

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

Mr. Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Messrs. Zeitz, Metropulos, Cohen, Shebeck, Sterling
Absent: None
Also Present: Ms. Lynn Muter, City Planner
Mr. Scott Barr, City Council Representative

The Board recited The Pledge of Allegiance.

<p>CITY OF TWINSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION MAY 20, 2019</p>
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1. Preliminary Site Plan – Senior Apartments

9422 Darrow Rd.
PP# 64-09130 and 64-09129 R-7 Senior Residence District
GREG SOMMERS / DARROW ROAD DEVELOPMENT, LLC

- PLANNER’S REPORT DATED 5/9/2019 ON FILE AND NOTED AS EXHIBIT A.

Mr. Greg Sommers with Darrow Road Development, LLC. 9760 Mountain View Dr. Willoughby, Ohio presented the application.

- They are proposing a new senior community called Wilcox Meadow featuring 71 cluster-style ranch residences, along with open space, a wooded and fenced perimeter buffer as well as landscaping.
- They previously presented a plan that featured a 134 unit 3 story concept, which he has with him tonight to compare and show due diligence.
 - The previous plan featured almost twice the density with 3 story building, they have done additional due diligence since that visit and they are here to propose a new plan tonight which is more in line with the character of the surrounding community.
 - The concept itself has been very successful, not everyone looking for senior housing is interested in the three story option.
 - This is a hybrid concept as it is not a large apartment building, more like clustered single family residences but for rent; this has been somewhat of a challenge as the intent of the code is for larger, three story buildings. They are halving the density but still working within the confines of the code.
 - There is also a gas line easement running through the property which had to be worked around, as well as rail road tracks; they want to be consistent with the code and follow the rules but between changing the concept and working with the challenges on the site, they will need some variances.
 - They feel that the new concept is more consistent with the housing and character of the surrounding area, therefore being much better received than a large three story building on the site.

Ms. Muter noted that the R-7 Senior Residence District allows for a higher density of apartment units versus our standard apartment district; this has been done without altering the setback standards for the senior apartment districts.

- The senior housing at a higher density is still at the same setback as apartments that would be at less than half the density, so the way that the apartment district reads is in a way that encourages the three story building, there is no allowance for the product being presented this evening.
- From that perspective, those regulations are likely from the initial zoning code and perhaps do not fit with the different products that may be on the market today.

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

- If you like this product but are concerned that it does not fit with our regulations, it may be because the regulations truly do encourage the multi-story type apartment units in terms of not changing the setbacks but increasing the density in the R-7 zoning district.

Mr. Cohen agreed that the definition portion of the code is obsolete in his opinion, where it states that three or more attached units it is considered an apartment. This product is an apartment by definition in the code, but is not really an apartment building.

- The setback requirements are good with the larger, longer buildings overlapping each other; however, they really are not designed for these smaller types of units which are a nice product and are popular in many communities.
- There are a lot of variances needed for this plan and the Planning Commission does not make those decisions, the applicant will have to go before the Board of Zoning Appeals and explain the practical difficulty or hardship as to why the variance is needed.

Mr. Sterling commented that he is concerned with the number of variances needed.

- Bel Mawr did not need variances as single family homes, and the condominiums at Twin Hills with multiple attached units also held to code.
- He sees a minimum of 15 variances and nothing in regard to hardships.
- He would like to see the plan drawn in a way that it meets the code and does not require the variances.

Mr. Cohen asked the applicant if he has done a study to see how many units could fit on the property if staying within the code with no variances needed.

Mr. Sommers replied that with the setbacks intended for the larger buildings it may be half of what is planned, he agrees that this product is aesthetically nicer; the challenge is trying to work within the code as it is written.

Mr. Rick Sommers with Sommers Real Estate, Chardon, Ohio commented on the application.

- He does not believe that their study showed that they require 15 variances.

Ms. Muter explained that it depends on how the request is written, whether it is requested for each building or for the whole project; the number is not the best place to focus, there is a variance needed for the rear of buildings H,G,F, E,I, D and C to the side for buildings E and H and then the railroad setback for one building. The total is 9.

Mr. Sommers noted that he was considering it as one rear variance and one side variance.

Ms. Muter pointed out that if the same buildings sat with the narrow edge to the rear of the property line and the garage moved toward the center (flip-flopped on the unit) they may fit better within the code. They would have to be reduced to 2 or 3 unit buildings or they would have to be turned on their side.

Mr. Sommers stated that they tried every possible way in order to minimize variances, including the railroad setback and the gas line setback; they did their best to work with everything on the property.

Mr. Shebeck explained that the railroad setback exists for a reason, the trains may not be frequent but they do come and the residents will hear them; he lives approximately 500 feet away from those railroad tracks and he can hear the train from his home.

- The other setbacks are to protect the existing residents on those sides of the property but the variances are up to the Board of Zoning Appeals to decide.

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

- He asked at the previous meeting for the applicant to try to move the driveway as far to the south as possible because of site lines and the railroad crossing.
 - Because it will be a senior community and the potential of accidents with cars coming down Darrow Rd. and people trying to exit the property, it is a challenge at Bel Mawr and the site lines there are much better.
 - If you sit in the existing driveway and look up the hill you will see that the site lines are an issue with vehicles coming down Darrow Rd.

Mr. Sommers asked if the volume is very low on the railroad tracks.

Mr. Shebeck replied that there are 2 to 4 trains each day, it is a short-haul railroad line between Brewster, Ohio to the Flats and there is also a spur that goes into Solon where there is a Home Depot warehouse that receives a lot of their lumber from the trains.

- It is a quiet crossing now, they got rid of the train horns and the trains are slow but they still rumble.

Mr. Metropulos asked how wide the access aisles are.

The applicant replied that they are 26 feet.

Mr. Metropulos commented that he would hate to see a senior community stuck in a corner, the City of Twinsburg has a nice trail system that is being improved, would it be possible to have this community get a connection to Edgebrook Crossing off of access aisle 3, at least in order to tie into that sidewalk so people can get out and walk.

The applicant noted that they have discussed that with Ms. Muter and are open to making that happen.

Mr. Metropulos explained that he would like for the residents feel that they belong to the larger community instead of being pushed off into a corner; being a part of something larger.

- If we develop more trails to the north he would like to see them have access to those trails as well.

Mr. Metropulos asked if there is only one mail center for all of the buildings.

Mr. Bobby Johnston with Mann, Parsons, Gray Architects, 3660 Embassy Pkwy. Fairlawn, Ohio commented on the application.

- With these being multi-family apartments the postal service will not deliver at each unit, they will have a cedar shelter with the boxes arranged in a “C” shape.
- There is one mail center planned for the entire development.

Mr. Metropulos asked if it is possible to consider placing another mail center in order to alleviate some of the congestion of having 70 homes using one area for mail pick-up.

Mr. Johnston explained that he can consider it, however, the post office dictates whether it is allowed in the end.

- His office works on many of these units throughout several states and the concept is the same but with 20 to 40 acres and 200 to 300 units and the post office still only allows one mail center.

Mr. Zeitz commented that the buildings look nice but the variances concern him and he is not sure how far this plan will continue through the process due to those variance requests.

- He feels that as far as Planning, it appears to be well thought out.

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

Mr. Barr agreed with Mr. Zeitz, he finds this plan more appealing than the three story unit and believes that this is more what the market wants to see and he understands that making it fit within the code is a challenge for this project; he believes that with the recommendations of Planning Commission, the City and BZA, hopefully they can put something together. He definitely prefers this style of unit.

Mr. Zeitz asked if there is a meeting set with the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Ms. Muter explained that they were waiting to see what Planning Commission had to say about the plan.

Mr. Zeitz noted that the neighboring residents will be notified of that meeting prior to it taking place and the applicant will likely receive feedback from them; up to this point they are not aware of this application.

Mr. Cohen asked if the applicant has considered holding a meeting with the Bel Mawr residents to make them aware of the plan and to discuss any issues and gain their support of this plan.

- Sometimes they are happy to support a variance request if they are aware that the plan includes mounding and landscaping or fencing as opposed to them just receiving a letter and showing up at the meeting to hear what is happening for the first time.

Mr. Sommers stated that they have discussed that idea with Ms. Muter and Mr. Finch, to approach the residents proactively and also to propose to preserve as many trees as possible and to put up a permanent fence as well as the landscaping.

Ms. Muter explained that the residents are aware that there is a plan for the property.

- Staff felt that it was more appropriate to present this new concept to Planning Commission at this meeting, without additional concerns from the residents as there will be plenty of opportunity for that; if there was little or no support from Planning Commission for this product, it seemed less appropriate to individually notify property owners.
- She believes that Mr. Sommers has been in contact with the Bel Mawr Homeowner's Association and they are aware that the site is going to be developed.

Mr. Sommers commented that he appreciates the opinion that this product is a better fit with the surrounding neighborhood and that a large apartment building would be much less desirable.

Mr. Cohen noted that the rear yard setbacks for units E through H are larger than the 25 foot marked area, it looks like the patios are even closer to the property line which creates even more of a challenge in regards to mounding and landscaping.

- The landscape plan shows the type of plants that the Commission likes to see, he is not sure about the grading, and fence as well.

Mr. Sommers stated that they had planned an 8 foot white vinyl fence as part of the landscape plan.

Mr. Cohen pointed out that a meeting with the neighbors may help determine whether they are interested in the fence as well, or perhaps would prefer only the greenery; they may want to see more landscaping out their window as opposed to a fence.

- It is worthy of discussion and consideration to get a consensus from the neighborhood, not necessarily individual adjacent properties.

Ms. Muter asked if Unit A became a 4 unit building and the 5 unit building became 6 units and Unit L had a unit added as well, would that enable the whole thing to shift forward off of the rear property line?

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

Mr. Johnston and Ms. Muter discussed this off microphone.

Mr. Cohen asked if these would be rental units.

Mr. Sommers replied that they would.

Mr. Cohen noted that he prefers that to having someone purchase a property which is encroaching on the railroad setback and then being surprised by the intensity of the trains.

Mr. Cohen stated that he believes that the Commissioners like the product and understand that they could fit a 3 story building without variances and have a higher density with a less popular product versus the cluster apartment concept, which is more desirable but with more challenges and requiring variances.

Mr. Sommers commented that this discussion has helped and they will work with their architect to see if there are other ways to minimize the variances; they are going to do everything possible to build a nice community with the minimum variances; it is a challenge with the code being intended for the larger buildings but they are open to all of the suggestions made this evening.

Mr. Cohen noted that they should update the setback markings to make them better understood by those looking at them, right now it appears that there are no variances required and it needs a true representation of what they are looking for so that everyone looking at it has a better understanding of what the variances are, relative to the true setback.

Mr. Sommers indicated that they plan to return with an updated preliminary drawing.

The applicant pointed out that this being a senior apartment development allows for current Twinsburg residents living in a single family home to have the option to remain in a single family unit in Twinsburg but no longer have to own a larger home; they remain in a community and have their own entrance and attached garage but minimal commitment and no maintenance.

Mr. Sterling asked if there is a community meeting area available on-site for those residents.

- Most of the senior housing developments have an area designated as such.

Mr. Sommers replied that there is not currently one planned but it could be incorporated into the plan.

Mr. Cohen pointed out that this is a very small development for such an area; if it were an assisted living it would have a lot more offerings like that, such as food and laundry, which are not needed here.

Ms. Muter noted that the City has a very active senior center with a lot of programming.

Mr. Johnston added that this is independent living for people who are still driving and living on their own.

Mr. Johnston noted that the gas easement would be perfect for a walking path but they only own part of that, the connection to the parkway would go across city-owned property; should it be shown as a future walking path?

Ms. Muter replied that it should be shown as an easement for a future walking path.

Mr. Cohen added that attaching to the sidewalk on Bel Mawr will require crossing property that is not the applicant's; coming off of access aisle #3, across to the southwest corner and tying into the sidewalk.

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

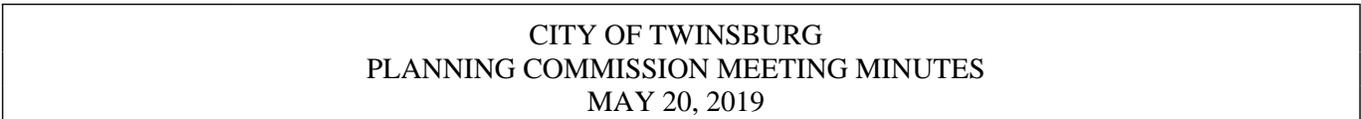
Ms. Muter pointed out that to come down Darrow Rd. they would have to cross Mr. Bogus' property and then walk 100 feet around the corner to reach the sidewalk on Edgebrook Crossing.

Mr. Johnston replied that they have a recorded easement from the Bogus' and they could place the entire sidewalk along Darrow Rd. to the parkway.

- This would also solve the site distance problem with the landscaping where the bushes are.

Mr. Cohen stated that the sidewalk on Darrow Rd. should be shown on the plan as well; the sidewalk tie-in to Bel Mawr would have to be discussed with them.

PENDING ITEMS – NONE



Mr. Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 6, 2019

The minutes of May 6, 2019 are approved as submitted.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NONE

COMMUNICATIONS & MISCELLANEOUS-

Mr. Barr stated that City Council confirmed by motion the recommendations of Planning Commission for final site plans for the building additions at PFG/Vistar and Circle K.

- There was also a resolution voted on for tax abatement with Pepperl & Fuchs.
- The maintenance guarantee was accepted and performance guarantee was reduced for Shepard Preserve subdivision.

Mr. Sterling commented that he feels that the BZA may not have enough information regarding the Commissioner's opinions of a project when presented with an application for variance; how can that be improved?

Mr. Cohen replied that the Board of Zoning Appeals receives the minutes from the Planning Commission meetings so any opinions stated by Commissioners are available for them to read prior to their meeting; all Commissioners are also welcome to attend the BZA meeting and voice their opinion at that time as well.

Mr. Zeitz pointed out that Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals each approve or deny their portion of the application pending each-other's approval; each board and commission has their own purpose.

Mr. Cohen commented that the BZA considers hardship and practical difficulty and money alone does not stand as one of those.

Ms. Muter stated that in this R-7 district, if you are building cluster homes, not apartments, with 3 or less the CODE states "Planning Commission has the authority to vary the setbacks if the intent of the district is met" but it does not give that same authority to Planning Commission in the apartment district.

Mr. Sterling commented on the application for the next meeting, they are asking to split the property into 4 lots, is the lot closest to the freeway buildable?

**CITY OF TWINSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

Ms. Muter replied that the houses will be 50 feet from Chamberlin Rd. and most of the wetlands are on that lowest lot closest to I-480 and there is a buildable pocket on that lot.

- There are 4 lots that are buildable without variances, they are 90 feet wide, they have more than the 17,000 square foot standard, have met the density standard, and they will have to extend the water main a couple of hundred feet to reach the homes, and the fourth lot will require a pump for the sewer line.

Mr. Shebeck indicated that it frustrates him that people build on and purchase undesirable properties and then complain to the City that they are not happy with the railroad, freeway, wetland, etc.

Ms. Muter commented that the Chamberlin Road lot split will be on the agenda for June 3rd as well as, likely, an updated preliminary plan for the senior apartments.

Mr. Sterling asked about the status of Tulum mexican restaurant.

Ms. Muter replied that they are working their way through Building and Engineering and she believes they have one more meeting prior to breaking ground; they are still within their time frame with their Planning Commission approval.

EXCUSE ABSENT MEMBERS – None

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Mr. Cohen, Chairman

Cynthia Bennardo, Secretary