



Planning & Zoning Commission
Donald Emerick, Chairman
Bill Little, Vice Chairman
Trent Hartranft

Shawn Boysko

Ed Cooper

Shaun Simpson

Elizabeth Bailik

MEETING MINUTES May 26, 2021

Chairman Don Emerick called a meeting of the Powell Planning & Zoning Commission to order on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Commissioners present included Elizabeth Bailik, Shawn Boysko, Ed Cooper, Trent Hartranft, Shaun Simpson and Don Emerick. Bill Little was absent. Also present were Claudia Husak, Planning Director; Elise Schellin, Development Planner; Karen J. Mitchell, City Clerk; and interested parties.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 12, 2021.

MOTION: Commissioner Cooper moved to table the approval of the minutes of May 12, 2021 because they were inadvertently left out of the packet. Commissioner Bailik seconded the motion.

VOTE: Y-6 N-0 (Little absent)

SKETCH PLAN REVIEW (Case 2021-25_SP)

Applicant: Christian Brothers Automotive
Location: 285 W. Olentangy Street
Zoning: PC – Planned Commercial
Request: Review of a Sketch Plan for a new automotive development on a +/- 1.5 acre site.

Billy Green, Jr., Property Procurement Manager, Christian Brothers Automotive, 17725 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX.
Applicant: Thank you for hearing us tonight. I will give you a brief overview of Christian Brothers Automotive, who we are, and what we do. We are an automotive repair facility established in Houston and have been around for 40 years. We have over 237 stores located in 30 states. We have never closed a single location that we have opened.

We handle mainly post warranty work; things that you would normally get from a dealership, such as brakes, shocks, tune ups, check engine lights, diagnostics, oil changes, etc. We are opened Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. We are only opened on Saturdays for limited hours for the first 180 days of business. After 180 days, we are completely closed on weekends. We take pride in being closed on the weekends, which is a little different from most automotive repair facilities; it allows us to hire a better technician and it allows our technicians to spend time with their family and friends on the weekend. We also have a shuttle service that will take customers back to their place of employment or residence as their car is being repaired and then pick them up when their car is finished.

As far as our architecture, we are basically a brick and stone cottage with a 10 car garage attached to it. We are usually located next to a residential area, schools or daycares. We try to have elements that blend in with single family residences. We have very nice interiors with clean floors and facilities, and consider ourselves an upper scale facility.

Bill P. Boron, Langan Engineering, 6000 Lombardo Center, Independence, OH. We prepared the site plan and I am here to answer any technical questions for the site.

Elise Schellin, Development Planner, presented the Staff Report (Exhibit 1).

Steve Reynolds, Architectural Advisor: We all know that this is just a sketch plan approval so my comments at this point are more just guidance based off of surrounding buildings and what we have in downtown Powell.

The sign. The sign is about 70 square feet larger than what is currently allowable which is quite a bit over the size

allowance. It is currently shown on both the north and the south elevation. Perhaps there is an in-between somewhere that could be amenable to both parties. I assume there would be some sort of a street-mounted sign preferred as well. There was not one shown on the site plan, but we would want to take those current sign guidelines that we have and make sure that we are in alignment with that at the next submission.

The architecture. This is a franchise type template roll out facility so I understand that there is a current aesthetic and template that is being rolled out, but I think within the city of Powell there are some considerations that we feel the Applicant should take. One those things would be the lighting. There are no cut sheets at this point provided, but it looks like there are some lights shown. It is hard not to look across the street and see Auto Assets who have utilized the goose neck fixtures over each one of the doorways, and tried to align with what we currently have in the historic district. I think that would be a good application here as well. What is shown in the elevation is there are keystones over each doorway, there are brick borders out of a buff brick that is a little bit out of character with what we would see in Powell. One recommendation I would have would be to maybe remove the keystone and apply that goose neck fixture above each door to try to remove one additional element. We currently have what appears to be a red brick blend, a buff brick blend, and a stone water table. It also appears that there could be a cast stone for that keystone and for maybe some window ledges, etc. I feel it would be more appropriate if we could just look at a red brick blend and then utilizing different colors out of that blend to create accent areas. Right now it gets this stripy effect and detracts from the facility. Also around the doors, I would rather see just red silver Corzine or utilizing just the existing brick to create some detail and aesthetic interest.

The roof. The roof was very green. What we talk about in our guidelines are variations of gray. I think it would be more amenable to have that as a base color. It says that graded grays are the most appropriate color. This is pretty distinct and visible. Given that north-south façade, but particularly the north facade, it is going to be very visible from the road. It is just a lot of roof plane that is a very distinct color.

The customer facing area. I am wondering if there is an opportunity here where perhaps the entire facility does not deviate from what might be a brand standard, where a section of this could be reviewed as being more of a board and batten or some sort of a natural material that aligns a bit better with what we see in downtown Powell. Perhaps it could be applied to the entire facility as well. If you do look across the street, you will see that those materials were applied to another auto service facility and it seems to work quite well.

The windows. We have a specific guideline about utilizing the 2-over-2 or 4-over-4 for our windows. With these moiré grid patterns, especially when you get into the side elevations, it is like 12-over-12 and it gets to be very Colonel. At first glance you may even read them as being glass-blocked. I know they are not, but I would just like to revisit the way those windows are detailed. I also feel that they read better if they were a darker frame to align with what we have on the actual overhead doors and the man doors.

Overall building height. It feels as if the roof plane could project slightly more. In this instance the eaves and the soffit are very tight to the building. I would not mind seeing there being a little bit more of a projection from that roof plane. As it sits today, it looks a little flat.

Entry component. The porch has a very sharp pitch. The way that the roof comes down onto the columns; the columns themselves are about almost 3 feet wide and right where the porch sits on that, it pinches down to almost 2 feet, it gets really narrow. I would rather see that roof get less of a pitch so that it all seems like the scale works. I think all the pieces are there, just as the main focal point, I would like to see a little bit of work done on that entrance component. The peak of that roof is almost starting to show Gothic. I would like to see that be a little gentler of a slope on the roof and maybe just revisiting how that porch components sits down on top of the columns.

That is the end of my comments. I am happy to make myself available to work with the Applicant on any further comments you may have.

Chairman Emerick opened the matter up for public comments. Hearing none, Chairman Emerick closed the public comment session and opened the floor for comments and questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Simpson: Is the front elevation is off Murphy Parkway? [Ms. Husak: The front is facing the vet or east.] My first problem with it is the direct orientation of the building. That looks to be quite a difference in the elevations so while you are driving down what is the entrance to our downtown district, you are really looking at the side of the building with a very large brick wall. That is not an acceptable building to have at the entrance of our downtown. That is the biggest concern for me, from an aesthetic standpoint, that is not the direction I would like to go. It is already a joke in our community with how many auto repair, auto body and tire shops we have here. So need-wise is a concern as well. As mentioned, that entire street, other than the vet, is forced up front to give us that general look.

Commissioner Hartranft: I appreciate you coming in and talking to us tonight. I think you have heard some of the comments on the architecture. Do you have any leeway as a franchise? What sort of flexibility do you have?

Mr. Green: We do have 237 of these so I do not want to portray that every last one of them is the exact same. There is some flexibility. With our 10-bay, I do not know that we have done too many things with that end wall, but we can definitely take a look at that.

Commissioner Hartranft: With the comments made by our Architectural Advisor, and probably some other ones coming up, it may be worth looking into and seeing what you guys can do with it.

Commissioner Cooper: My original concern seems to be the concern of others as well, which is do we need another one? The zoning is proper. I would not tell someone they could not put their business there when we are set up for that kind of business. I agree with Mr. Reynolds' comments about the architectural issues of this building. I echo what Shaun also said. I just want to see something better as I am driving down Powell Road or Murphy Parkway.

I am a little concerned with the large amount of parking spaces – not saying it is too many – but I would certainly want to see some kind of screening from the street to hide a lot of that. I do not know if this would mean moving parts of this building around or turning it on the lot, but I think we have something to work with if you guys are flexible.

Commissioner Bailik: Thanks for coming in. One thing I would like to point out is when we are driving down Powell Road [aka Olentangy Street], and that is considered the district, I am wondering if you have the flexibility to rotate the front door and make the cottage look on Powell Road? It has aspects of a cottage, but no one, except the people parking in the vet area or the parking lot for the businesses will actually see that. You may not have a lot of flexibility on where to put it, but if you can move the door to the front and have that look at the front, that would go a long way with bringing it to what we like to see.

The end walls are a bit industrial looking. Even though it is zoned for this, one thing I would like to bring up is the residential neighborhood behind. Those condos are expensive. If you are going to have public comment, that is where it is going to come from. If you have the ability to reach out to the condo association, I find if you have your hand out first to shake hands and ask what you can do, it goes a long way over just a surprise. If it feels like a surprise, they feel like they are not heard. Per the zoning code, I do believe you need additional screening if you leave the end wall facing that residential neighborhood. I am not sure what you plan to do with that grassy area between your building and residential neighborhood, but there might be some ways to put in a screening mound or trees or something. I think that would also go a long way toward having the residents that will be behind you accept this.

You do have a lot of parking. I am wondering if you had any flexibility to open your parking lot during non-operating hours for residents to park and walk downtown. Powell is constrained with parking in the downtown and we are always looking for additional parking opportunities. It would be great if the parking didn't look so generic and be made to look less industrial. Please do not take my comments as criticism. I am just trying to brainstorm ideas for you to bring you into the City with the chances of being successful.

Commissioner Boysko: I agree with many of the other comments that were presented today. The intent of the Sketch Plan is to give you some feedback. We are not voting on this so it is just sort of a brain dump to give you a lot of ideas and direction. Some obvious things we would expect when you come back for a Preliminary Plan review would be a landscaping plan. We expect some better development of what the dumpster enclosure looks like and that it is consistent with the architecture of the building. We would like to see a lighting plan, cut fixtures of the wall scones or whatever fixtures are on the building and the site lighting and what the site light poles look like. We like to see a mockup of what the signage is going to look like. We would like to see some development of a monument sign, what that looks like, and I think you have a great opportunity for a monument sign in the corner.

This is a very active intersection, especially when the Muirfield Golf Tournament and Columbus Zoolights are going on. That portion of the road will give you great visibility on that corner. Your best opportunity for signage is signage that faces the road and Murphy Parkway and capitalizes on people that are stopped at that intersection. We would like to see the development of that monument sign and that it is not a generic sign, but it is more consistent with your architecture and the design of your building so it is starting to incorporate some of the materials of the building into your base. Whether an externally or internally illuminated monument sign, maybe the top of that starts to pick up some of the design elements of the building, whether that is a gable piece or something.

We will want to continue the bike path along Olentangy Street. It would be nice to see a continuation of the white picket fence so there is that consistency. Those are all easy things that we expect to see when you come back.

I think the hard part is the setbacks and how you deal with them. In the previous development that was approved in

2017, we worked hard to push that building up tight against the road, not only along Murphy Parkway, but along Olentangy Street so that it had a strong street façade similar to the other buildings you see across the street and all the way down the road into the downtown area. That will be your challenge, how you work operationally – your building and your building layout - and push the building as close as you can to the street. If I scale off this building on your site plan and draw a line between the two adjacent developments, it looks like that building setback wants to be right around 38 to 40 feet. That is where that building edge wants to be, but operationally it is going to be a challenge and how do you circulate into that site and around the site. I'm not sure if you need to circulate around that site. To me, it seems obvious that you want to come in off of Olentangy Street and circulate around the site and draw an access road and put parking around there. That is a typical suburban model. But really what we are looking for is something that is more urban, like the downtown Powell where the buildings are pushed up against the road and all the parking is in back. So we do not want to see the parking, we want that screen, but operationally, I am thinking you do not want to enter on the further north side of the site, maybe you really want to enter further south on that access road. Maybe where the entrance is would be on the south side of the building so if you rotate the building 180 degrees and the entrance is on the south side, you could push the bays up toward the front of the road and may you would not even need an access road around all four sides. You could have dead ends. If people are entering from the south and going north on either side, the only reason they would go north is to go into those bays, so there is no need to circulate. Where they really need to circulate is on the south end if that south entrance was there. Flipping this whole thing operationally may work and I think it could get the building closer to the street, but then we would also have to think about what that north side looks like. That will be a prominent façade that everyone will see and we do not want to have a 40 foot gable end wall. We want some attention to what that looks like. Maybe there is a smaller false gable end to help articulate that end of the building more, and it creates an opportunity for some signs and a sign panel piece.

Those are my thoughts. I agree with many of Steve's comments. Steve does a great job articulating the details. I am not as much of a purist as others. I appreciate what you have and there is value to it. I think what you have is good, just developing the entrance piece a little bit more in a different way. I think the materials are fine. When I looked at the elevations, I had the same reaction that Steve did, but when you start to pan through and look at your photos, your elevations do not do it justice. In the photos, it looks pretty attractive. Maybe the elements can be toned down. You have a red brick, a buff brick, a stone, cast stone, a lot of different materials there. As you start to page through, you can start to see some variations that you have in different sites. I think all of those are attractive and have some value, so I think there is an opportunity to adapt this prototype to something that is more Powell-esque. I am confident we can work through the design and orientation of the building.

Mr. Boron: I know we can work through most of this stuff and get it to where everyone wants it to be. There is a 60 foot setback from Olentangy Street to that building so we are pretty close to that other than the fact that we have that drive out building. I think we need to see about fire and police, see if we eliminate that drive in front, it may end up being a dead end parking on the one side. We could still have the access through, but I think that is what we have to work through.

I do not know if we can rotate the building because I know with this corner lot, we have two front yard setbacks happening here so it squeezes us down. I am not sure if your Board of Zoning Appeals would grant a lesser set back, especially at that corner lot, but you can see that we are meeting the building setback as much as we can.

Commissioner Boysko: But with the Planned Commercial District that gives you the ability to make those changes within this board.

Mr. Boron: I do not think we are opposed to it. I think that as long as we can work with the City, I do not think there is any magic where we set it other than the setback.

The comment about the landscaping, we do not have the landscaping plan done yet. You can see some tree islands that are in the parking lot and we would extend the fence to be contiguous with the other uses along Olentangy St. The bike path will also be added as well.

Commissioner Boysko: With the position and orientation of the building as you have it, is it set up in a way that could allow for future expansion of the bays to the south?

Mr. Boron: No, they all have 5 bays on each side, for a total of 10 bays. But we are willing to work with you on the architecture.

Chairman Emerick: One of the things we talk about a lot in the city of Powell, particularly in an area where we view this as a gateway entrance project to the downtown area, is we talk about four-sided architecture. I would think that all of us will be looking at that very closely. We want something that looks good on all four sides of the building, not just two sides. That will be a key element.

I would have to say that while I understand that this is a permitted use for this piece of property, I would question the need and the location of such a facility. I know you stated that you do this a lot near schools and residential areas. I think as announcements go out to the residents, particularly to the condos to the south, we will be getting a lot of feedback as this proceeds through the process. I question if this is the best location for this kind of facility. Right now I would have to say I do not really think so, particularly for such a gateway entrance piece of property like this. I would be concerned because we have a park across the street. Several years ago we had a McDonalds that wanted to go into this area and with that park there was major concern about traffic, safety of the kids playing in the park, and I think that concern still exists.

I would agree with the comments on signage, and everything else I had has pretty much been covered. I hope this gives you some ideas of what we will be looking for as we proceed through the process.


OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Husak asked the Commission if they could let her know in advance, if possible, of any future plans for meetings/travel/etc. that may conflict with scheduled P&Z dates for planning purposes. The next meeting is scheduled on June 9.

ADJOURNMENT

By unanimous consent of all the Commissioners, the meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

DATE MINUTES APPROVED:

 6/19/2021
Donald Emerick
Chairman

DATE

 6/10/2021
Karen Mitchell
City Clerk

DATE

