



City of Ann Arbor
Formal Minutes - Draft
Planning Commission, City

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Tuesday, April 7, 2015

7:00 PM

City Hall, 301 E. Huron St., 2nd Fl.

10-b 15-0406

AutoZone Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to demolish an existing carwash and combine the site with an adjacent vacant site to construct a one-story, 7,381-square foot retail building with 28 parking spaces and a single curb cut at 2151 West Stadium Boulevard on 1.17 acres. (Ward 5) Staff Recommendation: Approval

Kowalski presented the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Ted Barnes, 2101 W Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor, said he is the co-owner of the parcel to the south of the AutoZone site. He said he has two concerns; one is environmental with the concern over the past leaking, and maybe present, tanks that he believes are still in the ground from when it was a gas station. He said he does not support the driveway, going south, and he has been told they do not have to allow that, and he would like to have it removed from the site plan. He said they just re-did their parking lot and he wants to keep it looking good and he doesn't want that traffic and trucks going through his lot.

Wesley Berlin, PE. Professional Engineering Associates, Inc., 2900 East Grand River Avenue, Howell, AutoZone Civil Engineer Consultant, said they have done their market analysis and there is a need for this type of business here in this area. He said he and his team were available to respond to any enquiries from the Commission.

Leo Fox, 2101 W. Stadium Blvd., Arbor Farms Market, and partner in Arbor/Ace Center, explained that they have a 20 foot driveway in the back that is about 500 feet long. He noted that there is quite a bit of traffic back there; Arbor Farms gets 20-30 delivery vehicles daily and his associates go to the recycle dumpsters often, and he is really concerned about their safety with this additional traffic that will be created on the south side of the Autozone site. He said he is also concerned for the potential cut-through to the back of the driveway and out to Maple. He said they have Goldfish Swim School back there with a lot of toddlers coming and going with their parents and he had concerns for their safety with the

potential traffic. He said on the one hand, he welcomes AutoZone, acknowledging that it is going to be a nice new business on the Boulevard, but he encouraged Planning to explore the possibility to just closing it off and getting them a little more parking.

Moved by Mills, seconded by Bona, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the AutoZone Site Plan, subject to recording of an easement for the sanitary sewer lead that serves the adjacent property prior to issuance of building permits.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Bona asked about the connecting drive between the two properties, noting that in the past they have tried to create as many internal connections as possible so motorists don't have to go out onto the street just to turn in again at the neighboring parcel. She said in this situation they have a brand new driveway next to another. She asked staff to explain why we like these and how can we prepare this site for future opportunities.

Kowalski said the value of cross inter-connections of parking lots is to minimize traffic and turning movements onto West Stadium Boulevard, and is not intended to be any kind of cut-through to Maple. He said the City's Master Plan and Transportation Plan both encourage these cross-connections, and in some cases it fosters compatible uses.

Bona said if they decide not to require the cross-connection now, could they put something in the site plan that would indicate that this property is already approved for a future connection when the neighboring property is ready.

Kowalski said it would probably require a site plan amendment to put a new drive in place.

Briere agreed that two drives next to each other is not ideal.

Briere asked what was on the neighboring parcel across the service drive.

Berlin provided a handout to the Commission showing an aerial view of the area.

Barnes reviewed their parcel layout and the neighboring proposed AutoZone site.

Peters asked about the proposed dumpster location on the AutoZone site.

Berlin said City staff had agreed that the proposed location was the best. He said they will be having a delivery truck backing into that area. Kowalski said there will be a sanitary sewer lead relocated on the site that will limit use of the site because City staff does not want any structures cover access to it, for maintenance needs.

Peters asked about the storm water treatment area and its capability to handle run-off.

Berlin said the site is currently 100% impervious surface and has no stormwater management system. He said the location of the detention was based on the building location setbacks and parking location restrictions, and was the only possible location on the site.

Berlin explained that there would be an 8 foot evaluation difference from the grassy edge to the bottom of the basin and they have proposed a fence around the perimeter of the basin which would hinder any public access to the open water area.

Mills asked what rationale went into favoring the building location on the northern portion versus the southern.

Berlin said cross-access is provided to both lots, and they propose to maintain the southerly drive approach, which is in direct alignment with the drive approach across the road, which is the most safe and optimum location, and recommended from City staff. He added that decision then laid out the remaining site. He said while their business is self-contained and they don't need the cross-connection with the neighboring site, it was something that was requested by City staff, and the location of the approach made the most sense since it was so close to the approach of the neighboring site.

Franciscus asked how likely it was that they would find a solution that would be a win-win for both Arbor Farms and AutoZone in regards to a shared driveway, which would involve an easement.

Berlin said in preliminary discussion with the owner to the south they were not in agreement with any sort of easement.

Barnes and Fox said they were not approached about the possibility of

sharing a driveway with the AutoZone site.

Franciscus asked if that is something they would be opposed to.

Barnes said without seeing it on paper, he is unable to say.

Berlin clarified that AutoZone and one of the co-owners of the neighboring parcel had held a discussion regarding the possibility of a cross-connection easement, which they were opposed to at the time, but they had never raised the issue of a shared drive approach. He said the location of a shared drive approach would also interfere with the alignment of the drive approach across the street which could create a left-turn conflict.

Franciscus said from personal experience she felt there would be enough space since there is a middle turning lane as well.

Rampson reminded the Commission that traffic reviews had been done on the current proposal and if there are any additional changes, they would need to go back for additional reviews from the City's Traffic Engineer since any changes could interfere with traffic flows.

Peters said he was contemplating a postponement to allow consideration of a combined curb cut and the possibility of the two sites sharing a modified access. He said it would be advantageous to pedestrian traffic and cyclists, noting that there are several residential areas behind these sites as well as traffic from the neighboring township. He said if there is an opportunity to remove an existing curb cut, it's worth exploring the possibility.

Clein said that the Commission should keep in mind that it's within the property owner's rights to have access to the street and they might be overstepping their bounds on that issue. He said he didn't believe that was reason to postpone. He said to begin to look at one shared drive access would require looking at the bigger picture, including semi truck access. He said knowing that one of the businesses has 30 truck deliveries a day make him nervous and this might be a situation where it's better to leave them separate. He said they will be removing impervious surface in the rear which will off-set pavement concerns in the front.

Briere said she would encourage the connecting drive to be a landscape island instead, and by doing that they would address the immediate concerns of the neighboring owner who just re-did their parking lot, and

they would keep open the possibility of a connection at some point in the future. She said if the motion were amended to include language to have the area turned into landscape for a possible future connection, with an administrative amendment, she would support that.

Rampson explained that if they add language on landscaping, when and if the item comes back, it could not be done administratively, because it would be adding impervious surface.

Woods asked Mr. Barnes what issues he had as a next door property owner.

Barnes said he had concerns about the proposed connector drive between the two parcels, and if the drive connection was put in, going south, it would be where the dumpsters and receiving dock are on his site.

Bona asked if there is existing access to both sites already.

Kowalski said, yes, and reviewed the access points on the aerial photo.

Bona said she felt differently about the connection access, knowing that there already is access, and said she was fine with approving the motion as it stands.

Peters asked why the connection location was chosen as proposed.

Berlin said it was due to parking configuration. He said they would rather pave the connection and barricade it than have to come back for future approvals from the City.

Bona encouraged AutoZone and the neighboring site to consider alignment before the item goes to Council.

On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Chair declaring the motion carried.

Yeas: 8 - Wendy Woods, Eleanore Adenekan, Kenneth Clein, Sabra Briere, Jeremy Peters, Sofia Franciscus, Sarah Mills, and Bonnie Bona

Nays: 0

Absent: 1 - Alex Milshteyn