

PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 26, 2016

Mr. Paul Clark called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Paul Clark, Jim Durham, Kevin Von Handorf, Robert Muzechuk, Jim Briggs and Bill Eton. Also present were City Manager Gregory B. Horn, City Planner Andrew Rodney, Municipal Attorney Scott Liberman, Planner Mark Yandrick and Interim Clerk of Council Julie Weaver.

Absent: Amy Korenyi-Both.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Von Handorf suggested a change on the last page of the minutes for the Planning Commission meeting of December 15, 2015. He requested the inclusion of Ms. Korenyi-Both on the list of those who attended the Miami Valley Planning and Zoning Conference.

MOTION: Mr. Von Handorf made a motion to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of December 15, 2015, as amended. Mr. Muzechuk seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0.

OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Clark read the Opening Statement concerning protocol for public hearings.

PUBLIC HEARING

Application P-2015-0051: Variances for Number of Ground Signs, Area of a Ground Sign and Height of a Ground Sign at Miami Valley Hospital South, 2400 Miami Valley Drive
Applicant: Dianna Conboy, LWC, Inc.

This application was tabled at the Planning Commission Meeting on December 15, 2015.

MOTION: Mr. Durham made a motion to remove Application P-2015-0051 from the table for consideration. Mr. Briggs seconded the motion. The motion passed with six ayes.

Because of the discussion of the advertising on the proposed sign at the prior meeting, Mr. Rodney reminded Planning Commission members they are not permitted to regulate the sign message, only the time, place, and manner of the sign—for example, the size of letters and colors used. The specific text and speech on the sign could not be regulated. Mr. Durham and Mr. Liberman discussed how that fact related to the Miami Valley Hospital South application.

In giving the staff report, Mr. Yandrick reviewed the requested variances for the number of ground signs, the height of the sign and the area of the sign. Noting the applicant had made some revisions to the proposal in keeping with the staff recommendations from the December meeting, Mr. Yandrick defined the changes. The applicant had added a vertical architectural brick element on the north end of the sign, as well as low boxwood and juniper plantings along the 115 ft. long base. The need for a change in elevation was still unclear, so the submittal of a grading plan remained a recommendation.

In the update, the Applicant addressed some concerns expressed by the Planning Commission in December. The new design added the brick column and eliminated the white glow from the north end of the sign. It minimized the impact on the small areas of wetlands and added a lockable security gate to limit access to the sign from the gravel exercise/maintenance path. Planning Commission had also requested the specific dimensions of the sign at Upper Valley Medical Center along I-75 in Miami County. That sign was described as 40 feet long and 8 feet tall. The total sign structure was reported as 13 feet high, with a white brick base 100 feet long. Mr. Yandrick said the science of the size of the proposed sign and dedication of a tree preservation area were items better addressed by the applicant. Regarding previous Commission comments related to the purpose of the sign as a brand advertisement, Mr. Rodney reiterated the Planning Commission was not able to govern sign content. In relation to the trees, the Applicant defined which trees would be removed for the placement of the sign. Mr. Yandrick overlaid the master plan and the aerial view of the hospital property, so the commissioners could see what areas were to remain undeveloped.

At the prior meeting, Planning Commission had objected to the size of the sign. Mr. Yandrick noted that two temporary banners had been erected along I-675 to compare two sizes of lettering. The revised submittal reduced the area of the sign by approximately 40%. The current request was for a fifth ground sign on the campus with an area of 448 square feet per side, in contrast to 32 square feet allowed by the UDO, and with a height of just over 15 feet. The UDO limits sign height to 6 feet at the public right-of-way.

The staff analysis giving the reasons in favor of the variances included that the hospital was a large property with significant frontage along I-675, and that signs on the building or other street frontages could not be seen from the interstate highway. The need for public wayfinding along the highway was also a factor. Staff compared the area of the signs on Wilmington Pike and I-675 to the speed limits and found them to be proportionate. The staff responses to the Standards of Approval remained the same as at the previous meeting. Planning Staff stated the sign was warranted and recommended approval with the following one condition:

1. Applicant should provide an updated grading plan to the Planning Department for approval with the change in the current ground elevation not to exceed 2 feet.

Before opening the public hearing, Paul Clark asked about the height of the sign on Wilmington Pike.

Peter Williams of Innocom, 7792 Olentangy River Road, Columbus, stated his company designed all of the signs for Premier facilities and answered Mr. Clark's question about the sign on Wilmington Pike and verified that the banners along the I-675 did not show finished height or location of the proposed sign.

Ms. Joann Ringer, Chief Operating Officer for Miami Valley Hospital South, stated the hospital currently occupied about 100 acres of the site. Having invested millions of dollars constructing the campus, the company wanted to be a good steward of the land. She said the hospital currently did not have plans to develop the property close to the interstate highway but did not want to limit options for future partners by designating a tree preservation area. She promised integrity to the master plan and noted that any development would come to the Planning Commission for approval.

Mr. Durham, who had requested a defined tree preservation area to give credence to an argument for practical difficulty for the variance for the long term, asked if the potential existed for the hospital to be visible from the interstate at some future time. Ms. Ringer answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Clark closed the public hearing.

Mr. Briggs stated that the changes were a step in the right direction. He pointed out the only designation for Southview Hospital from I-675 was a standard silver and blue ODOT highway sign at Yankee Street with the message, "Hospital next right." Mr. Briggs provided photos of the sign.

Mr. Durham stated he disagreed with the staff analysis. In his view, the application did not meet the Standards for Approval for Variances for numbers 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7. He said the variances were generally not in harmony with the intent of the Unified Development Ordinance. He disagreed that failure to approve the sign would deprive the owners of reasonable use of the property, especially when a simple ODOT hospital sign would suffice. He saw no proof of hardship. Because there was not sufficient basis, the variances would confer special privilege. Other businesses would want large signs along the I-675 corridor.

Other members agreed. Mr. Von Handorf concurred that, without the trees, there was not enough reason to grant the variances. Mr. Briggs was in agreement that the variances would set a precedent for a proliferation of signs along Centerville's interstate highway frontage. Mr. Muzechuk felt that a standard interstate sign from ODOT would meet the real need, if the intent was for people to know the hospital was there.

MOTION: Mr. Durham made a motion to approve the three variances for the proposed Miami Valley Hospital South sign along the I-675 frontage. Mr. Briggs seconded the motion. A roll call vote defeated the motion, 0-6.

Mr. Liberman explained to the hospital representatives in attendance that they could file an appeal of the decision of the Planning Commission to City Council by submitting an application to the Clerk within fifteen days. Staff verified the deadline for filing in time to meet advertising requirements for the meeting of City Council on February 15, 2016.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Horn invited the Planning Commission members to a retirement reception for Debra James, Clerk of Council, on Friday, January 29, 2016. Mr. Clark extended his congratulations to Mrs. James and thanked her for her help over the years.

Mr. Rodney previewed items expected to come to Planning Commission in the next few months.

Before adjourning, Mr. Clark announced the next meeting of Planning Commission would be February 23, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.



Paul Clark, Chair