

ROCKY FORK-BLACKCLICK ACCORD
MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
Thursday, December 19, 2024

I. Call to order.

The Rocky Fork – Blacklick Accord Implementation Panel held a regular meeting on December 19, 2024 in the New Albany Village Hall. Chair Boni called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. and asked to hear the roll.

Those answering roll call:

Mr. Brubaker	absent
Mr. Sellers	present
Mr. Siebenaler	present
Mr. Paul	present
Ms. Boni	present
Mr. Smithers	absent
Mr. Herskowitz	present
Mr. Chappellear	present
Mr. Harper	present

Having seven voting members present, the panel had a quorum to transact business.

Staff present: Columbus Department of Development Associate Planner Pittman Granger, New Albany Community Development Department Planner Saumenig, New Albany Deputy Clerk Madriguera.

II. Record of proceedings. November 21, 2024

Chair Boni asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the November 21, 2024 meeting minutes. Planner Pittman Granger said yes. The November 21, 2024 incorrectly stated that Mr. Siebenaler was absent and that Mr. Paul arrived at 4:21 p.m., when actually the reverse is true. Mr. Siebenaler arrived at 4:21 p.m. and Mr. Paul was absent. Deputy Clerk Madriguera noted the correction.

Hearing no further corrections, Panel Member Sellers moved for approval of the November 21, 2024 as corrected. Panel Member Paul seconded the motion.

Upon roll call: Mr. Sellers yes, Mr. Paul yes, Mr. Siebenaler yes, Mr. Herskowitz yes, Mr. Chappellear yes, Mr. Harper yes, Ms. Boni yes. Having seven yes votes, the motion passed and the November 21, 2024 meeting minutes were approved as corrected.

III. Old business.

Chair Boni asked if there was any old business.

Planner Pittman Granger answered none from staff.

Chair Boni introduced the first and only case on the agenda and asked to hear from staff.

IV. New business.

1. Z24-059 Premier Storage: 6955 Harlem Road

Review and action a Columbus application to rezone parts of parcels 010-278013 and 2200001876 generally located on the west side of Harlem Road and north of Central College Road.

Acreage: 4.3 +/-
Current Zoning Rural
RFBA District: Village Residential
Proposed Zoning: Limited Manufacturing
Applicant(s): Colliers/Premier Development Partners
Property Owner(s): Norman Singer

Planner Pittman Granger delivered the staff report.

Panel Member Siebenaler confirmed with Planner Pittman Granger that the location for the recommendation to add street trees was along Harlem Road.

Planner Pittman Granger said that is correct.

Panel Member Chappellear noted that there was a snake-shaped feature and asked if there was a pond. He further asked whether there was any elevation change.

Tom Gustafson, Premier Development Group, said there was not a pond, and indicated the landscaping. The area Panel Member Chappellear was referring to might be mounding and if so, it was minimal. This minimal mounding was also the extent of any elevation change. He also wanted to point out that he had spoken with a resident who was present at the meeting. He clarified with her and wanted to clarify with the panel that they were only requesting to rezone the southern portion of the land. The northern portion would retain its current zoning classification and would continue to be the man-land and barn.

Chair Boni asked for further questions. She further noted that many of the concerns raised at the prior meeting had been addressed.

Chair Boni asked the applicant if they had anything to add.

Panel Member Chappellear asked for a brief overview of the proposal since the last meeting. He explained that this would benefit members who were not at the prior meeting and would also benefit the public. He then asked whether the public was notified of the rezoning, including people residing in Plain Township. He stated that there is no communication following the time when the application leaves the panel.

Planner Pittman Granger responded that her presentation provided an overview of the application and the changes made. She further explained that in conjunction with the zoning application, neighboring property owners in Columbus within a certain distance from the subject property had been notified.

Mr. Gustafson and Mr. Davis stated they would be happy to provide an overview. The explained that they are with Colliers and they transact only in the self-storage space and they build these facilities regularly. They have calculated that there is a significant demand for this type of facility in this area. They stressed the importance of safety and security for these facilities, and in particular because about 60% of their clients are women. To that end, this will be a two-story drive-through facility that opens via a 14-foot wide door and cars enter and can be unloaded in a secure environment. An office will be staffed by two employees that are usually managers. They initially presented the panel with a pre-cast look but they have now altered the look to fit the environment and to increase the local appeal.

Mr. Davis added that it was likely that residents were concerned about traffic. However, traffic was not a concern here because this is a low-use facility. There will be very little traffic resulting from this construction, the adjacent apartments would contribute to the traffic. They wanted to build something that would be a benefit to the community.

Panel Member Paul thanked Panel Member Chappellear for his concern and confirmed that the video was available to the public on the City of New Albany's website. He further confirmed access to the facility would be limited to 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. He asked whether staff would be onsite the entire time.

Mr. Gustafson answered that typically staff would be onsite from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., access would be permitted from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Panel Member Paul asked whether hours of operation could be specified in the zoning text. He noted that without a restriction in the zoning text, the hours of operation could be unlimited. He asked whether the hours of operation could be changed without a change to the zoning text.

Planner Pittman Granger responded that the zoning text would include land use specifications and would not specify hours of operation. She stated that she had no comment on the hours of operation or changes to the hours of operation.

Panel Member Herskowitz, noting that the facility would be accessible from 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., stated that he immediately thought of noise and asked whether there are any decibel studies of these businesses. He did not think this would be a noise-creator, but wondered about the noise.

Mr. Gustafson answered that there are no decibel studies, but the access doors are not loud doors.

Panel Member Siebenaler clarified next steps for this application and the neighbor notification process.

Planner Pittman Granger explained that because the zoning application with the City of Columbus was proceeding in parallel, residents were notified.

Panel Member Paul stated that the notification boundary was within 125 feet.

Chair Boni opened the public hearing.

Deputy Clerk Madriguera administered the oath to all present who wished to address the panel.

Lori Keefer, 6597 Lightchase Street, approached the lectern. She said that she preferred a structure that looked more like a barn and would like to see street trees. She lives at the Preserve at Rocky Fork, she was not sure in which jurisdiction her development was officially located, but she calls it new Westerville. When she moved here in late 2021 it was residential and now new apartments are being constructed and now this new storage facility is planned. She has no idea what the new apartments will look like. She hears that Intel will be significantly delayed, and she questioned the necessity of a self-storage facility if that is the case. She wonders whether Harlem Road will begin to look like Hamilton Road. She wondered whether there is another location for this facility. She is concerned that there is not a turn lane into her neighborhood. She explained that traffic is already backed up. She agreed that the storage facility itself will not increase traffic, but is concerned by the increase due to the apartments and hopes there will be remedies. She is concerned about the light and noise pollution. She is concerned about the third space, she knows the board does not own the man-land but hopes it will not be developed. The zoning does not make sense to her. She worried about the look of the mounding. She was concerned about the taxes and the value of her property. She appreciated the opportunity to testify and would recommend a traffic study done prior to completion. She remarked that it is sad to see the big apartment complex coming. She further requested that the appearance of the self-storage facility be improved.

Diane Sturm, 6070 Loridann Drive approached the lectern. She also lives in the Preserve at Rocky Fork. She stated that her concern is about the long-term plan for Harlem Road in general. She sees the tide turning and is concerned about the commercial precedent that is being set and wonders what the plan is for the urban sprawl. She likewise questioned whether there will be turning lanes into the apartments and the storage facility or whether it would just be a two-lane road. She said that traffic and safety are her concerns. She also asked whether the building materials of the storage facility would complement the apartment. She pays almost three times as much in property taxes as she did in Cleveland and her house cost twice as much.

Ms. Keefer returned to the lectern and stated that Pulte, her homebuilder charged her \$10,000.00 for a view of adjacent trees. She explained that the trees were not on her property and she was sold a view of the trees, but now the trees have been removed. Developers should be required to be more transparent and she would like to see the homeowners represented.

Chair Boni asked if there was anyone else present who wished to make a comment on the application.

Brett Griffin 6637 Lightchase Street approached the lectern. He stated that he resented the apartment building construction so close to their neighborhood, and the proposed facility is very close to his backyard. This has made this property much worse and he did not appreciate it. He was not notified of the apartments and was not notified of the development of this facility. He appreciated Mr. Paul's comment about the hours of operation. He wondered what is holding these people to being good neighbors. He further noted that the people who will be running the facility are not even present to talk about it. He did not want a gas station in this property.

Barbara Bosson residing at 5986 Loridann Drive. She stated that much like Ms. Sturm, she moved to the area to be close to her kids. She moved from Seneca Lake to be closer to her kids. Her home looked beautiful when she bought it. Now with the construction of the apartments she worries about commercialization in that area.

Chair Boni closed public comment. She thanked the residents for taking the time to appear at the hearing and comment on the application. She observed that it seemed liked the comments were more development oriented, and the development pattern on Harlem Road rather than targeted at the construction of this particular self-storage facility.

Planner Pittman Granger stated that development plans for this area were unknown.

Panel Member Paul stated that the area to the south was the Northland Area and under the Northland Plan II, which is bordered on the north by Central College Road. He explained that this land is not within an area plan and further that there is no area plan for the area north of Central College Road.

Ms. Sturm asked whether there will be a plan and further stated that the residents deserve one.

Panel Member Paul agreed and responded that was a very good question for the City of Columbus Division of Planning of Development Department.

Ms. Keefer asked whether they were in the wrong place, and where they should go. Her husband is a devout runner and has to drive each day to a place where he can run.

Chair Boni said this is the right place to talk about this application, but development staff for the City of Columbus was the place to contact for regional long-term planning.

Planner Pittman Granger responded that this was a quasi-jurisdictional board. She would share resources with Ms. Keefer so she would know where she lived and so that she could follow this application through the process. She explained the progression of applications. She further stated that presenting a rezoning to the RFBA panel is an initial phase of an extensive process. And that all of the actions on this application are publicly available.

Panel Members Seibenaler and Paul recommended that Ms. Keefer engage with her homeowners' association.

Panel Member Chappellear asked for the rezoning classification.

Panel Member Paul answered it would be reclassified as Light Manufacturing.

Chair Boni added that a traffic study will be performed at a later stage of the development process.

Planner Pittman Granger stated that it will be performed when the application goes to the development commission.

Panel Member Paul asked whether it would be permissible to ask the applicant whether they would be willing to include a limit on hours of operation, if it was permissible, in the zoning text.

Mr. Gustafson responded that he would be open to it.

Chair Boni asked Planner Pittman Granger to pass that on to the planning commission at the next step and further requested that it be included in the minutes of this meeting.

Planner Pittman Granger agreed to share the recommendation with leadership.

Panel Member Herskowitz recalled that he requested that a barn style, similar to the Walnut Street storage unit be used rather than a New Albany Georgian style.

Mr. Gustafson said that one of the other recommendations was to look at the fire department which is very commercial. He further explained that they were trying to conform to the area.

Chair Boni asked if there were any further questions.

Panel Member Harper asked whether this was a conceptual review.

Planner Pittman Granger responded that this is presented for review and action.

Panel Member Chappellear remarked that, as presented this evening, this is much closer to what he requested at the last meeting. That being said he still had some problems with placement of the building. Much of the remaining property is in Plain TWP. He understood that frequently properties are bought and annexed to the City of Columbus for water and sewer. This is a much better product but he does not think it is the right building for this area. The building is between apartments and single family houses and is relatively close to the road. He explained that this is an advisory committee to make a recommendation regarding whether it fits in the area. He doubted whether the City of Columbus would consider whether their new police and fire department buildings would fit in the area. The panel's review has improved this product but it still does not fit in the area.

Panel Member Paul remarked that nobody likes to hear the comment "be careful what you wish for." Nonetheless, he remarked that if this land was not developed in this way, it would most likely be developed as apartment or residential rather than being undeveloped. He stated that he thinks this is a good application.

Chair Boni invited the applicant to make final remarks.

Mr. Gustafson thanked the panel and the residents. He said that he had no formal remarks and that the applicants want to make it work. They are happy to consider inclusion of the hours in the text. He further agreed that any other residential use would bring a more intense use. This use will generate a significant amount of property tax.

Mr. Davis agreed and stated that the big concern heard today was the apartments. The applicants will continue to listen. These are quiet facilities, the doors are quiet and high-speed, there is no power in the units, there is no refuse. Inclusion of hours of operation will be considered.

Hearing no further questions, Panel Member Paul moved to recommend approval of the zoning application. Panel Member Sellers seconded the motion.

Upon roll call: Mr. Paul yes, Mr. Sellers yes, Ms. Boni yes, Mr. Herskowitz no, Mr. Chappelle no, Mr. Harper no, Mr. Siebenaler yes. Having four yes votes, and three no votes, the motion passed and the application was favorably recommended.

The panel thanked the applicants and the residents and wished them all good luck.

V. Other business.

Chair Boni asked if there was any further business.

Panel Member Chappelle raised the State Farm building which is currently in the Columbus School District. He asked whether anyone knew of plans for it.

Panel Member Paul stated he had not heard anything about it.

VI. Adjourn.

Having no further business and without objection Chair Boni adjourned the December 19, 2024 meeting of the Rocky Fork Blacklick Accord Implementation Panel at 5:18 p.m.

Submitted by: Deputy Clerk Madriguera, Esq.