42 feet. Structures up to 50 feet are permitted. The total number of proposed parking spaces is 264, which is over the requirement of 248. Right-of-way and pedestrian facilities have been looked at. Much of the review is done by other departments, including the Engineering Department. An additional right-of-way was requested, along with a relocation of an access point on James Road and pedestrian facilities. The site plan provided by the applicant provides all requested accommodations. This is outside of Planning Commission's purview.

Director Blackford provided the site plan provided by the applicant. It is substantially similar to what was provided at the Planning Commission Workshop held for this project in August of 2024. Along Johnstown Road is buildings rather than parking. The proposed site plan shows the infrastructure hidden from public view, with parking to the interior. A trash

compactor was relocated away from the southern property line to a more internal site location.

Director Blackford shared a rendering of the exterior. Feedback from the workshop was considered, and slightly different materials and colors have been presented.

Ten total variances have been requested. The first is for Chapter 1103.10 - Density. This is the staff's main concern. The code has more than doubled permissible density by right. The applicant provided that in today's renter-by-choice market, there are fewer three-bedroom units being rented and more one- and two- bedroom units. Staff does not feel the additional density is warranted, and that it is more of a "want" than a "need." Director Blackford explained that the more dense-intensive a project is, the more difficult it is to meet code requirements.

The second is for 1103.10 - Building setbacks. There is a proposed setback of 25 feet along Johnstown Road and James Road, and a ten-foot setback in the northwest corner of the property. The northwest area is where the most right-of-way was requested by the City, which is being accommodated. Staff is generally supportive of this variance, as the setbacks along Johnstown and James Roads are 20 to 25 feet. Additionally, a five-foot rear yard setback is requested, which is along the western boundary that is adjacent to commercial usage. Director Blackford stated that reducing the setback to five feet may sound severe, but considering the surrounding uses, staff did not have objections.

There are two variances requested for Building Materials and Building Colors, for code chapters 1107.01(d)(3) and 1107.01(e)(2), respectively. Currently, the amount of vinyl is limited to 20% of the façade and to four colors per building. The applicant would like to exceed 20% vinyl and would like to have six colors on the building façade. Director Blackford explained that the reasoning for limiting the percentage of vinyl on the exterior of a building is due to public input during the zoning code re-write. He noted that while it is not preferred by the general public, changes have been made and newer vinyl is a better material than it was historically. A number of variances have been approved for vinyl. Additionally, fewer and muted colors were preferred when public feedback was sought. All six colors proposed are preferred colors within the code, so staff has no objections.

The fifth variance is for 1109.01(a)(2)/(4) - Parking Setbacks. A 25-foot parking setback is required, with 10 feet in the rear yard. Parking lines up

with the buildings, which is consistent with code. However, in order to align parking with the buildings, they are asking for a reduction in setbacks. A setback of zero feet is requested along the south property line. Director Blackford explained that there would be screening along the property line, which is part of the Creekside Green development.

The sixth variance requested is for Chapter 1109.01(d) - Parking Dimensions. Zoning code allows 9x19 feet, which DP described as standard suburban size. Proposed parking space sizes include 9x18 and 9x16. Staff does not object to the reduced size and reduced parking space size is a common variance request.

The next variance involves EV Charging Stations - Chapter 1109.01(j). The new zoning code requires one electric vehicle parking space per 25 parking spaces. The applicant proposes to provide 7 out of the 10 required EV parking spaces, and providing wiring for future spaces.

The eighth and ninth requested variances pertain to Chapters 1109.02(d) and - Dumpster Setbacks and 1109.04(b)(5) - Dumpster Screening. Director Blackford highlighted the dumpster location on the site plan, which is along the west property line. A five-foot setback is being requested. Screening is limited to eight feet in height and ten feet is being requested, which would be more consistent with the architecture. Staff has no objections.

The final variance requested is for 1104.04(c) - Buffering and Screening. A ten-foot wide buffer is required along the southern boundary. The applicant has proposed a variable width buffer, but screening is consistent throughout and consists of a six-foot tall opaque fence and a tree planted every 40 feet.

The variance criteria 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; and the variance is not likely to undermine the objectives of the land use plan.

Development plan criteria for approval are: the plan meets applicable development standards; it is in accord with appropriate plans for the

area; it would not have undesirable effects on the area; it is consistent with the land use character and development of the area. A development plan can be approved outright, approved with modification, or disapproved.

Director Blackford shared final remarks. He noted that staff has concerns with the number of requested variances. In particular, the variance regarding density is a concern. The zoning code was recently amended to allow more than double the density within this zoning district. While variances are meant to be considered on a case-by-case basis, Director Blackford expressed concern for more variances of a similar nature requested for future projects. Staff believes that a reduction in density would be more consistent with code and would permit flexibility in the design of the site. The less dense a project is, the more easily it can be adapted to meet code requirements. However, staff feels that residential is an appropriate use of the property. Many studies have been done in the region regarding growth and the need for development. The Land Use Plan discusses aging housing stock. Going into 2025, around 90% of Gahanna's housing stock was built over 25 years ago, so there is a need for newer housing within the city. Job attraction is a heavy focus in the city, but there must be a correlation between job growth and housing. Overall, staff sees a need for residential, but believes a reduction in density would more closely align with the recommendations of the Land Use Plan.

Chair opened public comment at 7:24 p.m.

Applicant Paul Pardi introduced himself and thanked the Commission for their time. He said much of the site has sat vacant for over ten years since Access Energy purchased it. It was intended to be turned into a drug rehab facility. The neighborhood fought against it, resulting in a lawsuit, and the property is sitting vacant today. There are break-ins on the property, along with pests chewing through fire suppression lines. Mr. Pardi expressed developing the property is in Gahanna's best interest. Avenue Partners has worked out a deal with Access Energy and has worked with adjoining property owners, who support the project. They have a perpetual easement with the adjacent condo association. He understood that not all area residents would be happy with the project, but highlighted his efforts to hand-deliver letters to all residents along James Road. He also provided business cards to all who attended the Planning Commission workshop.

Mr. Pardi said the project is three stories with a clubhouse, pool, and a

full set of amenities such as a fitness center. There will be pedestrian improvements along the James and Johnstown frontages. Johnstown Road will have a 10-foot wide shared use path. Avenue Partners will put it in themselves unless the City decides to do it and have Avenue Partners make a contribution. Mr. Pardi then highlighted the route from the site to the Creekside District, which is a five minute walk.

Mr. Pardi shared an exterior rendering of the proposed building, which provided the color scheme. He also provided interior images, describing the materials and finishes as extremely high quality.

He referred to the Land Use Plan, in which “mixed use” is called for for this site. Mixed use contemplates residential up to 30 units per acre. Less density is being requested for this project. Mixed use also calls for front yard setbacks of zero to 20 feet, and 60 to 70 feet in height. He acknowledged that the code requirements differ; however, he noted that the approval criteria for variances includes reference to the Land Use Plan and felt it pertinent to discuss here.

Regarding colors, Mr. Pardi stated that the reason a variance for additional exterior colors is requested is due to simple things such as windows and trim around balconies. These specifications add to the number of colors included in the count. He noted they are white and black, respectively, and are not bold.

Regarding EV charging stations, there will be seven spaces designated for EVs. Mr. Pardi stated that all garages on site will be set up to automatically switch to EV charging stations if the demand his needed. However, they do not anticipate the demand to be higher than what has been planned for. On other properties, Avenue Partners is investigating leading-edge technology for power-sharing schemes. He assured the Commission that Avenue Partners would meet the demand of EV charging stations.

Parking space dimensions are requested to be 9-feet by 18-feet. He stated he has never witnessed a large vehicle such as a Chevrolet Suburban park at one of Avenue Partners’ projects, and anticipates many smaller and compact vehicles. Some 9-feet by 16-feet spaces will be provided for compact vehicles. He stated there are 16 more spaces than are required by code.

The typical front yard setback is 20 feet, which is at the high end of the range recommended in the Land Use Plan. Along Johnstown Road, the

curb line is another 20 plus feet beyond the right-of-way line. They felt it was appropriate for the building to be closer to the street and to hide the parking, creating a more welcoming pedestrian environment along the street. Mr. Pardi referred to the south setback variance request as a technicality, due to the perpetual easement with the condo association. There will be an additional ten feet between the property line and the parking area, which will also include screening. Then, there will be more green space between the fence and the street. He added that all surrounding parcels have a minimal setbacks, including zero feet to ten feet.

Regarding density, Mr. Pardi said that Avenue Partners did not intend to game the system to obtain the most leasable square footage. They want to do what makes sense for the project. He stated their goal was to put together plans with high quality finishes that are affordable and attractive to young professionals. He stated their plans are for workforce housing. He stated that larger apartments, such as three bedrooms, would result in more bedrooms per acre than smaller, one bedroom apartments. He added that if square footage per unit is increased, the rent would be significantly higher due to current construction costs. Mr. Pardi felt there was justification to increase density for this site in particular.

Jerry Nicewarner, 143 James Road. Mr. Nicewarner has owned his property since 2003. He is a contiguous property owner of the site. He stated that 121 James Road has been empty since 2014. His property was previously a 2.3-acre tract, of which 2 acres was subdivided and sold for Creekside Green. He supports the Avenue Partners project. He described Mr. Pardi as courteous, respectful, and open to Mr. Nicewarner's observations. He feels the project will correct many of his annoyances regarding the property. A series of photos was provided by Mr. Nicewarner. He showed the boundary line and a fence along his property. There is no access through the fence for the property to be taken care of by Access Energy. He described it as a haven and breeding ground for varmints. He stated there is a flow of nuisance animals into his back yard. He said he spent years attempting to control the situation. He described the fence as not being built to code, and having fallen many times. He shared another photo from the Franklin County Auditor's site, highlighting the fence that has fallen into his yard. He stated that by Mr. Pardi taking care of this property, his property line will be properly screened and the fencing issue will be resolved. Mr. Nicewarner stated that after Access Energy purchased the property, animals chewed into a building and the varmint traffic increased. This included skunk, racoons, and coyote. He described vandalism done by

teenagers. He stated power is off to the building and has been since the spring. There is no light, security, alarms, or fire suppression system. He does not know if the gas has been turned off. Mr. Nicewarner described the property as a ticking time bomb. There have been windows broken out, of which he provided a photo.

Cathy Vansack, 97 Orchard Drive. Ms. Vansack said the proposed driveway will face her property. She stated that in its prior use, there were regularly ambulances at the site day and night. She is in favor of the site being developed. She is not in favor of the proposed plan due to potential issues with congestion. She stated that Johnstown Road and James Road cannot support the traffic. It is heavily congested during rush hour. At Johnstown and Olde Ridenour, the intersection gets blocked. There is a bus stop at the intersection of Orchard and James. She expressed concern over traffic to the pool, VFW Hall, and Saint Matthew's field, and is also worried about speeding drivers. She stated that light pollution is also a concern. Her primary concern is traffic, as she feels it cannot be supported. She said that Mr. Pardi's claim of the primary resident having a compact vehicle could not yet be known. She is also not in favor of the variance for density.

Russel Halsey, 102 Orchard Drive. Mr. Halsey expressed his support for improving the property; however, he has concerns about congestion. He stated a nearby commercial property on Johnstown Road is only 20% utilized at any given time. He said this project will bring more traffic. He noted that there is minimal space for traffic that accumulates. He said that people go to the opposite end of James Road to cut around traffic. He stated it can take him 25 minutes to get to the United Dairy Farmers location that is nearby. Mr. Halsey stated that the prior uses were bad, but felt that the proposed development would be worse. He specifically mentioned the use of sewer systems and EMS or fire trucks attempting to access the area as issues that could be worsened by increased density.

Mitch Manley, 221 and 225 James Road. Mr. Manley stated the sanitary sewer system is overwhelmed. He stated there are no plans to fix it and it will be made worse by this development. He stated it should have been addressed prior to this project being proposed. Second, he stated the traffic will create issues, highlighting where people already use neighborhood roads as cut-throughs. He stated Mr. Pardi is focused on the impact of the adjacent intersection, but felt there would be more far-reaching consequences. He disagreed that it fit within the plans for the area, and expressed concern about how it will affect the look and feel

of the street, as well as property values. He felt property taxes would be an issue. He hoped to hear information on how the development would improve the lives of the surrounding residents.

Chair Mako allowed Mr. Pardi to make additional comments. Mr. Pardi stated a detailed traffic study was performed. It was done in fall of 2023, when school was in session so that accurate information could be gathered. One recommendation was to remove two three-way stops and align drives. Also, they will be taking two access drives on James Road, turning them into one drive, and aligning them with Orchard Lane. He stated that while he understands the concerns, the current existing use fully occupied would generate 2-3% of the total traffic at the intersection. He said that residential is a less intensive use than office and rehab facilities, which is industry-wide accepted data. The trips generated by a fully occupied multi-family facility compared to a fully occupied multi-family use is 25% less. Overall, the amount of traffic is reduced when the use is residential. Additionally, the developer is providing significant right-of-way to the City of Gahanna. Mr. Pardi also stated that much time and effort had been put into reviewing this issue with the City. Regarding sewer capacity, there were two sites in Gahanna under contract and one was entirely scrapped because the site did not have sewer capacity. He stated the issue has been studied and the site does have sewer capacity. Per Mr. Pardi, this is an issue that has been worked on with the City. He also stated that storm sewer issues will be fixed due to storm water chambers that will be installed under the parking area. He stated the information is backed up by statistics and engineering studies.

Public comment closed public comment at 7:57 p.m.

Mr. Shapaka stated that while he understood traffic concerns, traffic is not a consideration of the Planning Commission. He said the Planning Commission workshop for this project that was held in August was informative and covered the variances at length. He directed a question regarding density to Mr. Pardi. He noted that what is being asked for is an additional 20 units beyond what code permits. He asked what, from Mr. Pardi's perspective, would be the benefit of removing 20 units. Mr. Pardi shared a density analysis chart. Reducing the density to comply with code increase the average unit size, but does not reach Gahanna's average size. The overall building footprint will not change. Mr. Shapaka wondered if the parking would be altered. Mr. Pardi stated they did not want to burden the surrounding neighborhoods if residents wanted to have visitors over. This is why they did not simply meet the minimum

number of parking spaces, but instead chose to exceed the requirement. Mr. Shapaka asked Mr. Pardi to share images of the elevations and colors. Mr. Pardi shared an updated rendering of the colors. There is brick on the first level, metal siding, and vinyl. The vinyl is thicker than traditional. There is also an intentional Dutch Lap profile to strengthen and add rigidity. Mr. Shapaka asked if the project would be built and then sold. Mr. Pardi replied that Avenue Partners intends to hold it forever. The materials chosen reflect their interest in maintaining the property long-term.

Ms. Pollyea stated her agreement that Gahanna needs more affordable and workforce housing, and feels that many people agree that this type of development is needed. Her concern is whether it will affect the adjacent property owners. She asked Mr. Pardi if, in his time attempting to connect with residents along James Road, he was able to obtain any feedback from them. Mr. Pardi stated he connected with two residents during that time. The general response was supportive, but residents expressed concern about property values. Mr. Pardi expressed his belief that the development will be one of the nicest residential complexes in Gahanna, adding that he would be more skeptical to purchase a home that is near a blighted property. He believes it will support property values. Ms. Pollyea wondered how Mr. Pardi might respond to the residents who are concerned about the affect the development will have on their day-to-day lives. Mr. Pardi said that he will share his contact information to anyone who wants it. Avenue Partners has reached out to those adjacent to the site. He believed that in order to improve traffic, the intersections need to be fixed. He hoped that Avenue Partners could be involved in future improvements, such as intersection improvements. The right-of-way space will be provided to the City in order to create an opportunity for improvements. Regarding concerns about the sewer and storm capacity, he said the cheapest way to handle it would be through a retention pond. The retention pond creates a safety issue. More money will be spent to install underground storm chambers.

Mr. Greenberg asked for clarification whether the Land Use Plan does in fact call for 30 units per acre. Director Blackford replied that it is a variable scale, and 30 units per acre is the high end. Each site is unique and the Land Use Plan acts as a guide. Mr. Greenberg asked Director Blackford to elaborate on the need for housing stock. Director Blackford said that the department examined the age and unit type of existing housing inventory. The main takeaway was that very little residential development has happened in the last 20 to 25 years. Since then, the region as a whole is being examined as well. These analyses informed

the zoning code. Mr. Greenberg clarified, for concerned residents, that traffic is outside the purview of Planning Commission. Director Blackford confirmed. Traffic can be considered through deliberations, but traffic studies and what is and is not required is all outside of Planning Commission's purview. Mr. Greenberg noted there was a resident concerned about light pollution at her property; he asked Mr. Pardi what can be done to assuage her worries. He shared that they do not want light shining on others' property, adding that there is a study being done and the plan will have to be approved by the City of Gahanna. The lights will point straight down at parking spaces. Mr. Greenberg inquired about the ability to add parking spaces that are capable of EV charging. Mr. Pardi said there will be nine garage spaces that will have the wiring set up and prepared for EV charging. Additionally, conduit will be run to surface spaces. He said the goal is to set the site up for current demand and to also be prepared for future additions. The site will be prepared to go beyond the ten spaces required by code in the future. Mr. Greenberg asked for further explanation on how runoff will be handled, since there will not be a sediment pond installed. Mr. Pardi replied that the site generally slopes from west to east, so most of the underground storage will be on the east end of the site. Mr. Greenberg asked if the sewage concern by the residents would be reviewed by Engineering for approval. Director Blackford replied affirmatively, adding that sewer issues are similar to traffic issues, insofar as what Planning Commission can weigh in their decision. He reiterated Mr. Pardi's statement that there were initially two sites under consideration, and one did not move forward because of sewer capacity issues. This one, however, has capacity. Mr. Greenberg asked Director Blackford if he felt a precedent would be set to increase density if this project is approved. He noted there have been other developers ask for an increase in density, but that was prior to the increase of units per acre allowed in the updated zoning code. Director Blackford predicted that there would be pressure for more and more density on other projects, even though each variance should be considered on a case-by-case basis. He believed expectations would be elevated when developers come into City Hall. Mr. Pardi said there are currently 182 units planned. If needed, they would take stacks of one-bedroom units and turn them into two-bedroom units. This would reduce the number to less than 25 units per acre. Mr. Pardi stated he does not feel that is what is best for the site. He felt Planning Commission could consider the Land Use Plan and proximity to the Creekside District as justification for allowing the proposed increase in density. Mr. Pardi added that they will continue the project even if Planning Commission does not increase the density. Mr. Greenberg asked if Mr. Pardi had an estimate for rental costs per unit. Mr. Pardi

stated that it would be in line with the market and would likely be in the range of \$1,200-1,400 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$1,600-2,000 for a two-bedroom depending on the size of the unit.

Mr. Tamarkin asked Director Blackford what the density in Creekside is. Director Blackford replied that Creekside, mostly along Mill Street, is essentially, "if you can park it, you can build it," although there are setback and height restrictions. Creekside does not have a set density like other zoning designations. Mr. Tamarkin asked Mr. Pardi, how many people typically reside in a 1-bedroom apartment, from his experience. Mr. Pardi replied that it typically depends on the size of the unit. He noted that reducing the number of units will not reduce the amount of leasable square footage, and may increase the number of residents, but not in a meaningful way. Mr. Tamarkin and Mr. Pardi concurred that 158 units and 182 units can hold the same number of residents because the project will have the same number of bedrooms. Regarding EV charging stations, Mr. Tamarkin clarified that there will be five stations in garages and two in the parking lots, so only two would be public. Mr. Pardi said that currently, across all their other projects, most renters who use the spaces have specific spots they use overnight and are not charging briefly throughout the day. He added that more surface spaces could be added to adjust to demand. He stated that from experience, people tend to prefer garage stations. Mr. Tamarkin asked how many spaces would be 9x16 feet. The compact spaces are a minimal amount of the overall parking spaces. Mr. Tamarkin asked how many projects Avenue Partners has nationwide. Mr. Pardi replied that Avenue Partners is only in the Columbus and Cleveland areas. They have developed 1,700 units and currently own four projects. Projects that were sold were early projects that were sold to build their finances. Their goal is to hold more projects.

Chair Mako asked Director Blackford for clarification that the parcel was rezoned R-4 during the zoning code rewrite, to which Director Blackford confirmed. Chair Mako asked how the limit of 25 units per acre was decided upon. Director Blackford said that the number may seem arbitrary, but other neighborhoods, trends, and recent developments were looked at to decide the number of units. Mr. Mako asked if this is like other established neighborhoods in the area. Director Blackford confirmed that a number in the 20s is consistent for the area. Chair Mako asked if the apartments already on Johnstown Road are a similar development. Director Blackford stated they are similar in use, but he felt that is where the similarities end. He noted that many other projects were developed in the 1970s. This project has a much higher level of

amenities. The existing developments on Johnstown Road vary and it is a heavy mixed-use area. Because it is mixed-use, it is also appropriate for residential. Chair Mako asked if there would be any additional legislative action if the Development Plan is approved tonight. Director Blackford replied that there would be no additional action from the Planning Commission, and that the plan would then proceed to review by the Engineering Department followed by building permits. Chair Mako then asked Mr. Pardi a series of questions. First, he wondered if this is the first suburban development of Avenue Partners, while others are in more densely populated areas. Mr. Pardi confirmed, adding that there is currently a Hilliard development. Regarding access, Chair Mako observed that the drives align with Olde Ridenour to the north, and Orchard Lane to the east. He wondered if these resulted from the traffic analysis that was conducted. Mr. Pardi confirmed. He said that the existing drive on the north is offset from the intersection, and that it was analyzed as two separate three-way intersections. There were initially two access points on James Road, which were reduced to one. Traffic engineers recommended approving the condition and aligning the drives. Chair Mako asked how many linear feet are part of the right-of-way. There will be approximately 200 feet from Olde Ridenour. Avenue Partners has committed to the City in writing to commit to additional right-of-way taking as plans develop. He stated that Access Energy will not do this. Chair Mako asked if Mr. Pardi recalled what traffic numbers were like during peak hours documented in the traffic study. Mr. Pardi stated that from his recollection, the current site would account for about 2-3% of traffic in the area. Shifting from its current use to residential use reduces that by 25%. Chair Mako reiterated there would be a ten-foot multi-use path on the north side and a 5-foot sidewalk on the east side. He asked if the sidewalk is outside the right-of-way. Ryan Szymanski, with Avenue Partners, stated it is part of the right-of-way discussions. The City is deciding whether it will be a five- or ten-foot path. It will most likely end up being part of the right-of-way. They needed to include something for the plan, so they included a five-foot path. Chair Mako said the reason for his question was to understand who maintains the path. Director Blackford stated that whether the path is in the right-of-way or not, it is the property owner's responsibility to maintain. Chair Mako referenced the two underground chambers planned for stormwater. He reiterated that one on the south will essentially flow into the one on the north side, which will eventually release. Mr. Szymanski replied that per the EPA, post-development runoff must be at the same levels or less than pre-development runoff. While there will be more hard surface, it will collect in the underground chambers. It is an engineering requirement and a mandate.

Mr. Greenberg asked if there will be a policy for residents' animals for walking and pet waste. Mr. Pardi replied that their typical experience is that about 25% of residents have pets. There will be some breed and size restrictions. He offered to cater a particular policy to the community if the Commission felt it pertinent.

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

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. Shapaka expressed that the location of a project like this, being on the perimeter of both single family residential and commercial, can be difficult. He felt the questions were addressed properly and acknowledged that the property owner has a right to develop the land as they see fit, as long as it fits within the guidelines established by the City.

Ms. Pollyea agreed in her support for the project. She feels it is well put together and well thought out and is something the community will benefit from.

Mr. Hicks stated there was a good discussion when the applicant brought the project to the workshop. He noted that sometimes projects discussed at workshops are different from what is presented at a regular meeting, but that Mr. Pardi's presentation did not differ greatly from the original plans, which he appreciated. He also appreciated Mr. Pardi's comments on not wanting to "game the system," and that Mr. Pardi did not use potential impact, or lack thereof, to the school system as a reason the project should be approved.

Mr. Greenberg said he is sympathetic to the traffic concerns, but reiterated that traffic is not under the purview of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Tamarkin remarked that the property is blighted right now, and may be one of the most unattractive pieces of land in the City. There have been no other plans to develop it in the time it has sat vacant. He feels the proposal is appropriate for the area.

Chair Mako said that the project makes sense from a land use perspective. He also sympathized with those who expressed concerns about traffic, adding that he, too, lives on the west side and understands the issues firsthand. However, from a land use standpoint, he feels it is a good development and the developer has done their due diligence.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

[V-0032-2024](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary Chapters 1103.10 Multi-Unit Dwelling Density, 1103.10 Building Setbacks, 1107.01(d)(3) Materials, 1107.01(e)(2) Colors, 1109.01(a)(2)/(4) Parking Setbacks, 1109.01(d)

Parking Dimensions, 1109.01(j) Electric Vehicle Charging, 1109.04(b)(5) Dumpster Screening, 1109.04(c) Buffering and Screening, and 1109.02(d) Dumpster Setbacks of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 175 Johnstown Road; Parcel ID Numbers 025-000890, 025-000808, 025-000855, and 025-000798; Current Zoning R-4 - Multi-Unit Residential; Avenue Partners Acquisitions, LLC; Paul Pardi, applicant.

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1103.10 Multi-Unit Dwelling Density be Approved.

Discussion on the motion:

Chair Mako determined that the votes would be broken out into individual variances. Assistant City Attorney Roth agreed that one motion could be made, and the ten variances could be voted on individually.

Mr. Shapaka said that while ten variances seems like a lot, he does not have concerns with them given the size and type of project being considered. He is in favor of all ten.

Ms. Pollyea said she is in favor of all variances except the density variance. She is sympathetic to the concerns of the residents in the area. She feels the increase in permitted units per acre in the new zoning code should be sufficient.

Mr. Hicks stated his concern for the density variance. This is because recent developments for multi-family are all under the new limit of 25 units per acre. He expressed favor for all the variances except the one pertaining to density.

Mr. Greenberg also shared his concern about density. The code was expanded to 25 units per acre on May 1, 2024. It creates many new opportunities for denser projects. He feels that the code should be adhered to on this issue, so that the City is not pressured to increase density for future projects.

Mr. Tamarkin stated he will be in favor for all ten variances. He understands the concerns, but does not feel there is anything to gain from denying that particular variance. In this case, the same number of residents, vehicles, and amount of traffic will still result from the project regardless of the number of units. He feels higher density works for this project to make it economically feasible.

Chair Mako stated his favor for all variances except the one related to density. He feels 25 units is a liberal number and mixes well with what is established in the city. Going beyond this would set a poor precedent. He feels the other are minor in nature and the result will be a good project.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Shapaka and Tamarkin

No: 4 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako and Pollyea

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1103.10 Building Setbacks be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1107.01(d)(3) Materials be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1107(e)(2) Colors be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1109.01(a)(2)/(4) Parking Setbacks be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1109.01(d) Parking Dimensions be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1109.01(j) Electric Vehicle Charging be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1109.04(b)(5) Dumpster Screening be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1109.04(c) Buffering and Screening be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

A motion was made by Greenberg, seconded by Pollyea, that the Variance Application to vary Chapter 1109.02(d) Dumpster Setbacks be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Greenberg, Hicks, Mako, Pollyea, Shapaka and Tamarkin

Absent: 1 - Suriano

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

G. NEW BUSINESS - NONE

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Director of Planning

Director Blackford shared a summary of 2024 projects. There were 66 applications, which is a slight decrease from typical due to changes in the zoning code that made some applications administratively approvable. There were six Development Plan applications that did not go to Planning Commission. Also, tonight's application would have been three to four applications prior to the zoning code update, rather than two applications. Eliminating Planning Commission from this process saved applicants about a month of time. In total, about 210,000 square feet of commercial space was approved by Planning Commission, along with 172 units.

Council Liaison

Director Blackford shared that the 2025 budget was passed. He thanked Council and staff for their work.

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS - NONE

J. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Mr. Shapaka suggested that the bed count be considered for the zoning code in the future, considering tonight's application. He wished all a Happy Holidays.

Ms. Pollyea thanked the Planning Commission for all that she learned from them while she acclimated to her first year in the role. She thanked staff for their work on the presentations and wished everyone a Happy Holidays.

Mr. Hicks stated that there were unexpected events that occurred for him in 2024 and thanked everyone for their support and well wishes.

Mr. Greenberg expressed appreciation for the administration's work and wished all a great holiday season.

Mr. Tamarkin also shared happy holiday wishes for all, and congratulated Chair Mako for chairing the Commission for the year.

Chair Mako thanked to his colleagues and acknowledged that the Commission sometimes has a difficult job. He appreciated their professionalism and time commitment. He also expressed thanks to the staff for their work.

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, Chair Mako adjourned the meeting at 9:04 p.m.