

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

April 8, 2014

7:00 P.M.

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Don Darby.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Carolyn Ghantous, Dave Okum, Richard Bauer, Marjorie Harlow, Robert Diehl, Marge Boice and Don Darby

Others Present: Anne McBride, City Planner; Don Shvegza, City Engineer; and William McErlane, Building Official

III. MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 11, 2014

Chairman Darby: The Chair will accept a motion for the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting.

Mrs. Boice: So moved.

(With an "aye" vote from the Planning Commission Members present, the Minutes from the March 11, 2014 Planning Commission meeting were approved.)

IV. REPORT ON COUNCIL

(Mrs. Harlow presented a report of the March 19, 2014 and April 2nd, 2014 City of Springdale Council Meetings.)

V. CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Darby: In your packets you should have received a copy of our letter to Council recommending the zoning code text amendment.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Chairman Darby: Under Old Business, Minor Modification of the PUD Plan for Harbor Freight oversize wall sign at 11711 Princeton Pike.

Mr. Ken Brown: I am the District Manager for Harbor Freight.

Mr. Brad Johnson: I am with Accent Signs out of Blue Ash.

Mr. Ken Brown: We appreciate the opportunity to speak again in front of the Commission. When we took a look at it, we remembered what you guys said last time so we are coming back with a smaller version of the sign plus some color changes that really fit well with the rest of the facility and the rest of the retail strip-mall there. We also have the landlord present to talk about what they are doing to keep the beautification of the area so that it is going to continue to look very strongly like it did, but allowing us a slightly larger sign in order for our customers to see us. We also had some pictures of buildings that were in this plaza further down the line, the Hobby Lobby and Woodcraft that have similar signs that our sign would be the same as far as similar in size and scope to the signs that are already there in the complex.

Mr. Brad Johnson: Square footage wise, Harbor Freight would be much less than Hobby Lobby and Woodcraft. Running through the numbers, so that we are all on

the same page here, Harbor Freight is permitted 163 square feet of total signage. As proposed, we are 192 square feet and this includes the pylon face.

Mr. Ken Brown: If you don't count the pylon sign which is separate, it is 5 square feet larger than what the code allows. So, it is much smaller than the one that we originally presented.

Mr. Brad Johnson: If we draw a single rectangle around the proposed Harbor Freight sign, it is 168 square feet, which is still 5 square feet over what is permitted. However, if we were to draw two rectangles because there is a 6-1/2" gap in between the "Harbor Freight" and "Quality Tools and Lowest Prices" sign, that would reduce the overall size 16' and it would then be 152 square feet for just the wall sign; and we are still proposing the 23 square foot pylon sign.

(At this time, Mr. McErlane read his Staff comments.)

Mr. McErlane: Mr. Gilhart distributed some illustrations tonight and those colors are a little more accurate in terms of the colors that are being proposed that are existing on the facade. One thing to note, and he noted it in the bottom, the sign that is shown on his illustration is actually bigger than what they are proposing tonight on their sign.

Mr. Clark Gilhart: If you break down the total, it is 30' x 67.5", and taking that whole rectangle into consideration. Now the fact that they brought up Woodcraft and Hobby Lobby, would the "Quality Tools and Lowest Prices" be considered an accessory sign, kind of in the vein of what we did with Hobby Lobby with "Scrap Booking"?

Mr. McErlane: They were all counted as an allotment towards the sign. In difference with what is going on with Hobby Lobby and Woodcraft, they have a lot more frontage and they are permitted more square footage. This particular space, you have leased out about half of the frontage that used to be there for Border's Books.

Mr. Clark Gilhart: And, I think with Woodcraft we had a variance.

Mr. McErlane: For the additional little signs, for the overall size of the sign exceeding 150 square feet.

Mr. Clark Gilhart: Yes, because when I was calculating this out, "Quality Tools Lowest Prices", if that is taken out of the equation we are well below.

Mr. McErlane: But our code requires boxing the entire message of the sign. If you took it to its infinite degree, then you could box every letter in the sign and figure out the square footage for it based on that. Or, take out the void area between "Harbor" and "Freight" and come up with the square feet.

Mr. Ken Brown: That is one of the things that we did do and that is where we came up with 152'.

Mr. McErlane: It would become pretty cumbersome trying to do that with every sign that we have and our code does require us to box the entire message.

Mr. Clark Gilhart: And I just wanted to make a point on the rendering that everyone sees in front of them right now and this was just aesthetically seeing what would work best, we came up with the red top and green bottom. If you look at the whole facade, we originally had green up here and red which makes this its own unique piece. And as Bill pointed out, the sign is not to scale and is much smaller than what they are proposing.

Mr. Lou Santoro: I am with Tri-County Towne Center. We worked with Harbor Freight for several months actually trying to get them in the Springdale community, and obviously our Center. We had approved the first sign which is their normal

signage for that type of building and we didn't feel it was overwhelming. We weren't involved in that first meeting, but it seems like they have dropped their sign down considerably and they are asking for an 18% variance on the signage. And as they pointed out, if you eliminate the pylon sign as a square footage in the calculation, they are actually under the square footage for the facade. I think they are a valuable addition to the Springdale business community and a valuable addition to Tri-County Towne Center and we hope you consider the much smaller variance that they are now asking for.

Mrs. Harlow: The sign that I am seeing here is 168 square feet?

Mr. Brad Johnson: Yes.

Mrs. Harlow: And that is 5' over what is permissible?

Mr. McErlane: It is 5' over what is permissible for total signage. All in all they have 192 square feet because you include the panel on the pole sign.

Mr. Bauer: I like the improvements that you have made, the change in the facade and bringing the couple different colors into it and reducing the size of the blank canvas of that one beige looking color. The only question I have that is in Mr. McErlane's comments, showing the side as it wraps back into the facility, how are you going to treat the colors as you wrap back into that building?

Mr. Clark Gilhart: It will be the same color, it will just wrap around it. We will take it from the front facade and just go around each side.

Mrs. Boice: I am really very pleased the way you worked the color scheme in and that was a big concern. As I said at the last meeting, I think that the Gilharts have just really done a tremendous job with their color scheme up there and this is a vast improvement. I really like it.

Mr. Okum: I will echo most of the comments. Just for purposes of the record, Mr. Gilhart what is the approximate width of the bands that you are going to be painting?

Mr. Clark Gilhart: I will have to get more accurate measurements.

Mr. Okum: About twenty four inches?

Mr. Clark Gilhart: Yes.

Chairman Darby: Before we go into the motion, I just want to say that cooperation works. You have done a good job.

Mr. Okum: I would like to move for approval for 11711 Princeton Pike, Harbor Freight, Suite 211 to include the specifications and designs as contained in the exhibits as submitted and reviewed by Staff. These shall include the four submissions by Urban Neon, excluding the colors and the photo rendering which we classify as Exhibit #5 for the color scheme. The building shall be repainted as depicted in the color scheme of the exhibit.

(Mrs. Boice seconded the motion and with a unanimous "aye" vote from the Planning Commission Members, the minor modifications were approved as submitted.)

VII. NEW BUSINESS

(No New Business presented at this meeting.)

VIII. DISCUSSION

A. Chairman Darby: Mr. Okum has an item for discussion.

Mr. Okum: Mrs. Harlow, you mentioned in your report on Council the sidewalks on Kemper Road and I know that is a sensitive subject as many, many years ago that discussion came forward. At one time there was even a discussion for a turning lane for safety along that road, and the residents were in opposition to it. There was also discussions regarding sidewalks in the old Springdale area a number of times over the years. One of the advantages of being on multiple Commissions over the years, I have an opportunity to see what is going on in other communities and I wrote a letter to Council.

Mrs. Harlow: It was very informative; thank you.

Mr. Okum: I hope that Council takes it to heart. On the other hand, it needs to start some place. The Planning Commission and the City of Springdale is responsible for the thoroughfare plan, which is a part of connectivity for our community. If Council hasn't made a decision to go forward, maybe we establish a trails and walkways plan through Planning Commission that could be executed over time for the entire community. Communities like Anderson Township, which Ms. McBride is connected to, and a number of communities throughout the region have done this. It is ruffling feathers but if you don't start, then you eventually end up with lots of people continuing to drive point to point, and some people do want to walk nowadays. I would just consider that, to bring that forward and possibly it would be something for us to start considering how to get to that point. To arbitrarily say that we need a sidewalk here, is not a plan; there is planning procedures to develop that.

Mrs. Harlow: I think that is a very good idea.

Chairman Darby: Mrs. Harlow, what are the main objections that the residents had?

Mrs. Harlow: Throwing the first stake out, where they had them too close to the people's homes; taking that out of the picture and looking at the second one, they all thought that the second option was better but still none of them wanted it because they did not want that traffic in their front yard. It still was pretty close and they just didn't want it that close. They were also concerned about the foot traffic that it would cause. A lot of them didn't feel comfortable with people that close to their house. We had some parents that had children that are in the Springdale Elementary School and the one man told me, "I really am not so opposed to it, if I could take my daughter out in her stroller and walk her, that would be o.k. But, I would never let my son walk from my house on Kemper Road up to the school." I think they are not used to having the foot traffic in front of their house and I don't think they were comfortable with it.

Mr. Okum: Obviously you see it in other communities and it is obviously a change. We can't put walls up in front of our homes and keep the neighborhood out. That section of Kemper Road is a connection between an enormous amount of resources.

Mrs. Boice: You also have to remember that you are dealing with some long term homeowners there. To me, I would have thought the other side of the road that the houses are back a little further, are they not?

Mr. Shvegza: There is quite a bit more right of way on the north side of the road. You have a continuing sidewalk that is east of Lawnview that is on the north side and there is no sidewalk on the south side. The location of the school and everything else, that is kind of what led it to be looked at on the north side of the road.

Mrs. Boice: You are correct, that other sidewalk that you can walk right up to Tri-County is on that same side. Change is difficult, I agree with you. It was a long meeting and many of them made good points because there would have been a number of houses there that they would have been really terribly close to those people's front windows; they really would have been. I agree with what you are saying also, Dave.

Mr. Dave Okum: It is a tough situation to deal with. On the other hand, if we don't have a plan there will never be any action.

Mrs. Boice: I agree.

Mr. Okum: Whether it meanders or it switches sides, a number of communities that come through Hamilton County Regional Planning are putting sidewalks on one side and transitioning to the other side at safe zones. They are not keeping sidewalks perpendicular or perfectly straight, they are meandering and waving. The flow and the softness of the architecture is very favorable; it is not a straight line. It doesn't necessarily need to be a straight line and there are a lot more people on bicycles right now; you are taking your life in your hands on Kemper Road whether you are walking or you are on a bicycle on Kemper Road. I am glad it was brought forward but I am sort of disappointed that it ended up exactly where it did but maybe the plan wasn't right and it needs to be looked at a little bit more intensely.

Mrs. Boice: The door has been opened.

Chairman Darby: If in fact they were there, would bicycles be prohibited?

Mr. Okum: No, not on the new designs or pathways; we could do both bike and walking.

Mr. Deihl: I would like to thank Mr. Okum for the letter he sent. It was very informative, the right piece at the right time. I said in the Council that I am a big proponent of sidewalks. I would like to see sidewalks throughout the whole City. You are absolutely correct, we had no plan at all. We do need a comprehensive plan. The other reason that people were opposed, and older people who didn't want to shovel the snow off of the sidewalks.

Mr. Okum: I believe the laws have changed, I believe that you are not responsible for shoveling the snow off of the sidewalk in front of your home.

Mrs. Harlow: According to the Ohio Revised Code, Mayor Webster said you are responsible but Springdale does not enforce that. Like Mr. Diehl said, not only with the sidewalk but with the needle exchange program, I think we went into that too fast and that was one of my comments to the Mayor, I think we need to slow down a little bit and on something that we feel will be controversial and do a little bit more planning on it and do the public hearing first to find out what our citizens and businesses think about it and send out communication to all of our residents and all of our businesses asking them to come in here and fill this chamber to let us know what they want. I think it would be much better for us to say if that grant is here this year then it probably will be here in a year or two; let's take our time and get more involvement and do some more planning. Tonight on Channel 12 News, they talked about Turtle Creek, and new planning that is going on where this gentleman is planning a community that will be very diverse and will have a lot of different things in it and it will be in circles and they will interconnect and it will be a very walkable community and most of the people could do a five minute walk and get to almost any type of store or activity that they wanted to get to. It said they were no where close to breaking ground on it and some of the circles might be as much as forty to fifty years out in their planning but they have a huge master plan.

IX. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Darby: On the Chairman's report we had just one sign approval.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Bioce moved to adjourn; Mr. Okum seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

_____, 2014 _____
Don Darby, Chairman

_____, 2014 _____
Richard Bauer, Secretary