

**PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF WILLOUGHBY
JANUARY 23, 2025
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

PRESENT: K. Kary; M. Wildermuth; Ben Capelle; S. Norris, Chairman
ABSENT: J. Cook
OTHERS: Mike Lucas, Law Director; Darryl Keller, Chief Bldg. & Zoning Official;
Tim Lannon, City Engineer; Vicki Grinstead, Secretary

Chairman Norris called the regular in-person meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Public Hearing Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2025

Mr. Wildermuth moved to approve the Planning Commission Public Hearing Meeting Minutes for January 9, 2025 as submitted and Mr. Capelle seconded.

ROLL CALL: Yeas: Ben Capelle; K. Kary; M. Wildermuth; S. Norris, Chairman
Absent: J. Cook
Nays: None

Motion Carried: APPROVED

Regular Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2025

Mr. Capelle moved to approve the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes for January 9, 2025 as submitted and Mr. Wildermuth seconded.

ROLL CALL: Yeas: K. Kary; M. Wildermuth; Ben Capelle; S. Norris, Chairman
Absent: J. Cook
Nays: None

Motion Carried: APPROVED

OLD BUSINESS

This item remains tabled until there is a full board.

Planning Commission

**Election – 2025
Chairman
Vice Chairman
Secretary**

NEW BUSINESS

None

DISCUSSION

STA Holdings, LLC
4921 & 4927 Robinhood Dr.
(Rep.- Mr. Slagter, Tucker Ellis LLP, Joe Ward &
Tim O’Toole, American Red Cross)

**Rezone PPN#27-A-007-I-00-013-0 &
27-A-007-I-00-020-0 from Retail
Business to General Business**

Mr. John Slagter of Tucker Ellis LLP, 950 Main St., Cleveland, OH 44113, legal counsel for the applicant STA Holdings, LLC. He is here tonight with Joe Ward, Head of Commercial Real Estate for the American Red Cross and Tim O’Toole, CEO of Northern Ohio Region of the American Red Cross.

Mr. Slagter said this is not a new development; it is an existing shopping center on Robinhood Dr. There are multiple parcels that make up the shopping center. This deals with the southernmost portion of the shopping center. They realized this was not an authorized use under Retail Business and would fit better into the General Business zone district, which is the zoning for the rest of the shopping center. Most of the adjacent properties are zoned General Business but there is also some adjacent residential zoning. They feel that the proximity to Euclid Ave. and the balance of the shopping center is General Business and has shared access and parking, so the zoning would make sense. The client has had issues with vacancies for years at this end of the center. It is a challenged center because of it’s age and the retail market in general. They are pleased to have a quality national potential tenant that provides a vital service to the community. They have a contingent lease with the American Red Cross based on this zoning approval. They will be making tenant improvements to the site to accommodate offices and upgrades to the door and entryway. He estimates three to six months to complete the improvements.

Mr. Joe Ward, 11279 Walnut Ridge Rd., Chesterland, OH 44026. He said he lives ten minutes from this site and is in the area quite often and saw this site and thought it would be a great site for the American Red Cross’s offices. They usually do not occupy an older center because of safety concerns for their donors but figured this site is safe and secure. Their team looked at the site and determined it would fit their needs.

Mr. Tim O’Toole is the Chief Operating Officer for the northern Ohio Region of the American Red Cross which covers thirty-one counties in northern Ohio. They have four other “fixed” sites within the region but also provide mobile sites for blood drives within the community. His role is to help maintain the facilities throughout the region.

Mr. Capelle asked how long the lease is for and Mr. Ward said ten years with two five-year renewal options. He said they tend to stay long term at a location.

**City of Willoughby
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2025**

Mr. Kary said he is the representative from City Council on Planning Commission. Mr. Kary shared an alternative option of applying for a Similar Use Permit (SUP) which may be more receptive to Planning Commission and City Council. Mr. Kary said going from Retail Business to General Business may open up a “pandoras box” for businesses that could be built or go into this space in the future. There are senior residences and duplexes in the vicinity of this center and the concern is they could tear this center down and construct a gas station etc. The SUP would not change the zoning but would set conditions and allow them to operate the way they wish to operate. His concern is they would have to pass Planning Commission for rezone and then it goes before City Council who has the final vote, and City Council is not all that receptive to rezoning.

Mr. Lucas said in regard to rezoning, it is fraught with peril because it not only goes before Planning Commission but also has to pass City Council. If it is a Similar Use then the discretion is then with the Planning Commission only, and they will set conditions which is a similar procedure to a Conditional Use. There will be a public hearing held on the Similar Use but there is a second component to this, which is an EAS, that does go in front of City Council for any environmental concerns. If the applicant meets the requirements then a similar use is a less onerous process for the applicant, and at first glance, it seems they will meet the requirements.

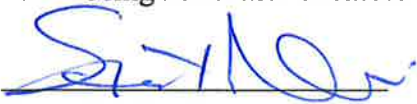
Mr. Wildermuth said once the occupancy is terminated the Similar Use is as well. Mr. Lucas said a rezone may be a more attractive option to open up more possibilities for leasing options. Mr. Slagter said the reason they are here is for the American Red Cross and does not believe his client has been negotiating with any other prospects. He would like to confer with his client to get their input but the SUP could be a perfect balance for both parties.

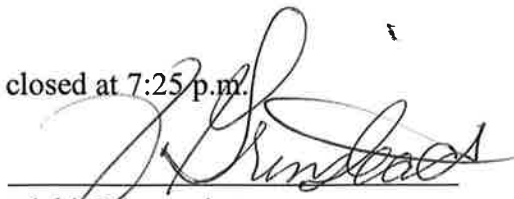
Chairman Norris read an excerpt from a draft of a Staff Report: “The zoning regulations are designed to be progressive in nature therefore allowing for buffering between industrial/business districts and business/ residential districts. The reason the property has been zoned in the current designation is due to the residential zoning to the immediate south of this property.” This is why it is zoned this way to provide the buffering element. Chairman Norris read some of the uses under the General Business zoning which would not be desirable to the city. Mr. Wildermuth agreed and said the whole parcel would be zoned G-B, and if sold, the next owner could tear down the center and construct one of the less desirable uses.

Mr. Wildermuth said Breckenridge is behind this center and they may have an issue with this rezone for future prospects.

Chairman Norris said if there are any capital improvement recommendations to the Mayor’s office, it will be on the next agenda for discussion.

There being no further business the regular meeting closed at 7:25 p.m.


Steve Norris, Chairman


Vicki Grinstead, Secretary