

**Minutes of VERMILION MUNICIPAL PLANNING COMMISSION
of October 6, 2021 @ 7:00 pm**

PRESENT: Jim Chapple, Heidi Strickler, Jeff Hammerschmidt. ***Absent:*** Heather Shirley, Joe Williams

In ATTENDANCE: Bill DiFucci, Building Inspector; Barb Brady, Council Representative; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Jim Forthofer, Mayor

Call to Order:

Jim Chapple, Vice Chairman called the Wednesday, October 6, 2021 meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

H. Strickler MOVED. J. Hammerschmidt seconded to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2021 meeting. Roll Call Vote 3 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

New Business:

Oak Knoll Investment (Cassell Realty Co.) – Property Location: Ridgeview – PP#: 01-0000-1110-020 (Submitted Drawings)

C. Howard noted that Ken Cassell submitted revised plans and has asked to table this to the November meeting.

Louis Douzos - Discussion

Louis Douzos of 10694 Baumhart Road, Amherst, Ohio submitted visual aids to the members and explained he is working on some ideas for the property behind the Nest Restaurant, so he came to the board for discussion only to see what they think. He is considering a rezoning change on the back parcel and a year ago when he started looking at it with the builders – 20 units back there could have been done, but now with the new market and pricing it has gotten out of hand. He said he needs density in the back, and he would like to do townhouses, so he is curious what rezoning on residential he could do that would support enough townhouses to make it worthwhile. He said the idea that came up the first time around is not going to work anymore as it is not feasible with the pricing. He explained several scenarios on possible layouts. He said it is about four acres (560'x340') in this back area. He understands there is a lot of concerns of the neighbors that it will be commercial, so the idea of building houses back there would be nice and better than commercial. However, it has to be feasible also and before spending anymore money in engineering he wanted to see what the thoughts were on his ideas.

Mayor Forthofer said when he was before Planning in the spring he had also proposed storage units. L. Douzos said he originally was going to build two buildings right behind

the restaurant and he went for a variance on storage on the idea that if he did not rent the buildings out for commercial use, then he could store boats, but the variance was denied. He is still thinking about these buildings, but he thinks he needs to structure the whole thing in one shot to keep the neighbors happy. Mayor Forthofer asked if he was B-3 out by the road. L. Douzos said the whole property is zoned B-3.

H. Strickler asked if he was looking to go from B-3 to zoning the back part residential. L. Douzos said correct and residential wise he is looking at what everyone else has – obviously Cassell and Whispering Shores have multiple units. H. Strickler confirmed he was talking about behind the Nest. L. Douzos said yes, behind the Nest and Napa. He said Yorktown Place townhouses are zoned R-3, so they allow cluster subdivisions, and Cassell off Sunnyside are duplexes and zoned R-4A, and Cassell's Woodlands has townhouses, and they are zoned R-6, and Whispering Shores apartments are zoned R-5. He was not sure what the PUD zoning referred to. C. Howard said he would need more acreage for PUD zoning. L. Douzos thought R-6 zoning requires 25 plus acres, so this seemed to not be an option.

H. Strickler asked if the existing neighborhood closest is Elizabeth Drive and Ann Drive. C. Howard said to the south of Elizabeth is R-3 and to the east is Guilford which is zoned R-4, and off Highbridge it is R-S for a stretch.

H. Strickler thought the neighbors would prefer it to be residential than it to be some building. J. Chapple agreed. H. Strickler said just looking over all of the city's planning map, it has not been looked at in so long and the best use for that land is probably to make it residential. They are in motion to review the zoning throughout the city. Mayor Forthofer said the consultant chosen from the public bids will be presented to council at the next meeting, and then they will comprise the list of people who will be part of the advisory board. H. Strickler said she and Heather Shirley are willing to sit on the board, and she would like to because it is important going forward as a community.

H. Strickler said with this property she would probably prefer residential, but she does not know how the residents feel, but he should be able to use his land. L. Douzos said he does not have a problem going residential, but if it is not profitable and he cannot make money on it, then there is no point in doing it. He is trying to get a good idea and residential will be better, but the question is – where does he go from now? Does he set up preliminary with an engineer and is the city willing to work with him if he needs to squeeze things down a little bit – setbacks and things like that? Is this possible? G. Fisher asked if he had spoken with Bill DiFucci on zoning requirements/density. L. Douzos said he did speak to him awhile ago when he first started this. G. Fisher suggested that he sit down with Bill DiFucci and the City Engineer to look at his density and everything to make sure it is cohesive to the area. Mayor Forthofer thought this was good advice and eventually the decision will be done by a civil board, but Bill and Chris can give him good hints.

B. Brady asked what was happening to the B-3 behind the Next. L. Douzos said he will keep this B-3. B. Brady asked if he wanted to expand the residential into this. L. Douzos said if he had to possibly, but he kind of wants to get something up there for more of a

commercial basis, plus if he builds a building across there it will block everything from the back side forward, so this is an idea. B. Brady asked about access from the east rather than accessing from Liberty. L. Douzos said the street is there – Overlook is there, and it isn't a dedicated street, but you have Altamont which is a dedicated street, and you have a streetlight there, so the access would better fit Overlook with the light. He said the sewers are already on the property, which is a benefit. Mayor Forthofer suggested that he give Bill DiFucci a call as they try to find ways to make it work and not to give him problems. L. Douzos said if it requires a little bit of work to get there that is fine, but what is best for the neighborhood and city is what he is after, but he definitely wants to lay out a large plan before he spends a ton of money on engineering. H. Strickler said at this point the board cannot guarantee anything. L. Douzos said he understands this. H. Strickler hoped something works for him as she is looking for that end of town to progress.

Lorain County Metro Parks:

C. Howard said he asked Donald Kasych of the Lorain County Metro Parks to come before the commission as they have a project they are doing at the Cassell Reservation. He explained they technically do not have to come before the Planning Commission for approval as the Metro Parks is a governmental entity, but he asked for a courtesy to present the project.

Donald Kasych distributed a copy of a master plan they have been working with at Cassell Reservation for the last couple years and they made slight modifications, so it is not completely accurate, but he would explain the changes. He said they submitted plans and have a contractor on board to start construction. What is shown on the drawing is the Burcl Trailhead – the Burcl property was purchased with a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources by the Metro Parks to secure frontage along Highbridge Road. The current entrance to Cassell Reservation is at the end of the cul-de-sac on Parkside Reserve. They all felt that they did not want their access at the cul-de-sac due to the neighbors in that location. So, when the Burcl property was available, they acquired it quickly so they could establish a small trailhead there. What is shown on the drawing is slightly different from the plans they presented. They are matching up the entrance to the parking area with Hilltop Drive, so it makes more of a four-way intersection rather than having multiple egress from Highbridge. The master plan originally called for them to acquire the property on the east side of Sunnyside – they called it the 100-acre woods, but it was recently purchased by the Springer family, and they had an agreement with the owners, but due to COVID and lack of action down in Columbus in ODNR, the funding source dried up, so they actually had someone else purchase the property. They also own the property at the former Nord House on Sunnyside, which they call the Sunnyside Trailhead. In the original plans this home was going to be converted into a comfort station for the public so they would have restrooms on the property, but they found that there is a lot of sensitive vegetation in this area, so they are limiting access in this area to the public as much as possible. What is shown in the dotted red line at that end just south of the lake – this is the area where the sensitive vegetation is, so they currently they have their naturalists out there now remarking this trail. The trail that will be finished

construction – the current trail goes from Parkside Reserve and follows the red line as indicated up until the little creek that runs to the property there. They ended it there at a bridge and they will start construction from the Sunnyside Trailhead and move west. This work will also be started this year, but it probably will not be finished this year. They are creating a loop that basically goes from the Burcl Trailhead through the yellow line that is shown where they connect it to the solid red line and it will go all the way to Sunnyside, but again, not all the way to Sunnyside. It will just be a loop and you'll follow it back. The Burcl Trailhead itself is approximately 20 cars and they think they can get 22 in there, and it will be one way in and one way out. They will have a gate at the entrance and the hours of the park will be sunrise to sunset and their rangers will be tasked with opening and closing this gate on a daily basis. He said if anyone has had a chance to walk back there it is a beautiful trail. He said the trail was installed last year from their crews in house because of the sensitive wetland area and instead of using limestone base they used a sandstone base to increase the survivability of the sensitive plants back there, and it has become a popular walking center. They have several reservations that essentially have no facilities other than walking trails. It is very successful, and they have the facility in Grafton (Royal Oaks), and it is one of their most popular parks because people just like to go and walk. Other than the trailhead which consists of the parking area, which will be stone, there will be trash cans, dog weigh stations, a kiosk, and a map. They also have marked out locations along the trail to install benches. One of their board members that lives on Elizabeth Drive dedicated the bench to his late father, so this bench is out there now. They also have other locations in the future if people would like to donate benches, but other than that it is just a walking trail. He said on the master plan the orange plan that goes up by Elizabeth Drive – when the master plan was originally conceived this too was going to be a trail and it was based upon the trail that is already existing. People have made this a trail, but again once their conservation people and land stewards got in there, again you have your sensitive plant material, so this trail will not be built as well. He said the dotted dashed pink line that goes from the Burcl Trailhead that connects up to the main stem – this is a possibility of a Phase 2 trail, but again, it is almost redundant, so they probably will not put this in. Again, this trail was established by the four wheelers, so they wanted to put the trail back, but it does not look like this will happen. The Cassell Reservation will essentially be their walking center in Vermilion, and it will consist of a quiet scenic trail with a lot of different natural resources back there.

J. Chapple confirmed the Sunnyside Trailhead is not going to happen. Donald Kasych said they have a sign there and they would like to do some parking there, but it is long-range. Right now, one of their rangers lives in that house and until they can address the vegetation and the drainage issues, they don't anticipate this.

B. Brady asked what the distance is from Sunnyside to Highbridge – how long is that? D. Kasych said the trail itself is just under a mile.

G. Fisher asked if he mentioned the plan was for a four-way intersection at Hilltop. D. Kasych said not a four-way intersection, but they thought it would be better to line up there rather than having another curb cut. G. Fisher said she recently received a question

in her office if they could put a stop sign at Highbridge at this location as people are speeding. C. Howard said when they got the plans they added a couple comments, and the plan is to add a stop sign at the exit from the parking lot and stripe it, but they will not be stopping at Highbridge. G. Fisher advised this person that she did not believe the traffic counts would warrant a stop sign. C. Howard said they would have to do a traffic study to justify this and there is not enough traffic there to justify it. G. Fisher said this is what she advised the caller.

B. Brady said if she wanted to access the trail today, where would she go? D. Kasych said she would go to Parkside Reserve at the end of the cul-de-sac. They have a sign posted at the Highbridge Trailhead and there is a path. He said she can park in the gravel. H. Strickler asked if there were houses on the cul-de-sac. D. Kasych said there are homes on Parkside Reserve, but not on the cul-de-sac. This entrance will be maintained for the people on Parkside Reserve to access it. J. Chapple asked if there would be two entrances and D. Kasych said essentially, yes, but that will be pedestrian only. He said they should be out there in a few weeks.

Adjournment:

H. Strickler MOVED, J. Hammerschmidt seconded to adjourn the meeting upon no further discussion.

Vote 3 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

*The next meeting has been scheduled for November 3, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street.*

Transcribed by Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk.