



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Krystal Gonchar, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Call in details: 513-306-4583, Conference ID: 457 383 783#. To speak during the meeting, at least one hour prior to the start of the meeting, you must email planningcommission@gahanna.gov and include: subject you wish to speak on, your name, address.

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

Gahanna Planning Commission met virtually for a Regular Session on Wednesday, September 9, 2020. The agenda for this meeting was published on September 3, 2020. Chair Michael Suriano called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA: None.

C. [2020-140](#) Planning Commission Meeting Minutes for August 26, 2020.

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

Yes: 7 - Shapaka, Suriano, Burba, Greenberg, Hicks, 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

Canini & Associates[V-019-2020](#)

To consider a Variance Application to vary section 1153.01(a)-Permitted Uses, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, to allow for a live/work space; for property located at 1255 Beecher Crossing North; Parcel ID No. 025-012044; current zoning SO; Larry Canini, applicant.

City Planner Michael Blackford provided a summary of the applications V-019-2020 and DR-017-2020; see attached file labeled *Staff Presentation*; applicant proposes to reside at the office; would otherwise have to rezone to CX-1 because SO zoning does not allow for residents; CX-1 would, in staff's opinion, not be appropriate for the area; all requirements from past approved applications still apply, still in effect for elements not covered tonight; renderings illustrate materials, not necessarily colors; reviewed criteria for granting variances; site is unique, have been challenges with getting the site completed with 100 percent office use; COVID changed development landscape; recommends approval of variance; reiterated that resident would also have to work there, hence the live/work site; reviewed criteria for approving design reviews; not much as far as standards for color in the city code, these are more subjective; seems consistent with existing environment; would contribute to economic vitality of the district.

Chair opened public comment at 7:17 pm.

Larry Canini, applicant: project started as a "build to suit" in 2009 for a bank operation center; was designed with 2 level ravine setting; the recession prevented that project from moving forward; difficult to find occupants that want to work on lower level; tough to market; have been approached for different uses but none for approved zoning; as a personal need, considered what is before the commission now; he does not have an office in Gahanna, but leases one in New Albany; thought that it would make sense to use space for personal use; has secured office in California that needs to expand in Gahanna, they will take main level; would be a corporate office for this region of the country; screening will not change from the 2017 approvals; dumpster will remain at rear of property; 5 pole lights will be LED; none of that changes; will modernize building somewhat though; more of a modern barn look; no signage will be suspended; would eliminate ground mount sign at the street with the new porch design.

George Lombardo: adjacent property owner at 502 Mechwart Place; all

questions have been answered during the presentation; nothing additional to add but appreciates the project moving forward.

Isobel Sherwood; Board member for Courtyard at Beecher Crossing Condominium Association; Blackford answered questions through email prior to the meeting; in favor of the application; would love to see the property completed; biggest concern was landscaping but that was addressed; applicant will have 16 spruce trees near 11' in height, along the property line.

Closed public comment at 7:27 p.m. and called for questions from the Commission.

Wester: no questions, but glad to see it moving forward.

Tamarkin: asked if existing foundation will be used. Canini confirmed that it was looked at by an engineer and met with a building official from city; meets requirements; no changes. Tamarkin asked about the vision for the land between the condos. Canini said to east are the condos, there are 2 vacant lots southwest, and sold that off years ago; development never materialized; hoping once this building is completed, will spur some other development. Tamarkin said looks like area he was referring to will be a parking lot. Canini confirmed.

Shapaka: asked about parking; would there be a consideration or desire to put in a garage. Canini said not interested; with fire codes it would be big hoops to jump through; no need for it. Shapaka asked where signage would be to notify people to go around the back of the building. Canini said a directional sign will be mounted to corner of building due to parking.

Hicks: asked Blackford if FDP applications expire; is a new plan required. Blackford said that yes they do expire, but the applicant doesn't need a new one; code says plans are valid for one year, but does not say what must occur during that one year timeframe; staff discusses this a lot; applicant must be working towards it, but not have to complete construction; not practical; some action must be taken and in this case, the site is in a construction state; activity has occurred, so staff interpreted that there's no need for new FDP, but if the layout would have changed, then they would have been required to submit a new FDP. Hicks said no concerns, just wanted to confirm. Hicks asked for the next owner, would this enhance the marketability. Canini said would enhance especially due to updates proposed.

Burba: everything has been addressed, but glad to see this getting finished.

Greenberg: echoed other members comments about getting this project finished; asked how this would stay with the property, the live/work portion. Blackford said live/work by definition has the occupant be an employee at the location; if ever an issue, staff would go back to the variance application and confirm that the resident works there, would be a code enforcement issue.

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

Discussion on the motion: Suriano stated that he will be voting in support of the application given the nature and context of the area; allowing for both an office and residential space gives the applicant flexibility for the use and space.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

[DR-017-2020](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for a building design, for property located at 1255 Beecher Crossing North; Parcel ID No. 025-012044; current zoning SO; Larry Canini, applicant.

(See discussion above, under V-019-2020)

A motion was made by Hicks, seconded by Burba, that the Design Review be Approved.

Discussion on the motion: Suriano stated that he will be voting in support of this application; believes the proposal is an improvement; likes the direction of the development.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Big Sky Realty

[Z-002-2020](#)

To recommend approval to Council, a Zoning Application for 2.65+/- acres of property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

Blackford provided a summary of the zoning, conditional use, and variance applications; see attached file labeled *staff presentation*; 60 units proposed; Land Use Plan designated this as medium density use;

code requires conditional use if containing more than 8 units; applicant also wants an accessory building; several variances, listed in staff presentation; one variance must be recommended to Council; had internal discussions about a dog park for land requirement portion; Parks Department and Administration discussed that the language may have been appropriate 40 years ago, but may not be appropriate direction any longer because we now have an abundance of park land; looked at data of land use, and #2 use in the city is park land; more park land than commercial or office combined; Gahanna has 23 acres of parkland per 1,000 people; development would bring in another tax base; park space requires funding; not financially feasible; have only 3,000 multifamily units in the city; most were built prior to 2010; development trends in the greater Columbus region include smaller homes, smaller pieces of property and renters by choice; lot width required for units is prohibitive; most setbacks for parking are for property line not building, unsure why; would require future applications for Final Development Plan and Design Review to finalize details; renderings are informational only for site plan; reviewed criteria for granting approvals of each type of application; there is a need for multi-family; estimated traffic impact of 60 apartments would generate 390 daily trips, most in the p.m. hours; if this were developed as a shopping center, allowable by code, would generate over 1,100 trips per day; from roadway capacity standpoint, apartments generate less impact on roadways; staff recommends approval due to trends and needs; 88% of land use the city is single family homes; there's an imbalance; city wants investment on west side; applicant provided images of existing buildings which are dilapidated.

Chair opened public comment at 8:05 pm.

Aaron Underhill, attorney representing the applicant: David Hodge is covering another meeting this evening, stepping in for him; the area is aging; identified as mixed use area in Land Use Plan; multi-family development is important component to that; residential areas near existing development is important; the location is near Creekside; near the freeway with easy access to airport; units existing today are aging and there's not enough; recent MORPC report states the importance of being near where you work; is an economic tool to get young workers in the area; central Ohio is adding nearly 50 people per day; only building 8,000 new units per year; math shows this type of development to be in demand and successful; over an acre of green space; will have a dog park in southwest corner available to the public; parking requirements very high for this zoning, unlike other regions.

Rubin: have spent a lot of time with planning, parks and engineering; to add to what was presented, regarding unit mix, we are including 48 2 bedroom units and 12 1 bed units; parking requirements are more than what is needed; south setback has trees between 50-100 ft high, minimizes impact to surrounding homes; anticipate that the traffic trips will only increase from what is currently there by 4% ,which is minimal; completed Jefferson Woods off Mill St. in Olde Gahanna; demand for high quality housing has driven us to pursue this opportunity; have family in Gahanna and excited to be a part of the community.

Joseph Robertson, nearby business owner: exciting to see development on this side of town; has a question about lot width; looks like over 50% requested; concern with total number of units due to current issues with traffic; looks close to streets; does this create precedence moving forward.

Rubin: ran the development from every angle possible, 60 units sounds like a lot but it's a small development and the costs add up; anything below that is not cost effective for a developer; traffic was reviewed with engineers at length; redesign to eliminate a curb cut. Underhill said what is currently allowed could have a larger traffic impact than this proposal.

Lisa Frabott, 227 Brookhaven Dr. North: there is a grid lock with traffic; not sure proposed changes to that intersection will fix traffic issues; all the businesses contribute to traffic; adding 60+ cars will not help; schools are currently overcrowded; would be a transient community because it's a rental; those residents are not invested in the community; just because there are apartments nearby does not mean we want more; there's a better use for property; coming from a resident of 25 years.

Rubin: appreciates concern; existing zoning allows for much higher uses including grocery stores; would increase the car count by 4x; traffic is getting worse for Columbus metro; for schools, we just developed The Huntley which has 28 units- has 7 children total in the Gahanna schools; not a burden to the school system; residents contribute to the city and spend money at Creekside. Underhill said with 1 and 2 bedrooms, usually generates very few students; is a misnomer that apartments automatically bring kids.

Colleen Howland, 327 W. Johnstown Rd.; lives behind the proposed project; agrees that 60 units seems excessive for 2.5 acres; a lot of parking spaces, traffic can be backed up from 3-6 p.m.; sometimes unable to get out of driveway; if approved, how will the city address this;

used to be a traffic light; have lived here for 50 years; there are private drives on each side of property; are they individual units or one building with multiple stories; there's a creek that runs behind the property; worries about children accessing the creek; what would be done to protect private property, a fence? Have caught people walking dogs on her property; concerned with vandalism; city has a responsibility to look out for homeowners; put a commercial building there.

Rubin: said can't answer questions about the traffic light, but improvements at intersection would widen the road; regarding private drive, no answer to wanderers; has experience with development in Olde Gahanna which was a rundown property and have gotten close with neighbors there; thinks they would see a reduction in vandalism because of running a tight ship.

Chair closed comment at 8:35 p.m. and called for questions from the Commission:

Wester: thought the presentation was self-explanatory; will have some additional comments later.

Tamarkin: most questions are around the Final Development Plan, which we will see at a later date. Would applicant consider placing a fence on southside of property? Is accessory building going to be used for storage?

Rubin said regarding the fence, was not part of design or budget; creek is well past 50' south of the property; open to discussing that; structure on sight already exists, those would be demolished; one building could potentially be a gym. Tamarkin agreed that the building on site is blighted.

Shapaka: the community has been vocal about this site, but wants to make it clear that we are not voting for site amenities such as a fence; 2 parking spaces per unit seems excessive; would reduce parking to one car per unit; the drive could be more secluded; asked Blackford about plans for Johnstown Rd. as it relates to sidewalks and future traffic signal. Blackford said he can't comment on traffic signal, as that is a Service & Engineering initiative; applicant must provide a portion of ROW for future roadway improvement; applicant has had discussions with that department.

Underhill said no development along this stretch is ever going to solve

the problem on its own; ROW will help facilitate a new improvement; Council could TIF this project and would generate a lot of revenue; would generate money for those improvements; even if we said we would help the city put in a traffic light does not mean we are able to; that is a city decision.

Hicks: Confirmed number of units; said Rubin referenced Jefferson Woods, is that The Huntley? Was that rebranded? Rubin confirmed. Hicks said the applicant buys and renovates projects; asked if the applicant has other examples of new builds. Rubin said he started a company 2 years ago but has worked on hundreds of new build units.

Burba: asked about the dog park; how big will that be? Rubin said they have no final dimensions yet; that would be a part of the FDP application. Burba said it looks small in comparison; asked if that would be open to the public. Rubin said that was part of the conversations with Administration. Burba said that may cause concern with the neighbors.

Greenberg: how will the public access the dog park if it is in the back; visitors would have to park in the spots; would parking spaces be opened or residents would have passes? Rubin said the parking will be open, will have small amount of reserved spaces; reducing parking is not a desire. Greenberg said for 20 units per acre requirement, was it an economical decision to ask for more units? Rubin confirmed.

Suriano: Rubin said architectural design does not work with less density. Rubin said no, that the design of buildings typically have 12 units for the layout; for us, it is not feasible if under 60 units. Suriano asked Blackford to identify some uses in the Community Commercial zoning designation. Blackford said it allows for professional and medical offices, grocery stores, liquor stores, drug stores, retail shopping center, automotive related uses. Suriano asked for clarity on 4 separate line items for variances; asked if both variances are to reduce public area requirement, and reduce parking requirement? Blackford confirmed. Suriano asked for the zoning, would change from CC to MFRD? Blackford confirmed. Suriano asked for CU, that would be under MFRD or current zoning? Blackford said under MFRD; said MFRD has 12 units allowed, additional CU is to add units on top of that.

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Greenberg, to recommend approval to Council the zoning change.

Discussion on the motion:

Wester: stated that he would not be in support of the zoning change; thinks this is a dichotomy project; is exciting because it is redevelopment but disappointing because it does not address issues with the area; CC probably not developed due to traffic; there's also a lot of pedestrian traffic coming off Johnstown Rd.; if there were a grocery store, there would be a turn lane at a minimum; provided examples of road improvements (roundabouts on Hamilton, McKenna Creek Crossing, Creekside off Mill Street); not in support due to traffic; even a small shopping center would require a turn lane.

Hicks: staff presentation touched on Land Use Plan and the need for new multi-family residential; agrees with that; however, this development is too dense for the area; applicant provided other examples of similarly dense developments, but not in this area; this project is not medium-density but rather high-density; development is asking for high percentage above recommendations; not in support; not what is recommended by Land Use Plan; would like applicant to come back with a project that the Commission can support; traffic issue is bigger than this parcel.

Suriano: agrees with Hicks on traffic issue being bigger than one property but in light of that, if you remove traffic from the equation, there are different degrees of intensity for CC use; more concerned with density above and beyond what is recommended; more on low end of high-density than medium-density; not opposed to zoning change, just not at this density; don't think that the Commission can question how much traffic will come without looking at parking, those two things are tied together; in support of 1.5 spaces per unit; regarding public space, there is not an issue with reduction in the public space requirement.

Burba: doesn't think the 2 lane road was prepared for this traffic; lives in the area and deals with traffic from all those businesses; there are no sidewalks on Johnstown Rd. and believes additional lanes have been needed for a long time; does not believe the area is prepared for that density; not in support of the project for those reasons; the city needs to get prepared for this type of project.

Shapaka: could support the idea of making this zoning change; hopefully the applicant can review their project and come back; thankful that the community came out to speak.

Greenberg: based on traffic, parking, density issues, and despite

needing multi-family development; this area is not ready for this at the moment; will not be in support.

Underhill requested that the applications be tabled in order for the applicant to review this; whoever made the motion could move to amend, based on Robert's Rules of Order. Shapaka said the zoning issue vote could proceed and table the others, if acceptable to the client. Underhill stated that everything is contingent upon the zoning change. Ultimately, the applicant requested that all the applications be postponed to a future meeting, preferably one month from now. Tamarkin withdrew his motion, as the Commission was in favor.

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Shapaka, that the Zoning Application be Postponed to Date Certain, due back on 10/14/2020. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

[CU-003-2020](#)

To consider a Conditional Use Application to allow for a multi-family development, for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel Id Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

(See discussion above, under file Z-002-2020)

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Greenberg, that the Conditional Use Application be Postponed to Date Certain, due back on 10/14/2020. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

[V-017-2020](#)

To recommend approval to Council, a Variance Application, to vary section 1109.08- Public Areas, of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, to reduce the public area requirement; for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

(See discussion above, under file Z-002-2020)

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Shapaka, that the Variance Application be Postponed to Date Certain, due back on 10/14/2020. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

[V-018-2020](#)

To consider a Variance Application, to vary sections 1149.02- Conditional Uses, 1149.03- Development Standards, and 1163.02- Minimum Number of Parking Spaces Required, of the Codified

Ordinances of the City of Gahanna; for property located at 307-319 W. Johnstown Rd.; Parcel ID Nos. 025-000848 & 025-000849; current zoning CC; proposed zoning MFRD; Big Sky Realty; Mitch Rubin, applicant.

(See discussion above, under file Z-002-2020)

A motion was made by Tamarkin, seconded by Greenberg, that the Variance Application be Postponed to Date Certain, due back on 10/14/2020. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

G. NEW BUSINESS: None.

H. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Assistant City Attorney

No report.

Planning & Development

Blackford stated that he is making progress with the Design Review code updates; hoping to have some public input opportunities soon; now the Code Enforcement Division is under Planning.

Council Liaison

Shapaka said there was public comment at the beginning of the last meeting; the resident commented on Council's jovial demeanor; wanted to remind the Commission that people are listening and watching; believes Planning Commission is doing a good job; congratulated Blackford on his new role.

CIC Liaison

Hicks said he announced at the last meeting, the small business assistance program; the CIC has received applications; no awards have been issued yet, but applications are being reviewed by a subcommittee.

Chair

No report.

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

Suriano thanked the commission for their support; thanked the past Chairs for providing guidance; important to remain professional; appreciates everyone's patience; is aware of how much work is put into staff presentation; does not want Blackford to think we take these things flippantly; would say in general, that we are going to get more applications like this; will continue to see the need for additional housing; is aware that schools are overstressed and it is a hot topic; asked if we have a forum to discuss these things devoid of a formal application; puts undue stress on applicants; curious of this should go to a workshop.

Wester said the last application we had, was deserving of a workshop; we have downplayed workshops in the past couple of years; having a zoning change with a conditional use and two variances is a complicated development, but it should be discussed more openly and not all at once.

Suriano said we have apportioned parts of the city for high-density; not feasible to have entire city be developed as single-family; economics do not work for that; it is important for the community to understand these needs; need a forum for those discussions.

Greenberg stated that this is something he would like to discuss and brought up recently; is in favor of more workshops; need to have in depth discussion and allot time for that ample discussion; thanked Suriano for his leadership.

Wester stated that Suriano has been doing an excellent job all year, especially in light of the pandemic; feels that we are sometimes operating in a vacuum because we don't see all the capital improvement plans, etc.

Blackford stated that there are a lot of moving parts, and things change quickly; capital needs assessments are the best resources for those things; reminded the Commission that we had received backfire for having too many workshops where people believed too many important decisions were coming out of those; we will continue to see these types of developments coming forward; we had a Land Use Plan public hearing process where those multi-family locations were determined; it's a zoning code problem when it was written 40+ years ago; not built for

today's environment; sometimes timing is not on the applicants' side when it comes to scheduling workshops; most anywhere you propose a multi-family in the city will have single-family homes surrounding it and possibly opposed.

Suriano stated that from personal experience, has been yelled at for projects for similar reasons; there is a disconnect with wants, needs and capacity; we must determine what is appropriate and where; if these applications would have gone before the Commission at a workshop, then the applicants would have been told that this seems off for that area. Blackford said he offered up a workshop to this applicant; said that the applicant mentioned there were some MORPC studies, and perhaps we can request they come to speak to the Commission.

Shapaka congratulated the Commission because we usually pass things through, but we took the time to discuss this because it didn't feel right; believes the system we have worked.

K. ADJOURNMENT

By Wester at 9:46 p.m.