



City of Powell, Ohio

Planning & Zoning Commission

Donald Emerick, Chairman

Richard Fusch, Vice Chairman

Shawn Boysko

Ed Cooper

Trent Hartranft

Joe Jester

Bill Little

Chris Meyers, AIA, Architectural Advisor

MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 25, 2015

A meeting of the Powell Planning & Zoning Commission was called to order by Chairman Don Emerick on Wednesday, February 25, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

OATH OF OFFICE

Chairman Emerick administered the oath of office to Ed Cooper. He took his place on the Commission.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present included Ed Cooper, Trent Hartranft, and Bill Little. Shawn Boysko, Joe Jester and Richard Fusch were absent. Also present were David Betz, Development Director; Chris Meyers, Architectural Advisor; Susie Ross, City Clerk and interested parties.

STAFF ITEMS

There were none.

HEARING OF VISITORS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Chairman Emerick opened the public comment session. Hearing none, he closed the public comment session.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Little moved to approve the minutes of February 11, 2015. Commissioner Hartranft seconded the motion. By unanimous consent, the minutes were approved.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Applicant: Germain Real Estate LLC c/o Brian Reynolds
Location: 378 West Olentangy Street
Current Zoning: PI, Planned Industrial District
Request: Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of most of the existing old Auto Assets building and the partial renovation of the existing building, fencing, landscaping and parking.

Brian Reynolds, Architectural Alliance, 165 N. 5th street, 43215, said this is the next step in the redevelopment of this property. They were here previously for Auto Assets and the proposal (Exhibit A) shows the current site and proposed changes. The "L" shaped building is owned by Germain Real Estate and they would like to move forward by demolishing the existing buildings, creating a new curb cut off of Industrial Park Place that aligns with one installed in a previous phase, and maintaining the existing building. The area where the buildings would be demolished would become lawn area. They would also stripe parking spaces and add a landscape buffer. There is an existing fence around the back and they would like to make some minor modifications to secure that area. Mr. Reynolds said in this first step they have no intent to change any of the surface materials of the back lot that is currently a combination of gravel and asphalt. In the next phase they will bring that area up to EPA standards. The site plan shows that they will finish off the existing building where the fire wall is located and paint the exterior to match.

David Betz, Director of Development, provided the Staff Report for this application (Exhibit 1). He said they have worked with both business owners to coordinate the redevelopment of this site. Germain is not ready to fully redevelop their site so they want to start by tearing down the buildings as described. Eventually they will come forward with the possibility of a new building in the front and some work on the existing body shop, depending on how they determine its usage. The body shop does not work well for them at this time so they may add on in the

future or do something different. Mr. Betz said Staff recommends approval with the condition that they make sure the site is graded so it does not hold water and is freshly seeded.

Chris Myers, Architectural Advisor, asked for clarification regarding the fencing. Mr. Reynolds said it is existing white fence with two signs for the body shop and buildings in the rear. Auto Assets will be applying for a combined sign for both uses. Mr. Meyers asked if they are placing curb along the east side to create a clean edge. Mr. Reynolds said that is correct; the fence is currently at an angle and they are proposing the addition of gates to make a secure area in the back. No additional fencing is proposed. Mr. Meyers asked if there will be lighting in the area marked for Auto Assets parking. Mr. Reynolds said a light pole is shown. They are trying to keep additional costs down in this interim step so they do not have a plan to light the grass area; there is nothing to secure so no lights are needed. They can consider placing lights on the existing building.

Mr. Betz said there is lighting overhead on a pole. Mr. Meyers said it may be helpful to have more than just a graphic of the landscaping. They could provide a list of types of plants and varieties. Mr. Reynolds agreed. He said they will add a landscape plan to their submittal of a grading plan. Mr. Meyers said that is something that Staff can finalize rather than bringing it back to the Commission.

Chairman Emerick opened this item to public comment. Hearing none, he closed this item to public comment.

Commissioner Hartranft asked if there is plenty of space to add the cut-through on the west side. It looks like it is close to the building but there may be enough space. Mr. Reynolds said there is room from the curb to the building. Commissioner Hartranft asked about the fencing material in the back. Mr. Reynolds said it is an existing chain link fence. The sliding gate will match and tie into the existing fence. Most of the area is used for storage of vehicles that are in a state of disrepair or mid-repair and need to be secured.

Commissioner Little asked what the building looks like from the street and what is the rationale for tearing down now, creating a lawn and moving forward later. Mr. Betz provided an image of the site (Exhibit 1). Mr. Reynolds said they want to clean up the site as they indicated when they came up with the Auto Asset proposal. They have recognized that this building can be used for storage until they finalize the plans for the body shop. Commissioner Little said the existing building has a showroom and he assumes the lawn and side of the building will be seen when this is complete. Mr. Betz said they will see a lawn, the landscape buffer and the side of a large building. Commissioner Little said there was a land swap and they provided a conceptual drawing for this site when the Auto Assets proposal was presented. Mr. Reynolds there was a new building at the front that aligned with the Auto Assets building and had parking behind. Germain needs a place for adjusters to use to look at wrecked cars and they talked about creating that office function on this site. Commissioner Little asked if the spirit of that concept still exists and if so, is there a time frame for when they might see it. Mr. Reynolds said that is still a concept and they are looking at this building. It is about as large as it can get and it does not have sprinklers so they are considering whether they should add on to it to improve it or build a whole new body shop and scrap this building. Commissioner Little said sometimes the Commission approves things with an understanding of the total solution so he hopes they get back to this. It is appropriate for Staff to approve any temporary landscaping. Mr. Betz said this landscaping is not temporary as they plan to keep it as part of the future development. Mr. Reynolds said their intent is use the back area for car parking with landscaping to screen it off.

Commissioner Cooper said he does not have a problem with what they are proposing contingent on Staff approval of the drainage and the landscaping.

MOTION: Commissioner Little moved to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for Germain Real Estate LLC for the property located at 378 W. Olentangy Street, subject to the following conditions:

1. That the final grading plan shall be approved by the City Engineer prior to issuance of a demolition permit; and
2. That the applicant shall gain Staff approval of this stage of the landscape plan.

Commissioner Cooper seconded the motion.

VOTE: Y 4 N 0

SIGNAGE DISCUSSION

Mr. Betz said City Council has asked the Commission to look at the sign ordinance as it relates to the use of temporary and portable signs. Staff sent out many letters for the previously scheduled meeting for this discussion and they only had one inquiry from one business. They were invited to attend this evening. The Development Committee discussed this at a couple of meetings; when they first changed the code they made it so portable signs were more available to businesses and there were different requirements within and outside of the Downtown area. They also set up requirements for multi-tenant signage plans. They found that the multi-tenant sign plans are very hard to put together and hard on both the property owners and businesses owners when they try to work out

a plan. They have heard a lot from businesses that the different requirements inside and outside of the Downtown are unfair because in the Downtown they are able to use the signs more often. Mr. Betz said they are now requesting a code change and Staff has drafted wording for discussion at the Commission level (Exhibit 2). The draft includes the return to permit requirements that are free for portable and temporary signs. These signs could be used on a temporary basis and through a permit process Staff could keep track of them better. The business would be able to use one sign up to 42 days per year. One suggestion from Craig Snider at Sign-O-Rama was that the permanent signage for buildings with multiple tenants be larger. The current signs are too small and a larger sign may make it so the portable signs are not needed as much. Mr. Betz said larger signs would give the opportunity for tenant signage. The property owner is typically the one who installs the permanent signs and a business owner would buy a piece of it and put their name in a space. There are a couple of situations on West Olentangy Street where there is no permanent sign or there is one that only identifies the center itself and not the businesses. Staff has drafted some changes to allow for larger free-standing signs or joint identification signs as well as changing the use of temporary signs to back where they were before where they issue permits for 42 days out of the year. Mr. Betz said in some cases where there are buildings or other structures such as fences that are built up to or close to the right-of-way, they may approve a certificate for a temporary sign on the building or in the right-of-way if a location can be found that is safe and does not obstruct a public sidewalk. That would be done on a case-by-case basis. They propose that they remove the use of a multi-tenant signage plan. The requirements within and outside of the Historic District for the use of portable/temporary signs would be equalized. Mr. Betz recommended they set a public hearing date for a future meeting and send letters out again to the businesses who use these signs.

Mr. Meyers said he read through the draft and it is headed in the right direction. The key is to engage the business owners so they participate in defining the regulations. They need to make sure they all know the objectives. The increase in signage size is not that significant. Mr. Betz said he tried to approximate the sizes allowed in Liberty Township; they recently revised their signage code based on public input about the need for larger signs along Sawmill Parkway.

Commissioner Cooper said the recommendations say they can only have one temporary sign per parcel. He asked what they would do in a case like Lapcraft where they have 7-8 signs out all of the time. Mr. Betz said they would be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis and after the previously scheduled date is done the next sign can go out. Commissioner Cooper asked if the intention is that the signs are brought in daily. Mr. Betz said in the current code they are supposed to do that but people do not comply. Under the permit process they do not have that requirement. He said this would be easier to police because they can check each day; there is no way Staff can keep up with the current regulations. Commissioner Cooper said currently it seems like every time one turns around there are more signs. Mr. Betz said he would like to get to a permit situation where one sign can go out and when it's time is up, it would come down and the next one would go up. They could change it in multi-tenant situations so they could have up to two signs out at a time. That would be for areas with four or more tenants or as determined by the Commission.

Chairman Emerick said the challenge may be to get rid of all of the temporary signs currently out there. Mr. Betz said Staff will just take them and the businesses can collect them later. They have heard from some businesses outside of the Downtown that think they are being treated unfairly and Staff spends so much time on it they felt it is necessary to change the code. Chairman Emerick said one of the largest proponents of the current temporary plan has never met the code by taking in his signs daily. Commissioner Little said enforcement is important because it seems like the businesses honor the spirit of the agreement for a while and then go their own way. Mr. Betz said the Grace Plaza plan was a success but all of the tenants that came in with that plan are now gone. Commissioner Little asked if there is a business association that might want to take some ownership and suggest what they think is appropriate. Mr. Betz said they have talked with the HDPI Executive Director; the Chamber is not interested because they cover the entire community rather than just the City.

Commissioner Little said they spent a lot of time determining the current code and if it is not working for the businesses it would be nice to see them take some ownership; it would also be good for the City to encourage those same business owners to support the Downtown walkability issues so they can bring people to the area and help their businesses. Mr. Betz said he hears complaints from both residents and business people about all of the portable signs. Some businesses say they do not need portable/temporary signage because they market their business in a different manner. Commissioner Little said Dublin does a pretty good job of keeping their signage more subtle. He asked how the increase in size of permanent signage would compare to Dublin's code. Mr. Betz said he would have to look in their ordinances; some of their signage is allowed to be larger because of I-270 and the major roads they have. Commissioner Little said one local plaza does not have a multi-tenant signage plan and it could be argued that the lettering on the front of the stores is brazen enough to be seen from the road without difficulty. He said the tenants think they need the temporary signage because there is no main sign; is there

way the City can encourage the owners/landlords to provide adequate signage for the businesses. Mr. Betz said he has suggested that the tenants of that center to speak with the landlord to see if an addition could be made to the base sign so it would hold the tenant signage. The owner is okay with that but the tenants have to pay for it. He said the same exists for the center across the street. He suggested they add a permanent sign but the owner said the tenants have to pay for it. At the time the plan was approved they felt that the close location to the street and signage under the lights on the façade was adequate. Commissioner Little said they will need to be adamant that approval will not be given if there is not adequate signage for the tenants. Chairman Emerick said if they do not have the ability to have temporary signs out all of the time it may encourage them to work something out with the property owner.

Commissioner Hartranft said he is concerned that putting restrictions on business owners could be a detriment to their business. He asked for the reasoning behind the choice of 42 days out of a year for each business. Mr. Betz said that allows for six weeks of signage for sales or promotions per year. They can split that time however they choose. The winter is not a good time for these signs but it would be up to each business. The other signs are typically in the right-of-way and should be removed anyway. The ability to put a banner on a fence or doing something on the building may be a better solution. The Commission will have to choose how many can be used at a time for multi-user sites. Mr. Betz provided examples of sites that are not in compliance.

Chairman Emerick said the current code gave the businesses the opportunity to work with the City as long as they would control them and they have not done so. He wants to see that corrected. Mr. Betz said Staff will set a public hearing and send notices to the businesses, the Chamber and HDPI.


OTHER COMMISSION BUSINESS


The next meeting is scheduled for March 11th and all of the Commission members should be in attendance.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Hartranft moved at 7:45 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Little seconded the motion. By unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned.

DATE MINUTES APPROVED: March 11, 2015


 Donald Emerick 4-8-2015
 Chairman Date


 Sue D. Ross 4-8-2015
 City Clerk Date

