City of Grove City

Memorandum

To: Planning Commission Members

From: The Development Department

CC: Honorable Members of City Council, Clerk of Council, City Departments

Date: February 18, 2011

Re: Staff Report for Wood Bookkeeping & Tax Service – Development Plan

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Item #1 – Wood Bookkeeping & Tax Service (Development Plan)

(PID# 201009300043)

Application: Development Plan
Location: 3751 Broadway
Applicant: **Donald E. Wood**
Zoning: PSO
Use: Accounting and Bookkeeping Services

Relevant Code Section(s):

- 1138.04 Historical Preservation Area and Sign Code – Design Requirements
- 1138.05 Historical Preservation Area and Sign Code – Procedure for Review
- 1135.09(b) Nonresidential Districts

Project Summary:

The applicant is proposing to make modifications to the site at 3751 Broadway. The purpose of the proposed modifications is to convert former single family residence into a site appropriate for an office, with the installation of a parking lot. The applicant is proposing to install a parking area on the south side of the structure, paving the area between the existing structure and the south property line. The parking area will extend back to the existing garage at the southwest corner of the property that will be used for storage and a workshop. In order to accommodate traffic circulation, the applicant is proposing to install continuous pavement to the south lot line and has obtained a cross-access easement agreement with the owners of property to the south allowing traffic to exit over their property. Two variances were granted from the Board of Zoning Appeals to reduce the required number of parking spaces on the site and to eliminate the required parking setback and associated landscaping along the south, north, and west lot lines. Both of the variances were contingent upon a development plan being approved by City Council and an egress easement being recorded (with the owner of property to the south).

Site History

In 2009, a violation letter was sent to the applicant regarding improvements done to the site without proper permits. Trees were removed from the south property line, separating the driveway from the driveway on the property to the south, and gravel was installed in the area proposed for the new parking lot. The alterations were made to the site without other approvals from the city. A court case regarding the property is currently pending in Mayor's Court.

On November 22, 2010, the applicant filed and was granted approval for two variances from the Board of Zoning Appeals. The two variances are to:

1) reduce the required number of parking spaces from eleven (11) to seven (7), and

2) eliminate the required parking setback and associated landscaping along the north, south, and west lot lines.

Both requests were approved with condition that the variances are contingent upon a development plan being approved by City Council and an egress easement is recorded and submitted.

Application History

Materials were initially submitted for informal review to the Development Department in 2009, with an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. However; at the time of submittal, no application fee was included and the application was reviewed informally. A preliminary review letter was returned to the applicant stating the need for an access easement with the Underwood and Saxton properties to the south, recommending the applicant consider relocating the proposed parking area to the rear of the property, and outlining the landscaping requirements for the proposed improvements.

On September 30, 2010, a development plan application with payment was received and the formal review process was initiated. The plans proposed a parking lot on the south side of the structure with a total of eight (8) parking spaces on the site, two of which utilized the garage. The parking area extended into the front building setback; however this area was in the form of the loading zone for the van-accessible handicap space and would not handle any vehicular traffic. In the review letter returned to the applicant, staff recommended relocating parking spaces off the rear alley, stated the need for an easement agreement for access across the Underwood property and noted the need for variances from the BZA to eliminate parking setbacks and reduce the number of parking spaces. Various landscaping issues were also noted including the need to screen the parking area fronting Broadway.

After the applicant was granted the requested variances from the Board of Zoning Appeals (with the conditions that a development plan is approved by City Council and an egress easement is recorded), revised plans dated January 17, 2011 were submitted to the Development Department. The revised plans showed a parking lot with seven (7) parking spaces, with two (2) in the garage. These plans show the handicap parking space within the front building setback and did not show a continuous landscape screen along the parking area fronting Broadway. A review letter was returned to the applicant on January 28, 2011 stating concerns regarding the easement agreement, noting that the handicap space should be located behind the front building setback line, and requesting that the parking area be relocated behind the structure, accessed off the rear alley.

The plans submitted for Planning Commission review are the revised plans dated February 2, 2011 (received by the Development Department on February 11, 2011), submitted in response to the review

letter sent on January 28. The plans show the parking area with seven (7) parking spaces, the garage used for storage, and the handicap parking space within the front building setback. The landscape screening was extended to cover the parking area along Broadway; however a number of staff's recommendations were not incorporated, including relocating the parking area to the rear of the structure and maintaining the existing sidewalk to provide pedestrian connectivity to Broadway.

Copies of the previous submissions and review letters reference above have been included in Planning Commission review packets.

Site Plan:

The site is currently accessed by a single 40 foot curb cut off Broadway, shared with the two residential properties to the south. According to information published by the Franklin County Auditor, the previous driveway varied in widths between approximately eleven (11) and thirteen (13) feet in width as it approached the garage. This created an almost eleven (11) foot wide landscape area between the driveway on the applicant's property and the driveway located on the Underwood property directly to the south.

The proposed parking lot and drive aisle would create a continuously paved area over three properties, with a total pavement width of approximately 40 feet.

Parking:

The applicant is proposing seven parking spaces, including one van-accessible handicap space. As proposed, plans show the handicap space within the front building setback line. Section 1135.09(b)(14) states that within the Historical Preservation Area, there shall be no parking of motor vehicles between the street right-of-way and the building setback line. Although section 1135.12(m)(3) gives Planning Commission the ability to deviate from these minimum requirements, staff does not support the placement of parking in the front setback within the HPA and recommends that the parking area be reconfigured to eliminate any parking within the setback.

The proposed parking lot does not have a drive aisle wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic; therefore the applicant is proposing to utilize the property to the south, owned by Mr. and Mrs. David Underwood, for traffic circulation. As proposed, traffic would enter onto Mr. Wood's property and exit from the Underwood property. Traffic would move in a one-way, entering direction on Mr. Wood's property and in a one-way, exiting direction on the Underwood property. An easement agreement has been signed and recorded giving Mr. Wood and customers on his site rights to travel over the Underwood property and the Underwoods the right to travel over the Wood property.

It should be noted that the pavement over the Underwood property is also connected to the paved entrance to the property of Mr. William Saxton, directly to the south of the Underwood property. According to BZA records, Mr. Saxton was not agreeable to signing any access agreements over his property. To alleviate the possibility of any vehicles traveling over Mr. Saxton's property, the applicant is proposing to install a series wheel stops (e.g. parking blocks) along the south lot line of Mr. Underwood's property. No Parking signs will also be installed on the Underwood property, to ensure that the property will be clear for vehicles to exit from the Underwood and the Wood property. Both of these improvements proposed by the applicant are located off the applicant's property.

Throughout the review process, staff has recommended the parking area be relocated to the rear of the structure and accessed off the rear alley in order to better match the character of the Historical Preservation Area. Within the past two months, Planning Commission has reviewed and recommended for approval to City Council two applications in which curb cuts are being removed from Broadway in order to better fit the character of the Historical Preservation Area and encourage a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere. It is the opinion of staff that the installation of the parking lot as proposed, with the utilization of neighboring property for traffic circulation would be counter to recent recommendations made by the Commission.

As stated previously, the applicant was granted variances in November 2010 to reduce the number of required parking spaces and eliminate the parking setbacks and associated landscaping for the south, north, and west lot lines (contingent upon a development plan approved by City Council). Granting the variance for the west lot line allows the property to be configured with the parking area in the rear, accessed of the alley.

Building:

The applicant is proposing to install a new wheelchair lift, accessed from the proposed parking area. The lift would be a "light almond" color and will be recessed in the front porch, not visible from the street.

Code Analysis:

1. Section 1138.04(a) states that any reconstruction or rehabilitation within the Historical Preservation Area shall conform to the distinguishing, original exterior qualities or character of the structure, its site and its environment.

   Criteria Not Met: In the opinion of staff, the proposed parking lot layout and site design does not conform to the character of the Historical Preservation Area. Furthermore, this property is included in the "Broadway Corridor North" in the 2008 Town Center Plan recommending that improvements within this corridor be made to improve the overall streetscape along Broadway. Staff does not feel that the proposed parking lot improvements enhance the streetscape along Broadway, and recommends that the parking area be relocated to the rear of the lot, accessed off the rear alley.

   Furthermore, staff does not feel that the removal of the existing sidewalk is appropriate in encouraging a pedestrian atmosphere. The applicant has stated that the sidewalk is uneven, pitted and unsightly; therefore staff recommends that the existing sidewalk be repaired to provide safe access to pedestrians utilizing the sidewalk along Broadway.

Recommendation(s):

Due to the number of outstanding issues, the Development Department recommends Planning Commission make a recommendation of disapproval to City Council for the Development Plan as submitted.