



**Oberlin Planning Commission  
March 16, 2011, 5:30 p.m.  
City Hall Conference Room #2  
85 South Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio**

**Members Present:** David Gibson, Frank Carlson and Eric Gaines.

**Members Absent:** Marilyn Fedelchak-Harley.

**Others Present:** Gary Boyle; Wendie Fleming, Secretary to the Planning Commission; Sharon Soucy, Council Liaison; Anthony Hiti; Angela Thompson; Barb Thomas; Ann O'Malley; Dan Beeman and Elizabeth Rumics.

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

**1. Approval of the March 2, 2011 Meeting Minutes.**

Gaines made a motion the March 2, 2011 meeting minutes as submitted. Gibson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**2. Request for Modification to an Approved Planned Development Project and Application for Site Plan/Design Review Approval, Proposed Assisted Living Expansion, Kendal at Oberlin, 600 Kendal Drive.**

Boyle advised that this application seeks approval of the next development phase of Kendal at Oberlin which is the expansion of the existing Health Care building by the construction of a one-story building addition with thirteen (13) assisted living units, and the internal reconfiguration of portions of the existing Heath Care building.

Boyle noted that this development also includes the construction of a "fire lane" from an existing parking area to the southwest of the subject site along a portion of the west side of the proposed building addition. That fire access route is intended to improve Fire Department access to the site. He further stated that landscaping around the perimeter of the building, along the fire lane and within a courtyard created by this proposed building addition is also proposed. Boyle also indicated that the architect has advised that architectural design, materials, and colors are intended to complement and match the existing building.

Boyle stated that the Commission needs to determine whether or not the proposed project conforms with the form, nature and intent of the approved Final Development Plan for Kendal.

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He noted that Planning staff has no objection to the project as the number of units is still below the number that was originally proposed for this Planned Development, and it follows the intent of the overall design on the Final Development Plan. For background information, Boyle noted that the Preliminary Plan submitted for this project included a fire lane extending to the north edge of the proposed building addition. The plans submitted for approval, however, show a fire lane that is shorter in length. The Fire Chief indicated that the fire lane on the revised plan was not sufficient and as a result, City staff met with representatives from Kendal to discuss that issue. At that meeting, Kendal agreed to extend the fire lane at some point in the future. He further stated that the Design Review Subcommittee considered this application at its meeting on March 16, 2011 and has recommended its approval to the Commission as submitted.

Tony Hiti and Angela Thompson of Herman Gibans and Fodor Architects were present to represent this application. Barb Thomas and Ann O'Malley of Kendal at Oberlin were also present.

Hiti provided a presentation on this project. He stated that the originally approved Final Development Plan showed twelve (12) assisted living units and this proposed project is essentially the same, except that the units have been shifted on the site in order to create a courtyard. Hiti stated that the assisted living addition would connect to the existing Health Center in two locations. He further advised that there will be some internal renovation of the existing Health Center at the connection points. Hiti stated that besides the thirteen (13) additional assisted living units, there will be a new dining area, lounge and courtyard/therapy garden area. He indicated that there would also be a large "shade sail" installed to provide the residents with shade in the courtyard. Hiti advised that there would be extensive landscaping around the perimeter of the building, in the courtyard and along the fire lane. Storm water from the proposed addition would be directed into Kendal's existing storm water system.

Carlson asked if Kendal was connected to the City's storm sewer system? Hiti stated that no, Kendal's storm water system is handled on-site by the development's various ponds/lakes and is then directed into Hill Creek. That design was approved by the City Engineer in the past.

Hiti stated that with respect to the fire lane, his client prefers not to have to install it, however, the Fire Code requires that fire apparatus be able to reach within 150 ft. of a new building. He further advised that the Fire Code states that if a building is fully sprinkled then the local Fire Chief can waive the fire lane requirement but Chief Kirin will not waive the fire lane requirement. Hiti indicated that the proposed fire lane would extend to within 150 ft. of the building as required, but the Fire Chief would like the fire lane to be extended closer to the northern most point of the building. Kendal does not want to install the fire lane to this distance as it is both expensive and would not be aesthetically pleasing to the residents. Hiti did, however, state that by extending the fire lane to the northern most point of the building, it would provide fire apparatus access to previously built cottage units, and Kendal officials consider this to be somewhat retroactive enforcement.

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Carlson stated that if the fire lane is required to be extended, why is the Planning Commission approving the site plan? If the proposed project would be safe without the extension, why is their request that it be extended in the future? The Fire Chief's comments in the staff report indicate that the partial access lane is acceptable but seeks a written commitment from Kendal that it will be extended at the direction of the Fire Department. Carlson indicated that the Planning Commission has the authority to approve changes to the site plan, not the Fire Chief. He noted that if the Fire Chief requires that the fire lane be extended in the future, the Commission would consider that amendment to the Final Development Plan at that time. Boyle advised that the Commission can put conditions on any approval it makes, as it has done so in the past. He further advised that the Fire Chief has expressed concern over access to the other existing buildings in this development. It was staff's impression that Kendal's representatives found the idea of a future extension to the fire lane at some date to be acceptable at a meeting with them last month.

Barb Thomas of Kendal at Oberlin, stated that it is their opinion that all of the buildings within the Kendal complex are safe, and although they understand the Fire Chief's desire of additional access, they feel that aesthetics are very important. She indicated that any prospective purchasers of cottage units that have a view of the fire lane may find it to be not aesthetically pleasing, and it could result in a financial impact for Kendal if they cannot market these units. She noted that Kendal now has a different market to deal with as do other retirement communities, and that there is a concern over being able to sell units.

Carlson asked Thomas if aesthetics was the main reason why Kendal did not want to extend the fire lane? Thomas stated, yes, because they may not be able to market a unit(s) that has a view of the fire lane. She noted that Kendal may be interested in discussing a future extension of the fire lane provided it would not affect the marketability of any units. Carlson indicated that if the fire lane was required, cost and aesthetics would not be considered valid reasons why it should not be extended. He further advised that he considers the fire lane to be acceptable as shown on the site plan, however, he would like Kendal to consider extending it in the future and it appears that they may consider doing so.

Gibson advised that it is his opinion that if safety considerations are met, he does not see the need for the fire lane to be extended in the future. Gaines agreed, but noted that Kendal may want to consider the need for better fire access to the other buildings in the future. He stated that he feels that it is in Kendal's best interest to do so. Boyle advised that those independent living cottages do not have sprinkler systems. Hiti stated that he feels that there is sufficient fire access to those existing independent living cottages, but the access just does not come within 150 feet of the buildings as now required by the Fire Code. Gaines indicated that if there is a deficiency with respect to fire access, he would think that Kendal would want to rectify that situation. Thomas stated that all of those independent living cottages have hard-wired smoke detectors, they are only one story in height, and there is a large number of staff present at all times.

Carlson indicated that he would like the Planning Commission to retain jurisdiction over any future extension to the fire lane as he considers that to be an amendment to the approved site plan

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and not leave the decision solely to the discretion of the Fire Department. Gaines advised that although extending the fire lane may be considered to increase safety, he does not like the fact that the applicant is basically being told they must do something that the applicant's architect indicates that they may not actually be required to do so by the Code.

Gaines moved to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee, to determine that the proposed modification to the approved Final Development Plan would conform with the intent and nature of that Plan, and to approve the site plan submittal, building design and landscaping elements subject to the applicant obtaining all necessary building permits prior to the commencement of construction, and subject to the installation of the fire access route as shown on the plans. He added that the Commission's approval also provides that the design of the fire access route is subject to a request by the Fire Chief to the Commission in the future seeking an extension of the fire access route. Gibson seconded. Carlson noted that if this motion is approved by the Commission, the Fire Chief can submit a request to extend the fire lane in the future, and the Commission will review such a request and make a determination on it at that time. Motion carried unanimously.

**4. Application for Sign Permit, Proposed Wall-Mounted Sign, Verizon Wireless, Oberlin Square, 14910 State Route 58.**

Boyle stated that this application seeks approval of the installation of a wall-mounted sign to identify the location of a new business in the Oberlin Square shopping plaza. That business is a Verizon retail store that would occupy a frontage of approximately 20 feet in this plaza. He indicated that the proposed sign would have an overall height of approximately 4.31 feet and a length of 19.0 feet resulting in a sign surface area of about 80.75 sq. ft. This sign, with a total sign surface area of 80.75 sq. ft. would not comply with the Code, and as a result, the applicant is also seeking the Planning Commission's approval of an exception to the Code's size regulations. Boyle advised that the proposed sign is intended to replace an existing, smaller sign that was approved by the Planning Commission at its meeting on December 15, 2010.

Boyle indicated that the Design Review Subcommittee considered this matter at its meeting on March 16, 2011. He stated that the Subcommittee discussed the reduction or removal of the logo to improve the aesthetics of the sign, but unanimously moved to recommend approval of the sign design to the Commission as submitted by the applicant.

Boyle advised that the Commission has approved size variances for other signs on this building in the past due to several factors such as the highway speed on State Route 58 and US Route 20, the orientation of the building, the design of the building with a large façade, and the possibility of future development to the south of this building along US Route 20. He noted that the Commission's past determinations reflect that the Code is rather restrictive in this particular area.

Carlson asked if the sign surface area was calculated by making a rectangle around the lettering and the logo? Boyle stated that yes, that was how the applicant calculated the size of the sign. He further advised that the Code states that buildings less than 15,000 sq. ft. cannot have a sign

surface area larger than 50 sq. ft. Boyle noted that the logo does take up a lot of the space within the rectangular area that was used to calculate the sign surface area. Carlson agreed that if the logo was removed, the sign would be much closer in compliance but the lettering would still be larger than what is on the existing sign. Gaines indicated that while he is willing to consider a somewhat larger sign for this business, this proposed sign is over two times larger than the existing sign and would seem to be larger proportionally than the "Shoe Dept" sign which has a much larger tenant space. Carlson noted that one of the issues with signage on this building is that the upper part of the façade is quite large and the Commission had agreed with larger signs in order to create an aesthetically pleasing appearance, etc. Boyle agreed that the small storefront makes the existing Verizon Wireless sign look out of proportion. Carlson suggested that the logo could be removed or reduced in size. The Code's guidelines require that "excessive information" and "clutter" be discouraged.

Since the applicant was not present at the meeting, Gaines made a motion to table this matter and asked staff to relay the Commission's suggestion that the logo be removed or reduced in size to the applicant to bring the sign closer into compliance with the Code. Gibson seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Boyle indicated that staff would advise the applicant of the Commission's suggestion.

**5. Application for Sign Permit, Proposed Freestanding Sign, Medical Office Building, Mercy Health Partners, 224 West Lorain Street.**

Boyle indicated that this application seeks approval to install a new freestanding sign to replace an existing freestanding sign. The proposed sign would be sited in the same location as the existing freestanding sign which is setback about 2.66 ft.  $\pm$  from the front lot line and approximately 103 ft. from the east edge of the drive.

Boyle advised that the proposed two-sided sign would be about 3.0 ft. in height, and would have an overall width of about 4.33 ft.  $\pm$ . The sign would feature aluminum faces with router cut letters and a white acrylic background. The proposed sign panels would be 2.0 ft. in height and 4.33 ft. in width resulting in a sign surface area of 8.6 sq. ft. per side (17.33 sq. ft. total area). Boyle stated that the proposed sign would be mounted on a brick base that would be approximately 11 inches in height.

Boyle noted that the proposed sign is intended to replace an existing freestanding sign that is in need of repair. He stated that the sign will have dimensions similar to those of the existing sign and the same setback. However, the proposed sign's setback of 2.66 feet  $\pm$  from the public sidewalk does not comply with the Sign Code's minimum setback distance requirement for a ground sign in a residential zoning district (i.e. 10 ft.). Boyle advised that the applicant's agent has subsequently requested that the Commission approve a variance to permit the new sign to remain in the same location as the existing sign. He also noted that this freestanding sign should not pose any sight-line visibility issues due to its distance from the driveway to the west side of the building

Boyle stated that the Design Review Subcommittee considered this application at its meeting on March 16, 2011 and unanimously moved to recommend approval of the sign design to the Commission as submitted.

Dan Beeman of Wagner Electric Sign Co. was present to represent this application. He indicated that this would likely be the last name change for the hospital.

Gaines indicated that while he understands that the existing freestanding sign does not meet the setback requirements of the Code and that the sign is in bad condition, the applicant does not have to relocate it at all if they do not change it. Carlson noted that if the applicant were to leave it the way it is, they would not have to do anything about the setback. Gaines stated that it would be preferable for the setback of the sign to be brought into compliance with the Code but agreed that if the applicant decided not to make any changes to the sign, it would not have to be moved. Gibson indicated that this building is somewhat of a secondary use to the hospital. Carlson agreed and noted that there is a large expanse of lawn in front of the building.

Gibson asked how far would the sign need to be moved in order to be brought into compliance with the Code? Beeman stated that it would need to be moved approximately 7.5 or 8 feet closer to the building. He further advised that this sign is fairly unobtrusive as it is low in height. Beeman stated that the sign does need some work as it is in bad repair and somewhat of an eyesore. He also noted that the sign does not create any sight-line issues for motorists. Boyle indicated that if the sign could be brought closer to compliance with the setback requirements, it perhaps would be easier for the Commission to justify granting approval of a variance. He noted that the Commission needs to concern itself with maintaining the integrity of the Sign Code.

Gibson moved to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee and to approve the sign design as submitted with the condition that it be setback as required by the Code at a distance of 10 feet from the public street right-of-way. Gaines seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Boyle advised Beeman that a revised site plan sketch would be need to be submitted showing the required setback distance before a permit could be issued.

**6. Application for Sign Permit, Proposed Wall-Mounted Sign, Mercy Allen Hospital, Mercy Health Partners, 200 West Lorain Street.**

Boyle advised that this application seeks approval to install a new, internally-illuminated wall-mounted sign on the south or West Lorain Street building facade. The proposed sign would be placed on the canopy above the main hospital entry doors and would feature two (2) rows of letters and a logo. The sign's channel letters are to be internally-illuminated by LED lighting and the total sign surface area would be 42.2 square feet ±.

Boyle stated that the proposed signage is intended to replace existing internally-illuminated channel letters and logo that identified the subject hospital as the "Allen Community Hospital."

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That signage has an area of approximately 53.6 square feet  $\pm$  according to the applicant's submittal. The Subcommittee and the Commission granted approval for that signage in 2007.

Boyle advised that although the proposed sign would be slightly smaller in size than the existing sign, it would still exceed the 20 sq. ft. allowed by the Code and would not comply with the sign area permitted by the Code. The applicant has been so notified of non-compliance and the applicant has since filed a request seeking a variance to permit the size of the proposed signage.

Boyle indicated that the Design Review Subcommittee had considered this application at its meeting on March 16, 2011 and unanimously moved to recommend approval of the sign design to the Commission as submitted.

Dan Beeman of Wagner Electric Sign Co. was present to represent this application.

The Commission determined that the sign design was in compliance with the Code's design guidelines, and that a variance to accommodate the sign was appropriate for this hospital use, hospital's setback from the street, the need for the public readily identify the hospital, etc.

Gibson moved to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee and to approve the sign as submitted and to grant a variance for the size of the sign for the reasons indicated at the time of the approval for the existing sign. Gaines seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**7. Application for Sign Permit, Proposed Wall-Mounted Sign, Mercy Allen Hospital Surgery Center, Mercy Health Partners, 200 West Lorain Street.**

Boyle indicated that this application seeks the approval for the replacement of an existing wall-mounted sign with a new wall-mounted sign to reflect the hospital's new name. The applicant proposes to remove a sign with the words "Allen Medical Center" and to replace that sign with the words "Mercy Allen Hospital." The "Surgery Center" portion of the previously approved sign would remain.

Boyle stated that the proposed sign would have a sign surface area of 44.7 square feet  $\pm$ . The Sign Code provides that one sign with a sign surface area of 20 square feet is permitted in the "R-2" District. He noted that the proposed sign would not comply with the Code, and the applicant has filed a request seeking a variance to permit the proposed signage. Boyle advised that the Planning Commission has previously approved variances for the installation of wall-mounted and freestanding signage for the hospital in the past, including for the sign to be replaced in this application. Boyle noted that the proposed replacement sign would be slightly smaller in area than the existing sign according to the appeal submittal.

Boyle advised that the Design Review Subcommittee considered this application at its meeting on March 16, 2011 and unanimously moved to recommend approval of the sign design to the Commission as submitted.

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Dan Beeman of Wagner Electric Sign Co. was present to represent this application. Boyle noted that the proposed sign would not be visible from the street and it is slightly smaller than the existing sign.

Gaines moved to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee, to approve the sign design as submitted, and to grant a variance to accommodate the size of the proposed sign based on determinations made in the past regarding the existing sign. Gibson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Carlson indicated that he is disappointed to see that the "Allen" part of the hospital's name is being somewhat downplayed as that family was very important to this community and northeast Ohio. Gaines agreed, but noted that he is pleased that the Allen name has not been completely eliminated from the hospital name. The Commission agreed that the Allen name has a strong local connection that should be respected.

**8. Discussion – Updated Zoning Map.**

Boyle advised that staff has reported to the Planning Commission in the past that an updated Zoning Map has been under preparation. He indicated that the City's present Zoning Map is based on the Zoning Map prepared by the Lorain County Regional Planning Commission in 1972 with revisions that were adopted in 1992. That Map was subsequently modified by City Community Services staff utilizing a somewhat different base map in the mid 1990's.

Boyle noted that as various amendments to the Zoning Map and annexations have been approved by City Council in the intervening period, this Map has been so updated over the years to reflect those changes.

Boyle indicated that staff has also prepared "alternative" Zoning Maps for consideration that identifies possible changes to the Map that are intended to: (1) bring zoning classifications for some commercially-zoned ("C-1" District) properties closer into compliance with the adopted Comprehensive Plan; (2) reflect the development and use of City parks and by other community non-profit organizations that are now zoned in various residential district classifications; (3) recognize that some privately-owned residential properties are zoned for public park use ("P-1" District) and should be zoned in a residential classification; and (4) address properties that are split with different zoning district classifications.

Boyle advised that if the Commission is comfortable with the consolidated map labeled "Figure 1," it could approve it and then consider the additional amendments at a future meeting. Gaines asked why would the consolidated map need to be approved if it just reflects the updates to the adopted Zoning Map? Boyle stated that in order to have an "official" map, the Law Director indicated that he would be more comfortable with City Council approving the map and making it "official" prior to the Commission make any additional amendments to it. Carlson agreed that this would be useful to do.

Carlson asked if the Commission was to recommend approval of the consolidated or updated Zoning Map (Figure 1) to City Council, is staff comfortable with that? Boyle stated yes. He noted that the alternative maps (Figures 2 and 3) reflect zoning in Figure 1, however, there are a few anomalies and amendments that staff recommend that the Commission should consider or review as outlined on those maps. He gave the City's Roadside Park as an example.

Gaines asked what the City is using for a base map at this time? Boyle stated that the City has been using the 1972 Map which had been updated in the 1990's. He indicated that Engineering Division staff has more advanced software now and can provide a much higher quality map including street addresses. The updated Zoning Map identified as "Figure 1" reflects that mapping. Staff can also provide detailed breakdowns of particular areas that the Commission may want to further review in the future illustrating the location and shape of the properties involved, the Comprehensive Plan designation, the existing zoning, the proposed zoning, etc.

Carlson suggested that the Commission continue its review of the updated Zoning Map along with the additional changes identified by staff at the next meeting. Soucy suggested that when the Zoning Map is submitted to City Council for adoption, definitions of each of the Zoning Districts should be included. Boyle noted that Engineering and Planning staff have considered providing that detail, and when the map is posted on the website, enabling links to the various zoning chapters by clicking on the district in the "Legend."

**9. Application for Conditional Use Permit and Site Plan Approval, Proposed Farmers' Market, Oberlin Farmers' Market, 69 – 85 South Main Street.**

Boyle stated that an application for a "Conditional Use Permit" to provide for the operation of a seasonal "farmers' market" has been submitted by the Oberlin Farmers' Market (OFM). The application seeks the approval of fourteen (14) or so vendor stalls. Since the proposed market is located on City-owned property, the City Manager has submitted an "authorization" for OFM to proceed with this request.

Boyle noted that the subject property is zoned "C-1"/Central Business District by the Oberlin Zoning Code and Map and a "farmers' market" is a conditionally permitted use if approved by the Planning Commission.

Boyle advised that the Public Hearing required for this type of application has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 6, 2011 and notice had been sent to the applicant as well as property owners within 200 feet as required by the Code and it will also be published in the Oberlin News Tribune.

**10. Other Business.**

Soucy asked for an update on the reconfiguration of the Verizon parking lot. Boyle indicated that Steve Varelmann of the College's Facilities Planning and Construction Office has advised that they have a contract for the work and it will commence as soon as the weather permits. He

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further advised that Varelmann has been working with City staff to develop appropriate directional signage for the downtown parking lots.

Boyle advised the Commission that the City is working on an Updated Strategic Plan and all board and commission members are invited to attend a “community conversations” meeting regarding the Plan on Wednesday, March 23, 2011, 7:00 p.m. in the Oberlin Public Library to give their input. He provided each member with a copy of the “Oberlin 2025 Community Conversation Guide.”

**11. Adjournment.**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

  
Frank Carlson, Chair

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Wendie Fleming, Secretary