

MINUTES OF MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 20, 2025

Members Present: Coyne, Allen, DeMarco, Bishop

Presence Noted: Ray Reich, Building Commissioner

Kathryn Kerber, Director of Planning and Community Development

Dylan Minek, Planning and Community Development Administrator

Michael O'Shea, Law Director

Council Members Present: Michael O'Boyle, Ward 2

Chairman Bishop called to order the May 20, 2025, meeting of the Rocky River Planning Commission at 6:00 P.M. in City Council Chambers of Rocky River City Hall.

Mr. Bishop asked if there were any corrections to the Planning Commission meeting minutes of April 15, 2025. Mr. DeMarco moved to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Mr. Bishop moved to modify the agenda, changing Ruffing Montessori School from a Pre-Preliminary Review to a Sign Review, and Gregg Mylett has been removed from the agenda. Mr. Demarco seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

1. Ruffing Montessori School – 1285 Orchard Park Dr. – Sign Review

Present: Jack Doheny, The Kreuger Group
Anne Lashutka, Principal

Mrs. Lashutka said they are requesting a variance to be able to put an electronic sign on the building. They are not on a main street, and they are not using it for advertising purposes. They want to use it to inform parents. If they were to do a monument sign, it would go right where the youngest children play. Mrs. Lashutka wants to avoid that; they do not want it to become a play structure for kids to climb all over. That's also why they would like it 8 feet up on the wall, so one can touch it. Hours of operation will be 8 am-5 pm and will only display messages for the parents of the school.

Mr. Bishop said there are two variances they'll need. One is for the wall mounting of the sign, and the other is for being within 125 feet of a residential district. Mr. Bishop said they do not grant the variances, but he would be recommending the variances. Mr. Demarco wanted to know if it'll be a changeable signage. Mrs. Lashutka said no, it will be simple messages, nothing too crazy. They used to have one you would manually change when they first bought the school, so now they want a new digital one where they can show little messages like "school is closed" or "don't forget the play." Mrs. Lashutka said they took the old signage down, and the parents miss it. Mr. Demarco said he doesn't oppose the signage, but he is concerned that the illumination will glare into the neighbors' homes. He thinks they may be able to mitigate that by limiting the

hours of operation. Mr. Demarco thought the narrative said 7 am – 5 pm, and he said that is more restrictive than the code. So, he would be in support of the variance with the limitation of restricted hours of operation.

Mr. Allen wanted clarification on whether this is an informational sign. Mr. Bishop said that it is an electronic sign and should be treated as one. So, the variances are to mount it on the wall, the code says it must be a ground sign. Also, the code says an electronic sign cannot be within 125 feet of a residential district, and this sign would be. Mr. Bishop and Mr. Demarco agreed that since it will be off at night, they are not concerned about the 125 feet. Mr. Allen wanted to know if this new sign is close in size to the old one. Mr. Doheny and Mrs. Lashutka said it is relatively the same size, might be a tad bit bigger.

Mr. Demarco moved to grant preliminary and final approval for a signage review for Ruffing Montessori School at 1285 Orchard Park Drive. On the conditions that they achieve the two variances that were stated, restricted hours of operation from 7 am to 5 pm, as described in the narrative, and Design and Construction Board of Review approval. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

2. Joe's Deli – 19215 Hilliard Blvd. – Public Hearing: Preliminary Review – Parking lot expansion

Present: Tony Valore, Valore Builders

Mr. Valore said that from last month's meeting, they had to put up a masonry wall, which meant they were going to lose the mature vegetation that is already there. He said that the neighbor, from across the street, asked him about the vegetation and hoped that he was going to keep it. So, Mr. Valore revisited the plans and angled the parking on the south side. They did lose 2 spots doing so, but it gave them enough space to keep the existing vegetation.

Mr. Bishop said in the book that they are governed by 1167.11, which states that the Planning Commission can make an exception to the setback requirement by allowing for the 4' masonry wall. Mr. Bishop said that means he could build a wall or get a variance. Mr. Valore is unsure what the variance is for; he pushed the parking back so he was not in the 10' setback. Mr. Bishop said that the way the code reads, since it is on street frontage, you would need the wall. If parking is on the dedicated street in Local Business, it's required to have a wall, or the other option is to get the variance. Mr. Bishop doesn't think that is a hard argument to make because the existing condition is the fence and the landscaping. Mr. Demarco said that if he had to choose between mature landscaping or a masonry wall, he'd choose the landscaping. The rest of the members agreed. Mr. Demarco said to also add a few more arborvitae along the fence to complete it.

Mr. Bishop moved to open the public hearing. Mr. Demarco seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Three residents stepped forward: Ann Rich, 18890 Rockcliff Drive; Maureen Murman, 19020 Rockcliff Drive; and Kathleen Jouriles, 19215 Rockcliff Drive. The three of them just wanted some clarification. Mr. Bishop said they are eliminating their current retention basin and seeking a variance so the fence and landscaping that is there now can stay. The Commission has asked them to add a few more arborvitae, and from across the street, you might not even notice that anything has changed. With the brick wall requirement, you would know something happened.

Mrs. Murman asked if the cars would be closer to Rockcliff. They will be 12' closer to Rockcliff. The three residents asked Mr. Valore why they are doing this. Mr. Valore said they are changing the bioretention basin to a smaller option that will open space to add additional parking spots. Mr. Valore said the new basin will be in the back corner, and the current depression will be eliminated to add those 6 spaces. Mr. Bishop said there will not be much change from the Rockcliff side. Except for the new arborvitae that will be added. Mrs. Murman is concerned about pedestrian safety because of the cars exiting and entering the parking lot. She would like to see some type of signage or something to slow the traffic down. Mr. Valore said they can add signage.

Mr. Bishop moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Mr. Bishop said to Mr. Valore that they agree to leave it as is, while also adding the additional arborvitae. To add some sort of slow mechanism towards the sidewalk, and in addition, some signage that says pedestrian or sidewalk. The mechanism would slow the traffic down, and the sign would alert the drivers to the sidewalk. Mr. Bishop said they'll get preliminary approval tonight, go get their variance, and then come back with the signage and the slowing mechanism to get final approval. The variance is for the masonry wall in Section 1167.11, and they are in support of that variance

Mr. Bishop moved to grant preliminary approval, subject to receiving a variance for the elimination of the 4' masonry wall at the street frontage. In addition, at the final review, provide a mechanism for traffic calming and signage warning of pedestrians/sidewalk. Mr. Demarco seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

3. Cleveland Yachting Club – 200 Yacht Club Dr. – Pre-Preliminary Review – New gas dock building

Present: Jim Wallis, Perspectus Architecture
Jon McCollister

Mr. Bishop said that it looks like it is a big improvement on what is already there. He said next time they'll need architectural samples and color renderings. Mr. Demarco said that he is not opposed to what is being presented, but he would like to know what the differences are between how the old facility works and how this new one works. Mr. Wallis said there is not much difference. About 6 years ago, the yacht club was told by the EPA that they couldn't have underground storage tanks. So now they are above ground, but the EPA wanted to monitor after the fact to make sure there was no contamination left. The EPA said the only remaining contamination is below the building, so it needs to be torn down to access it. Since the building was already coming down, they decided to upgrade it. Currently, the building has no space for employees or product sales. Thus, they wanted to double the size of the building but keep it under 1000 sq fr. Mr. Demarco said the old building had free and clear access to the gas pumps, but the new building has gated pumps. Mr. Wallis confirmed, they are moving the building closer to the river because the staff is the real master of the boat yard. So, they need a good visual to be able to see up and down the river; right now, they do not have that.

Mr. Allen wanted to know if the improvements on the roadway are for aesthetics or traffic calming. Mr. Wallis said that when they did the Master Plan, he felt that it was a sea of pavement and asphalt. He felt there should be an emphasis on opening up more green spaces and improving pedestrian connections throughout the club. The pavers are step one; they are making a lot more improvements to the area. Mr. Wallis said their goals are to give people curbs, walkways, and make it a safer environment for everyone else. The permeable pavers also help to improve water quality. Mr. Coyne said that finishes are important to focus on in the next meeting. Mr. Bishop said the landscape plan is important as well.

4. Rocky River Fire Department – 21012 Hilliard Blvd. – Pre-Preliminary Review – Fire station renovation

Present: Rich Snyder, Director of Safety Service
Pete Bohan, Perspectus Architecture
Loretta Snider, Karpinski Engineering
Aaron Lenart, Fire Chief

Mr. Bishop said that, in terms of the site plan, it is in complete compliance with the code. There is a reduction of parking from 30 spaces to 23 spaces. Mr. Bishop wanted to know what the normal staffing is. Mr. Lenart said that they currently have a 9-person shift and 6 on duty, and the new station is being designed to have 15 people. There is no additional burden on the parking, and there is overflow throughout the campus. Mr. Bishop said he can't give his thoughts on the architecture until there are color renderings and some samples. Mr. Snyder said the materials will match the police department. Mr. Bishop also said a landscaping plan and lighting plans would need to be submitted next.

Mr. Demarco wanted to verify that the apron on Wagar Road will stay the same; it will be the same width and everything. Mr. Demarco wanted to see the old fire station dashed on the site plan so they could see the size difference comparatively. Mr. Bohan said that they are on there,

but Mr. Demarco would like them to be more pronounced the next time they submit. Mr. Demarco also wanted to see dimensions included on the property lines. Mr. Demarco wanted to know the timing on development and construction. Mr. Snyder said the Fire Department will relocate to the service garage in late fall. Followed by asbestos abatement, demolition by late winter. And construction begins in the spring. Mr. Demarco would like to know how that coincides with the renovations happening at the senior center. Mr. Snyder said the senior center's completion date is May 2026, and they expect to have the majority of major construction done by late this year. Mr. Demarco said the senior center construction fences are taking up parking spaces, and having the two being constructed at the same time will take a significant chunk of parking. Mr. Demarco wanted to know if bay 6 is going to be used partially for the old fire truck. Mr. Snyder is not 100% certain, but that was the idea, and that is why the big picture window is there. Mr. Demarco said if that's the case, there should be a placard telling people what they are looking at. Mr. Demarco would like to see the details of the walkway between City Hall and the fire station. Mr. Bohan said they are working on that right now. Mr. Snyder said the goal is for it to be very complementary to the police station.

Mr. Allen said that based on the topography, falling as you go north, it looks like there are going to be 5-6 steps down to access the fire department. Mr. Allen said seeing the police station, city hall, and the fire station would be beneficial. Keeping everything as consistent as possible. Mr. Snyder said one of their biggest holdups is having to incorporate an elevator. The elevator shaft must be close to the existing building, and that makes it hard to step some of the elevation down like they did with the police station. They will try to step back to the front of the building to give the same feeling as the police station. Mr. Allen wanted to know what the steel and wood frame was on the back side of the station. Mr. Bohan said it is to add privacy for the physical training area. Mr. Snyder said one priority of the project is the mental health of the Fire Department. This is an area where the firefighters can go outside and enjoy some privacy that they are not afforded right now.

5. City of Rocky River – 22401 Lake Rd. – Final Review – Adding auxiliary parking across the street from Bradstreet's Landing

Present: Rich Snyder, Director of Safety Service

Mr. Snyder said there were additional questions about the retaining wall when they attended last month's Planning Commission meeting. They decided to go with a High Format Grand Ledge wall, which allowed them to achieve their structural desires while also maintaining the aesthetics they wanted. They wanted to go with the terrain color to go with the landscaping in the area, rather than the grey that is seen in the park. The park itself has a lot of grey with the pier, and they thought it would be nice to have a different color that matches its surroundings better. Mr. Demarco said he would rather see the colors consistent. The rest of the Commission agrees. They decided to go with the Fond du Lac color. Mr. Demarco wanted to verify what the maximum height of the wall was going to be again. Mr. Snyder said it would be 8' at the highest. Mr. Allen would like to know where it goes back to 3 lanes on the west side. Mr. Snyder said right at Pier Deli. Pier Deli would have a larger apron than what they have now. The three lanes will start just west of the deli, not at the deli.

Mr. Bishop moved to grant final approval to 22401 Lake Road for auxiliary parking at Bradstreet's Landing, with the condition that the retaining wall color be changed to Fond du Lac. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

6. The Foundry at Rocky River – 20325 Center Ridge Rd. – Pre-Preliminary Review – Change of use from office to multi-family residential

Present: Garrett Allen, Walter Haverfield
Scott Wallenhorst, HEART Design Group

Mr. Bishop said there was a discrepancy in terms of spaces in the narrative and the plans. Mr. Wallenhorst said there was a miscount and that the correction has already been made; there are 103 units. This means 232 parking spaces would be required, and that means they are 2 parking spaces short. Mr. Bishop said they could either find 2 spaces or seek a variance. Mr. Bishop said that when it comes to the studios, they did not listen to their suggestions. Mr. Garrett Allen wanted to know where in the code it prohibits studios. Mr. Bishop said the code allows one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and more than two-bedroom. Mr. Garrett Allen said that the previous submission had studios included. Mr. Bishop said they have been working on the new development code, which allows for 10% studios. So, they recommended the variance based on what the new code will allow, and the previous submission was granted that variance, but it has since expired.

Mr. Bishop said that studios have a minimum requirement of 600 square feet. One bedroom requires 750 square feet, and 22 are below that square footage. They were all good on their two bedrooms. There is a 90 square foot storage requirement for all units that have a 7' height requirement. Mr. Bishop said it is a little unclear in the site plans, but Mr. Garrett Allen said they can make that clearer and more pronounced in the plans. Mr. Bishop said they have a good start to their landscape plan, but referred them to Section 1185 for guidance. Mr. Wallenhorst said they followed the previous submission's landscaping. Mr. Bishop wondered if they could identify the future use on the ground floor because that could impact their parking. Mr. Garrett Allen said it is up in the air; when it changes, they'll be back here for that conversation. Mr. Bishop said if it is common space, then parking won't need to be discussed, but if it is a restaurant, or something similar, they would have a problem. Mr. Bishop wants them to label how many bedrooms and how much square footage for each unit has on every floor plan. Also, some spaces are not identified on the floor plans; have all of those identified. Mr. Bishop said there is not really a site plan, and that the landscape plan is not enough. They need a survey, and to show all their parking. Label the banks of parking spaces on both the lower and first levels and identify each handicap parking space.

Mr. Demarco appreciated them, including the louvers that were lacking in the previous submittal, and wanted more information about those louvers. Mr. Wallenhorst said he looked at quite a few colors for the louvers, and the dark bronze that matched the storefront system looked like a dark

line running down the building. The building will be cleaned to match the precast panels that are there, to match that color as closely as possible. Mr. Wallenhorst said he tried to depict the louvers the best as he could. Putting glass in there is very difficult, so it will be a metal panel to match the color of the building as closely as possible. The panels will not be on the street side of the building and will only be on the back half of the building. It was also designed to group the units as close as possible to prevent a mismatched pattern. Mr. David Allen wondered if they could use a panel that is nothing but louvers to make it look sort of intentional. Something more decorative but still matches that precast color of the building. Mr. Demarco wanted to verify if it was going to be painted or just cleaned. Mr. Wallenhorst said it will just be cleaned, but any repairs that will be done will be like-for-like. Mr. Demarco asked if the glazing storefront is new or existing, and if it exists. Mr. Demarco asked if there was going to be some sort of signage to have it incorporated or accounted for. Mr. Wallenhorst asked if it would be okay to submit separately, and the Commission said that it is okay, but if it is done before the final review, include it in that package.

Mr. David Allen wanted to make sure that with the louvers, it is intentional. Mr. David Allen wondered if they could add a faux louver to the 7th floor to avoid skipping the floor. Mr. Demarco said the street elevation is not the only elevation that you see from the street; the north elevation is seen from the street as well. The priority would be the units and the mix of the units, and then the aesthetics. Both are important, but in a relative sense. Mr. Bishop wondered why they didn't like the previous floor plan, and Mr. Wallenhorst said there was a lot about the floor plan that did not make sense. When he looked at the old plan, the louvers would have been a hodgepodge. The way the floor plan was originally proposed, it would not have looked well with how the louvers would have been placed. Mr. David Allen said on the north elevation, pay attention to the roof, as a lot is going on up there currently. Mr. Wallenhorst said there are units up there that are going to be removed, except for the cell towers, because they are obliged to keep them. Mr. Wallenhorst said the landscaping and the awning are going to help limit the impact of the louvers. There will be limited screening because there will be no large units on the roof. Mr. Coyne said he wants to see what the design of the louvers would be.

Mr. Wallenhorst wanted to list what they are lacking and what would be needed for next time. They are short two spaces, they could either find the two spaces or get a variance. The Commission would be in support if they were able to get 10% of the units to studios at 600 square feet. 22 one-bedroom units are below the 750 square feet requirement. 90 square feet of storage per unit and have some sort of deliverable to show. Site plan that provides the number of parking spaces, property lines, space size, and ADA spaces. Make sure that the square footage is labelled on all floors. On the unit plans, make sure to identify the use of each space, the unit square footage, and the unit type. For the exterior, investigate how the panels will look consistent and intentional, whether that be a louver. Including adding a louver on the top floor that would be a faux one. Not to mention, the building will be cleaned, and any repairs will be taken care of appropriately.

7. Planning Commission – DORAs

No discussion was had but brought up to include on next month's agenda.

Mr. Bishop moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm.



William Bishop, Chairman



Michael DeMarco, Member

Date: 8/19/25