

MINUTES
ONTARIO PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 14, 2025

The Ontario Planning Commission met in regular session on May 14, 2025, at 4:00 p.m., in the Municipal Building with Jill Knight presiding. Present during roll call were Commission members Jill Knight, Diane Wolfe, Rick Pauley, Service-Safety Director Adam Gongwer, and Mayor Kris Knapp; Engineer Mark Rufener, Law Director Andrew Medwid, Zoning Inspector Benji Hall and Clerk of Council Cathy VanAuker.

The minutes of the regular Planning Commission meeting of March 12, 2025, were presented for approval. Hearing no corrections, the minutes were approved as presented.

The first item on the agenda was a variance request submitted by Troy Nash, 449 Berlyn Ct, to allow storage units on his property, zoned Business, located at the southeast corner of W. 4th Street and Rock Road.

- Inspector Hall said the property was purchased in 2023. At that time mini-warehouses were in the Design Standards for a Business District but not in Conditional Use. Mini-warehouses have been removed from the Design Standards.
- Mr. Nash said he talked to a site engineer in Bucyrus and has a quote from the engineer for the property. He is back on the project and moving forward.
- Engineer Rufner said there are some preliminary layouts for the proposed 2028/2029 roundabout, a preliminary design is needed to know the full impact but there doesn't appear there would be much to this property.

When Mr. Nash asked why this decision was made, Director Gongwer responded by saying mini-storage units were never allowed as a conditional use or as a use in a Business District, it was always Industrial Park or General Industrial zoning. When Menards made their request the ordinance only placed mini-warehouses in the Design Standards, it did not put them in Business Zoning as a conditional use or a permitted use. Council had to either add mini-warehouses to conditional use or remove the Design Standard language. A few months ago, Council removed mini-warehouses from Design Standards and did not put them in Conditional Use of Business. Mini-warehouses have never been allowed in a Business District.

- Mr. Nash said prior to purchasing the property he was told storage units were allowed.

Mr. Nash said the structures will be brand new, gated with a code, and lit well. He is a good community partner and makes donations. There are a lot of other less desirable businesses that could go there.

At 4:15 p.m. the Public Hearing was opened for the variance requests submitted by Mr. Nash to amend Sections 1137.05 and 1143.03 to add mini-warehouses in a Business District.

Mrs. Knight read a letter from Christy Abercrombie, 3129 Hemlock Place, opposing the mini-warehouses.

Laura Click, 3149 Hemlock Place, said her backyard would face the storage units and that would be an eyesore. She was concerned about traffic patterns because they see accidents there all the time. The roundabout that is coming is a good thing. She didn't know if it would contribute to the water issues but they've had to have their basement redone due to drainage issues. They do not want to look at them on a daily basis.

Elizabeth Hollar, 3141 Hemlock Place, has had a lot of issues with water drainage and the city has been out to see the drainage area. She has made expensive repairs to her home. This is a beautiful area where everyone takes care of their homes and is close to Marshall Park. It would not be aesthetically pleasing to see storage units as you drive into the city on W. 4th Street. Trucks deliver products at storage units during the night that will be picked up later. There are a lot of young children in the neighborhood and this would disrupt their sleep. It's really close to their houses.

James Ousley, 3133 Hemlock Place, said he and his wife oppose this. His back yard would be toward the storage units and they like to sit in the sun room and they would look directly at them. There are concerns about water runoff, lights at night, trash, and 24/7 traffic. It would not be aesthetically pleasing coming into the city and drivers on the roundabout would look directly at the storage units. It's not a good look for the city when there are other areas that would work for storage units such as the previous GM and Wicks properties. It won't add to the tax base, no employees paying income tax, the property would be worth a little more for him and his taxes would increase but their home property values would be reduced.

- Mr. Ousley researched the surrounding storage units: there are four businesses in Ontario that have storage units, two on Stumbo, Menards, and one in old Ontario. These businesses have 951 units available, of those units, 49.5% are not currently rented. One on Stumbo is 75% rented and has a Little Debbie customer that brings a semi-truck in at 3 a.m., unloads into a storage unit so drivers can pick up products to take to the stores. The units across the street are rented about 50% because Menards and the U-Haul location in Mansfield have ruined his business. Menards has undercut them all. The units in old Ontario are 97% rented. Menards has 457 units with 121 rented for a 27% rental capacity. Within a quarter mile of one on the west side and one on the east side of Ontario is another 165 units available.
- According to the County web site, Mr. Nash's property is currently being taxed at a residential rate. He's getting a 10% reduction as residential property when it's zoned Business.

Derek Green, 3117 Hemlock Place, said Mr. Nash purchased this property at 66% less than what the last person paid, it has already decreased in value. Mr. Green has been trying to purchase the rest of the L-shaped property to protect their neighborhood but the owner isn't interested in selling. The traffic on the corner is extreme, the roundabout is a necessity, and how much of Mr. Nash's property is needed for the roundabout. They appreciate what they have and want to protect and keep it.

Dustin Powers, 2989 Hemlock Place, said he runs a transitional home for men in Mansfield. They have dealt with several men who have rented storage units to live in. For that reason, and what the others have said, he doesn't think it is a good idea, or to bring in things they don't want.

Adam Boughton, 3109 Hemlock Place, said we have kids that roam up and down the street all day. If people miss the turn into the units, Hemlock is the first street they would turn down and wouldn't pay attention to the kids riding bikes in the street. They don't want to have backyard cookouts and look at storage units for the high taxes they pay for their property.

Joe Sansalone, 3118 Hemlock Place, said they don't want the units and doesn't want them to be the first thing people see coming into town.

Michael Moody, 3146 Hemlock Place, said many of what he was going to say has already been said. The storage units could attract crime, devalue their property because values are based upon if people want to live there. Ontario is saturated with storage units. Mr. Moody shared a printout of Google Maps storage units of the Mansfield area that showed half of the storage units in all of the Mansfield area are either in Ontario or within 1½ mile of our border. There are hardly any in Mansfield city limits, most of the rest of the units are in Madison township, Lexington has two areas for storage units and neither is near a residential area. We don't need anymore eyesores. We have a beautiful park which is why traffic is increasing at the intersection. This is a request for a variance, not the neighbors asking to make an exception for them, but them asking not to make an exception.

Mr. Nash addressed comments by saying it is a business corner, someone will put a business there someday. His water run-off goes toward the front, not toward their homes, he hasn't done anything to the property so any water problems they have is not from his property, the roundabout doesn't affect him at all, there is minimal traffic at storage units, people don't stop at the units daily.

At 4:45p.m., hearing no one else who wished to speak, the Public Hearing was closed.

Mrs. Wolfe moved to approve the variance request submitted by Mr. Nash to add mini storage units as a conditional use in a Business District in Zoning Code Section 1137.05 and to add mini storage units to the Design Standards in a Business District in Zoning Code Section 1143.03, second by Mr. Pauley. No Commission members cast their votes aye, five nays, and the motion failed. Planning Commission does not recommend the variance requests submitted by Mr. Nash. A public hearing will be held before Council on June 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

At 4:47 p.m., with no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

/s/ Jill Knight, Chair

Date