



Village of South Russell

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

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 10, 2024, at 7:30PM

Members Present: James Flaiz, Chairman, Mark Porter, Mayor William Koons, Ph.D., Elisa Budoff, Greg Bruhn

Other Officials: Bridey Matheney, Solicitor; Dave Hocevar, Building Official; Leslie Galicki, Acting Board Secretary

Visitors: Peter Balunek, 16725 Munn Road; Allan Balaara, Cleveland Clinic Beachwood; Richard Gofman, 5055 Corbin Drive, Cleveland 44128; Bobby Vallarelli, 477 Industrial Parkway; Rob & Colleen Truax, 477 Industrial Parkway

Meeting called to order by Mark Porter at 7:31pm.

Leslie Galicki conducted roll call.

Mr. Porter said the first order of business is to approve the minutes from the Planning Commission meeting on August 8, 2024. He asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Bruhn motioned to approve. Ms. Budoff seconded. On roll call vote, Mark Porter-Yes; William Koons-Yes; Elisa Budoff-Yes; Greg Bruhn-Yes. The motion carried.

Agenda Item 1: PC Case #24-14: 516 East Washington Street, Unit F

Mr. Peter Balunek, applicant and owner of Wildscapes Gallery LLC, dba Peter's Safaris, is seeking approval to operate an art gallery and office at the property located at **516 East Washington Street, Unit F**, owned by Peter McCoy.

Mr. Porter asked the applicant to begin his presentation.

Mr. Flaiz entered the meeting at 7:32pm.

Mr. Balunek said they have taken over a former law office and are converting it into his office for his safari business, and it will also be an art gallery named Wildscapes.

Mr. Porter noted that the business meets current zoning per the zoning inspector, and asked board members if they had any questions for the applicant. Mayor Koons asked if he was planning on holding any gatherings. Mr.

Balunek said the main use of the space will be to have people come in and talk about safari trips. He plans on having a grand opening party and he may have an artist welcoming reception, as well as a few impromptu presentations on a consistent basis, for people to view photos of a recent safari trip. He said the office space is only 950 square feet, but the gatherings can extend into the atrium area of the building to better accommodate guests. Mayor Koons noted he has been allotted 3 parking spaces, and Mr. Balunek said he got lucky.

Mr. Porter asked board members if there were any further questions. Hearing none, he made a motion to approve. Mr. Bruhn seconded. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Balunek thanked the board.

Mr. Porter asked Mr. Flaiz to take over.

Agenda Item 2

PC Case #24-15: Mr. Richard Gofman of Zenith Systems LLC, and Mr. Allan Balaara of CCF, applicants for CCF Chagrin Family Health Center located at **551 East Washington Street**, are seeking permission to install three new Blink EV chargers in the parking lot.

Mr. Flaiz asked the applicants to begin their presentation. Richard Gofman introduced himself as a professional engineer who works for the contractor and would be representing Zenith Systems. He said as many people know, electric vehicles are becoming more and more popular. The Cleveland Clinic has engaged Zenith Systems and other contractors to install EV chargers across Ohio and Florida. Mr. Gofman said one of the most important things the Clinic would like to do is to bring the chargers to all their smaller campuses, like the one at the Chagrin Family Health Center on East Washington Street.

He referred to the drawings that had been submitted, along with photos depicting how the project would look at the site. The project would include the installation of a fire extinguisher, the three EV chargers, as well as the service setup. Mr. Gofman said they would be planting 5' arborvitae trees around the service to hide it. He said the yellow bollards would be installed to protect the service from cars hitting it, and the middle bollard would house the fire extinguisher. He pointed out the ADA accessible spot, and that each charger would be able to charge two cars at a time.

Mr. Gofman referred to the media screen, which displayed photos of the area that show how the installation would be hidden from the neighboring properties. Mayor Koons asked if six charging stations were too many for the neighborhood. Mr. Gofman said when installing a service, you want to make sure there is an ability to expand. Many times, if a parking lot is full, people will just park in the spaces dedicated to EV charging. It's a huge service for somebody just to be able to pull into the next available EV charging spot. It is also helpful that there are handicapped accessible spaces, should that be needed. He said the ADA spaces are in addition to what is required for the parking of the building.

Ms. Budoff said the spaces are quite far from the building. She said that parking can be a problem there and asked who would be responsible for policing the area so that the spaces stay available for EVs. Mr. Gofman said it would be first come, first served, and that a non-EV would not be given a ticket if they parked there.

Mayor Koons asked if theft or vandalism has been a problem at other charging stations. Mr. Gofman said some inner-city stations have been vandalized, although it is rare. The stations do not have a significant source of electronics to be stolen.

Mayor Koons asked about plowed snow. Mr. Gofman said the snow would be cleared from the area without issues.

Mr. Porter asked if the Clinic would be charging a fee for the EV charging service. Mr. Balaara said there is a fee, and it is charged through a credit card, or the app. Mr. Porter asked how long it would take for a vehicle to get a full charge. Mr. Gofman said since they are level 2 chargers, it would take about a few hours. They offer faster charging options at gas stations, but this would be a service for the community if there is a need.

Mr. Flaiz asked if there were situations when non-patients, but just members of the public, would be utilizing these stations. Mr. Balaara said yes. Mr. Flaiz said he feels this may be a zoning issue, since these would be for-profit charging stations, and they are in an area zoned for a medical building. Although these stations may not be very profitable, it would still be outside of the scope of the use for this particular parcel, which is zoned for a medical building. Mr. Gofman said part of the services provided by this type of building include vending machines with cafeteria-type options. One could say that the vending machines could also be considered a for-profit use, but that is not the use, but rather a small and minor ancillary use which falls under the main use of the non-profit. Mr. Gofman said in his experience, this type of amenity is available across the spectrum at public hospitals and public buildings. He said one day there may even be charging stations at Village Hall. He feels it is not really a sales type of thing, just an ancillary part of serving the public, which, from his experience, is how it is typically viewed.

Mr. Flaiz said serving the public is different than serving your customers. Having a vending machine offering snacks or coffee for the patients is different because it falls within the scope of what the parcel is being used for. By installing the EV charging stations, they would be operating a completely separate business in the parking lot, that would be open to people who aren't patients at the medical building. Mr. Balaara said the intent is for the stations to be used by caregivers and patients who come to the facility. If it happens that other people use them, they do not have any control measures for those instances. Mr. Balaara provided an overview of the general goals of the Cleveland Clinic as it relates to the EV charging stations. He added that the Clinic has been awarded a grant from the Ohio EPA for this installation.

Mr. Gofman said there would be no advertising of the charging stations, and that it wouldn't be able to be found online. Ms. Budoff said there are several office buildings within walking distance that do not have charging stations. She asked if these stations would have parking meters with time limits or could someone just pay and charge there all day. Mr. Balaara said he is not sure what control measures these stations would have in place. Mr. Gofman said they don't typically see that people are abusing the systems. Ms. Budoff said there are not that many in town, and if someone were to park at the Clinic all day and walk to their place of work, it may be less expensive for them than to charge the vehicle at their home. She said she understands they are not advertising the stations, but because they are so close to the street and very visible, that is advertising in itself. She said those are her concerns, along with the responsibility of monitoring. She asked if the Clinic security department would monitor the area or would it be asked of the South Russell Police to do so. Mr. Balaara said the Clinic would provide the security.

Mr. Flaiz said the other issue he has with these charging stations is the placement of them on the property. The proposed placement may be the best location for running power, but to install these rear facing electronic boxes right off the road would greatly detract from the nice curb appeal the Clinic has created and maintained at this property over the years. He said there are two separate issues here, the first being that the project may be outside the scope of the permitted use for the building, and secondly, he would like to see the charging stations installed

closer to the building or on an internal traffic island, to lessen the negative impact on the currently very attractive curb appeal. The Clinic has installed a very beautiful sign, the grounds are nicely manicured, and the building is always kept up well. He has never heard any complaints about the Clinic, they have always been a class act. Mr. Flaiz said he does not like the proposed location of the charging stations and the unattractive electric box at all.

Mr. Porter asked the applicants if these charging stations would be more of a convenience to their patients, rather than a money-making operation. Mr. Gofman said he's not sure if much money, if any, would go back to the Cleveland Clinic. The installation would be to provide a service that people are constantly requesting, and there is no doubt a need for it. More and more people are buying electric vehicles and seeking workplaces that have the amenities that they need.

Ms. Budoff referred to a Google earth image on the media screen and indicated a parking area in the rear of the parcel that she thinks would be a better location, since it is much closer to the building and far enough away to not be seen from the street and less enticing for the public to use. Mr. Flaiz agreed. She asked if that option had been considered. Mr. Balaara said they could explore that option, although the proposed placement was chosen to make it visible and project the Clinic as a supporter of sustainability. Ms. Budoff said after looking at the distance one would have to go to reach the building, she doesn't think many handicapped people in EVs would appreciate having to go that far of a distance to a medical facility.

Mr. Flaiz said he is struggling because he feels like their proposed placement is designed for advertising and virtue signaling for sustainability vs considering curb appeal, not enticing the general public to use it, and some practical issues of where it really should be placed.

Mayor Koons said he is fine with it. It's three black poles, situated in a corner, and the electrical box would be covered. He likes the idea.

Mr. Flaiz asked Mr. Hocesvar if he sees any zoning issues with the proposal. Ms. Matheney said the district is zoned as B-3, which is medical services. This includes inside retail but does not allow outside retail. Mr. Flaiz said he feels they need a zoning variance before the Planning Commission reviews it.

Ms. Budoff asked who owns the charging stations. Mr. Balaara said they are owned by Blink. Mr. Flaiz asked if the Clinic would be paid a royalty or a percentage of the profits. Mr. Balaara said the project is funded by the Ohio EPA and Blink is also funding a portion of it. The Clinic has no financial commitment. Any revenue will be shared 60/40 between Blink and the Clinic. The Clinic would be responsible for providing and maintaining the fire extinguishers. Mr. Flaiz asked if the Ohio EPA grant requires these facilities be open and available for public use, and not restricted to patient and customer use. Mr. Balaara said they do not require that, but they do require the placement to be easily accessible. Mr. Flaiz said that would be encouraging the public to use it. Mr. Balaara said that may be what is implied.

Mayor Koons asked Mr. Balaara if they had any theft, vandalism or complaints at their other Cleveland Clinic locations. Mr. Balaara said they have not had any complaints.

Mr. Flaiz said he is not opposed to charging stations themselves. The City of Chardon installed two of them for four spots, but he only ever sees one of them being used. He agrees that in the future they will be useful, and he doesn't want to give the impression that he is against the concept. He does not want to give free rein to anyone

to have a third-party vendor come in with a profit-sharing agreement and open up a use to the public that is not permitted under South Russell zoning. He thinks it's a huge can of worms.

Ms. Budoff referred to the photos of sample installations and asked where they were located. Mr. Balaara said they are on other Clinic properties. Mr. Bruhn noted that the photos show the stations on an internal road of the parking lot, not front and center and visible from the street. Ms. Budoff asked which Clinic property the photos were taken from. Mr. Gofman said he is uncertain. They are currently installing these stations at seven different properties, but it is another suburb.

Ms. Matheney referred to the zoning code and said she believes this would be considered retail, and it would not be permitted in a medical district. Mr. Flaiz noted that Panini's could put them in their lot without a problem. He said if the stations were in the Village Hall parking lot, he would not have an issue with it.

Mayor Koons asked what would have to be done to make this happen. Ms. Matheney said they would have to obtain a Use Variance from the BZA, or the Clinic could choose to initiate a zoning amendment. Mr. Porter said although it's ancillary to what they do, and primarily a convenience for their patients, and they wouldn't be opening it up as a public charging facility. Mr. Flaiz said it would absolutely be opened to the public, as the applicants stated earlier. Mr. Porter said they wouldn't be directing people to it. Mr. Flaiz said they are required to install these stations in a highly visible area, and that is so the public could see them.

Discussion followed regarding details of what would be permitted in a medical district, and the necessary steps required for the project to be approved.

Mr. Flaiz made a motion to table the submission until the applicants obtain a zoning variance. Mr. Porter seconded. Mr. Flaiz asked if there was any further discussion. Mr. Bruhn said he thinks it would better if the charging stations were situated to be not quite so visible from the street. There are a number of other options on the site. Mr. Flaiz said the applicants have presented a very professional, complete, and detailed submission, and one of the best he has seen. He complimented Mr. Gofman and Mr. Balaara on the renderings and their entire presentation of the project and wanted to make it clear that their decision to table the submission is not a reflection on their work. Mr. Flaiz asked for roll call on the motion to table. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Flaiz advised the applicants how to proceed in order to obtain a variance. Mr. Balaara asked when the next Board of Zoning Appeals meeting would be held. Mayor Koons said they meet next on November 20th. Mr. Balaara said they had committed to a timeline to begin the project by the end of October. They must apply for an extension and see if it would be granted.

Mr. Flaiz suggested rescheduling the next Planning Commission meeting to November 21st, the day after the BZA meeting, to better accommodate the applicants. Mayor Koons said he will be unavailable on that date, but they have alternates to call on. Other board members said they would be able to make the meeting on November 21st. Mr. Flaiz asked Mayor Koons if he would be okay with not being able to attend. He said otherwise, they would have to wait until the Planning Commission meeting on December 12th. Because the Planning Commission tabled it, if they get a variance from the BZA, they could appear at the Planning Commission the next evening. He said if a variance is obtained, he would feel somewhat differently about the project, although he still does not like the proposed location.

Mayor Koons made a motion to move the Planning Commission meeting from November 14, 2024 to November 21, 2024. Mr. Porter seconded. Mr. Flaiz asked for any further discussion, and hearing none, asked for roll call. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Flaiz told the applicants that since the Planning Commission has now moved their meeting date, if they are able to obtain a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals on November 20th, they could return to the Planning Commission the next evening. The applicants thanked the board.

Mr. Flaiz said the next item for review is under **Old Business: Traffic circulation, parking plan and fire lane discussion for Industrial Parkway**. He referred to the drawing submitted, noting it is labeled as a landscape plan, but is actually a parking plan. It is indicating the number of parking spaces and a fire lane. He asked Mr. Hocevar to tell the board about the plan.

Mr. Hocevar said he met at the site with the property manager and Fire Inspector. They went through the code requirements pertaining to parking spaces and fire lanes, and asked them to submit a plan, to be approved by the Planning Commission. Bobby Vallarelli, property manager for 477 Industrial Parkway, said they were able to get the code complying plan drawn out for them by Steve Ciciretto. Mr. Hocevar said the number of parking spaces line up with what is required by the square footage.

Mr. Flaiz said the parking plan is very well done. He asked Mr. Hocevar if both he and the Fire Prevention Officer have seen and approved the plan. Mr. Hocevar said yes, that is correct. Ms. Budoff asked if the plan has anything to do with the Hawaiian Guys building. Mr. Flaiz said no. He commended Mr. Vallarelli for taking care of this request in a timely manner for 477 Industrial Parkway. He said as chair of the Planning Commission, he has been in communication throughout the month with Ruth Griswold at the Building department. The owner of 576 Industrial Parkway has made a few attempts to draw a parking plan that would be approved, and he was trying to get it in before the deadline. Mr. Flaiz said he told Ms. Griswold that even if they submit something the night before the meeting, he would be willing to have the board at least talk about it at tonight's meeting. Mr. Hocevar said that Mark Derry did submit something this afternoon, but it is still not right. He met with Ms. Matheny to go over the code and requirements and hopes to receive a plan from Mr. Derry that could work. As of now, the parking plan for 477 Industrial Parkway complies with the code, and the one for 576 Industrial Parkway does not. Mr. Flaiz said hopefully they will have something for the board to review by the next meeting on November 21st.

Mr. Flaiz thanked Mr. Vallarelli and said he appreciates him jumping on this request when it wasn't even primarily their issue.

Colleen Truax asked if the parking spots were 9'. Mr. Vallarelli said yes, they are 9x18, and that he would provide her with an accurate drawing. Ms. Truax said by their side door there is a concrete driveway, with a nice entrance and there is a nice pathway. She said in Suite C, it is not like that and that caused problems with the previous tenant. She would sometimes have a car blocking her doorway. She said she has a picture of that. The other problem that Suite C would have is when CrossFit would use the parking lot as an extension of their gym, which created hazardous situations. Ms. Truax said the reasons why Suite C left are not being addressed by this parking plan. She went on to say that she was wondering if CrossFit would be required to park in the back, or will they continue to be allowed to park in the spots by their business, so that their patients have to park in the back.

Mr. Flaiz said the Planning Commission, within the confines of the parking that is allotted for 477 Industrial Parkway, cannot dictate which tenants are parking where. That is strictly a landlord and tenant issue. He said the parking plan shows proper clearances between the east side doors and the parking area. He really likes the fire lane being striped and marked. Ms. Truax questioned the doors having proper clearances. Mr. Flaiz asked Mr. Hocevar if the plan is in compliance. Mr. Hocevar said they went through everything with the property manager and the Fire Marshal, who was satisfied with the plan.

Mr. Flaiz made a motion to approve the parking plan set forth here for 477 Industrial Parkway. Ms. Budoff seconded. Mr. Flaiz asked for any further discussion, and hearing none, he asked for roll call. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

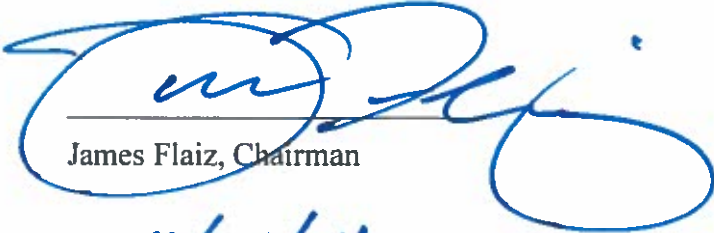
Mr. Flaiz asked for any other Old Business or New Business.

Under **New Business**, Mr. Hocevar said at the next meeting, the Police Department would like the Planning Commission to review the drawings for the Drone Vehicle garage.

Mr. Flaiz said he has been made aware that Lopez will be relocating to the former Flip Side location in Chagrin Falls, and that he plans to use the current location as an event space. He asked Mr. Hocevar if he had heard anything from Mr. Friedlander. Mr. Hocevar said he had only heard rumors. Mr. Flaiz said Mr. Friedlander was quoted as saying such in an article on Cleveland.com, and that the new location would have a third more seats than the current location. Mr. Flaiz said if he is going to start having wedding receptions at his East Washington location, it would be a lot different than having staggered dinner seating. Mr. Hocevar said Mr. Friedlander knows he must go through the Village before doing anything. Mr. Flaiz said it would be a shame to lose the restaurant, and he thought he was doing well. Ms. Budoff said he also opened up Goodfellas, which is right down the street from the new location, and they may get more traffic in that area as well. She said the night he opened Goodfellas, she went to Lopez, and the crowd was pretty thin. Mr. Flaiz said it is a very cool space and would be a shame to have an empty storefront. Mr. Flaiz said Violante's still owns the property and the liquor license.

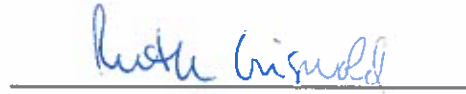
Mr. Flaiz asked if there was any other **New Business**. He wanted to mention that the new parking improvements that were recently completed at Gurney Elementary turned out so nice and are working very well. He said it is a major improvement, and he can't say enough good things about it. His only regret is that he wishes they would have taken care of the upper area, but he understands there is only so much funding available at a given time. Ms. Budoff asked if the improvements were meant to alleviate school-related traffic on Bell Road. She is in the area on Friday mornings, and there is still a horrible traffic problem. Mr. Flaiz said the traffic flow in and out of the school at peak times will always be there, but the improvements to the school parking lot, the addressing of the safety concerns and the new lighting have all been amazing improvements, and it has all turned out so much better than he could have imagined. He said he also drove through there after a recent significant rainfall and checked out how the detention basin was filling up due to their stormwater management improvements, and it was working as promised, which is another improvement. They really did a very nice job.

There being no further business, Mr. Porter motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:23pm. Ms. Budoff seconded. Ayes all, the motion carried.



James Flaiz, Chairman

11/21/24
Date



Ruth Griswold, Board Secretary

11-21-2024
Date