

# STRONGSVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

## MINUTES OF MEETING

**August 15, 2024**

The Planning Commission of the City of Strongsville met at the City Council Chambers located at 18688 Royalton Road, on ***Thursday, August 15, 2024 at 5:50 p.m.***

Present: Planning Commission Members: Gregory McDonald, Chairman; Michael Polo, Terry Toth and Michael Kalinich Jr; City Council Representative Kelly Kosek; Administration: Law Director, Neal Jamison; Building Commissioner, Ted Hurst; Assistant City Engineer, Lori Daley; Fire Department Representative, and Captain Green

The following was discussed:

**DICK'S HOUSE OF SPORT:** Mrs. Daley stated this request is for Dicks Sporting Goods to move into the old Sears building at SouthPark Mall. They will take over the entire building the top and lower levels. They will also add a sports outdoor playing field/training area and that will be located where the Sears tire and battery auto center was located. They will demolish the tire and battery auto center building and install an outdoor playing area. On the outdoor field, you will be able to try out equipment, they will host some training for kids and that is why they need the Conditional Use Permit for the outdoor playing field. With the site plan they are reducing the number of parking spaces; however, with the new code passed they still meet code. They also have a variance to use the cross access, for all of the parcels at the mall, for access and for parking and the City Planner had no issues with anything. From the Engineering Department, the site plan is in approvable form. From the Building Department, Mr. Hurst stated the Building Department has no report. From the Fire Department, Captain Green stated the Fire Department has no report. From the Law Department, Mr. Jamison stated we are in a position to act on this tonight and Item 1b for the final development, will have to go to Council for their approval.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by the Chairman, Mr. McDonald.

Roll Call:

Members Present:

Mr. McDonald  
Mr. Polo  
Mr. Toth  
Ms. Kosek  
Mr. Kalinich, Jr.

Also Present:

Mr. Jamison, Law Director  
Mr. Hurst, Bldg. Commissioner  
Mrs. Daley, Asst. Engineer  
Captain Green, Fire Dept.  
Mrs. Anderson, Recording Sec.

**MOTION TO EXCUSE:**

Mr. Polo – Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McDonald – Mr. Polo.

Mr. Polo – I move to excuse Mayor Perciak and Mr. Veris for just cause.

Mr. Toth – Second.

Mr. McDonald – Secretary, please call the roll.

Roll Call: All Ayes APPROVED

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. McDonald – You have had a chance to review the minutes for the meeting on July 11, 2024. If there are no additions or corrections they will stand as submitted.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

**DICK'S SPORTING GOODS, INC. /William Boron, Agent**

- a) Conditional Use Permit pursuant to Codified Ordinance Section 1258.04(b)(7) and 1242.07 to allow Dick's House of Sport to have an outdoor playing field/training area, property located at SouthPark Center (former Sears Store location), PPN 396-21-044, zoned SC - Shopping Center
- b) Amendment to final development plan pursuant to Codified Ordinance Section 1258.21, for the renovation of existing building, facades for new store entranceways, construction of a fenced outdoor play field with running track, play turf field, and potential ice rink for Dick's House of Sport, property located at SouthPark Center (former Sears Store location), PPN 396-21-044, zoned SC – Shopping Center  
\* *ARB Favorable Recommendation 8-6-24*

Mr. McDonald – If there is anyone wishing to speak in favor of this request, please come to the podium and give us your name and address for the record.

**Brian Bacik, Vice Pres. of Development, Dicks Sporting Goods, 345 Court Street, Corapolis, PA**

**Bill Boron, 6000 Lombardo Center, Seven Hills, Ohio**

Mr. Bacik – I would like to give you a little background on the Dick's House of Sport concept. I think most people are familiar with the Dick's brand and obviously we are an existing tenant at the shopping center, this is an elevated version of what you already know. Our Chairman in 2018, challenged his executive team to build him the store that would put us out of business if it moved across the street. That is how it started and where it has ended up with the House of Sport concept. We have 14 open across the country today, with a goal to get to 75 to 100 within the next 4 to 5 years. The Dick's House of Sport differentiators are it is a much bigger building, the existing Dick's is approximately 50,000 SF, where the Dick's House of Sport is prototypically 120,000 SF and you have a lot more space and we can do a lot more with it. First and foremost, the customer experience is paramount to us and we achieve an elevated customer experience in a number of ways. First, is the labor model and customer service, we will have two to three times as many employees working in a House of Sport than we do in the existing store. It is a much more customer focused experience and we are very proud of it, it has resonated greatly with the installations that we have opened thus far. Also, we elevate the fit and finish of the build out, many of the CEO's will tell you with the brand presentation that in many cases we do a better job displaying their product than they do themselves. This has opened us up to a much broader relationship with our brands and we get more lines, assortments and quality merchandise. You will find that what we offer in a House of Sport has more quality than what you see in the existing stores, which we are also very proud of. The big one is the experience component, we have leaned heavily into creating an interactive experience for our customers. There are a few things to note, the golf section has several hitting bays, so that you can do instruction, product demonstration, club fittings, and you can even play in virtual tournaments with other locations across the portfolio. It is really meant to be engaged on a different level than just going in to buy clubs. We have a 35' climbing wall and in many cases have a waiting list to get on, during the weekend, which is hugely popular with the athletes that go to our existing stores. We have an indoor multi-sport batting cage so, you can try batting for softball and baseball also, field hockey, lacrosse and soccer balls. We give you all the data so that you can make an educated choice on which piece of equipment to buy. You can also play homerun derby at your favorite major league park on the screen. The bell cow of this whole experience is the field, it is a 18,500 SF fenced area with an Olympic grade running track around it and we use it in a variety of ways. We leave the specific programming to the folks that run the store, which will be the people from Strongsville and its surrounding area. They know how to engage the community and that is what we want to do with the field. Examples of what we have done at existing stores are free play, during slower retail times, we open up the field and they can run around and blow off some steam. We have also offered the community members that choose to homeschool

their kids an opportunity to use our field as a facility to fulfill physical educational requirements. We have yoga studios, fitness classes, we hold events out there and really the sky is the limit. We turn to our operations team to determine how best to be hyper local in our activation of the field. It is not a public amenity because you do have to go through the store to get to it but it does feel like a quasi-public amenity because of the way we engage our neighbors. This is more than moving our existing store across the hall, this is an elevated concept and we have the full backing of our chairman and we are trying to do up to 100 of these. Not every House of Sport that we built has all of these components but because of the space, parking, and ability to put the prototypical unit down here, we are going to bring everything that we have to Strongsville. We are very excited about being able to do that here where we already have an established store, we know this community, and we know our shopper will react. We are very excited about it and I welcome any questions you might have.

Mr. McDonald – The outside portion of this, you mention it will be fenced off and the only access is through the store. Will the hours be the same as the store hours?

Mr. Bacik - That is correct, we operate our stores Monday – Friday from 9:00am – 9:00pm and on Sundays from 9:00 am – 7:00 pm, in most cases and I don't see why it would be any different here. When the store is closed the field is no longer accessible and the lights on the field close with the store. It is basically a retail operation and the field is meant to be an accessory to that and a complimentary component and the short answer is yes, it will be operated with the store.

Mr. McDonald – Continuing on with the Public Hearing is there anyone else wishing to speak in favor of this request? Is there anyone who would like to speak against this request?

**Bob Antonelli, 14591 Settlers Run, Strongsville, Ohio 44136**

Mr. Antonelli – I have lived here about 20 years and I love Dicks. My biggest question is two-fold and one is noise and the other is lighting. I back up to the mall and there is a big hill that has been there for a long time. I have lived here for 20 years and we have a nice hill in the back, 6' high fence and the mall has been a pretty good neighbor. My concern is that I don't want to see additional lighting that would be similar to skyscraper lighting, that is one of my concerns. My other concern is noise, within the last month there was a car show up there and the noise was about as bad as it could get with a lot of motorcycles, loud cars, and a lot of people that are not normally there. I never call the police and I called to ask when will they get out of here and they said they are finishing now, which was around 10:30 pm, don't quote me on that it is just a ballpark of when they were out of there. It was severely noisy and our whole neighborhood could hear it. I don't want to see that type of activity, we will get the occasional car driving through with someone having their speakers on, that is going to happen. I am concerned about a decent amount

of additional noise and sky type lighting, if it is on the field that is fine and I am not concerned about that. I am not concerned about someone trying shoes on and running around the field because it helps the kids out to know what they are fitting into. They are spending \$100.00, \$150.00 and \$200.00 on cleats and shoes, it makes a lot of sense. I don't want to see the noise factor but what I would like is consistent, peaceful good business and that is what I am looking for. If someone could address that, it would be a great help to me.

Mr. McDonald – Before we get to that, is there anyone else wishing to speak against this request? Hearing no one else, the Public Hearing is closed.

Mr. McDonald – Mrs. Daley, we are still going to see a site plan on this, right?

Mrs. Daley - The site plan was submitted and that is Item 1b on the agenda tonight for approval.

Mr. McDonald – Brian, would you like to speak to the questions?

Mr. Bacik - We often get questions regarding light and sound and I will start with the lighting. The way that we design the lights, there are four poles with one at each corner of the field. They are full cut off light fixtures, which are focused in a laser beam fashion on the field and we have photometric studies done that the light spillage outside the fence line is very minimal. When you are looking at the field from a distance, you will be able to see it because it is a lit field, it will be bright in the distance. As far as the amount of brightness that it throws outside of the fence line, you will get more of that from the parking lot lights than the field lights. It is because of the nature of how we design the fixtures and how we orient them, they are focused on the field surface and not outside of the fence.

Mr. McDonald – Are they all LED?

Mr. Bacik – Yes, they are and we have been very successful in the other installations where we have fields to keep the lights focused on the field and not anywhere else. As far as sound, I believe we are 350-400 feet from the corner of the fence to the closest house. Sound dissipates over distance, we have found that when you are adjacent to a ring road the ambient noise of traffic, of cars driving by, is going to be louder or similar to the noise that we make on the field. Given the dissipation of that sound over the distance, you may be able to identify a kid that is outside who may shout in celebration or score a goal but we don't expect it to be louder than ambient noise that is happening closer to those homes. We haven't had issues yet and we don't anticipate to have them here. We have installed fields in locations that are much closer to residents than we have here in Strongsville. I think with the distance away and the activity on the field we are not naturally generating a ton of noise, I don't foresee it as an issue.

Mr. McDonald – You have addressed the hours of operation, I like the idea that this field is only accessible through the store. Therefore, you will only be opened when the store is open and there will be regular hours and you will not have these issues at 10:30 pm on a Saturday night.

Mr. Bacik – We don't open past 9:00pm so, that will be the latest that we operate. No one goes out on the field unaccompanied and if people are getting rowdy there is a Dicks Sporting Goods employee who is tasked with managing the operations of the field. There are a group of employees that will always be outside to control the situation and keep it safe and that is another factor. We do have events, with more people, but those will be done during the daytime hours and there is a bit of self-policing that we do because we want to be good neighbors. We have controls in place where we can turn music down and quiet patrons if they are noisy but generally speaking from the houses that are closest we should be okay from a noise perspective.

Mr. McDonald – Let's go to our Administrative Reports, Mrs. Daley.

Mrs. Daley – Thank you Mr. Chairman, From the City Planner, since the location of this facility is the former tire and battery facility there are no issues with setbacks. As part of the site modification and landscaping plan, the applicant is proposing eliminating a total 28 parking spaces. Even with the elimination of the spaces the mall will still exceed the minimum code for required parking. The Commission previously granted parking setback variances for shared parking at the Mall so, there are no parking setback issues associated with this request. It is recommended that the Commission grant a Conditional Use Permit approval for the accessory outdoor playing field/training area and grant site development plan approval. From the Engineering Department, no report for Item A and Item B is in approvable form, thank you.

Mr. McDonald – Thank you, Mr. Hurst.

Mr. Hurst – Thank you Mr. Chairman, The Building Department has no objection to Item A, for the conditional use permit and no objections to the final development plan.

Mr. McDonald – Thank you, Captain Green.

Captain Green - The Fire Department has no report.

Mr. McDonald – Thank you, Mr. Jamison.

Mr. Jamison - From the Law Department, the Commission is in position to act on both Items A and B. As I stated earlier, if approved tonight the final development plan will have to go to City Council for their approval.

Mr. McDonald – Are there any questions from the Members?

Ms. Kosek - You said there is a potential for an ice rink and I would like to understand if there is a plan for an ice rink? What would make the decision if you were going to add an ice rink and how would that work?

Mr. Bacik – The climate here allows for it and that is why we say potential and to be honest, they are difficult and expensive to operate. We started opening the House of Sport stores in 2021 so, when you think about that we are kind of in our infancy; however, we are a well-established company since 1948. We have a few ice-rinks that we operate in cold weather climates, we have planned for it and we have a place for the chiller. I say potential depending on how they perform because it may not happen so, I don't want to promise it, that's all.

Ms. Kosek – The only other question that I have is it sounds like the hitting of the baseball is inside and the golf is inside. What is the loudest thing that would be going on outside, are we talking about kids cheering?

Mr. Bacik - Probably, kids cheering and if there is an event that we do during the day there could be music, which we would handle by self-policing. We can control the speakers, limit the volume, and the bass, which is typically the low frequency that travels further and we have the ability to limit it and adjust the system if there is an issue. Most of the activities on the field will be the free play because you can only do so many events and most of the time, I think what you hear will sound like a playground and that is how I would effectively compare it.

Ms. Kosek – Thank you.

Mr. McDonald – Are there any other questions?

Mr. McDonald – The rock wall is inside too?

Mr. Bacik – Yes.

Mr. Polo – Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McDonald - Mr. Polo.

Mr. Polo - I move that we give favorable consideration for a Conditional Use Permit pursuant to Codified Ordinance Section 1258.04(b)(7) and 1242.07 to allow Dick's House of Sport to have an outdoor playing field/training area, property located at SouthPark Center (former Sears Store location), PPN 396-21-044, zoned SC - Shopping Center, Dicks Sporting Goods, Owner, William Boron, Agent

Mr. Toth – Second.

Mr. McDonald – Secretary please call the roll.

Roll Called All Ayes APPROVED

Mr. Polo – I move that we give favorable consideration for an Amendment to final development plan pursuant to Codified Ordinance Section 1258.21, for the renovation of existing building, facades for new store entranceways, construction of a fenced outdoor play field with running track, play turf field, and potential ice rink for Dick's House of Sport, property located at SouthPark Center (former Sears Store location), PPN 396-21-044, zoned SC – Shopping Center, Dicks Sporting Goods, Owner ,William Boron, Agent

Mr. Toth – Second.

Mr. McDonald – Secretary please call the roll.

Roll Called All Ayes APPROVED

Mr. McDonald – Bill and Brian you are all set. When do you expect to have the store open?

Mr. Bacik – We are between the window of Fall 2025 or Spring 2026 and we are still in the process of acquiring the property. We expect to close on it within the next 7 to 10 days and we will look to start demo immediately after, while our building drawings are being approved. We are trying to overlap and run concurrent as much as possible, which would facilitate that 2025 opening. It is a little tight but I think it is doable. If we were to determine that we would miss that then we would take it Spring 2026, which would be a March opening and 2025 would be an October opening.

Mr. McDonald – Twelve to eighteen months, you have a lot of work to do.

Mr. Bacik – We do.

Mr. McDonald – Thank you, good luck. Seeing no other business to come before this Commission, we are adjourned.

Gregory McDonald /s/  
Gregory McDonald, Chairman

Mitzi Anderson /s/  
Mitzi Anderson, Recording Secretary

9/12/24  
Approved