

MINUTES OF MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
APRIL 15, 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

Jeanne Gallagher, Ward 3

Chairman Bishop called to order the April 15, 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 March 11, 2025. Mr. DeMarco moved to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Mr. Bishop moved to make The Foundry the last item on the agenda to try and move along some of the shorter items. Mr. Demarco seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

1. Westsiders – 19880 Detroit Rd. – Preliminary/ Final Review – Sign Review

Present: Kathy Clarke, Ace Lighting Services
Gregg Mylett, Building Owner

Ms. Clarke said there are two “tower” signs: aluminum panels that will go on the metal towers, channel letters with neon inside, and clear acrylic over them to protect the neon. The bar and restaurant sign is a cabinet that will be attached to the towers as well. So, there will be two elevations of the same sign.

Mr. Bishop asked if they are replacing the signage that the previous tenant had. Ms. Clarke said that it had already been taken down. Mr. Bishop meant the same size and scale as the previous design, not so much the design. Mr. Mylett confirmed that Westsiders' sign is very similar in size and scale to the previous tenant's sign. Mr. Bishop said he asked because there was no signage area determined in the packet, and if they are replacing what was already there, then they do not have to go through that. Mr. Bishop also asked about the east elevation, why are they extending the “s” off the panel. Mr. Bishop said that it is shown outside the rectangular backer panel. Ms. Clarke said that must be a design, but it is within the backer panel.

Mr. Demarco thinks looking at the signs, it may be a little bigger than what the signable area allows. But if they are assuming that they are essentially replacing what was already there, he is okay with it. Mr. Bishop said that the whole south elevation would be included in the signable

area calculation. That means there is plenty of allowable space for their proposed signs. Mr. Demarco's other concern was the mural on the building currently. When Cane's came before the Planning Commission, they were told to remove their mural. Mr. Demarco wonders if murals are to be considered signage. Mr. Demarco likes all the signage, but allowing the mural could destroy precedent.

Mr. Bishop said they should focus on the signs that were submitted today and act on the mural on a future date. If a sign is non-compliant, that would become an issue that the Building Department will have to address. Mr. Reich tells Ms. Clarke that if the Building Department is going to act on this, make sure your customer knows that it is one or the other, so it is not a shock when they need to show up. They could also apply for a variance for the mural.

Mr. Bishop moved to grant preliminary and final approval for Westsiders at 19880 Detroit Rd. for signage. Mr. Allen seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

2. Gregg Mylett – 1239 & 1241 Allen Ct. – Pre-Preliminary Review – Honeybee Sanctuary

Present: Gregg Mylett, Owner
Justin Sofio, Beekeeper

Mr. Mylett recently acquired some properties on Allen Ct. He was unsure what he wanted to do with the property, but his mother told him about Mr. Sofio and his organization. Mr. Mylett thought this was a great opportunity for the environment, the community, and education. Allen Ct. is a low-traveled street with not a lot of residential properties, which makes it a perfect place for this bee sanctuary.

Mr. Bishop said the issue he is having is that the code is extremely restrictive in office districts. He is trying to find a use to classify this as, and he is having trouble doing so. Mr. Bishop wondered what the timeline or longevity would be on this project. Down the road, will you want to develop that side of the street? Mr. Mylett said he might, when the Marion Ramp comes down, there could be the opportunity to develop. Mr. Mylett said there is a decent investment to get these properties to where he would like to see them, so maybe long-term, with the potential for redevelopment in the future. Currently, he wants to do something good for the community, and when the Marion Ramp comes down, maybe do something even better for the community.

Mr. Sofio said that this is a unique project. Rocky River would be the first, it would really be a pilot program that could be replicated in other cities or states. Youth Bee Works is an organization that Mr. Sofio founded 8 years ago. He said 85% of their work takes place in the Cleveland area, and the other is in Pittsburgh. Piloting this program here and incorporating the education component, not just for students but for seniors as well. Naturally, Rocky River seems like a very environmentally sound city, and this would take it to the next level.

The problem Mr. Bishop is having is that Magnificat came in front of the Planning Commission recently with their beehives, and their property is zoned public facility, which made it easier. These properties are zoned office, which makes it more restrictive. Mr. Bishop asked Mr. Demarco if he was able to find any uses that he thought would apply. Mr. Demarco wondered if “library, cultural institution” applies, and the definition for “school, specialty/personal instruction” had language that could be adopted in a project like this. Mr. Bishop wondered if this project would be the primary use or the accessory use. Mr. Demarco thought it would be primary use, but there is no real structure on the parcels. Mr. Allen agreed with Mr. Demarco that use would either be “school specialty/personal instruction” or “commercial recreation, outdoor.”

Mr. Allen asked about the honey, what is done with it afterwards. Mr. Mylett said that typically it is donated back to the sponsors. The sponsors help subsidize the educational component, so they get the honey in return. The honey stays in Rocky River, it gets donated, used for fundraisers, and used in different products. There will be about 1,000 pounds of honey for 20 beehives. Mr. Sofio said that Mr. Mylett and him have talked about the idea of creating a steering committee of some sort and seeing where the honey will benefit the community the most. Mr. Demarco asked about how the honey goes from the sanctuary to the supply chain. Where is it getting packaged and/or processed? Mr. Sofio said they are working with Spice Field Kitchen out of Parma to try and get the packaging there. They are already set up for agricultural production and packaging, so it would be a nice dovetail.

Mr. Bishop said this is a very admirable proposal, but it is just not in the right zoning district. This zoning district has a very strict definition compared to other districts about deviating from the list of permitted uses. The only way that it is possible to deviate from that is to find a similar use. When talking about school, Mr. Bishop thinks it implies that there is a building with a school in it. Mr. Demarco would agree that the code implies that, but it is not explicitly stated.

Mr. Bishop said parking is an issue. It cannot be street parking, and unfortunately, how the code is written, the parking that Mr. Mylett owns down the street would not count towards the parking needs of this project. Mr. Bishop asked what the conditions of the homes are, both to the north and the south. Mr. Mylett said that they could be torn down to make room for parking, if need be. Mr. Bishop also wonders if there is any way to secure the garden to prevent any possible accidents or incidents from occurring. Mr. Mylett said he is open to a fence.

Mr. Demarco wants to know the frequency of service and maintenance on-site. Mr. Sofio said once a week. It would either be himself or one of his colleagues, someone from Youth Bee Works. So, at most, there would be two people at the site during the weekly maintenance. Mr. Demarco wonders how many people would be there for an instructional-type event. Mr. Sofio said that it depends on the type of event, but said the average may be 15 people. Mr. Demarco also wanted a description of the beehives. Mr. Sofio said they are a little bigger than 2' X 2' and they grow vertically, not surpassing 4'.

Mr. Bishop wanted to know, of all its uses, how much of it is instructional. Mr. Sofio said that it just depends on the advertisement and how much the community wants to get involved with it.

He said so far, people have been passionate about it, and there has been a lot of interest. Mr. Bishop wanted to know if they could say it's an outdoor school, which is a specialty with personal instruction. Mr. Sofio would agree.

Mr. Bishop reminded that this is Pre-Preliminary. For next time, they will need to see more information about the hives, a parking plan, and a fence plan. Mr. Bishop asked Mr. O'Shea if they could act on the similar use issue since it's a Pre-Preliminary. Mr. O'Shea said he would have to research it. Mr. Bishop asked the other members if they felt that this is a permitted use based on what they have heard. Mr. Demarco thinks that in their narrative of the project, they need to describe how it's instructional and describe the classroom nature. So, the narrative substantiates the potential comparison of use. He would like to see a picture of the bee hives and maybe a description of what plants would go in the pollinator garden.

3. BRB Me Time – 20525 Detroit Rd. – Public Hearing: Preliminary/Final Review – Change of Use from Office to Medical Spa

Present: Megan Bruder, Business Owner

Mr. Bishop said it was a really nice package, and it is appreciated. He modified the parking calculation slightly; the two storage places on the lower floor need to be counted within the calculation. Mr. Bruder has enough parking for her business, but Mr. Bishop told her it is getting close to capacity, and for her to let the landlord know that. There are reductions available in the code, but those are based on certain hours of operation.

Mr. Demarco wanted a description of the business, what the treatments are, how often, and what the schedule is throughout the day. Mrs. Bruder said there will be a few procedures starting. Botox, the initial consultation will be 30 minutes, then after that it'll be 20 minutes, and those clients are seen every 3 months. Microneedling and hormone replacement would take about an hour, and then filler would take about 45 minutes. At most, maybe one person would be waiting, but Mrs. Bruder said she really would want to avoid that.

Mr. Allen wanted to know if there was going to be any additional signage. Mr. Bruder wondered if she was allowed to put anything in the windows. The Commission let her know that it was not permitted. However, she would be entitled to space on the master sign along the street.

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

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

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

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Mr. Bishop moved to grant Preliminary and Final approval for BRB Me Time at 20525 Detroit Road for a change of occupancy. Mr. Demarco seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

4. Joe's Deli – 19215 Hilliard Blvd. – Pre-Preliminary Review – Add Nine Parking Spaces to Existing Lot

Present: Tony Valore, Valore Builders

Mr. Bishop said there is a required 10' setback on the south side for parking. In the code, there is an exception that allows a 4' masonry wall with a 4' setback from the right-of-way. Mr. Bishop said that leaves room for there to be landscaping, and he believes it will look better than what is already there. On the east side, there is a 15' required setback, and he is proposing 6'1." It is a large variance request; however, it looks like they are closer than the 15' already. Mr. Bishop wonders if there were variances already granted and would like to see those included in the package next time. Mr. Bishop said that if they elect to go with the masonry wall, then they will have to provide a landscaping plan. Mr. Valore wants clarification on where that masonry wall would go. Mr. Bishop said that at a minimum, it needs to stretch the distance on the six spaces on the south end of the parking lot. However, he would encourage that it is the same brick that is on the building and run a distance larger than the six spaces – maybe the corner of the lot to the entrance of the parking lot. Mr. Valore said the underground retention system will stay underneath the parking lot, and there will be a new supplementary one that will catch what the old bioswale was.

5. Rocky River Fire Department – 21012 Hilliard Blvd. – Pre-Preliminary Review – Fire Station Renovation

Present: Rich Snyder, Director of Safety Service

Mr. Bishop was not pleased with what was submitted and felt like there was not enough information. Mr. Snyder started to pass more copies of updated site plans, but Mr. Bishop felt that it was not fair to the Commission or the applicant to do so. Mr. Snyder said there would be a reduction in overall parking. The parking is used by the Fire Department. Mr. Bishop said they can have a special meeting for the Pre-Preliminary before the May meeting, so they could have their Preliminary in May still. But that would require them to get their submission in quickly, so there would still be enough time to send out notices for the May meeting. Mr. Demarco was concerned that even what was passed around just now was not enough for a Pre-Preliminary. They want to see the existing conditions, site survey, bigger paper sizes, elevation, lighting, landscaping, and be clear about circulation coming out of the fire bays.

6. City of Rocky River – 22401 Lake Rd. – Public Hearing: Preliminary Review – Addition of Auxiliary Parking Across the Street for Bradstreet's Landing

Present: Rich Snyder, Director of Safety Service
Matt Hills, OHM Advisors

Mr. Snyder said the Commission was split last time they were here, so they took those comments and tried to make a project that was a good combination of the two sides. They were able to eliminate a curb cut by reducing the number of parking spaces. Viewing this as overflow parking, the removal of a few spaces does not lessen the intent of the project. Mr. Snyder said they were still able to add 29 parking spaces, if you include the on-street spots. The entrance to the parking is still directly across from Bradstreet's main entrance. They increased the drive aisle by a foot, so now it is 17' wide. They added bioretention between the sidewalk and the parking lot. Mr. Snyder said there was a request for signage, so they have included some examples and where they'll be located. Also, the Commission wanted to see a landscape plan. Mr. Snyder had included that, they wanted to use low-maintenance vegetation that has enough of a visual cue to visitors in the area that they are approaching Bradstreet's Landing. The vegetation also has a secondary function of helping to slow down traffic.

Mr. Bishop felt this was a blend of everything they asked for, while still holding to some of the aspects Mr. Snyder and Mr. Hills wanted. Mr. Bishop wanted to know more about the retaining wall. Mr. Hills said that it would be a gravity wall with large precast blocks that are large enough that they won't need geogrid. It'll vary in height, but the largest it'll be is 8'. It will be a precast Redi-Rock finish.

Mr. Demarco appreciates what they have done with their comments. He likes how the traffic flows and the landscaping plan. Mr. Demarco was curious if there would be a monument sign that designates this as overflow parking. Mr. Snyder said he didn't want to overshadow the neighboring properties, so at this point, no. Mr. Demarco agrees that it is implied that this is overflow parking, but if it becomes a problem, it might need to be addressed.

Mr. Allen also appreciates the changes that have been made. For the new crosswalks, it looks like there is a material change beforehand. Mr. Allen was curious about what that was. Mr. Hills said it would be plain concrete to act as a visual aid for drivers to indicate that there is a crosswalk. The crosswalk itself would be a stained concrete to add another visual aid. Mr. Allen also said that it would be nice to add a texture or something visually appealing to the retaining wall to minimize the impact on people who park in front of it. For the final review, Mr. Allen thinks the elevation of the retaining wall should be included.

Mr. Coyne appreciated the changes as well. He is curious about the wooden bollards only being in a few locations instead of along the whole road, like they are across the street. Mr. Snyder said that it is because they wanted to create an obstacle to make sure people do not cross through the grass. He did not want to do the whole distance because it would create a corridor effect, and that is not what they are going for. They wanted to go a little softer with the landscaping.

Mr. Demarco had a question about the possible need for speed reduction. Mr. Hills said the idea is to slow down traffic through design rather than with an actual reduction. Mr. Snyder said that changing the speed would require talking to ODOT, and they still may not get it reduced.

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

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Jim Hildebrandt, 22480 Lake Road, came forward. Thinks the plan is great and loves Bradstreet's Landing. However, his concern is around traffic. That area has a lot of traffic already; narrowing the roadway and adding more parking will only make that worse. Mr. Hildebrandt said that there may need to be a traffic light added to that area.

Mr. Bishop asked Mr. Snyder, when they renovated Bradstreet's Landing, wasn't there a reduction in the total number of parking spots. Mr. Snyder said it went from 70 spaces to 32 spaces. Mr. Bishop said there are still fewer spaces, even with this overflow parking, than what was there before the renovation. Previously, Bradstreet's had two curb cuts, and when they renovated, they took it down to one; now this overflow parking is one way. Mr. Bishop felt that they had done every to limit the impact on the traffic in the area.

Mr. Bishop wondered if, down the road if they needed a traffic light, what would that entail. Mr. Snyder said that it would require contacting ODOT, and they would have to conduct a study of the area to make sure it warranted a traffic light. The city would have to pay for that, it would not be state-funded. Mr. Snyder said that their design is to help mitigate traffic and help slow down vehicles so that it is safe for pedestrians. Outside of this small stretch of road, it expands back out and has a middle turning lane.

Jeanne Gallagher, Ward 3, came forward. She just wanted clarification on how many spaces it would be; she heard conflicting numbers. Mr. Snyder apologized that he had misspoken earlier. It has 29 total spaces, 23 in the lot, with one of those being a trailer spot, and 6 parallel spaces along Lake Road.

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

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

Mr. Allen added that he really appreciates the traffic calming measures that are going on throughout the city and thinks they are super important. He doesn't think a traffic light is as efficient because it stops the traffic instead of keeping it moving. Mr. Snyder said a project like this is important because it helps translate it to other parts of the city.

Mr. Bishop moved to grant preliminary approval for Bradstreet's Landing auxiliary parking with the understanding that we will have details regarding the retaining wall next time. Mr. Demarco seconded.

4 Ayes – 0 Nays
Passed

7. The Foundry at Rocky River – 20325 Center Ridge Rd. – Pre-Preliminary Review – Change of Use from Office to Multi-Family Residential

Present: Agostino Pintus, Owner
Garrett Allen, Lawyer
Brian Smith, Construction Manager

Mr. O'Shea said that there has been some progress made with the citation that was given to the applicants. They have pleaded no contest, and they are working with the Building and Fire Department to address compliance issues. There is a rubbish issue that will be rectified to the satisfaction of the Building Department and the Fire Department within 7 days. In addition to that, there are some electrical box and exposed electrical wiring issues that will be addressed in approximately two weeks to the satisfaction of the Building Department and the Fire Department. The judge has indicated that the applicants will be on a relatively moderate leash over the next 12 months or so to get the building into compliance.

Mr. Bishop said they had spent a lot of time on this project to get to where the Commission was happy, particularly with the exterior. Mr. Pintus said they tried looking for the package but could not find it. Mr. Bishop told him the city has it. He should have a package of the final approval and all the previous meeting minutes for the project, as it will guide you to what the Planning Commission is looking for. Secondly, Mr. Bishop pointed out that everything that was submitted was under the General Business zoning. In 2024, the zoning was changed to Office Building – 3. The reason for that was that the building was not in compliance with the General Business, mainly because of its height.

Mr. Bishop said that they felt very strongly about what was approved, especially the exterior. The planters and the bocce ball around the perimeter to eliminate the excess parking. There were ways to soften and eliminate those parking areas. There was landscaping around the front entrance as well. Mr. Allen and Mr. Pintus said they took the bocce ball out because of cost and low possible usage. However, Mr. Bishop said that they didn't care about it being used as an amenity, but rather as another way to handle some of the oversized parking deck. Mr. Demarco said that it came about because of the conversion of the office to residential; they wanted to soften the barrier between this project and the properties surrounding it. Mr. Demarco said that they are aware that you cannot add planters right on top of the parking deck, so they were sympathetic to that and were okay with certain amenities that could use the hard surface while still softening the impact.

Mr. Bishop said the code does not permit studio apartments. They are working on an updated version of the code that would allow for studio apartments. But at a maximum of 10% of the unit count and square footage. The new code will set the studios at a minimum of 600 square feet. Mr. Bishop said the exterior and the unit count will be extremely crucial. They are fine with the 100 unit count; the previous approval had the 100 units with 10% of them being studios of 600 square feet or more. The precedent is there to make it work. The Commission doesn't get too caught up in the interior, in terms of floor plans and things like that. The exterior, getting that residential flavor, is super important. Mr. Bishop said they should look at the previous approval

and use that as a strong base. A lot of what they will need is in that package; the only difference is that the previous approval was under General Business zoning, and now it is zoned Office Building – 3.

Mr. Reich said there are variances that have expired. Mr. Demarco said that with the new zoning, they may not need those variances. This needs to be looked at through a fresh lens. Mr. Pintus understands that, just for them, they would like to keep the project moving as fast as possible. Mr. Demarco asked if they wanted to reach occupancy within that 12-month period. Mr. Pintus said they would like to break ground sooner than that, but this project is going to take 16 months to build. Mr. Reich asked if there is a structural package by an engineer that is ready for review. Mr. Reich said there was quite a bit of engineering review done for the parking garage in the previous approval, and the work never got done. Mr. Allen wonders if that work can be done concurrently. Mr. Reich said work can be done concurrently, under no umbrella of approval of this board, but they can look at it based on structural and building codes.

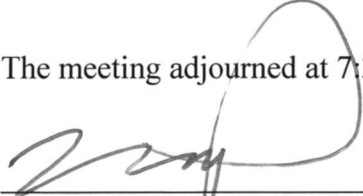
Mr. Bishop said they can move as fast as they can. They do have requirements for public hearings. So, they can hold special meetings, but they need all four members present, and enough time is needed to be able to send out the notices.

8. Planning Commission – Updating the Development Code

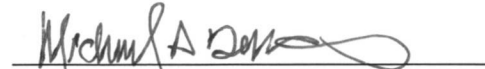
Ms. Kerber said she has gone through and added all the notes of Mr. Bishop's previous review of the code. Ms. Kerber has also sent the Design Guidelines to the Design and Construction Board of Review so they could look at them. She is going to attend one of their meetings with the old code and the new code to review and discuss with the Board. Mr. Bishop said he didn't remember seeing a lot about Design Guidelines in the new code when he reviewed it. Ms. Kerber said the new code has a separate section for it, rather than within each zoning district type. Mr. Bishop said they were trying to get away from people jumping around from certain parts of the code, they were trying to make it more user-friendly. Ms. Kerber said that it might be nice to have a separate section so that the Design and Construction Board of Review has its own section, and people who need to go in front of them know exactly where to go in the code for it.

Ms. Kerber said she had gone through the definitions and cleaned them up, so there were no words in there that weren't used. Mr. Bishop said another issue is the definitions of some of the words. They can be confusing for some people, so simplifying those would be nice. Also, Mr. Bishop wanted to ask the Law Director about having an executive meeting, where they could discuss agenda items without it being a formal meeting. However, Mr. O'Shea had left earlier. Ms. Kerber wonders what type of agenda items he would want to discuss. Mr. Bishop said one issue had been addressed by providing the Design and Construction Board of Review with a copy of the sign code. Mr. Bishop thinks a review of the code will identify other parts of the code that have sign regulations within them, he asked that those be provided to the Design and Construction Board of Review as well.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.



William Bishop, Chairman



Michael DeMarco, Member

Date: 5/20/25