

PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION
TIPP CITY, MIAMI COUNTY, OHIO JANUARY 12, 2016

Work Session

The work session began at 7:02 pm. The following Planning Board members were present: Stacy Wall, Jamie DeSantis, Andrew Thornbury, and Vonda Alberson. Also attending was Assistant City Manager/Community and Economic Development Director Brad Vath, Zoning Administrator Matt Spring, and Board Secretary Kelly Rowlands. Matt Collins (Bruns General Contracting, Inc.) and Tony Heint (Repacorp, Inc.) were also in attendance.

Industrial Landscaping

Mr. Spring provided the following information:

At the December 8, 2015 Planning Board meeting, Board members discussed the possibility of modifying the existing landscaping requirements for industrially zoned property. It was agreed that additional discussion was warranted, with personal input from industrial business and property owners desired. With assistance from Mr. Vath, Matt Collins (Bruns) and Tony Heint (Repacorp) were invited to provide some direct input from the industrial community.

In general, landscaping falls into two broad categories:

1. Landscaping associated with off-street parking areas, and
2. Buffering

The category of landscaping associated with off-street parking areas can be divided even further into two subcategories:

1. Landscaping Adjacent to Public Streets
2. Interior Parking Area Landscaping (Islands and landscaping that helps to break up the monotony of large areas of asphalt)

Mr. Spring provided the specific parameters in the memo that was prepared for the Work Session.

Landscaping Adjacent to Public Streets includes anything that is either 2,000 square feet in area or has 10 spaces. In other words, when a parking lot has either 2,000 square feet or has 10 parking spaces, it is required to complete the landscaping requirements.

Those landscaping requirements include:

- A 6 foot strip between the parking area itself and the street. Within that 6 foot strip, there has to be a 2 foot berm that can be made of either earthen material or it can be a small fence or a hedge.
- Also within the 6 foot strip, there has to be one tree for every 50 feet.
- If non-living material is used, one shrub or vine should be included every 10 feet along the barrier. Everything else has to be landscaped with grass, ground cover, or other landscape treatment.

Interior Parking Area Landscaping requirements include 10 square feet of interior landscaping for every parking space. That is divided out into islands. An island is a minimum of 100 square feet. In other words, for every 10 parking spaces, an island is required.

Within that island the following items are required:

- A minimum of 1 tree and 3 shrubs. The island can then be mulched or grassed.

The other major category of landscaping is Buffering.

Buffering is essentially, additional landscaping that is required between uses. If industrial is located next to industrial, no buffering is necessary. But, if industrial is located next to commercial, there is a certain level of buffering required. If industrial is next to residential, the buffering requirements are even greater.

The discussion this evening will not focus on buffering. It is well agreed that buffering is a necessity when differing uses are next to one another.

Mr. Spring is seeking input from Mr. Heidl as an owner/representative of a major industrial building within Tipp City and Mr. Collins representing Bruns, which is not only a developer of industrial property, but also a property holder in Tipp City and throughout the Miami Valley. Both of these gentlemen can answer any questions that Board members might have or make a statement regarding landscaping.

The floor was then opened for any questions or comments.

Ms. Wall began by stating that at the last Planning Board meeting this topic was brought to the Board to consider for a Public Hearing. The Planning Board rejected the idea of a Public Hearing due to lack of understanding of what the exact position is regarding the landscaping requirements and no language to even consider. So, the decision was made to hold a Work Session in order to better understand why a change is being requested. When the Code was rewritten, Ms. Wall feels that many changes were dictated by one individual. Her concern was whether or not this request was similar.

Mr. Spring wanted to make it clear that Mr. Heidl and Mr. Collins did not specifically request changes to the landscaping requirements. There has been rumblings about the necessity for changes. When Mr. Spring discussed the matter with the City Manager, he suggested going to the Planning Board.

Mr. Heidl noted that Repacorp is in a cul-de-sac and there is only other manufacturing nearby. Currently, they are in the process of building another parking lot, which is adjacent to the current lot. That current lot has run out of space.

As far as landscaping, the current lot only has trees. There is no buffering for car headlights because there is no one in the area, besides themselves, that would be affected by lights shining into a building. Most of the trees, which are in the islands, have died due to a lack of an irrigation system.

Bottom line, does it really make sense to put in all these landscape materials, when Repacorp will be the only affected individuals. Keeping costs low is another factor.

Mr. Collins agreed with Mr. Heini's statements.

Going further, Mr. Collins stated that he agrees with the buffering requirements between zones. As far as landscaping required adjacent to public streets, he can see the requirements being stricter for businesses closer to roads with heavier traffic. It would help with aesthetics and block headlights. As you move further into an industrial zone, where the whole zone is all industrial buildings, Mr. Collins believes that the landscaping requirements should be a bit more lenient.

Mr. Heini inquired if Code has changed since 1997, when the current Repacorp building and parking lot was built. He was curious since that building does not have any of the buffering. That leads him to believe that requirements have changed.

Mr. Spring replied that he starting working at the City of Tipp City in 2004. There have not been many changes since that time, but he is not sure what occurred between 1997 and 2004.

Mr. Vath added that the area where Repacorp is located could essentially be an industrial park. A similar case could be made for Abbott Parkway. The buffering requirements exist and Abbott put in a large mound that goes along County Road 25A. The City of Tipp City envisions the same type mound being created if and when the area south of Abbott Parkway is developed. Northgate Commerce Center also has the same issue. All these areas are mainly industrial users and little usage by the motoring public.

It is essential on Main Street to have requirements that would help to limit the amount of headlight pollution. This is due in part to more general public traffic traveling in this area. It is Mr. Vath's view that an argument can be made to delete the buffering requirement in industrial plat areas. Planning Board can make the recommendation to City Council to make that change to Code.

Ms. Wall asked Mr. Heini and Mr. Collins if there were specific parts that they wished to be changed. Is it just the requirements that are in place for areas adjacent to public streets or are they concerned with the interior parking area landscaping portion of the Code?

Mr. Collins answered that he feels the main topic is the portion that is for areas adjacent to public streets. In his opinion, interior parking and buffering requirements are ok as written.

Mr. Heini sought clarification from Mr. Collins regarding how many island areas are in the new parking area for Repacorp.

Mr. Collins stated that there are 2 islands.

Mr. Spring went further by stating that the City of Tipp City has tried very hard, from a design stand point, to work with builders, developers,

and owners to lessen the amount of islands and still maintain interior landscaping. In other words, if there is a rectangular parking area, it would be attempted to keep the islands in the corners of the lot. What that does is allows for snow plows to clear lots much easier. When islands are situated in other areas of the parking lots it is much more difficult to maintain. Not only for snow plowing, but also watering. An island in the middle of a sea of asphalt tends to get very drought stricken. When adjacent to other green areas, islands tend to get more water and run off from the parking lot can be directed to those corners and edges of parking areas.

Mr. Heintl mentioned that on the existing parking lot at Repacorp, the snow plows have hit the islands so many times. They are marked, but they are still not visible. Curbs have been replaced multiple times. Moving islands to the corners or edges makes a lot of sense.

Ms. Wall asked if there is an engineering design reason as to why the islands are required.

Mr. Spring replied that he doesn't think it is from an engineering design stand point. Rather, the idea is to break up large expanses of asphalt. It is a little more aesthetically pleasing to not just have a sea of asphalt. The idea of islands is to make sure that there is not just one large area of green space in the middle of a parking area, but instead the green areas are spread out throughout the lot.

Ms. Alberson questioned if the intention of landscaping requirements is looking at sustainability or LEED certification.

Mr. Spring answered that there are no specifics on that at all. However, it is smart to look for xeriscaping and drought resistant types of materials in the islands.

As a follow-up, Ms. Alberson asked if it has ever been an intention of Code to have islands as a source of shade in a large parking area.

Mr. Spring replied that shade is a maybe a secondary reasoning behind requiring islands. Specifically, that is why the tree requirement is included.

Ms. Wall said that she would rather see the landscaping required adjacent to public streets instead of in the interior. Especially, if the attempt is being made to move the islands to the edges. It would make more sense to have trees lining the street. That is more visible to the motoring public.

Mr. Vath mentioned that he feels the objection is more the shrubs, rather than the trees.

Mr. Heintl agreed. The shrubs aren't going to do anything for any other business other than his. It is not a concern to Repacorp if headlights from their own parking lot shine into their own building.

Mr. Spring read what the specific Code requirement states. There is a 6 foot strip the entire length of the parking lot between the lot itself and the street. This strip should be planted with 1 tree for every 50 linear

feet or fraction thereof and shall include a hedge, wall, or other opaque durable landscape barrier of at least 2 feet in height. So most people have to plant a hedge that is 2 feet tall the entire length of their parking lot.

Mr. Collins wished to add that he can understand if a parking lot is adjacent to a main road, those requirements are necessary. But deep in an industrial zone, those requirements seem a little much. Especially in Repacorp's case. The parking area is in a cul-de-sac. Even a reduction to the amount of landscaping required would help. Everybody's situation is going to be different.

Ms. Alberson asked Mr. Collins if he had any experience with other municipalities and what their requirements are in comparison to the City of Tipp City's Code.

Mr. Collins answered that everyone is different. He is currently finishing a building a Vandalia and he is doing trees every so many feet, but he is not sure how that specifically relates to this topic. So, the short answer is not very much.

Ms. Alberson then directed the same question to Mr. Spring or Mr. Vath.

Mr. Spring stated that he did not do any specific research. However, he does know that the general concept in zoning is to require some type of barrier to keep headlights from going onto adjacent properties or onto any type of thoroughfare. This is a traffic safety concept.

Further, it is a valid concept, especially when there is parking in the evening. Some industrially businesses operate on a 7am-5pm schedule, so evening parking is not an issue. Many commercial businesses are open in the evening and are located in more populated areas. This particular 2 foot hedge requirement applies to a greater extent in those situations.

Ms. Wall inquired as to whether or not changes would only be applicable for industrial properties.

Mr. Spring responded that he is not really asking for anything specifically. He was hoping that the Planning Board could determine if any changes are warranted and if they are, where they are warranted and to what degree. It appears that after discussions this evening, some of the industrial requirements might be superfluous. If that is the case, specific language could be carved out stating, that maybe the 2 foot hedge requirement wouldn't be required in an industrially zoned area or that the interior requirements could be lessened to 5 square feet instead of 10 square feet. Language could also be added that would allow for requirements to be combined or manipulated to make plowing more accessible or easy.

Bottom line, Mr. Spring was not trying to craft any language or changes. He mainly wanted to get direct input from industrial property owners and builders. The same rumblings have been heard for quite a while now.

Ms. Wall commented that she appreciates the expense and that in Repacorp's case, there is not really a need for some of the landscaping requirements. However, her concern is that the Code is applicable to everyone. So how can language be carved out to provide an exception to one business that is located at the back of a cul-de-sac versus all industrial/commercial properties.

Mr. Heintl stated that he has served on the Zoning Board many years ago and to him it has to be common sense, but that is hard to write into Code. In 2003, he was President of the Chamber of Commerce. At that time many businesses came to the Chamber and were upset with all the Code requirements in Tipp City and they mentioned how difficult it was to build there. A letter was then sent to the City of Tipp City.

Further, Mr. Heintl said that the cost of developing increases because the City of Tipp puts developers through so much and has so many requirements. This is a comment that has come straight from an engineering company. That becomes a concern for business owners. He understands that there has to be Codes, but is there a way to maybe get a variance in certain cases when requirements just don't make sense.

Overall, the goal is to find a way that makes it a little easier to develop in the City of Tipp City. Also, to make it a little less expensive.

Ms. Wall asked if the engineering company that stated it costs more to develop in Tipp City, has done work since the Code was updated.

Mr. Heintl answered that they have done work in the City of Tipp City since the Code changed.

Once again, Mr. Heintl made the comment about applying for a variance. Could it be done for an industrial property?

Ms. Wall questioned whether Mr. Collins has had any other comments from other businesses that he is working with in Tipp City.

Mr. Collins replied that Repacorp is the only company that he has done work for in Tipp City. In Vandalia he hears the same types of comments from businesses. Most business owners don't want to spend the money on landscaping. Codes are met in any jurisdiction, but there is always a little bit of push back from businesses as to why they have to spend money on certain requirements that seem unnecessary.

Mr. Heintl commented that he is willing to spend money where it makes sense and to make the area look nice. That includes trees and landscape. It just doesn't make sense to put in this one row of shrubs. None of the other businesses in their area have the shrubs and the current parking lot doesn't have the row either.

Furthermore, Mr. Heintl understands that Planning Board is in a tough situation because they have to look at the Code as it relates to every business, but if they could look at maybe a variance for certain instances.

Ms. Wall thanked Mr. Heint and Mr. Collins for attending the Work Session and providing input.

The Planning Board then began discussion amongst their own members.

Ms. DeSantis expressed that she is concerned about making a change and then all businesses would be affected.

Ms. Alberson mentioned maybe adding language stating that a business could not put in shrubs, but add twice as many trees.

Ms. DeSantis then commented that trees would be defeating the purpose of the shrubs. Trees would not provide the buffering that shrubs do.

Ms. Alberson also stated maybe wording could be changed that would allow an industrially zoned property to not do any interior landscaping, but move everything to the perimeter. That would not address Mr. Heint's specific concern, but those are requirements that make more sense to her.

Mr. Spring said that Repacorp could seek a variance to the one specific section that he is questioning.

The bigger picture, according to Mr. Spring, is that there are a few areas, which Mr. Vath noted earlier, that are essentially their own little world.

Ms. Alberson noted that maybe language could be included that if you are in an area that is industrial adjacent to industrial, requirements are not applicable.

Mr. Spring agreed that wording such as that could potentially be added. However, it is difficult to write something that is designed for just a few situations.

Ms. Wall then stated that the problem is that the area of Abbott Parkway is not fully developed. It is difficult to understand what the future is for that area.

Mr. Spring commented that the area along CR 25A will have to be built up for whomever develops the property.

Mr. Thornbury asked if landscaping requirements are causing businesses to not develop in Tipp City. Has it gone that far?

Mr. Spring stated that the Planning Board heard Mr. Heint's comments this evening. He is a prime example of a business owner/developer in Tipp City. It is a strong possibility that Mr. Heint and others chat about their "war stories" and it is possible that Tipp City has developed a reputation.

Ms. Wall noted that every city has requirements. It might be that a developer has to take 4 steps in one city and 2 in another, but overall requirements are pretty similar.

Further, Ms. Wall said that a variance would be a great option in this case.

Mr. Spring clarified that what Mr. Heint said about no one else in the industrial neighborhood being required to do the 2 foot landscaping berm, was true. He doesn't know why.

Ms. Alberson asked if the areas were developed prior to the Code requiring it.

Mr. Spring answered that yes they were.

Ms. Wall then stated that it won't make sense to go to the area and see only one business that has the 2 foot shrub line.

Ms. Wall inquired as to whether or not Mr. Heint knows that he can request a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Mr. Spring answered that he didn't know, but that he specifically mentioned variance this evening.

Ms. Wall noted that she would support a variance.

In the end, Planning Board members decided to think a little bit more about implementing Code changes and to suggest that Repacorp seek a variance.

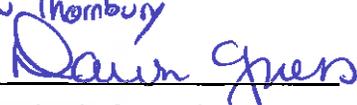
Work Session adjourned at 7:37pm.



~~Stacy Wall~~, Planning Board Chairman

Andrew Thornbury

Attest:



~~Kelly Rowlands~~, Board Secretary

Dawn Gross

PLANNING BOARD MEETING
TIPP CITY, MIAMI COUNTY, OHIO JANUARY 12, 2016

Meeting	Chairman Stacy Wall called the meeting of the Tipp City Planning Board to order at 7:39 p.m.
Roll Call	Roll call showed the following Board members present: Vonda Alberson, Andrew Thornbury, Jamie DeSantis, and Stacy Wall. Others in attendance: Zoning Administrator Matt Spring and Board Secretary Kelly Rowlands.
Election of Officers – Chairman & Vice Chairman	Ms. DeSantis nominated Ms. Wall for Chairman . Mr. Thornbury seconded the motion. Ms. Wall accepted the nomination. Motion passed 4-0. Ms. DeSantis nominated Mr. Thornbury for Vice Chairman . Ms. Alberson seconded the motion. Mr. Thornbury accepted the nomination. Motion passed 4-0.
Approval of Minutes – December 8, 2015	Ms. Wall moved to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2015 meeting as written . Ms. DeSantis seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.
Items Not on the Agenda	There were no comments on items not on the agenda.
<u>New Business</u>	There were no new business items on the agenda.
<u>Old Business</u>	Ms. Wall reminded everyone that there is an opening on the Planning Board. If anyone knows someone who would be interested in serving, please encourage them to apply.
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	
City Council Reports – December 21, 2015	Ms. DeSantis stated that this was the last City Council meeting of the year and the last meeting for Dee Gillis and Mike McDermott. Also, a Public Hearing was set for the rezoning of 15 N. Hyatt and it was approved to establish a Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Master Development Plan.

**City Council
Reports – January
4, 2016**

Ms. Wall asked if the members of the Steering Committee were listed.

Ms. DeSantis answered that no members were listed.

No Planning Board members attended this meeting.

**Upcoming City
Council Meetings –
January 19, 2016**

Ms. DeSantis will attend the January 19, 2016 City Council Meeting.

February 1, 2016

Ms. Wall will attend the February 1, 2016 City Council Meeting.

**Board Member
Comments**

Ms. Wall asked Planning Board members to provide any further feedback regarding Industrial Landscaping to Mr. Spring.

Ms. Alberson questioned whether anyone has applied for the open Planning Board position.

Mr. Spring answered no. The City of Tipp is actually down a BZA member, Planning Board member, and Restoration Board member. So, several people are needed to serve. Also, individuals are needed for the Comprehensive Master Development Plan Steering Committee.

Ms. Wall inquired about the status of the County Road 25A project. When is the proposed completion date?

Mr. Spring believes that it is supposed to be completed sometime during the Fall of 2016.

Right now it is only open for traffic heading north.

Ms. Wall asked if there are any development projects that will be coming before the Planning Board this year.

Mr. Spring stated that as of right now, he doesn't know of anything on the horizon.

Ms. Wall asked Mr. Spring if he has heard any complaints regarding the new Code. Are there any items that are still causing issues?

Mr. Spring responded that there has not been anything out of the ordinary.

Going further, Ms. Wall questioned if the process of reviewing and approving more items internally, rather than having the Planning Board get involved, is working well.

Mr. Spring stated that a few cases have gone through an administrative

review process. For example, Dayton Orthopaedic was approved internally and it went very smoothly. They did have to apply for a variance and went through the BZA for approval.

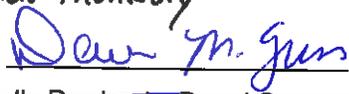
Adjournment

Ms. Alberson **moved the meeting be adjourned**. Mr. Thornbury seconded the motion. Ms. Wall declared the meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.



Stacy Wall, Planning Board Chairman

Andrew Thornbury

Attest: 

~~Kelly Rowlands, Board Secretary~~

Dawn M. Gross

