



## Village of South Russell

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

---

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING  
MINUTES  
APRIL 11, 2024 at 7:30pm**

**Members Present:** James Flaiz, Chairman, Mark Porter, Mayor William Koons, Ph.D.; Elisa Budoff, Phyllis Marino, alternate.

**Member Absent:** Greg Bruhn

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

**Visitors:** Jeff Jardine of Riverstone Engineering, 3800 Lakeside Ave, Cleve; James Nace, Chagrin Schools, 400 East Washington; Ryan Schmit of TDA, 2630 River Rd, Willoughby 44094; Christopher Woofter of Chagrin Schools, 400 East Washington; Robert Tropf, 29 Sugar Bush Lane; Jennifer and Brennan Donnellan, 110 Waverly Lane; Jimmy Leffler, 1109 Bell Road

James Flaiz called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30pm.

Ruth Griswold conducted roll call.

Mr. Flaiz welcomed the applicants and guests and explained the process necessary to approve the submission from Gurney School. He said since the school is not a permitted zoning use, therefore operating under a Conditional Use Permit, a Public Hearing must be set for any proposed changes or modifications. After the Public Hearing, there will be development review during the Planning Commission meeting, and the board will vote whether or not to approve the proposal. The presentation, discussion and public comments will be during the Public Hearing. He asked if there were any questions regarding the procedures. There were none.

**Agenda Item 1:PC Case #24-01:** Mr. Ryan Schmit of TDA, on behalf of Mr. Christopher Woofter, Director of Operations for Chagrin Schools, is seeking approval for parking and storm drain improvements to the west parking lot at Gurney Elementary School.

Mr. Flaiz asked the applicants to begin their presentation.

Mr. Woofter introduced himself and thanked the board for convening on their behalf, and thanked the residents in attendance as well. He referred to the satellite view displayed on the media screen and outlined their proposed parking lot expansion. He said as many people know, the parking lot at Gurney currently has gravel on the west side of the west drive. If their proposal is approved, the west drive would become paved spaces and they would also add additional parking to the east side of that same driveway. The inside of the curve would also have more walkway spaces added. These proposed improvements are needed due to an increase in staff, volunteers, and visitors. He said during events, and even on regular school days, it can become very crowded. Additionally, the wider drive would also allow the buses to navigate easier. He introduced Ryan Schmit of TDA, saying he could go into more detail. Jeff Jardine, the civil engineer with Riverstone, is also prepared to speak to any water runoff concerns.

Mr. Schmit referred to the satellite view and pointed out the problems with the current parking situation. The available spaces reach capacity very quickly with staff, making it difficult for parents, visitors, and volunteers. Their plan would provide additional safe and secure staff parking, which would free up space for others. When there is an evening event, the new spaces would also make parking easier.

He went on to say that the other issue is the current morning and afternoon pick-up and drop-off area. There is a five-way intersection that is very challenging for cars and buses. The concept is to simplify the interaction between traffic. Currently, there are many people coming from various directions, as well as kids walking in the area, which makes for unsafe conditions. Reducing the crossing points would make it easier for both drivers and pedestrians. He said another improvement to the meandering drive would be to make it straighter, which will allow the buses to maintain a simpler traffic pattern. The project should also eliminate the need to have drivers park on any grassy areas.

Mr. Schmit then referred to the development plan on the media screen and indicated what the areas would look like after the improvement, and explained the intentions and positive impact of the finished project. The new parking would be achieved by converting some gravel areas and edge spaces to paved spaces, with the total for that lot reaching about 100. Regarding the pedestrian aspect, the pathways and crosswalks will create more defined methods for people to reach various destinations, without migrating across grass or driveway areas. He said there will also be several lights added, which will be directed downward with minimal light levels for the purpose of safe traveling. Mr. Flaiz asked how many light poles would be added. Mr. Schmit said he believes there may be about 4 or 5, and they are indicated on the electrical plan. They would only be placed in the island area, and as far away from the rear of the property as possible.

Mr. Schmit said presently there is no drainage system in the area, and water sheds into the grass and gravel. The goal of this project is to create a way to channel the water into a swale, which will then direct the water to end up in a depression. The release rate of the water is EPA regulated, so the tie-in to the sewer system will not be overburdened, and their engineer has done all the calculations to ensure compliance with the EPA. He said generally, they will be going from having no system in place to having a storm drainage system in place, which is designed to reduce some of the water in that area. He referred to an area on the drawing and said there will also be a little bit of a berm, since somewhat of a formal swale along the edge must be maintained. Mr. Flaiz said currently, north of the baseball field, there is a build up over a culvert pipe that people walk over, and asked if this would be similar. Mr. Schmit said yes, that is the same concept. Mr. Flaiz asked if they would be at four different points. Mr. Schmit said that is correct, and that most times it would be dry grass that people walk on, except when the weather has been damp for a period of time. Mr. Schmit said the project also affords them the opportunity to create a couple of ADA parking spaces.

Mr. Flaiz said he thinks the project is great. He referred to the drawing on the screen and said his only concern is the busy pick-up and drop-off area that has heavy circulation, and the plan includes eliminating the extra drive. He said it doesn't appear to him that the area will accommodate the two-way traffic. Mr. Schmit said the drive will be 27' wide, with a typical drive being 24'. They made it larger for the buses. Mr. Flaiz expressed concern that the buses would be able to make the turn. Mr. Schmit assured him that they would, and the area would be in excess of what would be required. Mr. Porter asked if two buses would be able to go by in either direction with the expansion. Mr. Schmit said yes, that is correct. Mr. Flaiz asked if the area would be curbed. Mr. Schmit said generally, no. Mr. Flaiz asked what would be done if people started parking at the apex of the turn, which would make it difficult for two-way traffic. Mr. Schmit agreed that he made a good point. Mr. Woofter said this issue was discussed during the design phase, and they would need to police the area for safety reasons. They plan to add signage to discourage that and be diligent about enforcing the No Parking areas. Mr. Flaiz said the biggest problems would be during after school and evening hours. Mayor Koons suggested adding some sections of split-rail fencing. Mr. Schmit said there are some people who are going to break the rules no matter what deterrents are in place.

Mr. Flaiz said he likes the project, and the elimination of the other island is a great idea. His only concern is how narrow the area looks between the handicapped spaces, comfort station, and the extended out grassy area. Mr. Schmit said he understands his concern, and assured him that the width is ample if people follow the rules. Mr. Flaiz said people will park along that area, especially if it is not curbed. Mr. Porter said adding boulders may help.

Ms. Marino said she understands the project will control the flow rates, but still feels there will eventually be a significantly increased amount of water flowing into the sewer systems, and asked if the impact of that has been considered. Jeff Jardine of The Riverstone Company, the civil engineer on the project, said he would speak to that concern.

Mr. Jardine said the impervious area on the site will only be increased by about 10,000 square feet. The total acreage of the parcel is about 10 acres, and their area of work is under 3 acres. It will increase the storm water volume, but not necessarily stormwater discharge. He referred to the utility plan on the media screen and pointed to the detention basin on the south end of the site. They pretty much cut the parking lot in half. One half of the lot will drain into the detention basin, where it will be held for 48 hours and then slowly released over time, at a reduced flow rate. The upper half of the parking lot has curb cuts and catch basins throughout that will slow down the amount of water that is getting there, and also how quickly it is getting there. Mr. Jardine said their post-development flow is required to meet the pre-development flow, but they are actually doing more for the area than is required. He said by over-detaining, they will be easing stress on the system as a whole. Mr. Jardine went on to outline and explain the details of the storm water management project.

Mayor Koons said the average parent may be concerned by seeing the word "pond" as indicated on the plans, and asked Mr. Jardine to explain. Mr. Jardine said a detention basin is sometimes referred to as a pond. When it is raining, there will be water in there, but it will slowly let out over time. Forty-eight hours from when the rain stops, the basin should be free of water, and within 72 hours it should be fairly dry and able to be walked on. He said sometimes they hear concerns about people falling into the basin. When they design their basins, they use a three-to-one slope, which is very comparable to the lawn seating at Blossom. Mayor Koons asked if the basin could become an attractive nuisance to children. Mr. Jardine said he didn't think so. Ms. Budoff asked if kids would want to use it for sledding. Mr. Jardine said no, it would not be that steep. Mr. Schmit said there is presently a basin just to the north of this, and he hasn't heard of any difficulties. Mr. Flaiz asked how deep the basin would get before overflowing. Mr. Jardine said there will actually be an extra foot or so before overflow would occur during a catastrophic 100-year storm.

Jennifer Donnellan of 110 Waverly Lane asked if the retention basin would be located near the girls' softball field. Mr. Jardine said yes, that is correct. They tried to keep it as far away as possible so as to not hinder pedestrian access.

Mr. Flaiz asked what the depth of the basin would reach during a ten-year storm. Mr. Jardine said the depth would reach approximately two feet. Ms. Marino asked if there would be a fence around the basin. Mr. Schmit said they do not plan to put up a fence, and oftentimes that is only done in highly walkable areas, but not in an area such as this.

Mayor Koons said people may ask why a rain garden was not considered. Mr. Jardine said rain gardens do not provide a lot of storm water detention, and they are more suitable for smaller areas.

Mr. Flaiz asked if the rate of the slow release of the water leaving the property would be improved under this proposed plan. Mr. Jardine said yes, they are coming in under the allowable amount, and the allowable amount is what is currently coming off of the site. Mr. Woofter asked if he could give a general percentage of how much of an improvement there would be. Mr. Schmit said it depends on the storm, and the frequent smaller storms will have a greater percentage of improvement than a five-or ten-year storm.

Mr. Flaiz referred to the satellite view on the media screen and asked Mr. Jardine to point out where the existing water is going. Mr. Jardine showed the board and guests the current path of the water, which goes off the parking lot, over and then down the hillside. There is an existing catch basin that is collecting the upper portion, and the bottom portion is going from the catch basins into a swale, which then discharges into the basin. Mr. Flaiz asked where the catch basins feed into. Mr. Jardine said it would go into a 48" storm sewer, and he is not sure where it actually goes after that. James Nace of Chagrin Schools said he could be wrong, but he thinks that it eventually goes down to Bell Road. Mr. Woofter said there is an underground detention, and he believes it goes into a large pipe underneath the driveway. Mr. Flaiz asked where it then goes from the driveway. Mr. Jardine said he would have to check on that.

Ms. Budoff asked if there were any residents from that area in attendance. Jimmy Leffler from 1109 Bell Road was present. Ms. Budoff asked him if the water was currently going into his yard. He said yes, it is, and the area between his house and the neighbor's collects a lot of water, and there is an area that turns into a 4' lake during the bad storms. The previous owners of the house told him they never had any water problems in the rear yard, but for the past ten years, a good rain would flood his rear yard. When he put his pool in three years ago, he also added drainage and has not had any problems since then. Mr. Leffler said the reason he came to the meeting is because the water issues began when the school put the fields in. He has been there for ten years, and his backyard used to flood at least once a year. A certain area of his property still gets 3 to 4 feet of standing water.

Ms. Budoff asked if this proposal would stop that from happening. Mr. Jardine said he would have to see exactly where that water was coming from in order to answer that, but that is outside of the area of the proposed work.

Mr. Porter said this brings up an issue that many are concerned about. The central retention basin just next to Village Hall was put in for storm water considerations, particularly for the Parkland and Chagrin Lakes residents, as well as others. He said the July 25<sup>th</sup> storm of last year caused the basin to fill to a depth of 4', and Chagrin called it a 500-year storm. He went on to say that he's not sure if the proposed retention pond is large enough, although it might be okay for now. He said over the past few years, there has been a decrease in snowfall and an increase in rainfall. He said going forward, he's wondering if the basin is large enough, so that

it serves not just today, but also down the road. Mr. Porter said to Jim's point, he thinks the pipe that comes off of it goes down Bell and winds up in Sugar Bush, and he doesn't feel the people in that area need more water. Mr. Leffler said that's why he is in attendance. Mr. Flaiz said he's not convinced that the pipes go into Sugar Bush, as it seems too far west. Discussion followed as to the current path of the water, and where it ends up, from various areas of the Gurney site.

Mr. Porter asked if the proposed detention basin was a 100-year basin. Mr. Jardine said the basin could accommodate a 100-year storm, and there would be room for about another 16" or so that could hold more water. Mr. Flaiz noted that the area currently has zero detention, and this project would be adding the capabilities of handling a 100-year storm. Mr. Porter said they are also adding more runoff due to the additional asphalt. Mayor Koons referred to the site plan and said he realizes that this is not part of the project, but asked if any water could be channeled into a 48" culvert to help the neighbors. Mr. Leffler said they are used to the water, and his main concern is something that would potentially cause more water to be on their properties. After further discussion, Mr. Schmit said the project should not be adversely affecting anything in that direction, and the project should improve the whole edge as indicated, which conceivably could help reduce water flow along that edge.

Mr. Flaiz said to reiterate, even though more impervious surfaces are being created, the calculations indicate that the flow rate off the Gurney property is being reduced. Mr. Jardine said that is correct. Mr. Woofter said from a stewardship perspective, their goal, when considering major projects over the years, has always been to reduce any water flowing off the property by 20-30%. They don't want to meet the minimum allowance, but exceed it. Their past work is evidenced at Gurney as well as at the High School.

Mr. Flaiz asked the residents and commission members if there were any further questions regarding stormwater issues. There were none.

Mr. Flaiz asked how many official parking spaces the project would create. Mr. Schmit said after the project creates about 40 additional spaces along the edge, there will be about 100 spaces total. Mr. Woofter said there is also the gravel parking area that is used for parking but not striped.

Ms. Donnellan asked about the timetable to commence work. Mr. Schmit said they will start the work in summer, and it will be completed by the start of school. He said the actual amount of work won't take very long, and the experienced contractors have the capacity to complete the work in a timely manner, as their goal is always to finish as quickly as possible.

Mr. Flaiz asked if the main parking lot would be repaved and re-striped. Mr. Schmit said no, as it had been done fairly recently. Mr. Flaiz said he has noticed the state of the signage on the campus is in disrepair, and asked if they intend to upgrade it so it looks as nice as the main campus. Mr. Woofter said they could do that, and told Mr. Schmit to make a note of it. Mr. Flaiz confirmed that there would be no work done on the upper parking lot. Mr. Schmit said that is correct; they looked at it extensively and found there is no way to improve the amount of parking without enlarging it and cutting into the trees. Mr. Flaiz asked if the storage of items in the nine spaces at the far north end could be relocated, perhaps to the bus garage parking lot, since it contributes to the parking problem. Mr. Nace said they recently auctioned some of the items, and the trailers have been moved. Mr. Flaiz asked about the shipping containers that have been there for years. Mr. Woofter said they utilize the three units for summer and winter equipment, as they are under-spaced for storage of those items. Their immediate plan is to paint them as needed, as they do look pretty bad. Mr. Flaiz said the school has many people coming from outside the district for games, and in his opinion, the Gurney campus is not kept up to the same standards as the High School.

Mayor Koons addressed the two residents of Manor Brook in attendance, and assured them that this project will not affect them at all. Mr. Flaiz said, from a stormwater perspective, he does not believe it will adversely affect anyone.

Mr. Flaiz asked if anyone had any further comments or questions. Mr. Leffler said the main reason he attended tonight was to hear about the stormwater. As a parent of children who attend Gurney, he thinks this project is very much needed for the campus, and that the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic will be greatly improved. Ms. Donnellan asked if there were any future plans for enhancing and enlarging the bus garage. Mr. Woofter said, although the discussion began about 5 years ago, the official decision has not been made yet. Mr. Schmit said unexpected cost increases due to Covid put a damper on the project. Mr. Woofter said the drawings are ready to go out for bid, but they are tasked with prioritizing. They try to address the more immediate issues of fitting the needs from an educational and community perspective. The school board knows the bus garage is something that still must be addressed.

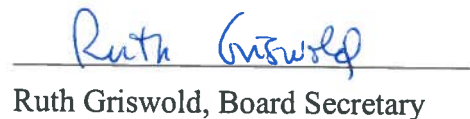
Mr. Flaiz said the Public Hearing will now be closed, and the regular Planning Commission meeting will be called to order. The board will then consider the application and allow any further comments before making a decision. He asked for a motion to adjourn.

**Mr. Porter made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing at 8:29pm. Ms. Marino seconded. On roll call vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**



James Flaiz, Chairman

5/9/24  
Date



Ruth Griswold, Board Secretary

5-9-2024  
Date