

Minutes: Russell Township Board of Zoning Appeals
Russell Fire-Rescue Station
February 13, 2012

Present: Steve Gokorsch, Chairman
Fred Cuffari
Charles Johns
John Rybak
Diana Steffen, Secretary

William Downing was absent with apologies.

Also in attendance: Ric Machnics, Zoning Inspector.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and the Secretary announced that she published a legal notice for tonight's hearing in The News Herald and The Chagrin Valley Times on 02/02/12, and it was sent to the neighbors by certified mail on 01/27/12.

The Chairman swore in all those in the audience who planned to give testimony or make comment tonight.

APPLICATION #464 Russell Park Commission

Conditional Use approval requested for a 6' x 2' sign at the entrance to the Russell Uplands Preserve, 15200 Russell Road, per Section 5.5.G Passive Park District Zone

The Russell Park Commission was in attendance: Chairman Roy Podojil and members Sandy Siegler and Terry Ries. Mr. Siegler confirmed he was sworn in and stated that they wished to erect a sign so residents will know where the park entrance is located. With a green background it will blend in with the surroundings and look nice with the landscaping around it. It is designed to face traffic heading south into Chagrin Falls. The Geauga Park District assisted with the design and will help to make it. The sign will not be lighted. Mr. Podojil said that there is no electricity on the property so it is very unlikely it could ever be lit up. Mr. Siegler said the park is open dawn to dusk only.

Mr. Gokorsch asked if he was correct in saying that the park was purchased with public funds and therefore the public is allowed to access the park. Mr. Siegler said yes. Mr. Podojil said it was funded by two federal grants and surplus revenue from the park levy, and was purchased directly from Nancy Janoch, who lives next to the property, and her niece Lisa Ferguson.

Mr. Rybak asked if the proposed sign is the first on Park Commission properties. Mr. Podojil stated that it is the first large sign for park identification. Mr. Siegler said they own the Bob Hall baseball field which has a large sign, but this is the first for a passive park. Mr. Cuffari asked about the face dimensions on other signs in similar types of conditional use developments. Mr. Machnics said a zoning permit was not issued for the Bob Hall field sign but it is less than 32 square feet. He stated that Laurel School obtained a zoning permit for a 6 ft. 4 ins. by 2 ft. sign, West Geauga Commons for an 8 ft. by 3 ft. sign, ASM for a 3 ft. by 8 ft. sign. He does not have zoning permits on file for signs at The West Woods Park or Wiegands Lake, but they are all less than 32 square feet. He said the proposed sign is in keeping with the neighborhood.

The Chairman asked if the audience wished to comment, and swore in three more people who had arrived late.

Edmund Leopold, 7340 Cardinal Lane, stated that he owns property adjacent to the park, and has a problem with people walking onto his property and also with loose dogs. He may have to erect a fence. Mr. Podojil said they had no objection to a fence, but they are having 'No Trespassing' signs made to put by the trails that are near to private properties, and he hoped to have them erected in the Spring. Regarding the proposed sign, Mr. Leopold asked that it be made as small as possible. He then looked at the drawing of the sign and said he had no objection to it.

Mr. Gokorsch asked how the Park Commission decided on the size of the sign. Mr. Podojil said they liked the Affelder sign erected by the Geauga Park District at its driveway on Chillicothe Road into The West Woods. Originally they planned the sign to be 2 ft. by 8 ft. but they reduced it to 2 ft. by 6 ft. to match the Affelder sign. The colors will match the colors of other small signs within the park.

John Janoch, 15180 Russell Road, stated he would prefer an alternative residential-looking sign that would be more in character with the residential neighborhood while still identifying the park. He showed the board a picture of a previous sign for the property that he preferred. Mr. Gokorsch said that unless the Park Commission modified its request the board will vote on the current application.

There being no further comments, *Mr. Cuffari moved to close the public hearing, Mr. Johns seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

Mr. Cuffari said that since there is nothing specific in the Zoning Resolution regarding this type of sign the board can consider many factors. His main concern was the size relative to the property and its location. He noted that Russell Road is similar to Fairmount Road, where Laurel School has similar-sized signs that are lit and are more obvious than the proposed sign. He felt there was no reason to treat the Park Commission sign differently from other similar ones in the Township.

Mr. Johns said the sign is consistent with other signs in the Township, and as he ages he would have more difficulty recognizing Mr. Janoch's suggested sign as a park entrance sign than the proposed sign. He understood the concern of neighbors near the park but thought the sign must be recognizable to Township residents. Mr. Gokorsch agreed that the proposed sign has the style of park signage.

Mr. Cuffari made the motion to approve Application #464 for conditional use permit submitted by the Russell Township Park Commission as submitted, Mr. Johns seconded, and upon roll call the vote was Mr. Cuffari – yes, Mr. Johns – yes, Mr. Rybak – yes, Mr. Gokorsch – yes, and the motion passed unanimously by 4-0.

Application #464 was granted.

LAUREL SCHOOL CONDITIONAL USE #380 - Annual Review of Environmental Management Plan

In attendance on behalf of Laurel School were Mary Ann Pellerano and Ed O'Connell, and Kathy Jankowski of Knight & Stolar, Inc.

Ms. Jankowski said she had submitted the Environmental Management Plan annual update on January 24, 2012, with copies sent to the Zoning Office and to the Township's consultant, The Chagrin River Watershed Partners. The update includes data logs for pond testing, soil testing and daily maintenance. Ms. Jankowski said that with the update she wrote a letter to the Board of Zoning Appeals with a request for three changes to current procedure. The Chagrin River Watershed Partners reviewed the update and has commented on these requests.

Request No. 1 – Elimination of pond testing - Ms. Jankowski asked to eliminate testing the water in the irrigation ponds that has been tested for 10 years and has consistently shown very low levels of contaminants even during construction projects. As the site has matured solids, nitrogen and phosphorus are increasingly filtered out before entering the ponds. The three ponds are each tested three times a year, one time including pesticide testing which is expensive. The school is using far less chemicals on the site than it is permitted to use. It is costly to test the three ponds three times a year, and those funds could be put to better use. They would test the ponds during any construction work and for one year after. Ms. Pellerano said the pond testing costs \$4,000 a year. Ms. Jankowski said the ponds are not treated but have one fish, a type of carp, in each to remove algae, etc. The swales are vegetated and provide good filtration for runoff from the fields. C.R.W.P. has responded that this would be a reasonable adjustment as long as there is testing during and after a construction project.

