



PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 5:30 PM

1 Benjamin Franklin Way Franklin, Ohio 45005

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CLERK'S JOURNAL

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Dr. Sarah Nathan, Paul Ruppert, Christine Pirot, David Hopper, Mayor Brent Centers, Jason Hall, Brain Rebholtz

Staff: Jonathan Westendorf, Liz Fields, Cindi Chibis

Guests: John Grier, Han Chun Wang, Lin Cai, Taylor Milford, Travis Millard, Todd Hocz, Kristen Hocz

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr. Nathan.

5. APPROVE THE CLERK'S JOURNAL AND ACCEPT THE TAPES AS THE OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Clerks' Journal was approved, and the tapes were accepted as the official minutes of the February 12, 2025, meeting.

5. OATH OR AFFIRMATION

The Oath was issued to all guests.

7. OLD BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. PC 25-06 Major Site Plan – NC Works

The applicant John R. Grier c/o Arete Design is requesting approval of a major site plan to construct a 11,800 square foot addition to NC Works located at 3500 Commerce Center Drive. The property is located in the I-1 "Light Industrial" Zoning District.

Fields introduced PC 25-06 stating that the proposed site plan includes the development of the building addition located at the southern side of the existing structure. The proposed

building addition will be utilized for warehousing space. Additional landscaping in the form of seven maple trees are proposed to the south of the building addition which meets applicable landscaping. Additionally, the southern boundary of the property is densely forested, which should ensure that the operations are not visible to the adjacent property.

Fields reviewed parking requirements stating that with the building addition, the total number of parking spaces required under the UDO is 70 spaces. Fields stated that there are currently 53 parking spaces, which provides more than adequate parking for a total of 36 employees. As such, staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider waiving the parking requirement as authorized under Subsection 1111.07(s)(1).

Fields confirmed that no new lighting is proposed as part of this major site plan.

Fields stated that the proposed expansion building is precast concrete panels which are articulated with a pattern of fluted ribs with exposed aggregate in earth tones which match the existing building. As the proposed building will match the existing facility and will have minimal visibility from Commerce Center Drive, staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider waiving the materials requirements as authorized under Subsection 1115.08(h)(2)(A).

Fields reviewed the following **Major Site Plan Standards for Approval:**

- 1) That it fully complies with all applicable requirements of this UDO;
The major site plan largely complies with the requirements of the UDO. The applicant has requested waivers for the requirements not met.
- 2) That it adequately protects other property or residential uses located on the same property from the potential effects of a non-residential use;
The major site plan provides adequate screening and will not impact any adjacent properties.
- 3) That it is not detrimental to the use and character of the surrounding properties;
The proposed building expansion is for an industrial building located in the I-1 Light Industrial District and will not be detrimental to the use and character of the surrounding industrial uses or the surrounding area.
- 4) That it provides safe conditions for pedestrians or motorists and prevents the dangerous arrangement of pedestrian and vehicular ways; and
The proposed addition provides safe conditions for motorists and is not arranged in a way that would be dangerous to pedestrians or motorists.
- 5) That it provides safe ingress and egress for emergency services.
Safe ingress and egress for emergency services is provided.

Fields stated that no compliance concerns were noted and confirmed that staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the electronic changeable copy sign with the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant shall comply with the comments from the City of Franklin Fire Department.
 - 2) The applicant shall comply with the comments from the City of Franklin Engineer.
- The Chair opened the floor for public comment on PC 25-06 at 5:37PM.

John R. Grier, with Arete Design architects on behalf of NC Works, approached the podium, stated his name and address, and confirmed that he had been sworn in. Grier reviewed landscaping, parking, and building materials, reiterating a request for waivers for parking and design materials. He confirmed full compliance with all recommendations received from Franklin Fire & EMS and expressed a commitment to work with the City Engineer to ensure compliance with all comments received.

Hopper thanked Grier for the thorough plan and expressed appreciation for NC Works as a growing business in the community.

Hearing no questions or additional comments, the Chair closed the floor for public comment at 5:42 PM and called for a motion to approve PC 25-06 Major Site Plan with a waiver for parking requirements under Subsection 1111.07(s)(1); a waiver for materials requirements under Subsection 1115.08(h)(2)(A); and the applicant's agreement to fully comply with comments from the City of Franklin Fire Department and City Engineer.

Motion made by Mayor Centers, Seconded by Pirot.

Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall, Rebholtz

B. PC 25-07 Conditional Use-Commercial Recreation (Event Center)

Fields introduced PC 25-07 by explaining that the applicant, Tall Oaks Holdings LLC, is proposing to open a commercial recreation use (event center) in a vacant building (former Museum of Spiritual Art) located at 318 S. River Street. The subject property is zoned RMU, Riverfront Mixed Use District, and commercial recreation facilities are a Conditional Use in that zoning district.

Fields stated that the applicant plans to restore both the interior and the exterior of the existing building and is also considering building a small, detached structure in the future. She confirmed that future development will require a site plan submission for the Planning Commission's consideration.

Fields reviewed the following **Conditional Use General Standards for Approval:**

- 1) The proposed use is a Conditional Use in the zoning district for which it is proposed.
Commercial recreation is an identified Conditional Use in the RMU zoning district.
- 2) The proposed Conditional Use will be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the City's Comprehensive Development Plan or this UDO.
The existing building on this site meets all dimensional requirements for the RMU District and meets the intent and purpose of the UDO by promoting community development and revitalization. Additionally, the proposed conditional use is in line with the Downtown Master Plan by adaptively reusing a currently vacant property which will help bring people into downtown (See Strategy #4 for the Riverfront Mixed-Use Planning Area.
- 3) The proposed Conditional Use will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the neighborhood.
The proposed use is in a commercial area and is intended to align with the City's vision of fostering a vibrant and welcoming downtown environment. Since the proposed use will be located in an existing building, it will not change the essential character of the neighborhood.

- 4) The proposed Conditional Use will not be hazardous or unreasonably disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses.
It is not expected that this use will be hazardous or unreasonably disturbing to adjacent uses.
- 5) The proposed Conditional Use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as streets, police and fire protection, drainage, water and sewer, or the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the proposed use shall be able to adequately provide any such services.
The proposed Conditional Use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services.
- 6) The proposed Conditional Use will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services and will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
The proposed Conditional Use will not create excessive additional requirements or be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
- 7) The proposed Conditional Use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions or operations that will be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors.
The proposed Conditional Use does not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, etc. which are detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare.
- 8) The proposed Conditional Use will have vehicular approaches to the property that are designed so as not to interfere with traffic on surrounding public thoroughfares.
The proposed Conditional Use will utilize existing vehicular approaches.
- 9) The proposed Conditional Use will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of a natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance. **The applicant is proposing to utilize an existing building therefore there will not be significant loss of features or structures on the site.**

Fields stated that no compliance concerns were noted then reviewed the following **Specific Standards for Commercial Recreation:**

- 1) The lot area shall be adequate to accommodate the required off-street parking requirements without any variances to said requirements, as outlined in section 1111.07.
As the property is located in the RMU District, off-street parking is not required. However, the property contains 18 parking spaces which the applicant has noted should be sufficient to accommodate most events.
- 2) Any signage shall be of the type and size permitted in the zoning district under the City's sign regulations, outlined in section 1111.08, and shall be approved by Planning Commission as a part of the Conditional Use Permit.
Signage is not proposed as part of this conditional use application. The applicant has indicated that they will be applying for a sign permit at a later time.
- 3) The proposed use shall comply with the Landscaping Standards contained in section 1111.06, and the City's Parking Regulations, contained in section 1111.07.
The landscaping and parking regulations are met.

- 4) Cut-off type lighting fixtures shall be used in parking areas to minimize impact to neighboring residential properties.
No lighting fixtures are proposed as part of the conditional use application.
- 5) A solid wood fence, masonry wall, or hedge six (6) feet high shall be required along any property line adjacent to a residential use or district.
N/A.
- 6) The minimum distance of driveways from intersections shall be as approved by the City Engineer. The minimum distance of driveways to an entrance of a school, place of worship, cemetery, or day care center shall be as approved by the City Engineer.
N/A.
- 7) Access shall be from an arterial street or collector or shall be provided in a manner that does not cause heavy impact on residential streets. Access drives shall be as approved by the City Engineer.
N/A.
- 8) The circulation areas shall provide smooth, continuous flow with efficient, non-conflicting movement throughout the site. Major vehicular circulation movements shall not conflict with major pedestrian movements. Interconnecting circulation aisles between parcels shall be provided.
N/A.
- 9) Every parking and loading space shall have sufficient access and maneuvering area. All maneuvering areas shall be on the same lot as the use the area is intended to serve.
The proposed conditional use will utilize existing parking spaces on the site which have sufficient access and maneuvering area.
- 10) The applicant shall submit a plan indicating safe traffic ingress and egress, traffic circulation, and on-site parking, which plan shall be subject to approval by Planning Commission to assure reduced congestion, promote safety, and reduction in the impact on the residential character of the neighborhood, as applicable.
N/A.
- 11) The exterior of any buildings shall be compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood.
N/A.
- 12) In residential districts, all buildings shall be set back an additional one foot (1') over the usual yard requirements for each one foot (1') of the building that exceeds thirty-five feet (35') in height.
N/A.
- 13) If adjacent to a residential use or residential district, such use shall not create excess noise, dust, odors or other nuisances.
N/A.
- 14) Planning Commission may limit the hours of operation of such use to assure compatibility with adjacent uses.
The proposed hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sunday through Saturday.

- 15) This use may be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that the use is distributed and properly integrated into the site plan to avoid congestion, to minimize conflict points between auto traffic and pedestrians, to reduce the number of curb cuts and to prevent strip type development.

N/A.

Westendorf complimented the applicants, recognizing their significant investment in terms of both time and money and praised their vision for the property. He admitted that the application presented here is not a fully realized plan, as the project will evolve with Riverfront development. That said, they agreed that it was best to present the initial plans to PC for consideration so that the property owners can continue to make financial investments with confidence.

Hopper asked how we integrate future parking needs while considering the application.

Westendorf described the City's vision for future parking which will not only support parking needs at the event center, but will also support parking needs throughout the downtown area.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment on PC 25-07 at 5:58PM.

Todd and Kristin Hocz of Tall Oaks Holdings approached the podium, introduced themselves, stated their address and confirmed that they had been sworn in. They plan to start with what they termed a "micro event center" for gatherings such as birthdays, showers, corporate luncheons etc. Ms. Hocz confirmed that there are no current plans for catering, as they plan to use a preferred vendor model to partner with local caterers, bakeries, and florists to meet client requests. They reassured the Commission that in the short term they have no concern about adequate parking. Ms. Hocz spoke fondly of their efforts to restore the beautiful historical building and shared their hopes to eventually expand event options to include outdoor spaces.

Dr Nathan asked them to share a bit about their journey to decide to purchase the property.

Ms. Hocz described herself as a historian with an appreciation for older architecture. She spoke about their search for the right property, as well as their familiarity and appreciation of Franklin, saying that they searched far and wide for the perfect opportunity before purchasing the property. She explained that her daughter is graduating from college this year with a degree in hospitality services and a photography minor, and she is excited to have her daughter contribute to the project.

Pirot said that she is very pleased to see this property come to life. She humored that the only question she had was about an open house opportunity.

Mayor Centers expressed support and enthusiasm for the project, but reiterated concerns about adequate parking for the owners.

Mr. Hocz suggested that a shortage of parking would be a good problem. He then respectfully stated that did not mean to discount the concern but is prepared to work with their downtown partners to find creative solutions when that time comes.

Pirot questioned if there were plans for additional restrooms in the facility.

Mr. Hocz reassured her that they are working with an architect to address multiple property needs, including restrooms.

Pirot recognized the City's efforts to drive more business downtown, saying that we can't reasonably object to the development that we had hoped for because of concerns that the event center may drive too much downtown activity.

Hopper affirmed that the event center aligns perfectly with the City's vision of fostering a vibrant and thriving downtown.

Hearing no questions or additional comments, the Chair closed the floor for public comment on PC 25-07 at 6:12PM.

He then called for a motion to approve PC 25-07 Conditional Use Application as presented.

Motion made by Ruppert, Seconded by Hall.

Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall, Rebholtz

C. PC 25-08 Conditional Use-Personal Service (Barbershop)

The applicant, Taylor Millard, is proposing to open a personal service use (barbershop) in an existing multi-tenant commercial building located at 183A E. Sixth Street. The subject property is zoned TN-2, Transitional Mixed Use, and personal service uses are a Conditional Use in that zoning district.

Fields introduced PC 25-08 confirming that the personal service is proposed to be located in an existing commercial building. Fields stated that the location provides adequate parking, loading, and maneuverability areas. She reminded members that the proposed hours of operation may be limited by the Planning Commission to assure compatibility with adjacent uses per Section 1107.09(r)(2).

Fields reviewed the following **Conditional Use General Standards for Approval**:

1. The proposed use is a Conditional Use in the zoning district for which it is proposed.
Personal services are an identified Conditional Use in the TN-2 zoning district.
2. The proposed Conditional Use will be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the City's Comprehensive Development Plan or this UDO.
The existing building on this site meets all dimensional requirements for the TN-2 District and meets the intent and purpose of the UDO by promoting community development and revitalization.
3. The proposed Conditional Use will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the neighborhood. **The proposed use is in a largely eclectic area with multiple zoning districts located within the general vicinity. Since the proposed use will be located in an existing multi-tenant commercial building, it will not change the essential character of the neighborhood.**
4. The proposed Conditional Use will not be hazardous or unreasonably disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses.
It is not expected that this use will be hazardous or unreasonably disturbing to adjacent uses.

5. The proposed Conditional Use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as streets, police and fire protection, drainage, water and sewer, or the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the proposed use shall be able to adequately provide any such services.
The proposed Conditional Use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services.
6. The proposed Conditional Use will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services and will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
The proposed Conditional Use will not create excessive additional requirements or be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
7. The proposed Conditional Use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions or operations that will be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors.
The proposed Conditional Use does not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, etc. which are detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare.
8. The proposed Conditional Use will have vehicular approaches to the property that are designed so as not to interfere with traffic on surrounding public thoroughfares.
The proposed Conditional Use will utilize existing vehicular approaches.
9. The proposed Conditional Use will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of a natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance. **The applicant is proposing to utilize an existing building therefore there will not be significant loss of features or structures on the site.**

Fields confirmed that no compliance concerns were noted.

Hopper asked for a review of the applicable specific standards.

Fields provided a brief review of the applicable **Specific Standards for Personal Services**. No compliance concerns were noted.

Mayor Centers thanked the applicant, Taylor Milford for her patience during the moratorium and congratulated her on the new business.

Dr. Nathan questioned why PC 25-06 Major Site Plan included a staff recommendation, but PC 25-07 and PC-25-08 Conditional Use applications did not.

Fields responded that Franklin's legal team directed staff not to include Staff Recommendations for Zoning Map Amendments, Zoning Text Amendments, and Conditional Use Applications only.

Hearing no public comment, the Chair opened and closed the floor for public comment on PC 25-08 at 6:23PM and called for a motion to approve PC 25-08 Conditional Use Application.

Motion made by Pirot, Seconded by Hall

Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Mayor Centers, Hall, Rebholtz

Voting Abstaining: Hopper

9. DISCUSSION

Dr. Nathen requested further discussion on staff recommendations for items presented for Commission review, affirming that such comments are an important consideration in the decision making process.

Fields offered to seek advice from legal Council on ways to include staff comments that fall short of a recommendation, but still provide staff insight.

Hopper countered stating that based on legal advice he prefers that staff recommendations /comments be withheld, as they could potentially sway Commission members' opinions.

Westendorf pointed out that the challenge occurs when the staff recommendations differ from the Planning Commission's recommendations. He supports continued consideration and will invite legal counsel to attend an upcoming PC meeting for further discussion.

Westendorf announced that the April PC meeting will likely be cancelled due to a lack of agenda items. He then cautioned that the May meeting will likely be lengthy with at least one large residential development and the next round of zoning updates. He noted that although review of zoning text and map amendments is tedious, these revisions are needed to improve transparency and ease of understanding to help pave the pathway for developers.

Westendorf concluded by praising the value of the Commission's work. Hopper responded by saying that it's virtuous cycle in that the quality of the applications and the presentations have improved greatly. Saying that "staff have made our lives easier".

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Pirot, Seconded by Hall

Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall, Rebholtz

The meeting was adjourned at 6:39PM.