

MINUTES
CITY OF WOOSTER PLANNING COMMISSION

April 1, 2021

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chuck Armbruster, Commission Chairman, called the meeting to order. Commission members Kyle Adams, Chuck Armbruster, Sheree Brownson, Grant Mason, Mike Steiner, and Mark Weaver were present at the meeting. Andrew Dutton, Planning and Zoning Manager, was present representing the City of Wooster.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Mike Steiner made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2021 meeting of the Planning Commission. Kyle Adams seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

III. APPLICATIONS

PC-21-12.

John Long requested Final Development approval for a manufacturing building and an outdoor storage at 1109 Pittsburgh Avenue in an I-1 (Office/Limited Industrial) zoning district.

John Long, 3477 Commerce Parkway, stated that the proposal was for an additional 13,000 square foot building to the rear of the E-Pak property. Mr. Long explained that the company manufactured trailers and steel containers of various sizes, from small dumpsters to full-size semitrailers. He continued that the building would manufacture some of the company's smaller units. Mr. Long stated that the property was unique in that the building had frontage on three streets.

Mr. Long continued that the property was wooded and there was a very steep hill to the east with a 50 foot elevation change between the proposed building and East Henry Street. Mr. Long stated that the intention was to keep a majority of the landscaping on the hill's crest and noted that variances would be submitted to the Board of Building and Zoning Appeals. He explained that a gravel surface was requested for the storage of finished containers, drives, and parking. Mr. Long stated that the use was a permitted use for the property in the I-1 district and the business was out of room at the current facility.

Andrew Dutton stated that the staff report stated a few variances that were needed regarding the outdoor storage, the gravel, and the interior parking. He explained that landscaping was required between the building and the street. Mr. Dutton continued that staff would work with the applicant to see if the landscaping variances were necessary.

Kyle Adams made a motion to approve the application PC-21-12 as submitted with the following conditions:

1. Plans shall comply with Section 1113.01(e)(13)(D.) regarding the amount of outdoor storage permitted, Sections 1113.01(e)(13)(F.) and 1125.03(h)(3) regarding the use of gravel for outdoor storage, parking, and drives, and Section 1123.05(b) regarding interior parking lot landscaping, or the applicant shall receive variance approval from the Board of Building and Zoning Appeals.

2. The applicant shall work with Staff to determine if street tree, frontage landscaping, and screening requirements are met by utilizing existing landscaping and proposed grading. If requirements are not met, landscaping and screening shall be provided or the application shall receive a variance from the Board of Building and Zoning appeals to Section 1123.04 regarding street trees, Section 1123.05(a) regarding frontage landscaping, and Section 1123.07 regarding the screening of outdoor storage.

Grant Mason seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

PC-21-13.

Jacob Holdeman requested Final Development Plan approval for a warehouse on properties located on the north side of Daisy Way and west of North Geyers Chapel Road with Parcel Numbers 51-.00137.000 and 53-01011.000 in an I-2 (General Industrial) zoning district.

Jacob Holdeman, 8801 River Crossing Boulevard, Indianapolis, Indiana, stated that a previous application at a different location was withdrawn based on a denied variance. Mr. Holdeman explained that the Board of Building and Zoning Appeals approved a variance required for the current site's outdoor storage area. Mr. Holdeman stated the proposal was to build a 198,000 sq. ft. warehouse distribution center.

Mike Steiner made a motion to approve of application PC-21-13 as submitted with the following conditions:

1. A variance shall be approved from the Board of Building and Zoning Appeals to Section 1113.01(e)(13)(D.) to allow more outdoor storage than permitted.
2. The subject site shall receive approval from City Council for the requested I-2 (General Industrial) zoning.

Michael Steiner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

PC-21-07.

Thomas Winkhart requested an approval recommendation from the Planning Commission to City Council for a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning of 4677 Melrose Drive with parcel numbers 71-00250.000 and 71.00251.000 from R-1 (Suburban Single Family Residential) to PD (Planned Development).

Andrew Dutton stated that in 2019, a preliminary subdivision plat was submitted for the property for a 62 unit detached single-family development. He noted the application was approved by the Planning Commission, but not constructed. Mr. Dutton explained that in January of 2021, the current applicant submitted a request to rezone the property from R-1 to R-3, which was not recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. He continued that after the meeting, the applicant chose to withdraw the application prior to review by City Council. Mr. Dutton stated that the applicant then approached staff with a development containing a mix of both single-family detached homes and single-family attached homes. He stated that, due to the unique mix of uses, staff recommended that the applicant seek a Planned Development (PD) zoning.

Mr. Dutton stated that a typical rezoning considered only the change of the zoning map, with all other information being completely informational. Mr. Dutton continued that a PD asks the Planning Commission and City Council to consider the zoning, preliminary development plan, and development text. Mr. Dutton stated that exceptions to zoning district standards were expected and were the basis of a PD. Mr. Dutton explained that if the rezoning was approved, a PD Final Development Plan would be reviewed by Planning Commission and would follow the approved Preliminary Development Plan, and development text.

Mr. Dutton stated there were four existing PD's in the City. He noted that Tartan Ridge was a gated community on the west side of Akron Road, contained detached single-family residences on a private drive, and was surrounded by R-1 zoning. Mr. Dutton indicated that Miller Lakes was off of Burbank Road, contained detached single-family and multi-family residences, and was surrounded by R-1 zoning. He noted that Townsview Place was north of Robinson Road, included attached single-family residences, and was adjacent to R-2 and CF zoning. Mr. Dutton also stated that Yorkshire Estates was located on Cleveland Road, contained attached single-family residences, and was surrounded by R-1 zoning.

Patrick Mackey, 8230 Pittsburg Avenue NW, North Canton, stated that the property consisted of 21.87 acres, was zoned R-1, and the proposed zoning was PD. Mr. Mackey continued that the submitted site plan conformed to PD zoning requirements and offered solutions to concerns previously raised by lowering the density, incorporating single-family detached homes, and increasing the setbacks.

Mr. Mackey stated that the development addressed a need for various multi-family units in Wooster. Mr. Mackey explained that the concept plan had 141 attached single-family units, including two, three, four, and eight unit buildings. He also noted 23 single-family detached homes and a community clubhouse were also incorporated. Mr. Mackey continued that, aside from the eight unit apartments, all units had attached garages.

Mr. Mackey stated that the rent would range between \$1,050 and \$2,000 per month. Mr. Mackey explained that stormwater would be retained on the property. Mr. Mackey explained that a traffic study was completed in March of 2021. Mr. Mackey continued that all roads to the community will be private and the connection to Mel Lane would be for emergency use only with access would be controlled by City safety services. Mr. Mackey explained that the range for the single-family homes would be \$175,000 to \$250,000.

Mr. Dutton stated that the Fire Department had not completed a full review of the application and the Fire Department's review occurred in future steps of the process. He also noted that the Planning and Zoning Code indicated the appropriate review procedures for changes to an approved PD.

Mike Steiner asked if the firm had done other PD's. Mr. Mackey stated that they had completed different types of multi-family developments and had experience with all of the types of units on the plan.

Mr. Armbruster noted that the Planning Commission received several letters via email about the application.

Mr. Armbruster opened the public hearing and asked if anyone from the public would like to address the Commission regarding the application.

Anna O'Planick, 4700 Mel Lane, asked if any of the former PD's located in Wooster had R-3 zoning and if any were rental units. Mr. Dutton answered that three had attached single-family residences, which were proposed in the application. Mr. Dutton stated that due to the age of the developments, he did not know if the units were owner or renter occupied. He continued that the Zoning Code did not distinguish between owner and renter occupied units.

Mrs. O'Planick stated that the map showed that the property was mostly surrounded by R-1. Mrs. O'Planick explained that the majority of the proposed PD would fall under the R-3 category. Mrs. O'Planick asked how the application was compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, which contained detached single-family residences, zoned R-1.

Mr. Armbruster stated that the Planning Commission was required to follow the review criteria and make a judgment based on those criteria. Mr. Armbruster explained that the application presented in January had no detached buildings, which raised concerns from neighbors. He indicated that the current application incorporated some detached single-family homes around the perimeter.

Mrs. O'Planick stated the R-1 zoning had been in effect since 1989 and asked if a precedent would be set.

Bob Brenneman stated that the application was truly important to the City of Wooster. He explained that the Ohio EPA forced the Madisonburg area to get sewer and the City came forward and annexed the area. Mr. Brenneman continued that, at the time, the area was predominantly farmland, so it was zoned R-1. Mr. Brenneman stated that the Planning Commission was tasked with weighing the interest of the area property owners and the interests of the City of Wooster.

Mr. Brenneman stated that the owner was interested in seeing how everything progressed and might consider selling the detached single-family homes on the property. Mr. Brenneman stated that the City needed housing units and Wooster industries had been indicating a need for housing. Mr. Brenneman explained that Lemmon Development had built the Danbury development on Portage Road, which was a very good development. Mr. Brenneman stated that the City needed rental units to help workforce development. Mr. Brenneman explained that several members of the business community were present at the meeting and may weigh in on housing needs. Mr. Brenneman stated that the application could possibly lead to other residential development in the City.

Mrs. O'Planick asked that if any development could invade an R-1 space, what the meaning of an R-1 designation was. Mr. Brenneman stated that the purpose of the Planning Commission and Planning Staff was to try to weigh needs and actual circumstances. Mr. Brenneman explained an R-5 zoned mobile home park was to the west, R-1 zoning was to the north and east, and open field was to the south. He continued that there was no zoning at all and the other side of Mel Lane, which was located in an unincorporated area of the County. Mr. Brenneman stated that development in an unincorporated area could be commercial, industrial, single-family residential, or high-density residential. Mr. Brenneman explained that the proposal was good planning as it transitioned from lower density residential to mix of residential uses.

Jonathan Millea stated that the rent was in line with newer apartments in the City. Mr. Millea explained that housing was needed from a community development perspective and to encourage companies to have their workforce in the City. Mr. Millea continued that apartment housing helped bring people to a community and then purchase a home later.

Mr. Millea explained that the proposal was a private development with a private infrastructure, which allowed the emergency only access to Mel Lane. Mr. Millea stated that a typical single-family residential development required public streets. He noted that the proposal was a great opportunity to address a housing need and incorporated a harmonious land use. Mr. Millea stated that the City had lost investment and jobs as a result of companies needing housing in Wooster.

Tim Swift and David Sparr were present from the Wooster Brush Company. Mr. Swift stated that a study was completed to consider expansion, which was chosen within the City of Wooster. Mr. Swift continued that throughout the study, workforce development and housing deficits were apparent. Mr. Swift stated that some other locations were ahead of Wooster in those areas. Mr. Swift stated that Wooster was definitely in need of housing to support manufacturing jobs.

Melissa Pierce, Community Action Wayne/Medina, 905 Pittsburgh Avenue, stated that in their 2020 Community Needs Survey, affordable housing was the number one need in the community. Mrs. Pierce continued that the proposed Melrose housing development would free up existing housing stock. Mrs. Pierce stated that more housing opportunities help families climb the economic ladder. Mrs. Pierce continued that there would be a ripple effect of expanding housing opportunities in the community.

Tom Marting, Facilities Environmental, Health, and Safety Sustainability Director at GoJo, 1147 Akron Road, stated that the company had been growing since 2015 and employed 700 employees on site. Mr. Marting continued that labor force availability and housing market constraints had been challenges. He stated that they had over 25 open positions in Wooster and that number was always open. Mr. Marting stated that they were speaking in favor of the project because it included the type of housing that the community needed to grow.

Merlin Peterson, 4491 Mel Lane, stated that the R-5 development was on the western side of Melrose Drive and there were houses and a church on the east side of Melrose Drive. He stated the development would be surrounded by R-1 properties. Mr. Peterson stated that on Mel Lane, the residents welcome individual homes, but not the rentals. Mr. Peterson asked the Commission to consider a lower density with detached single-family homes.

Kevin Welty, President Managing Director, Tekfor, 3690 Long Road, stated that they had been asking for help with the housing situation for some time. Mr. Welty explained that Tekfor had moved jobs out of the community due to a lack of available workforce. Mr. Welty stated that they had been 15 to 20 employees short at the facility for the past two years, and the positions were in the mid to upper pay range. Mr. Welty explained that the community was below 3% unemployment, which was very challenging. He continued that about 60% of the workforce commuted 40 to 45 minutes. Mr. Welty stated that the stability of our workforce was at risk.

Scott Boyes, Wayne Economic Development Council, 1763 Morgan Street, stated that companies were unwilling to consider future growth because of the City's tight job market. Mr. Boyes explained that one-third of the workforce commuted from outside of the County and the housing stock was very important at all pricing levels.

Anna O'Planick stated that she agreed that Wooster needed more housing. Mrs. O'Planick continued that the Planning Commission was considering the changing of zoning in an area zoned R-1. Mrs. O'Planick stated that the need for housing and the appropriateness of the zoning were different issues. She stated the high-density rental project would be placed in an established R-1 neighborhood, which was not compatible with the Wooster Comprehensive Plan.

Don Noble, Chairman, Wayne Economic Development Council, stated that the Board represented companies large and small and their position was that Wooster needed housing. Mr. Noble explained that they strongly encouraged the Planning Commission to look at housing opportunities like this and make the correct decision.

Carl Emler, 2685 East Smithville Western Road, asked what the rent would cost. Mr. Mackey stated that the rent would range from \$1,050 to \$2,000 per month. Mr. Emler asked who the owner of the property was. Mr. Mackey stated that the management company would be Brookwood Management Company, which was a sister company of the developer with shared ownership.

Joel Montgomery stated that the design and zoning requirements were generated based on engineering, public safety, and fire standards and were a part of a process. Mr. Montgomery explained that with a PD, standards were laid out ahead of time, which was earlier than typical development.

Mr. Montgomery continued that many of the same neighbor concerns were brought up in the 2019 proposal for a proposed detached single-family subdivision on the site. Mr. Montgomery stated that that there were several concerns by the neighbors including stormwater runoff, traffic, and safety issues. He noted that those issues were completely addressed with the current proposal. Mr. Montgomery explained that 95 percent of stormwater runoff on the property ran away from Mel Lane. Mr. Montgomery continued that a traffic study was completed and reviewed by the City's Engineering Department. He stated that the study showed the development would not decrease the level of service and would not require turn lanes. Mr. Montgomery stated that the roads were private and there would not be traffic onto Mel Lane.

Ms. O'Planick asked if the streets would be built to the R-1 specifications, including curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. Mr. Montgomery stated that the streets did not need to be built per the City's specifications because they would be private. Mr. Breneman noted the Preliminary Development Plan indicated asphalt pavement with concrete curb and gutters on the.

Tony Perez, 8230 Pittsburg Avenue, North Canton, stated that the Civil Engineer was also in attendance and the City would review engineering drawings moving forward. Mr. Perez explained that all the roads would be privately maintained roads by the owners.

Roger Kobilarcsik, City of Wooster Engineer, 538 North Market Street, stated that stormwater would have to be collected and detained before it exited the site per the Site Development and Improvement

Manual, whether there were curbs or ditches. Mr. Kobilarcsik stated that only one percent of the area drained toward Mel Lane.

Mr. Dutton indicated a PD included a distinct situation where a unique set of rules were created based on a default zoning district. He noted there were no variances proposed. Mr. Dutton explained exceptions and modifications were inherent to all PDs.

Mr. Dutton continued that the proposal was less dense than what was previously proposed for the R-3 development. Mr. Dutton noted that 24 areas of the City were zoned R-3 or R-4 and 20 were adjacent to single-family residential zoning districts. He continued that it was common in the City to have R-3, R-4, or PD zoning adjacent to attached single-family or multi-family homes.

John Scavelli, Law Director, stated that a public hearing was being held, which was not a discussion format. He noted there were comments from the public on YouTube.

Matt Delpropost, 4676 Mel Lane, asked what the point of zoning was if it could be changed so easily. Mr. Scavelli stated that zoning changes were not easy and included two public hearings, one with the Planning Commission and one with City Council.

Val Williams, 4561 Mel Lane, stated that the traffic study seemed inadequate and did not incorporate future industrial growth and growth on Route 83. Mr. Mackey stated that the GBC Design prepared the traffic impact study and the City agreed with the findings.

Mr. Williams stated that manufacturing jobs could not support rent of \$24,000 a year. Mr. Millea stated that at \$24,000, rentals would not be affordable at a wage of \$12 per hour, but would be affordable at a wage of approximately \$17 per hour. He noted that some industries started with a pay range between \$16 and \$19 per hour.

Mr. Williams stated that he agreed with the need for housing, however, he disagreed with the proposed high-density housing.

Mr. Del Propost stated that owner-occupied R-1 homes should be encouraged to stay in the community, not overpaying renters.

Mr. Dutton read an email from Mr. Delpropost he recently received:

“Hello, my name is Matthew Del Propost owner of 4676 Mel Lane and swear to tell the truth, I ask that you do not rezone the property at 4677 Melrose Drive. The property is zoned R-1 and should be left as such. If there is a need for housing, supported by facts and current data applicable to the immediate area, then I feel it should be developed with R-1 properties, like every abutting property. The parcel in question is completely surrounded by R-1 properties and should be developed similar to those properties surrounding it. We bought our home because all surrounding R-1 homes are owner occupied making it a great, safe place in our City to raise a family and hold its value. There are zoned/designated areas for R-3, R-4, R-5, Planned Development etc.in our City. As well as there are zoned/designated places for R-1 like I currently live. Rezoning this parcel is a bad idea, as it is not compatible with the immediate surrounding area. Furthermore, the northeast side of the parcel wanting to be developed holds

a lot of water and stays wet constantly. This is consistent with the wetlands described on page 6 of the proposal, but isn't addressed. Every time it rains or snows it overflows and floods out several properties to the east. So, the entire property does not flow from east to west as stated on page 6 of the proposal. This has never been addressed in any proposal ever brought forth and I feel the problem would be exacerbated by a development of this scale. So, to illiterate please keep the parcel in question R-1 and address the property runoff to the east. Thank you for your time, consideration and community service."

Mr. Armbruster closed the public hearing.

Mike Steiner made a motion to approve the application PC-21-07 as submitted. Grant Mason seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

PC-21-04.

Jonathan Millea requested an approval recommendation from the Planning Commission to City Council for a Zoning Map Amendment to assign zoning of I-2 (General Industrial) to properties on North Geyers Chapel Road and Daisy Way with parcel numbers 51-00137.000, 51-00137.001, and 53-01011.000.

Jonathan Millea, 538 North Market Street, stated that the proposal for I-2 zoning was previously before the Commission and was recommended for approval. Mr. Millea explained that there was interest from local companies, including Wooster Brush, to locate at the site. Mr. Millea noted that the second review of the application was needed due to a notification error.

Mr. Armbruster opened the public hearing and asked if anyone from the public would like to address the Commission regarding the application. Hearing no comments, Mr. Armbruster closed the public hearing.

Mark Weaver made a motion to recommend to the City Council the approval of application PC-21-04 as submitted. Mike Steiner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Sheree Brownson moved to adjourn the meeting. Kyle Adams seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Chuck Armbruster, Chairman

Carla Jessie, Administrative Assistant