



Village of South Russell

5205 Chillicothe Road
South Russell, Ohio 44022
440-338-6700

**PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES
May 11, 2023
7:30pm**

Members Present: Steve Latkovic, Chairman, Mark Porter, Mayor William Koons, Elisa Budoff

Member Absent: James Flaiz

Other Officials: Bridey Matheney, Solicitor; Dave Hocevar, Building Official; Ruth Griswold, Board Secretary

Visitors: Bob and Jo Royer, 233 Manor Brook Drive; Mike Roeder of EMOD Construction; Phyllis Marino, 124 Southwyck Drive; Chris Smith, 200 Fox Lane; Christopher Woofter, Chagrin Falls Schools; Jennifer Bencko, Chagrin Falls Schools

Mr. Latkovic called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30pm.

Ruth Griswold conducted roll call.

Agenda Item 1:

PC CASE # 23-04: Mr. Mike Roeder of EMOD LLC, on behalf of Mr. Christopher Woofter, Director of Operations for Chagrin Schools, is seeking approval to replace the current two-classroom modular unit with a four-classroom modular unit at 1155 Bell Road, Gurney School.

Mr. Latkovic asked the applicants to begin their presentation. Mr. Woofter began by thanking the South Russell community and Planning Commission for the opportunity to present. He introduced himself as Director of Operations and Human Resources. He said although the Superintendent, Dr. Penczarski, was unable to attend, she wanted it known that the project has her full support. He will talk about the project from a conceptual level, and then have the Pupil Services Director, Ms. Jennifer Bencko speak about the programming aspect from a pre-school and special education perspective, and then Mr. Mike Roeder of EMOD Construction will speak about the construction itself.

Mr. Woofter said the existing space currently has two connected modular units that have been there for ten years and are nearing the end of their useful life. He said the replacement would be a four unit building with an awning and some steps. The decision to do this was based on some spacing issues related to enrollment and services. The final decision to move forward with the project was made in February and EMOD Construction

was contacted. They perform quality work and have extensive experience in this area. He asked Ms. Bencko to discuss why the classrooms are necessary from a special education and pre-school perspective.

Ms. Bencko said many people may not be aware that the school district has a legal obligation to provide special education services to children, starting at the age of three, who have been identified as having a disability or special needs. She said there has been a tremendous growth in need during the last two years, coupled with changes to school licensing rules, which encourage programming where special needs students are represented in a general education setting. They have expanded from two pre-school classes to four, due to the increase in needs, especially after Covid. The determination was made that the facility lacked adequate space to be able to provide the necessary additional services, and the expansion of the extra classrooms will alleviate that need.

Mr. Woofter added that the existing playground in that area will be converted to a more pre-school appropriate playground.

Mr. Roeder referred to the updated plans on the large screen, and said the building was built in 2012. The previous owners had added four bathrooms, three of which will be converted to accommodate the pre-school population. The building will have three classrooms and one staff work room. While the new building is larger than the existing one, it will still fit nicely into the space, with some reorientation of the main access. He said the school district also asked them to create a traffic circle for drop-offs and pick-ups. The access to all utilities is very close. There will also be a canopy over the main entrance to allow protection from the elements between the modular classrooms and the main building.

Mr. Woofter said additional school safety features will also be added during the course of the project.

Mr. Latkovic said he appreciates and values the continued partnership between Gurney and the Village. He knows from firsthand experience that this is a needed improvement. He asked the applicants what the expected life of the structure would be, and if cost was a factor in not building something more permanent.

Mr. Woofter said the anticipated life cycle of the structure is about fifteen years and the cost of the modular classroom building is very reasonable, which allows them to add the needed square footage and remain within their budget.

Mr. Porter asked what would happen to the old building. Mr. Roeder said they plan to take it apart and dispose of it off site. He said since they need to begin the project as soon as school lets out for the year, this would also be the fastest method of removal. Mr. Porter asked how long they anticipate the project to take. Mr. Roeder said they are hoping to be completed and ready in time for the new school year, around August 15th. Mr. Woofter said, judging from their past projects, he is very confident that EMOD will complete the project in time for the beginning of the next school year.

Mr. Latkovic asked if there would be any permanent parking by the turn-around. Mr. Woofter said it would be strictly for drop-off and pick-up, and there will be no parking. Mr. Latkovic asked how far back the turn-around goes. Mr. Roeder said its diameter is 50' and the radius is 25' and referred to the depiction of the area on the large screen. Discussion followed regarding the placement of the turn-around in relation to existing conditions.

Mayor Koons asked Ms. Bencko what methods are utilized to incorporate the special needs children into the larger school population. Ms. Bencko said there are many opportunities to do cross-grading activities, such as buddy classes, which provide good modeling for all of the students. She said some of the therapists will bring a mix of students together with activities in the main school building.

Mr. Latkovic asked what the anticipated enrollment for next year would be. Ms. Bencko said the anticipated capacity is about 56 preschoolers for the three rooms, and right now their enrollment is at about 46. She said the maximum enrollment two years ago was 32 students, and of those only 16 of the students had IEPs. There has been a significant increase since then. Mr. Woofter said early identification of the special needs of children is very important to their overall success.

Mayor Koons asked Mr. Roeder what the biggest problem is with modular units. Mr. Roeder said from an architectural standpoint, they are fairly plain, but landscaping can soften their look. They are metal sided, and painting has to be kept up in order for them to look decent. The roof is very easy to maintain, as are the HVAC systems. Mr. Latkovic asked about the interior acoustics. Mr. Roeder said the walls are vinyl covered, and the transfer of noise between rooms is very low, since two walls separate the rooms instead of one. If the room is noisy, it would be due to the 8' ceiling. He said the design of these rooms, per the State's requirement of 20 square feet per student, would allow 32 children, but he would suggest that realistically it would handle 20 children very well.

Mr. Latkovic asked if the structure has permanent electrical back to the building. Mr. Roeder said yes, it does, and Gurney updated their electrical about five years ago, and they have a feed for the existing, which will be doubled, and some things will have to be moved around a bit. There will be an exterior panel placed between the two buildings, which can be locked up.

Mr. Latkovic asked guests in attendance for their comments. Chris Smith of Fox Run introduced himself and asked if the building would be on pillars or on a foundation. Mr. Roeder said it would be about 36" off the ground with skirting of either vinyl, metal, or wood. Mr. Smith asked where the roof gutters would run to. Mr. Roeder said they would be tied into catch basins under the building and one to the side. The details regarding tying in have not been confirmed yet. Mr. Smith asked if the run-off from the added turnaround would go into the catch basins. Mr. Roeder said he believes so. Mr. Smith asked if he knew where the catch basins discharge to. Mr. Roeder said he was not sure. Mr. Smith said he wants to be sure the water runoff does not become an issue due to the added areas of impervious surfaces. Mr. Smith then asked if there would be any lighting on the new building. Mr. Roeder said there would be lighting at the doors, and he wasn't sure if there would be any more. Mr. Woofter said any additional lighting would be down-lighting, like the school currently has, and there wouldn't be any bright security lights. Mr. Smith asked how much more square footage the new building would have in comparison to the existing. Mr. Roeder said it is about double the size. Mr. Smith said his two concerns are water runoff and lighting. Mr. Woofter said the district's civil engineer has been involved in the review of the project to ensure the proper handling of water runoff, and if anyone would like to speak to the civil engineer regarding the project, that could be arranged. Mr. Smith asked if there were any variances needed for the new building. Mr. Roeder said they are not exceeding the footprint of the existing building, and they do not need any variances. The zoning application was displayed on the large screen and confirmed that the distances from lot lines are in compliance with the code.

Jo Royer of 233 Manor Brook asked if the school nurse would be expected to cover the increase in student enrollment. Mr. Woofter said yes, but the position is full-time at Gurney. Ms. Royer asked how the project would tie in with the proposed expansion of the transportation garage. Mr. Woofter said they have not put that project out to bid yet, and that the district has not yet made a decision, whereas the replacement of the modular classroom is nearing the end of its useful life, and funds have been allocated for the replacement. He said all the plans for proposed projects are also on the school website.

Mr. Smith referred to the satellite view of Gurney School and asked for clarification as to the placement of the turnaround and traffic flow. He wanted to be certain that no headlights would shine into any neighboring houses. Mr. Woofter clarified the direction of traffic and said pickup and drop-off hours would be from 9:00am-3:00pm.

Mr. Latkovic moved to adjourn the Public Hearing. Mr. Porter seconded.

Mr. Latkovic adjourned the Public Hearing at 8:13pm.



Steve Latkovic, Chairman

James Flaiz Acting Chair

9/14/23

Date



Ruth Griswold, Board Secretary

9-19-23

Date