

**KENT PLANNING COMMISSION  
BUSINESS MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15, 2022**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Amanda Edwards  
Jeff Clapper  
Naser Matar

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Bridget Susel, Community Development Director  
Tim Sahr, Development Engineer

**I. Call to Order**

Ms. Edwards called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. Roll Call:**

Mr. Clapper, Ms. Edwards, and Mr. Matar were present.

**MOTION:**     *Mr. Clapper moved to excuse Michael Bruder from the November 13, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Matar. The motion carried 3-0.*

**III. Reading of Preamble**

Ms. Edwards read the Preamble, which describes the purpose and procedures of the Planning Commission as well as the applicant's right to an appeal.

**V. Administration of Oath**

Ms. Susel instructed those members of the audience wishing to be heard on any of the cases presented at this meeting to rise and raise their right hand. Ms. Susel administered the Oath, "Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God? Please say "I do." The participants responded, "I do."

**VI. Correspondence**

None

**VIII. New Business**

**A.     PC22-017     Davey Expert Tree Company  
                                 6662 & 6700 State Route 43**

**The applicant is requesting a zoning use certificate and site plan approval for a Testing/Experimental/Research Facilities use. The subject property is zoned R-T-O: Research, Technology, and Office District.**

Mr. Sahr presented the case as outlined in the staff report. He stated that the site is accessed from State Route 43 also known as North Mantua St. He stated that the site is abutted by City of Kent residential uses to the south, and as designated by the Franklin Township Zoning Code, the land to the west is zoned Rural Residential and Local Commercial, and to the north and east Open Space Conservation. He stated that the

applicable codes sections for this case are 1103.21, 1107, 1108, 1109, and 1111.02(b) of the Kent Codified Ordinances. He stated that the applicant has purchased the subject properties with the intent of creating the Davey Tree Science Employee Education and Development (SEED) Campus. He stated that the required minimum amount of parking spaces is 70, however the plan provides 181 spaces. He stated that new water, sanitary, stormwater, gas, electric, and connectivity services will be installed on the site as detailed in the provided plans. He stated that while stormwater changes will be made, the intent is to keep all stormwater on the property to be utilized for irrigation purposes. He stated that at this time, no signage has been submitted but will be pursued at a later date. He stated that the proposed plans have an extensive landscaping plan with exterior lighting only around the new building. He stated that the dumpster will be removed by a professional hauler. He stated that this project is outside the Architectural Review Board's boundaries and no variances have been requested at this time from the Board of Zoning Appeals. He stated that two variances from the Board of Building Appeals for the Riparian Setback have been granted with regards to grading and a mulched path in the setback. He stated that staff finds that the request for a Zoning Use Certificate and Site Plan Approval are in accordance with the standards established in the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable development regulations.

Ms. Susel stated that the applicant will only be returning for a sign if it is part of a Comprehensive Sign Package. She requested that language be added to the proposed motion stating that as such time as the annexation is finalized. She explained that the process is nearing that point. She stated that this will not prohibit the project from moving forward or for any work to begin; just for legal reasons.

Sandra Reed, Davey Tree Expert Company, 1500 N. Mantua St, thanked the Commissioners for considering their project.

Chad Brintnall, The Smith Group, 2602 Scarborough, Cleveland Hts., stated that Davey purchased the former Oak Knolls Golf Course and Franklin Elementary School with the goal of creating research, training, and education facility for the company, which will provide Davey 182 acres to conduct green industry leading research. He stated that there is a proposed 70,000 sq. ft. multi-purpose facility that will contain a community event center, two classrooms with of a total capacity of up to 200 people, office space for up to 60 full-time employees, two laboratories, and an indoor climbing facility for training. He stated that the proposed location of the building allows them to capitalize on the natural assets of the site such as the class III wetland, a heritage grove of trees that are 100+ years old, and proximity to the headwaters of the Cuyahoga River. He stated that they are seeking LEED & Site Certification for the project. He stated that Davey is planning to achieve net zero energy for the project as they are including a photovoltaic solar array. He stated that the project will include a 25 acre arboretum that will be open to the public and a 2,500 ft multi-purpose trail through the site that will be ready for a future connection with Franklin Township and Portage and Summit County trails. He stated that there will be a non-energized utility towers to mimic work done in right of way for training purposes on site as well as various enclosures that will be planted for research. He stated that the project was designed to save as many significant trees as possible. He stated that they also have the Davey Resource Group, which does site remediation and restoration of preserve landscapes.

Mr. Matar questioned if the type of research would be biological or chemical and if the storm management system would be effective in maintaining the wetland.

Mr. Brintnall stated that Davey has a self-imposed 100' buffer around all of the wetlands where only 75' is required. He stated that they will be restoring those areas to natural vegetation that will decrease runoff and increase phytoremediation; any type of application or trail would need to be appropriately located so that it is not detrimental. He stated that Davey is a very sensitive partner in understanding the assets on the property. He stated that it is their intent to return the site to a much better site than it was before. He stated that they will do their best to convey water and keep all of the water on-site by directing it to the large central area to hold and reuse for irrigation purposes. He stated that they will have bioswales in the parking lot for the hard surface runoff, which will then run through a treatment drain; stormwater will not be discharged into the Cuyahoga or wetlands.

Ms. Edwards questioned the northern service entrance, southern public entrance, and how they will be denoted.

Mr. Brintnall stated that they will have signs as well as landscaping to direct traffic.

Ms. Edwards questioned the frequency and purpose of the larger groups for events.

Mr. Brintnall stated that it will not be an everyday occurrence.

Ms. Reed gave the example of the February Davey Institute of Tree Sciences for 60 people that is currently held at the corporate headquarters, but will move to the new SEED Campus. She stated that they have 1 week training sessions that happen throughout the year. She stated that their vision is to host the International Tree Climbing Championship, which could draw a couple thousand people. She stated that such events would have all the special event provisions that are needed. She stated that other groups will be able to meetings there such as Rotary, Kent Environmental Council, etc.

Ms. Susel stated that this project has been very public over the last year and a half with the annexation process and staff has only received supportive comments.

### **Public Comment**

Brian Gould, 1480 River Trail, stated that his property abuts up to the proposed project. He stated that his concern is regarding the possible increase in traffic because it is already difficult to make a left out of the neighborhood as well as an increase in pedestrian traffic. He questioned if there would be additional lighting for safety. He also expressed his concern for people who may unintentionally wander through the adjacent properties.

Ms. Susel stated that numerous traffic studies have been done with the existing condition and while it is difficult at times to make a left-hand turn from River Bend Blvd. onto N. Mantua St., the traffic does not currently necessitate a traffic light. She stated that currently the area is under study and if a traffic light still isn't warranted, additional street lighting of the area could be a possibility. She stated that the City Engineer is exploring all possibilities and he is hopeful that a realignment and a traffic light will be added in the coming years; the process runs through the State of Ohio as they are the owners of the road.

### **Board Discussion**

Mr. Clapper and Mr. Matar had no further questions.

Ms. Edwards stated that she has reviewed the project and feels that it has met the legal requirements for granting the request.

Mr. Clapper and Mr. Matar agreed.

**MOTION:**     *In the case of PC22-017 Davey Expert Tree Company, 6662 & 6700 St. Rt. 43, Mr. Clapper moved that the Planning Commission approve the Conditional Use Certificate and Site plan with the following conditions:*

- 1. Technical Plan Review.*
- 2. At such time that the annexation is finalized.*

*Mr. Matar seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0.*

**X.     Other Business**

None

**XI.    Adjournment**

**MOTION:**     *Mr. Clapper moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Matar. The motion carried 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.*