



City of Gahanna

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Meeting Minutes Planning Commission Workshop

*Bobbie Burba
Rick Duff
John Hicks
Thomas Shapaka
Donald R. Shepherd
Michael Suriano
Thomas J. Wester*

Krystal Gonchar, Deputy Clerk of Council

Wednesday, January 23, 2019

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

OPEN MEETING

Suriano opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. Additional attendees included Deputy Director of Planning & Development, Michael Blackford, George Berardi, Jon Holway, Jonathan Leonard, George Tabit.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

Chair Hicks and former Chair Wester presented former Member Joe Keehner with a commendation for his many years of dedicated service as a Planning Commission Member.

[2019-0007](#)

National Church Residences schematics for building height, site plan, and floor plan.

At the November 28, 2018 Planning Commission Meeting, a Conditional Use and Zoning application were presented by National Church Residences. Questions arose about the final development. George Berardi reviewed a few items from that previous discussion. Berardi said several of the concerns were related to the property to west, the tree line and height of the building; explained that there are some variations of the height as it moves west; the topography of the site allows for terracing; besides the issue of the building height, is the natural buffing. He showed renderings of the project from different views; showed the lower level as moving east; that is 4 stories, but the buffering screens that wing; said we want to be sensitive about the materials used; wants low maintenance; will have a lot of masonry. Berardi showed the parking plans; roadway at the south end gives clear access for fire protection and emergency vehicles; thought the best solution was to hide the parking; this is best for

the residents; pushed as far to the east as possible for recreation spaces; will have one entrance to the garage; trying to avoid north side traffic; will have gardens and open spaces for residents; perimeter of building is poured masonry; had a limitation from a lack of additional parking, but that would dig into the hill side; will show decorative materials later on; upper floor will be synthetic materials and have vinyl siding; height at the back of the building has a flat roof; trying to keep at a 9' ceiling height; large common space has a step down due to 13' height, for less impact.

Suriano reminded everyone that this Workshop is an opportunity to better understand the project and ask questions. He opened up the meeting for questions from the Commission. Berardi passed around the renderings for the members to view more closely.

Wester asked about Sheet SD100D, there are 2 trees that are 45' in height; asked if those trees currently exist. Berardi confirmed. Wester wanted to ensure they are not intending for saplings to be planted.

Suriano reviewed building layout. Berardi said there will be a 20' retaining wall.

Duff asked what the planned usage is; asked if this is a retirement home and assisted living. George Tabit reviewed the zoning request; will be independent living; will offer housekeeping, a light meal plan, limited transportation, an activity coordinator; not assisted living with a 24hr nursing care. Duff asked about staffing anticipations. Tabit said 8-10 staff members will be on duty during a shift. Duff said the question is due to concerns with parking. Tabit said there will be .75 cars per unit. Duff asked about the dining facility. Tabit said it will not be extensive because the intent is to keep the price point at mid-range. Berardi said every unit has a full kitchen.

Hicks said after reviewing his notes from the last meeting, public comments included concerns about a Final Development Plan; said that Berardi was asked questions from residents and Council about a Final Development Plan that was not yet before them; said he did a great job answering those questions.

Duff said the building will not impact views from nearby houses because the trees currently there are already blocking the view. Berardi said there's not a solid blocked view, but mostly screened.

Wester asked if a traffic impact study is required. Blackford said it was required for the rezoning but not the FDP and one was already submitted with the rezoning; said these types of uses are low traffic generators; nothing additional is required.

Burba asked about the estimated payroll per year. Tabit said he doesn't have numbers available but will follow up with those. Burba asked about the total cost of the project. Tabit said he believes that was in the original application but can't recall from memory. Burba asked about the layout of the units. Berardi said they will include 1-2 bedrooms with full kitchens and 2 full baths.

Shapaka said there appears to be a filled in creek in the schematics. Berardi said it will be piped and stored underground. Shapaka asked if it is stored underground will it be stored under the round-a-bout. Berardi said maybe at the southeast corner. Shapaka said there's a change in grade of the parking lot surface; asked if there is a retaining wall. Berardi said maybe a small retaining wall; referred to the red line on the rendering. Shapaka asked about taking away some rooms, 20 from the west end, and putting them somewhere else. Berardi said that would be more expensive.

Suriano said he is aware that this is a puzzle and great detail is required in order to get all the pieces in place correctly; appears the development team is doing a great job; this discussion has been very helpful in understanding the layout.

Wester said Rob Priestas is an excellent engineer and will review the drainage for site.

Berardi said more people from the team will be present at the next meeting to provide additional details.

Blackford provided an estimated cost of \$4.5 million for the project; just under \$200,000 annually into the TIF revenue. Suriano thanked everyone for coming out.

[2019-0008](#)

Electronic Sign Code discussion presented by Deputy Director of Planning & Development.

Blackford reviewed the discussion about the Peace Lutheran Church request for a Variance for an electronic sign, which was not moving or flashing. Staff wanted opinion from Planning Commission about the

direction of sign code changes in relation to these signs; showed images of manual message signs that are allowable by code; anything electronic is currently prohibited by code; the thought process was that electronic signs are more appealing. He stated that possible changes include: limit type of sign, on monument only, limit the size of ad display to 40% or less, limit frequency of message changes to once per day; limit the number of colors to one, require approval of Planning Commission through a Design Review application process. He stated that this has not yet been vetted through the legal department; this is just discussion at this point; also noted that staff can't change Ch. 11 code without Planning Commission approval.

Suriano said he voted in favor of Peace Lutheran's electronic sign because if we are limiting the number of colors and movement then it is drastically more appealing than manual message signs; believes the purpose was to limit the signs so that the City didn't look something like Las Vegas; Variance criteria asks "is there a hardship"; believes having to manually change messages can be a hardship.

Duff said this is a great idea; in support of simple electronic signs; other signs show a dated city; gas stations with 2 colors are not bad; makes sense to update those; does not feel they detract from anything; does not like the McDonald's sign or the high school sign due to their scrolling, flashing, blinking messages which are trying to get attention.

Hicks said when opposing the 2 variances, asked what the purpose of the sign was; the definition of "sign" was changed in 2017; read previous and current definition; the distraction in the thoroughfare is his concern; if the sign were in a cul-de-sac, would not be so concerned; is the sign meant to advertise a message or show where the building is; would hate to change the code to allow for more distractions.

Duff said he spoke with the Fire Chief after the last meeting and he had no worries about traffic incidences increasing there at that intersection due to the presence of an electronic sign.

Hicks thanked Blackford for adding in a DR requirement. Suriano said a Variance implies that there is an ask for permission to do something wrong but a DR is seeking approval for what is permitted; there's a difference.

Blackford said regarding setbacks, would they be asking for increased setbacks; monument signs are typically smaller than pole signs. Duff said

if we are keeping them simple then it's not a big deal.

Wester said Blackford did a great job in a short amount of time; likes the monument only and limiting screen area; asked if there's an industry standard. Blackford said we can look further into that; for reference, the Peace Lutheran sign was 30% of the sign. Suriano said about 1/3 of the sign would be good; 40% may be too much; agrees with Duff that it's not more distracting than other words.

Wester said we should also look at a requirement for the background color, and changing only once per day; likes the idea of a DR going before Planning Commission; must consider the nature of the area; asked about City Public Notice message signs. Hicks said public info signs are permitted in ROW, and are not electronic signs by definition; also noted that we must change "prohibited" portion of code.

Wester asked if this will be in conflict with the current high school sign. Blackford said a Variance was approved; said this language would be better; a DR captures the intent and conditions of and on the sign and not specific code references like Variance approvals.

Suriano said the next step is to draft language and vote at a future meeting. Blackford said it would be better to clean up multiple parts of the code at once; can package a few things. Wester asked about timeline. Blackford said the City Engineer and Council Office have proposed changes and they can all go together at once.

Hicks asked about the Peace Lutheran appeal. Clerk confirmed that the appeal was filed recently, but the date for BZBA was not yet set.

ADJOURNMENT

Suriano closed the meeting at 8:05 p.m.