



City of Gahanna

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Meeting Minutes Planning Commission Workshop

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

Pam Ripley, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

6:15 PM

City Hall, Committee Room

A. OPEN MEETING/ROLL CALL

Gahanna Planning Commission met a workshop session on April 12, 2023. The agenda for this meeting was published on April 7, 2023. Chair James Mako called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

All members of the commission were in attendance. Suriano arrived at 6:16 p.m.

B. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

SPEED WAY TOWING

Applicant Mark Antonetz representing Speed Way Towing introduced the owners of the business, Ahmed and Omar Shehata. Antonetz believes that have complied with all the issues. They have pulled all the infrastructure out of the new right-of-way. He believes the city is asking for a 10' extension of the right-of-way. A couple issues they have not complied with is installing the public bike path sidewalk along the frontage and combining the lots. He doesn't believe there are any other issues that they are not willing to comply with. They are asking for six variances. Most of the variances are related to setbacks. The reason is because the existing building is already inside the building setback. To provide the public parking, it is going to have to encroach the parking setback. They have complied with all the landscaping requirements. There still seems to be an issue with what they are calling this. There was reference to providing significantly more handicapped parking because the analysis was based on the proposed vehicle storage area being a parking lot. It is not a parking lot. The only public parking lot is in front of the building which they are proposing to be compliant with ADA requirements and parking count. The surface is going to be paved asphalt. No public will be provided access to the proposed storage area. The area is fenced and gated. Customers will enter the office, pay their retribution, and the employees will bring the vehicle to them. This seems to be an anomaly in city code. If we can get past the fact that this is not a parking lot most of it can be resolved.

Mr. Mako asked the commission members for comments/questions. Mr. Hicks asked what the use of the location is. Antonetz said it is for towing, and towing storage. When they tow a vehicle, it will be brought through a gated entrance and stored in the gravel parking area. They had worked significantly with previous city engineer Moorehead on how they will manage storm water and came to an agreement. In the final construction drawings/plans they will provide the grading and stormwater management that is compliant with city code and EPA for water quality. At the rear of the property there is a significant area set aside for detention. There is a small area out front that is currently draining towards Taylor Station Rd. Antonetz referred to the documents included in the application.

Hicks said the rendering shows parking lines, but Antonetz said it is not a parking lot. Hicks is confused as to what the area would be used for. Antonetz said it is vehicle storage. The vehicles they tow would be stored in that gravel area. Hicks asked what the typical length of stay is for a vehicle. Omar Shehata, said vehicles would stay around 60 days or less until the owner picks them up or abandons them. After that they have the authority to either junk the vehicles or sell them. Hicks asked the capacity of the proposed storage facility. Omar Shehata said approximately 280 vehicles. Hicks asked if a potential customer could visit the lot and get a part for a car. Omar Shehata said no, they only allow the owner in that area to get their items out of their car. They are not allowed to work on their cars.

Mr. Greenberg said the retention pond in the back is going to take all the runoff from anything that is leaking and there is a sheet flow towards that retention pond are permits required from the state and do they have to do sampling on a quarterly basis. Antonetz said the only requirement they need to comply with will be the EPA's requirement for water quality. They have to show where they capture the first three quarter inch rainfall and detain it. they are prepared to provide whatever compliant water quality measures that the city requires.

Mr. Tamarkin asked Blackford who decides the number of handicap spots. Blackford said it is in a few sections of zoning code. Technically the code would categorize the impound lot as parking. The way zoning code defines it, they would have to have landscaping, lighting, and ADA accessible spaces in that area unless the commission varies those requirements. They do have a variance request to the ADA parking requirement. Tamarkin commented on the sidewalks that they are not currently in compliance with, but the application states they will comply once they add the sidewalks. He believes the city engineer said that with the roundabout going in nearby the city plans on adding sidewalks. Even though there are no other sidewalks around he would vote that the sidewalk be required. Once they are doing the improvements, a sidewalk is required. Tamarkin asked if they would be willing to put in the sidewalk. Antonetz said that there are a couple of issues; there is an open ditch roadway. They are probably not going to want the sidewalk adjacent to a roadway that doesn't have curb to deter traffic and it is also the expense that is going to be incurred to install the sidewalk. It might make it cost prohibitive. There has been some discussion that if the city would consider if they would participate in some future project that is going to have the entire bike path sidewalk installed. Tamarkin said there is a roundabout going to be installed and asked if they are a contiguous property to it and how close they are to the roundabout. The roundabout will come

with sidewalks. Blackford said he believes the roundabout is going into the intersection of Clay Craft and Taylor Station Roads. Blackford said they are about one quarter of a mile from the roundabout. Tamarkin said for the records that personally he is not in favor of avoiding the sidewalks. He thinks it needs to be done. Tamarkin stated that once they build this, all vehicles will be stored in back inside the fenced-in area. Antonetz said that is correct and they believe they are providing a significant improvement to the curb appeal. All the fencing will be chain link to provide security with vinyl inserts with nearly 100 percent opacity. The landscaping plan proposed includes the street trees required and they are proposing low level bushes along the front of the parking area along most of the perimeter except the access drive and the entrance to the building. Tamarkin asked if when they are closed and there are not any customers will there be any vehicles parked in front of the building outside the fence. Tamarkin said the property is currently an eyesore in his opinion. There are vehicles everywhere. He thinks this will be a nice improvement. Omar Shehata said at night tow trucks and any vehicles they bring in will go inside the fenced area. He said they are going to make it look a lot better. Tamarkin said the current parking lot is gravel and they are going to pave it. Omar Shehata said that is correct. Tamarkin asked if the sidewalks have to be concrete or can they be blacktop. Blackford said it is up to the city engineer, it is part of the thoroughfare plan. They specify the width and the type of sidewalk/trail. In his opinion if you are paving a driveway, he doesn't know how much more it cost to do a sidewalk. Antonetz said he thinks that one of the requests is a sidewalk from the entry to the ADA spot. It doesn't apply in this case because the whole front end is going to be paved and it is redundant to put a sidewalk and then have pavement adjacent to it flush. They could stripe the access from the ADA to the front door. It will deter any cars from parking there. The plan shows the parking lot, and it will all be paved all the way to the building. Tamarkin believes the sidewalk being referred to is along the road and he understands it is an open ditch with no curb. He will have to leave it up to the city engineer, but if they are going to require it, he is going to support it.

Wester asked if the facility is hooked up to sanitary sewer. Antonetz said they are in the process of doing that and have prepared a water and sewer service plan in combination with the architect's drawings that have the interior plumbing. Wester asked when it will go out for bid. Omar Shehata said they have submitted an application with the city and are waiting for a response. Wester asked when it will go out for bid and what is the scheduled completion date. Omar Shehata said once they receive the response from the city they will go forward. Wester said he find this appalling because this was asked for about five years ago and it has taken five years to this point and there is still not end date for it. Wester asked Blackford if the site was approved for the use. Blackford said that one of the applications necessary is a conditional use for the facility. They have approval as Mr. Wester stated that goes back to approximately 2016. The original approval is for about a one-acre piece of the property. To expand it out requires a conditional use approval in addition to a design review and some variances. That use is not allowed by right. Wester said that in 2017 a conditional use was amended to allow an extra year to allow an office trailer on site. Wester asked if the office trailer is still on site? Wester said in 2020 a conditional use and variance was filed, the applications expired due to inactivity. Wester asked what those application was for. Blackford said the applications were a conditional use and a variance. When going before the process if there is no activity on the

applications after six months they expire. That is why some of the applications were resubmitted last year, but it was lacking the conditional use application and the design review can't move forward without a conditional use approval. Blackford said as Mr. Antonetz states they have resubmitted applications, and it looks like they are progressing well but there is a conditional use application currently in review with the city.

Shapaka thanked them for the landscaping and the opaque fence out front. Shapaka said the plan for the paved parking area looks good. Shapaka doesn't see how you get from the gravel to into the paved lot holding area. Antonetz said there are three gated entries, one at the top and two gates on either side of the building. When a customer comes to pick up their car, the access will come from the southern two gates. The access goes directly to a paved area. Shapaka asked if the car is in storage how is that handled. Omar Shehata said that employees always bring the cars out. Customers do not drive the car out. There is a gate that connects the lots. Shapaka asked what is towed to their lot; workable cars, wrecked cars, cars that leaking. Omar Shehata said they all kinds of cars and if a car is leaking, they put something under it. Shapaka asked if there is a requirement to put in a designated paved area with an oil interceptor to collect any fluids. Omar Shehata said they could assign one if that is a requirement. Shapaka asked if they are just hauling cars, small vehicles, or trucks. Omar Shehata said they haul cars and the largest is a box truck. Shapaka asked how high the fence is along Taylor Station Rd. Antonetz said that has not been determined yet, but they can agree on a height. Shapaka said it is related to what is going to be hidden behind it. Antonetz said it would be six to eight feet. Shapaka asked if they are proposing a color to the fence. Antonetz said whatever in the design review is appropriate. Blackford said that in this zoning the fence can exceed eight feet up to 10 feet. If the desire is to go higher code will allow for it, without an additional variance.

Mako asked for additional information about the storm drainage to the retention basin. The site plan doesn't show anything going to it. Antonetz said they have not gotten that far yet. They may end up being storm structures if the grading will allow for sheet flow. The area in the back is the lowest spot on the parcel. If they can sheet flow it too that they will do it. If they can't sheet flow, they will use standard stormwater structures. Mako asked if they are proposing any type of safety around the basin. Antonetz said the basin will be a dry basin. Mako asked about staff report and the comments and concerns from the fire department and if they have been addressed. Antonetz said they have responded to all the reviews, the design review, the variance review, and the conditional use review. The fire department had no further comments.

Greenberg asked Blackford if there is anything else that the city is waiting for from the applicant. Blackford said since the last meeting the applicant refiled the applications and submitted the conditional use application. Staff needs to review. He is not sure of outstanding comments on those application.

Hicks said it sounded like there is a potential to have auto sales as a use and asked for that to be expanded upon. Omar Shehata said they do have an auto sales license. They usually preview several cars that they plan to sell and that is what the preview area is for. If there is anything they are doing wrong, or they could do better that can adjust it. This is the way they get rid of

the cars so that they are not on the lot for more than the 60 days. Hicks asked Blackford if that use was permitted in the zoning district. Blackford said that in the 2016 conditional use, although it is not a conditional use it did reference auto sales in addition.

Shapaka asked if they have an auto repair shop. Omar Shehata said they have a parts shop where they work on their trucks and some cars, there is an office area with a dispatch office. Shapaka asked if the shop has an oil interceptor. Omar Shehata said that it does. Shapaka said he is sympathetic to the ADA parking. He asked if there is a site lighting plan proposed. Blackford said it is one of the variances requests. He showed the site plan and the area in which zoning code says needs lighting. They are asking for a variance from the lighting in the area shown. Not in the front lot which by code does not need lighting due to the size. Shapaka asked if they anticipate site lighting. Omar Shehata said there is currently lighting that covers the front part. They have some flashlights, and some lights came with the building. That is what they are using. It covers everything well and they have cameras.

If they are required to put in more, they will. They do plan to add more. Greenberg asked for clarification; he wrecked his car, it gets towed, they put it in the back, and he never comes to get it. Omar Shehata said a person has 60 days to claim their vehicle, then they go through the legal process through the BMV, or the police department sends them the paperwork to turn over the title. They will resell it or get rid of it by sending it to a junk yard. They try to get rid of them after the 60 days to allow for more vehicles.

Wester asked about the comments on fire protection. The Fire Department made reference to fire apparatus roads and asked where they are on the site plan. Antonetz said as far as he knows all the comments from the Fire Department have been addressed. (*Antonetz was not speaking into a microphone and the tape did not pick up what was said*) Wester read from the report "fire in back parking area exceeds the dead-end fire department access road of 150-feet and requires 120-foot hammerhead, 60-foot wire and 96-foot cul-de-sac in accordance with figure D-103.01". Wester asked if that has been address on a design review. Antonetz said their latest review had no comments. They want fire access. He interprets that language as being something that might not be applicable to this because it sounds like it is a roadway where you put a hammerhead on it so the fire truck can get access and turn around. He is not sure that its applicable to this situation. He would be more than welcome to reach out to them for clarification.

Maiko asked if there was anything else. Antonetz asked for a prompt review and commented to Mr. Wester he understands the history of this and can assure him that it is in the best interest of the Shehata's to get this done for the operation and success of their business. The plans for the water and sewer and interior improvements are in for permit. They have a contractor already lined up; they are waiting for the approval. This proposal is a vast improvement to the curb appeal of the property. Blackford can only speak for the Department of Planning and said they will get to the resubmittal quickly. They are getting a lot less intense in depth in the review because a lot of those comments have been satisfied.

1105.04, 1163.05, 1163.06, 1163.08 and 1155.04(d) of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna, for property located at 788 Taylor Station Road; Parcel ID: 025-003996; Current Zoning OCT; Speed Way Towing; Mark Antonetz, applicant.

[DR-0004-2023](#)

To consider a Design Review Application for a site plan and landscaping for property located at 788 Taylor Station Road; Parcel ID: 025-003996; Current Zoning OCT; Speed Way Towing; Mark Antonetz, applicant.

C. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the workshop adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

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

James Mako