

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 16, 2023

Members Present: McAleer, Capka, DeMarco, Bishop

Presence Noted: Ray Reich, Building Commissioner
Michael O'Shea, Law Director
Kate Straub, Planning and Zoning Coordinator

Chairman Bishop called to order the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission on March 16, 2023 meeting at 6:00 P.M. in City Council Chambers of Rocky River City Hall.

1. LAKE ROAD ROCKY RIVER LLC – 19621 Lake Rd. – PRE-PRELIMINARY REVIEW – New Office Building and Parking Garage. Mr. Mark Conzelmann, developer of the project, came forward with Mr. Denver Brooker, Principal with Vocon, to present the project.

Mr. DeMarco said he would like to state for the record that he worked for the applicant's Architect in the past. Law Director O'Shea stated that he is friends with Michael and Molly Schroeder, but he has no involvement with the vote.

Mr. Conzelmann explained that they are proposing to construct a new office building to be occupied by Roundstone Insurance, currently located in Lakewood Ohio and which will be 100% occupied by the employees of Roundstone. The zoning of this parcel is split which has presented some challenges but they think what they have put together is a great solution to those challenges, as opposed to other designs they could potentially do.

Mr. Brooker introduced himself and said they are seeking to build 60,000 sq. ft. of usable office space and enough parking to serve that office building. They have arranged it on the site in a way they feel best works with Lake Rd. and the context of the area.

Mr. Brooker explained the submittal while referring to page numbers. The three parcels for this project include 19621 Lake Rd., which is the largest of the three. They also have 19701 Lake Rd. which is currently Cravings Thai Restaurant. In addition, 539 Linda St. is the long narrow parcel with access on Linda St. He explained that the zoning includes two zoning districts within the 19621 Lake Rd. parcel, which adds to the complex zoning puzzle. Everything on these sites will be removed, including the existing curb cuts, and curb cuts will be repositioned as he described, with one new curb cut on Lake Rd. and one new curb cut on Linda St. There will be fewer curb cuts than the current and previous uses on the site. There is an existing light pole at the Lake Rd. curb cut that they will have to relocate slightly to the east.

Mr. Brooker described the 2-level parking garage and explained the setbacks for the project. They will be at the maximum setback of 25' for the Lake Rd. building frontage and this particular section of Lake Rd. has a much wider right-of-way, with a variable of 13' – 7" to 17' – 4" from the right-of-way line to the south side of the sidewalk which means that the perceived setback will be much greater, which is intentional. Mr. Brooker continued to explain the site while referring to the submission pages.

Mr. Brooker explained that the building will have two entrances, with one on Lake Rd. and one from the south, which will probably end up being the entrance primarily used, but they wanted to give the building street presence and a sense of entrance on Lake Rd. He also explained the setbacks for a building versus a parking area so the ground level parking has surface parking setbacks of 10' and the second level is pulled in to provide the 20' side setbacks. They are asking for a variance to the south property line which is against a railroad, where they are proposing a 10' setback in lieu of a zoning required 20' setback. The parking garage is on the parcel zoned R-5 and it is very discreetly located behind the office building. It is next to a large industrial warehouse-type building to the east, railroad tracks to the south and landscaping will be added to the west.

Mr. Brooker continued by explaining that the third floor of the office building is set back about 10' to 15' in order to provide some outdoor space along Lake Rd. and at certain times of the year, a view of the Lake. He explained the exterior elevations, which he described as classic, timeless and with a little bit of an industrial edge. There is a mix of multi-paned windows that are inspired by industrial window types and there are also sections of large glass in order to maximize natural light-filled office space, which was a request of the owner. They feel this building has a quiet and dignified presence.

Regarding the height of the building, it will be approximately 45' tall and most of the building is on the Local Business zoning part of the site but if it was to be on the R-5 part of the site, they would not need a variance for height. He said that 4,500 square feet of the building is actually zoning compliant regarding height. The two-story portion of the building is rhythmically modulated along its length with some accents, particularly at the main entrance.

Mr. Bishop said he appreciates the amount of respect that went into the zoning requirements and thanked the applicant for the very detailed plan for a pre-preliminary review. This site is very unique with the multiple zonings of LB and R-5. Mr. Bishop said that nobody could have anticipated either property being developed in that manner and if you looked at the zoning map he feels there is an argument that the whole quadrant should be office zoning, which would allow for the height they are asking for. He said that they interpret the parking garage as part of the building, which will be discussed more as they move forward. He explained that the code allows the parking garage at the front of the Local Business parcel and it would allow the larger height in the R-5 in the rear of the site. However, where the parking garage is placed, is a much better plan.

Regarding height, Mr. Bishop said that the maximum in Local Business is 35' and it is 50' in the R-5 district. There is a 30% maximum lot coverage for the building in Local Business and 40% in the R-5 zoning district. Impervious coverage is limited to a maximum of 75% in the R-5 district but there is not a requirement in Local Business for impervious coverage. He said that common sense is required when figuring out what is the right blend because of the two zonings. He said that they will go through the list of what variances are required.

Mr. Bishop asked about the CEI easement in the back of the property. Mr. Conzelmann said that the CEI easement does not affect this proposal. There is a previous legal matter between the

existing property owner and CEI that was worked out and there were conditions that were established for new buildings or renovation of the existing building and this proposed structure complies with those. For the parcel that goes out to Linda St., Mr. Bishop said they are not showing the required setbacks for building and parking and in this scenario, parking follows the building setback. They need to verify that the first parallel parking spot is not within the building setback and that it does not cause a safety issue as it relates to the ingress and egress at the drive. He asked for the count for each of the parking banks as a circled number. He said he would like to see all of the zoning moved to one page of the site plan, on page 7. Mr. Bishop said that he would like to see a parking setback closer to the 10' required parking setback from the west wall.

Mr. Bishop said that we don't recognize the railroad track right-of-way as a zoning district, so they would not need a variance along the south line abutting the tracks. Mr. Bishop asked if they could break each floor down as it applies to square footage, number of handicap parking spaces, number of parallel parking spaces and number of head-in spaces. He said they need to verify that they are using the proper dimensions for parking spaces because there are different recommendations for dimensions. For instance, a head-in space has a different dimension than an angled or parallel space.

Regarding impervious coverage, there is the dilemma of the 75% versus 100% and it is difficult to determine where there is 75% and 100% because it is mixed. He asked if there is any consideration to doing about 6% of the site in permeable pavement. He is not sure they could ever determine if they need a variance for impervious coverage or not because they would have to extract the calculation and show the percentage of coverage in each district. Mr. Brooker said he thinks they will be able to extract those percentages for each district.

Mr. Bishop asked them to break out the parking count to show a total of open, enclosed and surface spaces. He said that the enclosed spaces are contained within an overall larger building with some parking integrated within the office building versus a parking structure, which is interpreted as a freestanding garage. He said that the applicant should remove any reference to a parking structure because that is not what this is. On each zoning page, he said they should get all of the information that is applicable to zoning information and also show the level 3 for the zoning as well so the information is complete.

On page 9, Mr. Bishop said that he will make a few comments and then they can remove this page from the packet. The total lot area does not add up to 93,870 s.f. to all of the other pages that are 92,786 s.f. and he asked them to fix that so that all of the pages are accurate.

Mr. Bishop said that the landscaping and lighting plans are a great start. He said that if they are proposing anything in addition to what is being proposed, they should bring it to the preliminary review. He likes the colored floor plans and he asked that they take the zoning information off and move it to the zoning pages.

Regarding elevations, Mr. Bishop said that he feels they have paid a lot of respect to the property next door and they are paying a lot of respect to the Kennedy project that is just down the street. He feels like these things will all blend together and fit into a very nice theme along Lake Rd.

Mr. Bishop said that we do not count the parapet in the height calculation so there is some leeway to bring down that variance, which is what he thinks they are identifying in the 42' height label. He said that they are asking for an 8' variance rather than a 10' variance. The Kennedy project received a variance for a project which is identical to this, so there is a precedent for that variance. This building very much follows the flavor of the Kennedy building with the step-back at the 25' setback, which was a big consideration for that variance.

Mr. DeMarco asked why the zoning change to OB-1 is not being considered and whether it is just to avoid the timing associated with that process. Mr. Conzelmann confirmed that Mr. DeMarco is correct. Mr. DeMarco asked for more information about the business with number of employees and how they envision traffic coming into and out of the site because he is wondering about traffic impact. Mr. Conzelmann said that there is currently about 130 employees with a plan to grow to 175 to 200 over the next 5 years. They are all primarily professional jobs for the employees and the office will have only 50% of the employees in the office at any one time, anywhere between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm, so everyone is not arriving all at once. In response to other questions from Mr. DeMarco, Mr. Brooker said that there is level 2 entry to the building from the parking garage. Mr. DeMarco asked them to match the scale of the survey to the site plans because the site plans are larger scale. He would like them to identify some sort of marker, perhaps the location of the existing house dotted in on the floor plans to give them an idea of where the context is. He said that there is an easement noted as triangle 15 that is outside of the right-of-way and into the street, and he asked if they are allowed to locate street parking in that easement. Mr. Conzelmann said that he is not sure, but it was not a consideration for them.

Mr. DeMarco suggested that they push the building face to the east a little bit and grow it to the south in order to gain the required parking setback against the building and Mr. Conzelmann said that they will study that. Regarding the elevations, Mr. DeMarco likes what they have done and the continuity with the Kennedy building, but the elevation still seems a little flat. He said that they created a sense of entry, but wonders if they could have a detail that is a little more massive or pronounced at the entry piece there for more emphasis. He also wonders if there is a way to pick up some aspect of the gable roof rhythm into the façade of the building. to continue that roof line rhythm along Lake Rd. That is his only comment on the elevations and he feels it looks as handsome as the Kennedy Building does.

Mr. Capka asked if they need the parking they have provided to meet the parking requirements. Mr. Conzelmann said that they are over the parking requirement by a few spaces and they have future growth in mind over 10 years, they feel that the spaces will be more utilized. Mr. Bishop explained the gross floor area that is calculated versus the net square footage and how it affects the parking requirements. Mr. Capka said that he is curious to see what the length of the elevation along Lake Rd. is when they come back. He asked about outdoor employee areas for those who work in the building. Mr. Brooker responded that there are three different employee spaces, including the enlarged plaza space off of the north entrance that will include some benches. There will be a separate patio space on the south side of the building where the small rectangle inset into the greenspace is located. There are also benches lining the walkways

between the garage and the south entrance. There is also the third floor terrace, which they expect to be the primary outdoor space. Mr. Capka asked if any changes to traffic patterns are planned at the Lake Road left or right exit. Because there is not a lot of space to go westbound out of the parking lot on Lake Rd. with the traffic light and curb cut right next to it. He is assuming there is enough turning radius to go west out of the Lake Rd. curb cut. Regarding mechanicals, Mr. Brooker said that the mechanicals will be on the roof and will be screened. They will bring details when they come back.

Mr. McAleer asked if a lot of clients or visitors come to the building or whether it is just occupied by mainly the employees. Mr. Conzelmann responded that Mr. McAleer is correct that it is just mainly the employees so there are not clients coming and going throughout the day. Mr. Conzelmann said that Lake Rd. is anticipated to be the main means of ingress and egress from the site. Mr. McAleer said that he agrees that the landscaping and the lighting plan is nice and this project feels like it connects with the neighborhood and the project to the west. He appreciates the time and energy they have put into this proposal.

Mr. Bishop followed up with the fact that they would like all of the surface parking areas to be curbed and asked them to identify that. Mr. Bishop said that the front site wall is violating the front setback, which is 10'. He asked if they can work to move it outside of the setback and Mr. Brooker said that they will.

Mr. DeMarco said that he asked the Building Commissioner if a traffic impact study would be warranted here because the only signalized intersection is at Linda and Lake. He said that they may be opening up the potential for people to bypass the intersection by cutting through this site in order to go east on Lake Rd. Mr. Bishop said that they are eliminating Cravings and the businesses that were functioning there that are more intense uses. He said that he thinks that the drive-thru at Cravings probably generated more traffic with the previous coffee service drive-thru than this use would with 60-80 employees coming and going at various times. Mr. DeMarco said that the traffic impact will most likely come up during a public hearing and he would like the applicant to be able to address it. He said that it could be that Cravings is generating more traffic through there because of the use. Mr. Bishop said that the way the aisle is designed, he does not feel that it would be useful as a cut through. He recommends that they go to Design Board for their review prior to the pre-preliminary review.

The applicant thanked the Planning Commission for their time and input.

2. ROCKY RIVER PLANNING COMMISSION - Discussion/Recommendation regarding Drive-Thru Regulations. Mr. Bishop introduced the conversation.

Mr. Bishop said that this is something that has concerned him and he feels like this should be addressed sooner rather than later. In other communities there are drive-thru establishments where the traffic from long lines in the drive-thru spills out onto main streets. Our code requires accommodation for 6 cars in the drive-thru queuing lines for those type of establishments. They also talked about changing drive-thrus in General Business districts to Conditional Uses because

they are a permitted use now. Part of the reason for making all drive-thrus conditional uses is because there are areas that are zoned General Business that the Master Plan says should be walkable, pedestrian friendly areas, but a drive-thru that spills out cars across walkable areas would be in conflict with that.

The next steps is to review the changes to be made to the code to accommodate the new requirements for minimum number of queuing spaces that are required for the different drive-thru uses and to adjust the Code to reflect those changes. Car washes are shown as permitted uses in General Business and that would need to be changed to a Conditional Use. It was discussed that in order to make a car wash a conditional use, we will need to come up with conditions that would be acceptable. Mr. DeMarco said that he has a comment about the notations with regard to the quantities of spaces. We are identifying potentially 12 queuing spaces as a minimum, and then it is qualified by saying “or additional queuing spaces as determined by Planning Commission.” He thinks they should have the ability to reduce the amount required if it fits the development line, so the word “additional” should be removed. He said we should also add a small footnote, labeled as (d), in the table to reference is back to that.

Mr. McAleer moved to move forward with the recommendation to City Council to consider an ordinance for the proposed changes to the Development Code as presented at today’s meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.

William Bishop, Chairman

Michael DeMarco, Member

Date: _____