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LOCAL

Board of Zoning Appeals to act on tire and auto stores, Varsity House exit/entry

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MUNCIE, Ind. — The Metropolitan Board of Zoning Appeals is being asked to approve variances for an O'Reilly Auto Parts store and an RNR Tire Express franchise, and to allow Varsity House apartments to open a gated driveway now reserved for emergency vehicles.

A zoning variance is being sought for an O'Reilly Auto Parts store to be built on a vacant property at the southwest corner of Morrison Road and Bradburn Drive.

A decision on the petition was continued at the last meeting of the BZA due to a 3-1 vote in favor of the project. Four votes are needed for official action. There is one vacancy on the seven-member board, and two members were absent.

The city's corridor development standards call for a 20-foot setback from Morrison for the 7,500-square-foot retail store, but O'Reilly wants to move it 136 feet back from the street, saying it would otherwise look "out of place" and "disproportionate" compared to the neighboring Walmart and a Honda dealership.

The intent of the 20-foot setback requirement is to create a downtown-like environment on auto-oriented corridors like Morrison, McGalliard Road and Madison Street, with stores close to the street and parking in the rear or on the sides.

The applicant is proposing a compromise. In exchange for a variance on the setback requirement, it will provide an increased landscape buffer between the store and a residential addition to the south.

If the variance is approved, construction will start in August and finish by January of 2022, according to the petition. Wiltshire Properties LLC, Vicki Shockley, managing

partner, Muncie, owns the site.

The property would be landscaped with two rain gardens; oak, maple and other trees; shrubs and other plants.

On Nov. 19, the BZA is scheduled to act on that case as well as several others, including:

BSB Enterprises, 1717 N. Wheeling Ave., Bill Gaddis, seeking a variance to allow a 47.5-foot setback from McGalliard Road for a proposed RNR Tire Express tire/wheel store at 504 W. McGalliard, the site of a former Hyundai dealership next door to the Olive Garden restaurant. The plan is to re-use the existing building on the site that sits back 47.5 feet from McGalliard. Landscaping-related variances also are sought.

Varsity House apartments, formerly Campus Crest apartments, 3015 N. Oakwood Ave., is appealing a special use that allowed a gated driveway on the west end of the property to be used by emergency vehicles only. The driveway provides access to Winston Drive.

In its application, Varsity House complains there is only one entrance/exit for the property, home to more than 600 tenants, on Oakwood. The apartment complex wants to open the gated driveway as a secondary entrance/exit.

To address concerns that doing so will send apartment-building traffic through a residential neighborhood, which opposes the appeal, Varsity House proposes to install signage prohibiting left turns from the driveway onto Winston, to route traffic to McGalliard.

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