PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Mr. Paul Clark called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Paul Clark, Jim Durham, Kevin Von Handorf, Robert Muzechuk, Jim Briggs and Bill Etson. Also present were City Planner Andrew Rodney, Municipal Attorney Scott Liberman, Planner Mark Yandrick and Assistant Clerk of Council Julie Weaver.

Absent: Amy Korenyi-Both.

EXCUSE ABSENT MEMBERS

Mr. Clark stated Ms. Korenyi-Both had notified him that she would be absent.

MOTION: Mr. Briggs made a motion to excuse the absence of Ms. Korenyi-Both. Mr. Von Handorf seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No additions or corrections were noted for the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of October 27, 2015.

MOTION: Mr. Briggs made a motion to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of October 27, 2015, as distributed. Mr. Muzechuk seconded the motion. The motion passed, 5-0-1, with Mr. Etson abstaining.

OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Clark read the Opening Statement concerning protocol for public hearings.

PUBLIC HEARING

Application P-2015-0051: Variances for Number of Signs, Area of a Ground Sign and Height of a Ground Sign at Miami Valley Hospital South, 2400 Miami Valley Drive
Applicant: Dianna Conboy, LWC, Inc.

After Mr. Rodney pointed out the distribution of an updated staff report changing Condition #2 on page 4, Mr. Yandrick presented the staff report for Application P-2015-0051. He reviewed the signage and variances in place on the hospital grounds and located the proposed interstate sign on an aerial map in an area zoned I-PD. He showed drawings of the internally illuminated ground sign that would include the Premier colors and logo, the hospital name and a red panel with Emergency in white letters. The sign would sit on a brick wall 110 feet long that would add about 6 feet to the overall height. Mr. Yandrick showed a similar sign that sits on 22 acres at Upper Valley Medical Center along I-75 in Miami County. He described the base of the

proposed Centerville sign, the illumination, the expected landscaping, the elevation changes and the maintenance access.

Mr. Yandrick defined the requested variances. He stated one ground sign was permitted per premises by the Unified Development Ordinance. Miami Valley Hospital South had four signs, and this sign would be number five. The code limited the maximum area of a ground sign to 32 square feet per side. Miami Valley was asking for 748 square feet. The code set the maximum height of a ground sign at 6 feet at the setback. The hospital requested a sign height of 18.5 feet.

Staff analysis showed factors in favor of the variance included the size of the parcel (115 acres), the lack of visibility of the hospital from I-675 because of wooded areas and the high roadway speeds. The code was written for typical business properties with less than 500 feet of business frontage and with roadway speeds of less than 45 mph. The hospital owned about 3000 feet of frontage along the interstate, and traffic moved at much higher speeds, often over 65 mph Staff felt the standards of approval for the variance could be met and recommended approval with the following three conditions:

1. That the monument sign include a vertical element on the north side of the sign as constructed on the two Wilmington Pike ground signs. Such vertical element shall mimic the vertical pier elements on the Wilmington Pike signs.

2. That the landscape plan shall include low plantings & landscaping beneath the sign to shield the entirety of the brick base.

3. The change in the current ground elevation shall not exceed two feet.

Questions from the commissioners followed. Members clarified what was meant by the vertical element on the north end of the wall in Condition #1 and asked about the height of the sign in Miami County, the area of trees and shrubs that would be removed to improve the visibility of the sign, the need to work with the Army Corps of Engineers with the proximity of wetlands, and accessibility of the sign to pedestrians on the walking trail.

When Mr. Clark opened the Public Hearing, Mr. Andrew English of Innocom Corporation, 7792 Olentangy River Road, Columbus, representing the applicant, said the hospital had chosen this particular site because ODOT required perimeter fencing and also a setback of 500 feet from the exit ramp at Wilmington Pike, and the hospital needed to avoid the wetlands. Terracon Consultants, Inc., of Cincinnati, a wetlands specialty company, completed a wetlands delineation that determined the wetlands were generally insignificant small pockets of less than 0.1 acre. It was expected that Terracon would continue to work with the Army Corps of Engineers on any wetlands issues. Innocom had done a tree survey for the area where trees would be removed.

Pete Williams, a partner of Andrew English, said he had extensive experience studying the appropriate height and size of lettering for signage for different highway speeds; he stated the size of the hospital's proposed sign was appropriate. He discussed the details of the Upper Valley sign, but did not know its height. The Upper Valley sign was in a large open field of over twenty acres and had been in place about fifteen years.

Mr. English thanked the Planning Commission for the past approvals of the variances for the signs along Clyo Road. He said those signs were effective. Upon question from Mr. Clark, Mr. English said he did not have objections to the conditions of approval suggested by staff.

Mr. Briggs asked if there was a body of evidence or complaints from people who missed the exit. Ms. Joann Ringer, Chief Operating Officer of Miami Valley South, responded that they had heard from people who missed the eastbound exit because of they could not see the hospital, yet the hospital did not want to remove trees.

Mr. Von Handorf asked again about the height of the sign at Upper Valley. Mr. English said it was proportional, but he did not know the height. The Upper Valley sign did not have the Emergency component. Mr. English said the proposed sign was the correct height for the speed of the traffic, the sight distance and readability of the letters. He noted differences in the settings for the two signs. Mr. Von Handorf suggested adding the height of the "Emergency" panel to the height of the Upper Valley sign.

Mr. Durham said the fact the trees hid the hospital was the main argument for the variance. However, for the variance to be reasonable, the trees needed to remain. He was in favor of tabling the application to allow time for the hospital to define the area where trees would be maintained over the longterm. Having trees in designated preservation areas could then be listed as a condition of approval.

Mr. Muzechuk pointed out that ODOT had placed generic blue and silver hospital signs as highway signage. He felt the proposed large sign was an advertisement for Premier branding rather than a way to meet a need to help people find the hospital. Mr. Briggs agreed. Mr. English responded that unlike food and gas signs, ODOT would not allow a panel listing the name of the hospital or "Premier," so the entire north side of the 115 acre campus had no identification. He added that drivers might be trying to find a hospital under stressful circumstances and that people wanted to know the brand affiliation of a hospital. The proposed sign would supplement the hospital identification on the existing ODOT signs.

When asked for clarification, Mr. Durham said he wanted to know what specific trees Miami Valley intended to preserve for the longterm and did not want to pressure an off-the-cuff decision. He noted that "Premier" was the dominant element of the sign. The "Emergency" panel was less and the fact that this was a hospital was the least prominent element on the sign. He felt the purpose of the sign was brand recognition and said he was in agreement with his colleagues to know how the size of this sign compared to the one at Upper Valley Medical Center.

Mr. Rodney verified that Mr. Durham wanted a fourth condition to have a definition of a tree preservation area along the right-of-way for trees that impede the view of the hospital from I-675 eastbound traffic.

Mr. Durham asked if the applicant was willing to have Planning Commission table the request for the variances. After consultation with the representatives present, Mr. English agreed that Application P-2015-0051 for sign variances could be tabled to the January meeting.

Mr. Von Handorf suggested that a 15% slope in the area around the sign might keep the required grading out of the wetlands. In answer to a question about the light from the translucent end of

the north face of the sign, Mr. English said the consultants did not feel it would impact drivers on the highway. Mr. Briggs asked about keeping pedestrians on the gravel trail away from the sign and again protested that the sign was a corporate billboard.

MOTION: Mr. Durham moved to table Application P-2015-0051, the three variances for an interstate sign for Miami Valley Hospital South, to the next meeting of the Planning Commission on January 26, 2016. Mr. Etson seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Rodney pointed out that Mr. Muzechuk and Mr. Von Handorf had attended the Miami Valley Planning and Zoning Workshop. He noted the next workshop would be December 2, 2016. Ms. Korenyi. Both also attended. pc

Mr. Muzechuk stated there was good information on the Sugarcreek Fire coverage issue in the *Town Crier.*

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Clark announced the next meeting of the Planning Commission would be on January 26, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers and adjourned the meeting.

Paul Clark

Mr. Paul Clark
Chair of the Planning Commission