

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY OF ROMULUS
PLANNING COMMISSION HELD ON MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2023
ROMULUS CITY HALL, ROMULUS MICHIGAN
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

1. **Pledge of Allegiance.** The meeting was called to order by Chair Freitag at 7:00 pm and all participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Roll Call Showing:** Crova, Frederick, Gbogboade, Glotfelty (left 9:57pm), Long, McAnally, Roscoe, Talon-Jemison, Freitag

Excused: None

Also in attendance: Carol Maise, City Planner; Jeff Kemp, Director of Building and Planning; Jessica Katers, Engineering Consultant (OHM); Roberto Scappaticci, DPW Director

3. **Approval of Agenda:**

Motion by Glotfelty, support by Talon-Jemison, to approve the agenda as submitted.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Glotfelty, Talon-Jemison, Roscoe, Crova, McAnally, Long, Gbogboade, Frederick, Freitag. Nays – None. Motion carried 9-0.

Agenda

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call – Frederick, Glotfelty, McAnally, Long, Roscoe, Talon-Jemison, Crova, Gbogboade, & Freitag
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Approval of the minutes of the regular Planning Commission meeting held on May 15, 2023
5. Comments from Public on Non Agenda Items
6. Public Hearings
 - A. **SLU-2023-004/SPR-2023-009; Romulus Distribution Center**
 - Applicant: Kyle Morton, Ashley Capital
 - Request: Special Land Use/Site Plan
 - Location: 36711 Ecorse Road (DP#80-028-99-0012-704)
 - Project: Construction of two industrial warehouse/distribution buildings that exceed 80,000 sq. ft. in size (Building 1 is 469,780 sq. ft. and Building 2 is 546,881 sq. ft.)

(Action Required: Recommendation to City Council to approve, approve with conditions, deny or postpone action on the Special Land Use request; approve, approve with conditions, deny or postpone on the Site Plan request).

B. SLU-2023-005/SPR-2023-013; Sheetz

Applicant: David Bruckelmeyer, Sheetz, Inc.
Johnny Sweeney, NorthPoint
Becky Klein, PEA Group
Request: Special Land Use/Site Plan
Location: 33380 Wick Road (DP#80-039-99-0001-707)
Project: Drive-thru as part of a proposed fueling station, convenience store and restaurant

(Action Required: Recommendation to City Council to approve, approve with conditions, deny or postpone action on the Special Land Use request; approve, approve with conditions, deny or postpone on the Site Plan request)

7. Old Business
 8. New Business
 9. Election of Officers
 10. PC-Cases Involving Advice or Input from the Planning Commission
 11. Reports on Interest Designation
 12. Communications
 - A. Project Status Report
 13. Adjournment
- 4. Approval of Minutes**
- A. Approval of the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on May 15, 2023.

Motion by Talon-Jemison, support by Crova, to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on May 15, 2023 as submitted.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Talon-Jemison, Crova, Frederick, Glotfelty, Long, McAnally, Freitag. Nays – None. Abstentions – Gbogboade, Roscoe. Motion carried 7-0-2 (2 abstentions)

5. Comments from the Public on Non Agenda Items

None

6. Public Hearings

A. SLU-2023-004/SPR-2023-009; Romulus Distribution Center

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Members of the development team present this evening included:

- Kyle Morton, Ashley Capital, 2575 S. Haggerty Road, Ste 500, Canton MI
- Mark Quimby, Ashley Capital, 2575 S. Haggerty Road, Ste 500, Canton MI
- Julie Kroll, Fleis & Vandenbrink
- Joe Webb, Webb Engineering, Ann Arbor MI
- Brandon Kritzman, Detroit Architectural Group, 30445 NW Highway, Farmington Hills.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Morton, Ashley Capital, made the following points:

- This project has been about four years in the making; the applicants first started talking to the City in mid to late 2019.
- The property is the largest M-1 property left in the City.
- The property had challenges associated with its historic use as an unregulated landfill.
- Ashley Capital has been in the Detroit market for over 30 years, specializing in bulk warehouse buildings. Their average building in Metro Detroit is over 500,000sf. They currently own about 40 buildings, with over 22 million square feet, spread across the Tri-County area.
- Ashley Capital was known for brownfield redevelopment. This will be their 3rd brownfield site, with the two proposed buildings their 6th and 7th buildings on landfills. They have a team of experts – both internally and externally – that are used to working with complicated projects such as this one. Recent examples of their work included redevelopment of the Hazel Park Racetrack, and redevelopment of the Liberty Park of America softball field in Sterling Heights.
- The subject site was very large – about 280 acres. However, only about 80 acres on the eastern portion of the site are useable. The rest of the land is encumbered by a conservation easement, which was put in place when the Pinnacle Racetrack was built in Huron Township. The conservation easement requires state inspection every three years. Ashley Capital has been working with the State, and nothing being proposed will impact the conservation easement. Ashley Capital was not seeking to lift the conservation easement or change anything in that area.
- Ashley Capital had spent considerable time working on land assemblage. The main parcel came from the City, which was basically everything that was a conservation easement as well as the southern landfill. Other parcels had been acquired in order to provide appropriate access to this site.

- The prior site had two access points which would not be adequate for the proposed plan. The applicants were now able to provide new access as well as a new circulation plan, which will include installing a traffic signal that will line up with the General Motors access drive across the street.
- Historically, as shown in two aerial photos from the 1960's, there had been two separate landfill/dumping operations on the property; both were unlicensed and therefore were not handled through a state regulatory agency. The approximately 75' elevation change on the site was caused by the long-term dumping that went on there.
- Ashley Capital will be seeking a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals in order to put a detention pond on the west side – on the part of the parcel that is zoned residential. Originally they had hoped to put the detention pond toward Ecorse Road, but that ended up being regulated wetlands. The detention pond will be a dry pond.
- Ashley Capital had been before the Romulus Brownfield Development Authority and the City Council at least twice regarding this project.
- The biggest concern with the site was its combination of environmental pollution including methane and fill. This was never a municipal waste site, but was more a landfill operation for construction solid waste, such as 55-gallon drums, car parts, and so on. This material will not settle over time.
- Ashley Capital was proposing to level out the southern landfill to match the northern landfill, in order to create a single flat site. 750,000 cubic yards of soil needs to be moved south to north.
- Ashley Capital was proposing to construct two speculative buildings. One would be 470,000sf and the second would be 546,000sf.
- There would be two points of access from Ecorse Road, with no access to Wick Road.
- The watermain will be looped and will need to be extended from Wick Road; the applicants will restore any portion of Wick Road that will be disturbed.
- The buildings were set back 800' from the Wick property lines, allowing the applicants to leave most of the vegetation on the south side of the site undisturbed. A county drain runs through the area.
- In terms of proximity to residential uses, the development was 1,000' from the property line to the east, and 1,300' from the closest residential building.
- Ashley Capital was not proposing a rail spur on the site. The plans do show the neighbor's inactive rail spur crossing a corner of this site.
- Ashley Capital was requesting a waiver to provide 8' tall evergreens at 15' on center in a staggered row along the perimeter of the truck parking area (east, west, and south perimeters), in lieu of the required buffer. They were proposing 826 8'-high evergreens, a 4'-high berm, and existing vegetation to screen the proposed dock doors.
- Trees to be removed are shown circled in red on the plans, and calculations have been provided for tree replacement, per City ordinance.

Ms. Kroll, traffic engineer, Fleis & Vandenbrink, provided the following information:

- Fleis & Vandenbrink started working on this project in 2020, after working with the City to come up with a scope of work.
- As already stated, the project had two points of ingress and egress to the site, with no access to Wick Road.
- A signal will be added to the primary point of access, to facilitate truck movements in and out and to provide gaps in traffic that will allow trucks to get in and out of the site without impacting traffic on Ecorse. Purchasing the residential properties as part of the property

assemblage allowed the applicants to design a driveway that will share access and accommodate a signal for both the GM facility and this new facility.

- The bypass lanes will be widened and extended out to provide left turn lanes, so that traffic will not be backed up on Ecorse Road. Ashley Capital will also be working with the railroad to provide preemption, to avoid any issues where there might be a red light when a train comes through and traffic is backed up across the tracks. The signal design will incorporate the operations of the railroad tracks.
- Other mitigation will include signal timing optimizations, specifically on Ecorse and Wayne, as well as other locations, to improve the operations of the intersections over current conditions.

Mr. Morton described the project status further:

- The applicants had worked with EGLE (Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy) over the last 3 years to do extensive environmental testing, and extensive geotechnical work to ensure that the buildings' structure can be supported.
- The applicants had worked through the brownfield plan and tax increment financing. The project was on the MEDC/Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) July agenda to request approval.
- Regarding the wetlands, the applicants were proposing just under 5 acres of wetland impacts on the site, largely in the area between the two landfills. This area had been left to be overgrown for the last 50 years, and has tires, random auto parts, and some kind of white suspended fluid in the water. From the State's perspective, this was not a high-quality wetland.
- Should special land use and site plan approval be granted, the applicants were hoping to start construction fall 2023.
- As noted in the MKSK and OHM reports, Ashley Capital was requesting 3 waivers:
 1. Landscape waiver, related to adding more evergreens in lieu of shrubs, in order to enhance screening of the site.
 2. Sidewalk payment in lieu of constructing additional sidewalk beyond the access from the railroad tracks west to the new traffic signal. Fractured land ownership to the west as well as an error in the conservation easement boundary prevented further sidewalk installation. Ashley Capital was not proposing a sidewalk on Wick Road per the City's request.
 3. Variances granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals: 1) to allow the detention basin on property zoned R-1A, and 2) variances for building height and light pole height.

Mr. Quimby, Ashley Capital, summarized the brownfield request as presented to the Brownfield Development Authority Board and City Council:

- The Brownfield Plan was approved in 2022, and was subsequently amended to include the newly acquired parcels. Since that time the combination of parcels has been approved, so that all the land was now one parcel.
- Mr. Quimby reviewed the history of brownfield development in Michigan, and described the purpose of and processes regarding brownfield development. Brownfield development helped provide funding through a TIF (tax increment financing) in order to allow polluted sites to be cleaned up and redeveloped, so that older, compromised sites could compete with new greenfields in terms of development potential.
- The subject site had several issues, chief among them the explosive levels of methane being generated by the organics within the landfill.
- From a geotechnical perspective, the site was completely inconsistent, which means the site cannot structurally withstand the proposed building loads without significant structural

support and work. The applicants were proposing geopiers to act as foundations for the buildings.

- The buildings will have mitigation protocols to prevent the methane from accumulating in the buildings. Also, any pipes will need to be sealed with chemically resistant materials so that no groundwater contamination or leachate in the landfill can infiltrate the storm water system.
- The landfill itself will be capped, which essentially means to cover everything in order to control the contaminants and allow the actual construction process to move forward. A vapor barrier will be placed underneath the entire building slab so that methane can't come in through the floor.
- The TIF plan was approved for \$25M. About \$10.6M of that amount is for non-environmental activities, and \$14.5M is for environmental activities. The reimbursement period is for 23 years as currently estimated.
- Ashley Capital will continue to own the buildings after the project is complete.
- The brownfield law allows a developer to keep 100% of the tax increment; Ashley Capital was proposing to capture 90% of the tax increment, with 10% of the tax capture to go to Romulus and the applicable taxing jurisdictions.
- A Brownfield plan pays for activities that are necessary to make the site buildable, including earthwork, special utilities, methane controls, etc. The developer pays for those costs up front, and over the period of the plan the developer is reimbursed from the TIF. If at any point the development does not go forward after money has been spent on brownfield development, the developer will be out that money; the City will not be involved.
- Using graphs and charts, Mr. Quimby explained in some detail how a brownfield plan and TIF financing works. The 10% of the TIF that will go to Romulus and other taxing jurisdictions exceeds the current taxes being paid for this site. After the 23-year term of the brownfield is up, all the taxes will revert to the taxing jurisdictions.
- Ashley Capital's view was that this contaminated property can be redeveloped into productive use for the City, and after completion the development will generate at least 640 jobs. The brownfield mitigating process will control the entire site into perpetuity.
- Regarding the size of the buildings, this site had many issues, and there was a certain amount of money that will be needed to just get the site to ground zero so it can be developed, and the size of the buildings can offset that cost. Developing this site without brownfield funding would be impossible from an economic point of view.

Mr. Kritzman, Detroit Architectural Group, showed renderings of the existing conditions on site, including the residential neighbors and nearby schools, as well as renderings of the proposed buildings from different views including aerial views. The renderings showed the new access road, the new intersection, the rail line, the new berm and landscape buffer. Elevations of the proposed buildings were also provided, with some architectural articulation near the entrance doors, and windows on the south side of the buildings' facades. Mr. Kritzman pointed out the additional landscaping that was being purposefully located along the main thoroughfares to provide additional screening from many public vantage points.

The entire site was physically modeled, with the model included as part of tonight's PowerPoint presentation showing the proposed topography and grades of the entirety of the site, as well as the existing conditions on the site.

Mr. Kritzman pointed out that the existing residential homes had a significant amount of tree coverage immediately behind their properties. Some of the existing and new tree cover will lose

leaves in the winter, which is why the applicants were proposing evergreen trees to help further screen the property.

The applicants completed their presentation.

Engineering Consultant Katers said that the lighting question noted in her June 15 written comments was in error – lighting plans are now acceptable as proposed, as long as the variance is granted by the BZA for the light pole height.

Engineering Consultant Katers offered review comments as follows:

- There were some waivers not included in the planning report that the Commission needed to discuss this evening:
 - a. The applicant had asked to decrease the typical trailer storage area curb from 12”x36” to 7”x12”, which would still be greater than the standard curb and gutter. The applicant had indicated that this type of curb and gutter is used throughout their projects in Southeast Michigan. Engineering Consultant Katers had asked for pictures or additional items that show that those other developments were being successfully maintained, without trash running off the back of the curb, for instance. Engineering Consultant Katers said she could support this waiver request, but the additional items did need to be provided.
 - b. The landscaping waivers need to be added to the motion. The three property lines to the east, the south and the west all require a Type A buffer between the residential use and the industrial use; this needs to be clarified on the engineer’s list of waiver requests. The applicant has proposed to put the double row of evergreens around the three property lines in order to provide screening. The buffer request was for a reduction in or a substitution for the Type A buffer to be evergreen rather than the mixture that is typically required of deciduous trees and shrubs. Engineering Consultant Katers also supported this waiver request.
- The building appearance needs to follow the appearance requirements in Section 13.01 of the Zoning Ordinance. Certain modifications in building appearance and materials can be allowed if the amount of required landscape materials within the frontage greenbelt is increased by 50%. That 50% was not calculated in the landscaping calculations, but Engineering Consultant Katers thought the applicants did have the ability to get the 50% increased landscaping in the frontage. After this modification, the plan would need to be reviewed again.
- The rain gardens in the front were not treated as detention; the applicant should provide the calculations to make sure the detention intent for landscaping was met.
- The amount of greenbelt frontage was reduced with the wetland. While plantings cannot occur there because of the conservation easement, the frontage as defined in the zoning ordinance needs to include the entire length of the property, with the landscaping dispersed over the rest of the remaining section of the frontage that can have plantings. If the Planning Commission allowed a decrease in the frontage length, that would also require a waiver.

Noting that this was a public hearing, and that an affidavit of first-class mail was on file, Chair Freitag opened the meeting to public comment.

Geri Schaudt, 36739 Wick Road, said she lived across the street from the proposed development. While the applicant stated this project would have no impact on traffic, currently the residents dealt with semi-trucks going up down the road on a constant basis. The traffic has increased

dramatically. Wick Road has signs that said “No Commercial Vehicles” but they were inundated with commercial vehicles. The applicants were claiming this development would have no impact on the railroad, yet currently trains stopped for 20-30 minutes. Ms. Schaudt found it hard to believe there would be no impact on the railroad. The residents were looking at over 1,016,661sf of industrial building going in across the street from their homes, next to the schools. She would rather see overgrown trees than this development.

Teresa Pokorny, Cogswell, was concerned about the views that the elementary school and junior high would have of this property. Also, while the applicant would not have an entrance onto Wick Road, how long would it take before an entrance was constructed there? There was a lot of traffic on Wick Road now due to the detour. What would stop people from using Wick Road when the detour was no longer needed? People did not want to stop at the light would continue to use Wick Road. She did not want this development in her neighborhood.

James Garrison, Ozga Street, said he lived across the street from the Romulus engine plant. He found it hard to believe that the described new access drive will support the amount of traffic that these buildings will generate. He was concerned about the impact on the conservation easement. Mr. Garrison was also concerned about the impact on his back yard of disturbing that site with its toxic waste – would the contamination migrate to his property? His children all walked through the woods on a regular basis. Mr. Garrison said it was difficult to pull out from his street on to Ecorse right now. Again, he found it hard to believe that traffic would not be impacted by increased semi-traffic and more employee traffic. Mr. Garrison was concerned as to what this development would do to his property values, and whether the zoning would be expanded and he would be pushed out of his home.

Coralie Gelormino, Cogswell, agreed with the previous speakers. It was difficult to walk across the street right now to get to her mailbox because of the traffic. This was a commercial site being placed in a residential neighborhood, close to schools. The ambience of the area will not be the same. Children will look out their school windows and see a large commercial warehouse.

Franklin Schaudt, 36739 Wick Road, was concerned about an increase in train traffic. Trains park there for an hour or more at a time. Ashley Capital said they would not use the train, but this was hard to believe. The subject site was not a landfill, and it was not honest to call it one. Mr. Schaudt said the after the Ecorse intersection construction was complete, people will still use the easier way down Wick. He wondered if anyone on the development team would want this in their back yard. Ashley Capital mentioned jobs but Amazon had made the same promise, yet only a few people from Romulus worked at Amazon. The brownfield plan was for 23 years – would the City get nothing from this development for 23 years? Would the buildings be empty in 23 years? Mr. Schaudt mentioned the protected Michigan massasauga rattle snake which lived on the subject site, and the eagles nesting in the trees. A hundred acres of trees would be cut down, to be replaced a by few rows of trees and landscaping. He thought this development was a big mistake.

Stanley Stanek said he lived on Ecorse Road between Ozga and this site. The residents were plagued with flooding issues, and the McCoy Drain could not keep up with its current volume. What will happen to his home value when this project is constructed? Will the dry detention pond hold?

Leah Garrison, Ozga Street, asked how disturbing the soil will impact the residents, schools, and drains in the area. What will be the typical noise pollution levels for a development of this size? While some hazardous materials will be removed or capped, more will be brought in with this

development. How will capping an entire property impact the wetlands? Lighting will impact wildlife. Will the lighting light up the sky? The GM plant down the road lights up her backyard. Was the proposed AT&T cell tower part of this development? The renderings made it difficult to see where the detention pond will be in relation to its residential neighbors.

Seeing that no other public indicated they wished to speak, Chair Freitag closed public comment and brought the matter back to the Commission.

Commission questions and discussion

In response to questions from the Commission, the applicants provided the following further information:

- The process for moving materials and soil around the site or moved off site will be regulated by EGLE, and EGLE is currently reviewing the applicant's workplan. EGLE review and approval was part of the tax financing plan/brownfield plan.
- Detroit pipes that are deteriorating are very old and constructed of wood, brick, etc. Newer materials, such as high-density plastic, have a much longer life expectancy. The pipes for this project will not be encapsulated in high-density plastic material that is chemically resistant, but will be constructed of that material. The life expectancy for these materials is very long – longer than the life expectancy of the building.
- The geopier system that will be under the buildings will absorb and spread the load across the entire footprint of the building. A traditional slab is constructed over the top of the geopier system. In a sense the weight of the building is floated across the piers, but the building is not really floating.
- The vapor barrier materials are regulated and EGLE has to approve them. EPA (Federal Environmental Protection Agency) also has guidelines relative to vapor barrier materials. The vapor barrier is made out of specific materials that are chemically resistant, with long life expectancies that are expected to be longer than the life of the building. Everything will be encapsulated underneath the building.
- All materials on site will comply with industry standards.
- Ecorse Road will be widened, and the turn signals and dedicated turn lanes are definitely going in. Fleis & Vandenbrink staff are meeting with Wayne County, DTE, and the City tomorrow.
- In response to comments that a more future-oriented traffic study would suggest mitigation based on the long-term growth of the City, Ms. Kroll explained the process and protocols for the traffic studies that were done. The traffic study encompassed 15 intersections on Ecorse Road. The traffic volumes used pre-COVID traffic counts, with COVID adjustments made on top of that. An annual growth rate was applied to the COVID adjusted volumes to account for additional traffic volume that is anticipated throughout the network, not just for this project, but for all the development that is anticipated to be in the area. This is why the recommendations include off-site mitigations for signal timing optimization, in addition to the signal that will accommodate the future traffic generated by this site and the existing traffic from the GM facility.
- Romulus requires that if a tenant comes in that is a heavy traffic generator (heavier than the assumptions in the study), the site will have to be completely re-evaluated.
- Fleis & Vandenbrink applied a .96% growth rate to the build-out year; this growth rate was provided by the City. Again, the study used pre-COVID traffic adjusted volumes, and then applied the background growth rate to those volumes, and added the site-generated traffic on top of that.

- Mr. Morton said that Ashley Capital will commit to put language in the leases that Romulus residents will get a “first shot” at jobs through advertising, job fairs, and/or a local hiring preference. Ashley Capital had done this in other municipalities as well.
- The new evergreen trees (such as arborvitae) will be 8’ tall, 15’ on center, and will provide a year-round landscape buffer. The applicants were in communication with the school in order to make landscaping improvements against the school’s fence line.
- The berm is 4’ tall, so the trees when first planted will be at a visual height of 12’. The building will have a maximum height of 47’.
- In terms of the end user, the applicants were targeting tenants such as those in their Van Buren projects and in the Romulus Business Center. There will be no heavy manufacturing/stamping plants, etc., which in any event were not allowed in the M-1 district. There could possibly be light assembly/automobile sub-assembly uses in the buildings.
- The buildings were not intended to be true cross-dock truck terminals, where trucks would enter one side of the building and exit out the other within 20 minutes, for instance.
- In response to specific questions about the traffic study, Ms. Kroll reviewed background traffic volumes in Figure 4, site generated traffic volumes for cars in Figure 5, and site generated traffic volumes for trucks in figure 6, all of which led to future traffic volumes in Figure 7. The increase in volume was about 16% for certain intersections and turning movements. This increase did not represent an “in totality” percentage, however. Table 6 (p. 9 of the Study) showed the Site Trip Distribution that was used to send all the cars through the transportation network. The majority of the trips generated by the site will be cars used by employees or others accessing the site. Truck distribution was also shown on Table 6, with 50% of truck traffic anticipated to go to the west, and 50% to the south. Cars and trucks did not have similar distribution systems. The traffic study evaluates a.m. and p.m. peak hours.
- The two access points would allow trucks and cars to exit the site by turning left to I-275 should a train be backed up on the tracks.
- Both traffic signals that will handle GM traffic on Ecorse will be actuated and coordinated.
- The extension of the watermain will cross the wetland and go on to school property in what will be a “straight shot.” No trees are being removed for the watermain extension, which will run parallel to the east line of the school.
- The applicants will look at why trees to be removed on the southwest corner of the property were not indicated on the plans by a red circle as other trees to be removed were.
- The watermain extension will not come from Ecorse because they were creating a looped system, with the water connection on Wick Road much better for this purpose compared to Ecorse. The watermain extension will travel down school property, and have nothing to do with Wick Road. The watermain is 30’-40’ off the centerline of Wick.
- The geopiers would be driven into the ground about 20’ deep, and filled with stone. The typical construction time for the piers would be about a month, with minimal offsite vibrations. These piers were different than those used for multi-story buildings.
- The applicants had met on site with the facility staff for the school, regarding how best to do this work with minimal impact to the school. They were working with the school on some other drainage improvements also. The applicants were obligated to repair anything on school property that might be damaged; they were aware of the new driveway and curbs that were recently put in. The only thing that might have a material impact was the new light pole that will need to be worked around or possibly relocated, but this would not require ripping up the new driveway.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Talon-Jemison thought the traffic studies should be based on future growth beyond the two-year build-out period.

Engineering Consultant Katers said that the process for obtaining an occupancy or re-occupancy permit will look at the trip generation for the known user to determine whether or not there will be any additional adverse impact. At that point, the City will require additional mitigation measures, if needed.

- After a series of questions and answers reflected in the discussion above, Commissioner Gbogboade noted that with two very large buildings on this site, there would undoubtedly be an increase in truck traffic on the local roads. How would truck drivers be incentivized to use the correct truck routes? How would the applicants reduce trucks turning right so that they did not fill up Wayne Road?

Mr. Morton said they had worked with tenants in other municipalities to make sure the lease language included enforceability of the requirement that trucks must stay on Class A roads. They would do the same in this case.

- Commissioner Frederick noted that large fires on the site had burned for about a week several decades ago, around 1989 and 1992.
- Chair Freitag pointed out that until the tenants were known, all conversation about traffic was to some extent hypothetical.

Mr. Morton said that the assumptions for the traffic study were based on maximum utilization of the buildings. Additionally, once tenants were in place the traffic studies would be redone based on the needs of the specific tenant. No changes were contemplated relative to a railroad spur, access to Wick Road, etc., and in any event those changes could not occur without a public hearing.

- Commissioner Long said he understood the concerns made in public comment regarding traffic and the impact on the environment. He did think that property values might actually increase as this area was improved. Based on his professional experience, he did not think the impact would be as negative as the neighbors feared.

The Chair recognized Jim Garrison, Ozga Street, and allowed Mr. Garrison to speak again.

Mr. Garrison spoke at length and in some detail regarding the fact that the residents had already seen the negative impact of development on traffic in their area. This was a huge development with employee shift traffic combining with other shift traffic in the area.

Additionally, the nearby homes were subject to repeated extensive flooding; flooding was horrible in this area. Widening roads eliminated drainage, and would likely increase the flooding.

Nothing had been done to address either the traffic or the flooding in the neighborhood. It was difficult to trust any promises made that things would not be harmed or that they might even be improved, or that the toxic waste/contamination from the site would not migrate to nearby residential properties. There was no built-in safety net for the residential properties.

In response to comments from the Commission, Mr. Garrison said every agency and municipal body, including the County, had been contacted regarding their flooding issues, and he had worked with the City and County for years trying to get the situation improved. The McCory drain cannot keep up with current demand. And while Ecorse Road belongs to the County, the residents were surrounded by City property, and nothing had been done.

Mr. Morton said Ashley Capital had similar flooding issues on their property off Van Born Road, and had petitioned the County without success to take care of the situation. They were spending considerable money on the Van Born property to redo some of the detention ponds to try and improve the situation themselves. Tonight was the first they knew of the problems the residents were having, and they will do what they can with the County to work on improving the situation; they would be meeting with the County tomorrow.

Engineering Consultant Katers reiterated that the background traffic on the traffic study does include all the new traffic from the Trade Center, Sheetz, and the new development on the north side of Smith road.

Chair Freitag indicated she was ready for a motion, and after discussion and amendment, the following motions were offered:

MOTION by McAnally, support by Long, that the Planning Commission recommend to City Council approval of the Special Land Use application for *SLU-2023-004; Romulus Distribution Center* for two warehouse distribution buildings greater than 80,000 sq. ft. in area at 36711 Ecorse Road, subject to the following:

- 1. Submission of a revised site plan addressing all outstanding comments as noted by the Planning Commission and other agencies and departments;**
- 2. Use variance being granted by the BZA to allow the detention basin on property zoned R-1A, Single-Family Residential;**
- 3. Variances granted by the BZA for building height and light pole height; and**
- 4. Waiver to allow payment in lieu of construction of sidewalk in the amount of \$69,795.00 for a portion of the development.**

Roll call vote: Ayes – McAnally, Long, Frederick, Crova, Roscoe, Talon-Jemison, Freitag. Nays – Glotfelty, Gbogboade. Motion carried 7-2.

MOTION by McAnally, support by Long, that the Planning Commission approve the Site Plan based on the June 14, 2023 MKSK report (Site Plan) and other staff reports, subject to the following:

- 1. Special Land Use approval by City Council;**
- 2. Use variance being granted by the BZA to allow the detention basin on property zoned R-1A, Single-family Residential;**
- 3. Variances granted by the BZA for building height and light pole height;**
- 4. Waiver to allow payment in lieu of construction of sidewalk in the amount of \$69,795.00 for a portion of the development;**
- 5. Waiver to reduce curb height in the trailer storage area based on the applicant providing evidence of maintenance on other sites, from 12" x 36" to 7" x 12";**
- 6. Waiver to substitute double row of evergreens instead of Type A buffer screening along the South, East and West sides of the development.**

7. **Once a tenant is known and prior to occupancy, anticipated truck and vehicle trips must be provided for review to verify if any additional improvements will be required; and**
8. **Submission of a revised site plan addressing all outstanding items as noted by the Planning Commission and other agencies and departments.**

Motion discussion:

- The applicants should increase the landscaping to the 50% requirement per the zoning ordinance; this is included in condition #8 above. Mr. Morton said they would make sure the calculations reflected this requirement.
- In response to comments, Mr. Morton said they were not requesting a waiver from the frontage calculation in terms of the wetland frontage discussed above.
- The rain gardens will be included in the calculations for detention.

Roll call vote: Ayes – McAnally, Long, Frederick, Crova, Roscoe, Talon-Jemison, Freitag. Nays – Glotfelty, Gbogboade. Motion carried 7-2.

B. SLU-2023-005/SPR-2023-013; Sheetz

Applicant: David Bruckelmeyer, Sheetz, Inc.
Johnny Sweeney, NorthPoint
Becky Klein, PEA Group
Request: Special Land Use/Site Plan
Location: 33380 Wick Road (DP#80-039-99-0001-707)
Project: Drive-thru as part of a proposed fueling station, convenience store and restaurant

(Action Required: Recommendation to City Council to approve, approve with conditions, deny or postpone action on the Special Land Use request; approve, approve with conditions, deny or postpone on the Site Plan request)

Members of the development team present this evening included:

- Drew Miller, Skilken Gold Real Estate Development Company, 4270 Morse Road, Columbus OH
- David Bruckelmeyer, Scheetz, Inc. 6430 Morrison Rd., Suite 150, Gahanna OH
- Scott Armstrong, Sheetz, Inc., 31000 Northwestern Highway, Farmington Hills MI
- Rebecca Klein, Civil Engineer, PEA, Auburn Hills MI

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Bruckelmeyer highlighted the following:

- Sheetz was founded in 1952 in Altoona, PA, starting as a convenience store with a deli, which is what it mostly remains today. Sheetz focused on made-to-order sandwiches and premium beverage offerings, as well as fuel.
- Sheetz was a family operated company with no franchisees.
- A prototypical store design was shown as part of the presentation. The building used full sized brick, with metal facias, and excellent exterior lighting. An interior shot showed the restaurant with interior seating; exterior seating was also provided.
- Sheetz had 25,000 employees.

- Sheetz was committed to giving back to their communities. At the opening of every store a donation is made to Special Olympics, as well as to a local food bank. After opening, the store will continue to support the local community.

In response to questions, Mr. Bruckelmeyer gave the following further information:

- The restaurant was not a franchise, but was operated by the Sheetz company.
- There would be no car wash on site.
- Sheetz was requesting a drive-thru for the restaurant.
- There would be no long-term truck parking on site.
- The layout was almost exactly the same as the previously approved site plan for Royal Farms.
- The yard hydrant was in place for cleanup/maintenance of the diesel lanes, and for filling windshield washer buckets, etc. The hydrant will be connected to their water system, and will be metered and frost-free.

Ms. Klein, PEA Civil Engineers, explained that the project was located at the northeast corner of Vining and Wick Roads. The subject site was an outlot of the NPD (NorthPoint Development) project, located between Vining, Smith, Wick, and Wickham Roads.

As mentioned, the site was previously approved for Royal Farms, and tonight's submission was very similar to that earlier approval. Differences included:

- There is now a hard separation between the tractor-truck fueling station and the passenger vehicle areas.
- There was no carwash with the Sheetz development proposal; instead that area will now be utilized for additional stacking for the restaurant drive-thru, which will be located on the north side of the building.

The landscape plan will match the previously approved plans. Any discrepancies will be corrected and the plans resubmitted. A few things will have to be adjusted because of the curb changes, but otherwise there would be the same number of plantings with the same species and same caliper trees as previously approved.

The site is zoned Regional Center. The building area will be about 5,879sf and the buildings will be about 21' tall. The fueling canopy will be about the same height, the truck fueling canopy slightly lower; 52 parking spaces were proposed. There will be 12 spaces for car fueling, and 10 spaces for truck fueling.

The applicants were seeking some modifications and waivers for the project.

- A special land use is required for the 12 dispenser vehicle fuel pumps, and the 5 dispenser diesel fuel pumps. A waiver is required to allow the diesel fuel pumps.
- A special land use is also required for the drive-thru restaurant.
- A signage package – including a variance request for signs – will be submitted separately.
- The applicants were requesting 5 parking spaces above the maximum allowed number of spaces, which is 47.

Ms. Klein reiterated that the landscape plan was very similar to the original Royal Farms landscape plan. Differences included 1) adjusted curb lines, and 2) additional landscaping in the island that separates the diesel truck fueling area from the passenger area.

The layout showed the access and circulation for the Romulus fire truck.

Deliveries for the convenience store will come in full size tractor trailers. The trailers will circulate around the center of the site, and then exit out the east, head north, and pass through the NorthPoint industrial development to get back out to Vining Road.

Trash vehicles will enter in through the truck entrance and the diesel fueling area, access the trash enclosure and then exit the site through the northeast. Tanker trucks will be able to come to the diesel fuel pumps and then exit the site without hindering traffic.

Ms. Klein showed proto-typical elevations for all 4 sides of their proposed building. The passenger canopy will be brick columns consistent with the brick on the building. The dumpster enclosure is also going to be masonry and the brick will match what is on the building. A small utility shed will store maintenance equipment for the site. Site-specific elevations will be included in the resubmittal.

Outdoor amenities included an outdoor dining area. All the furniture will be bolted to the pavement, and installed in such a way as to provide ADA clearance.

The applicants would like to put a couple of ice chests on the south side of the building, shielded by wing walls on the sides and a section of fence in front of the ice chests. A photo of a Columbus site showed an example of wing walls that had been constructed in this way. The propane tanks would have a similar enclosure.

Ms. Klein said they had reviewed the various comments provided in the package they received and they were going to resubmit drawings that will meet requirements and address any outstanding items.

Chair Freitag opened the public hearing. Seeing that no public indicated they wished to speak, Chair Freitag closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Commission.

Commission questions and discussion:

In response to questions, the applicants gave the following further information:

- The ice chests will face Wick Road. The propane cages will be located on the side of the building facing east and will be screened.
- The small plastic merchandiser for automotive items will be at the front of the building facing south.
- No mulch, salts, firewood, etc., will be sold outside. If firewood was sold, it would be merchandised in the atrium or vestibule.
- In response to staff comments, the applicants had submitted a new sidewalk plan that shows the appropriate clearances for the propane tank enclosure.
- The original layout for Royal Farms would remain, and would include pedestrian walking areas with seating areas and pet sanitation stations in the same locations as originally proposed.
- The typical store has between 30-40 employees, depending on the sales volumes and how many people could actually be hired.
- Regarding how long someone would take to get their order at the drive thru:
 - There would be no squawk box on this site. The onsite order process will utilize a touchscreen. The ordering process was very fast.
 - Customers could also order ahead on their mobile app, speeding the pickup process.

- Using the data from almost 700 locations, on the average about 11 cars used the drive-thru during the peak noon hour.
- Should an order be delayed, a driver could pull forward from the drive thru window, or pull into the spaces next to the building, where an employee will deliver the food.
- Approximately 15 cars could stack on this site; that would, however, be an unusual occurrence. The drive-thru was roughly 10% of the restaurant business as a whole, unlike other restaurants where drive thru use was about 90% of the business.
- Approximately 60% of Sheetz stores were highway stores, and 40% were neighborhood stores. Their goal in this new market was to build density and brand recognition, and then go into some of the neighborhood markets. This will be Sheetz' first store in Michigan.
- A small canopy will cover the touch point ordering device; this will be approved with the sign package.
- Sheetz is considering EV charging stations at all their locations, but since they did not own the technology, they could not yet guarantee those charging stations will be constructed. They were working with Tesla and EVgo, but both companies ultimately decide what location they will choose based on demand. The parking spaces next to the corner of Wick and Vining are tentatively slotted to be future EV charging stations, and will be prepped and ready to go for that use.
- Target date for opening will be September, 2024.

Commissioner Frederick asked how the change from Royal Farms to Sheetz would impact the phasing of this development. City Planner Maise explained that the conditional rezoning agreement had been amended by City Council, and the phasing dates had been adjusted. Also, the new site plan had some items that still needed to be cleaned up; these could be approved administratively.

Engineering Consultant Katers listed the following outstanding items:

- Anticipated trips will need to be updated in the trip generation study and analysis.
- The yard hydrant must be metered and backflowed.
- The underground detention has been shifted over; the clearance between the detention area and the fueling area needed to be provided.

Ms. Klein said the plan would be changed to reflect approximately 20' between the edge of the detention system and the nearest fuel tank.

- The detention basin cannot be constructed under the old permit because of the change in the layout. The applicant shall work with Wayne County relative to amending the permit.
- The loading space had been moved closer to the building.

Ms. Klein said the loading space would be clearer in the revised drawings, but in essence the delivery trucks bring most of their product right through the front door during off-peak hours. Drivers are trained not to block other traffic, and to wait patiently for other people/vehicles to get out of the way before they stop their vehicle for loading/unloading.

Commissioner Glotfelty left the meeting at 9:57pm.

- Lighting needed to conform to ordinance requirements. Some areas under the canopies could go over standard, but parking lot lighting must be modified to meet requirements.

Mr. Bruckelmeyer said they had already prepared a rough photometric plan, and they would meet ordinance requirements.

In response to further Commission questions, the applicants provided the following:

- Generators were not provided on site automatically, but the electrical system will be prepped to receive a larger generator plugin. Should the power have to be out for an extended period time, a portable generator could be brought in.
- The applicants were very comfortable with the number of parking spaces requested.
- If a fleet of limousines tied up the parking, they would manage that at the time.

Chair Freitag indicated she was ready to entertain a motion, and after discussion and amendment, the following motions were offered:

MOTION by McAnally, support by Gbogboade, that the Planning Commission recommend to City Council approval of the Special Land Use application for *SLU-2023-005; Sheetz* for the proposed vehicle and diesel fueling stations and drive-thru restaurant uses at 33380 Wick Rd. subject to the following:

1. A waiver to allow 5 diesel fueling pumps as an accessory use;
2. Trucks and trailers are prohibited from entering or exiting the site from Wick Road;
3. Submission of a revised site plan addressing all outstanding comments as noted by the Planning Commission and other agencies and departments; and
4. Submission of a revised landscape plan that is consistent with the Royal Farms approved landscape plan.

Roll call vote: Ayes – McAnally, Gbogboade, Long, Talon-Jemison, Roscoe, Crova, Frederick, Freitag Nays – None. Motion carried 8-0.

MOTION by McAnally, support by Gbogboade, that the Planning Commission approve the Site Plan for SPR 2023-013 Sheetz, based on the June 14, 2023 MKSK report (for Site Plan) subject to the following conditions:

1. Special Land Use approval by City Council;
2. Variances for the additional parking spaces over maximum allowed and signs being granted;
3. A revised landscape plan in accordance with the approved Royal Farms landscape plan;
4. A revised site plan to address all the outstanding comments noted and those of other agencies and departments.

Roll call vote: Ayes – McAnally, Gbogboade, Frederick, Crova, Talon-Jemison, Roscoe, Long, Freitag. Nays – None. Motion carried 8-0.

7. **Old Business**
None.

8. **New Business**
None.

9. Election of Officers

MOTION by Crova, support by Gbogboade, to re-elect Chair Freitag as Chair.

Roll call vote: Ayes - Crova, Gbogboade, Frederick, Long, McAnally, Roscoe, Talon-Jemison, Freitag. Nays – None. Motion carried 8-0.

MOTION by Frederick, support by Crova, to re-elect the following officers as currently constituted:

**Vice Chair: Commissioner McAnally
Secretary: Commissioner Gbogboade**

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

10. PC-Cases Involving Advice or Input from the Planning Commission

City Planner Maise reviewed process for distribution of meeting information and packets. When information was distributed, a text announcement will go out to the Commissioners to check their emails.

11. Reports on Interest Designations

Commissioner Roscoe reported the schedule for railroad track maintenance, including replacing railroad ties, railings, paving, etc., which will occur Tuesday June 20 through Friday June 23.

12. Communications

B. Project Status Report

- The Commission discussed upcoming and ongoing Planning Projects with City Planner Maise and DPW Director Scappaticci.
- As today was Juneteenth, the Commission discussed the desirability of not meeting on Juneteenth in future years. City Planner Maise explained that this was a matter decided by union contract.
- It was noted that there was significantly increased activity generating increased dust at the Cadillac Asphalt site. City staff will follow up regarding this situation.
- A “heads-up” was requested when the streets were going to be swept, so that vehicles could be appropriately parked.

13. Adjournment

MOTION by McAnally, support by Talon-Jemison, to adjourn the meeting at 10:20pm.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – McAnally, Talon-Jemison, Crova, Gbogboade, Long, Roscoe, Frederick, Freitag. Nays – None. Motion carried 8-0.

/cem


Adewunmi Gbogboade, Secretary
City of Romulus Planning Commission