

Community Meeting on 4501 Butler (Morgan's BBQ)
5/1/2017
Meeting Minutes

34 people in attendance.

Introduction from LU and LC: Matt Galluzzo from Lawrenceville Corporation and Dave Breingan from Lawrenceville United walked through the community process. Anytime new development of scale or new liquor licenses come into the neighborhood, we go through this community process in order for the community to hear about projects in advance and for resident concerns to be met. Normally we have these community meetings at either the 6th, 9th, or 10th Ward Block Watch meetings. Review of ground rules: everyone accepts. If folks have questions, there are notecards and they can ask question that way as well. Recognition of Councilwoman Deb Gross in attendance, as well as Chris Morgan, Joel Bolden, and rest of team from Morgan's BBQ, plus Gavin Robb (counsel representing Morgan's BBQ).

Backstory on Morgan's Barbeque: This project came to the 9th Ward Block Watch back in September 2016; many folks attended this meeting. They were to go to zoning in April but there were some concerns about details related to plan. We asked to continue hearing and they agreed. They wanted to come back and have more engaged conversation. We met with them before the continuance to talk about things we're interested with site. They worked on design and now are going to share new concepts and things they're willing to agree to. Hearing is May 11th which is next Thursday for zoning. They will provide presentation, then we'll open it for Q&A, then guests will be excused and we will have closed door meeting. Everyone clear? Everyone agrees to ground rules? Yes. This is a respectful and productive environment for us and guests. Everyone familiar with site? 45th and Butler bargain auto site. They will talk through arrangement with owner and plans moving forward. The plans seen today have substantial revisions after conversations over the past couple weeks. They have been working based on previous conversations.

Presentation from Morgan's Barbeque team: Chris Morgan and Joel Bolden.

Doing a texas barbeque at 4501 Butler Street. We operate in Brooklyn in Prospect Heights. Same size as what we're doing in Pittsburgh. We had a video last time showing community relationship to space. No 311 complaints. No noise violations. No police or fire. We were looking for Lawrenceville as a very good mix of old, young, and new, very walkable area similar to Brooklyn. We fell in love with Lawrenceville and spoke with realtor and looking for space for 6 months. We came across 4501 Butler and it wasn't available but we wanted that size. We approached Mike the owner and we kept approaching and finally convinced Mike he'd be better off without it and he finally agreed to move and they got the space. They had 24000 sq feet and owner and operation on corner, outdoor is great. They presented the potential project to the community and zoning and had to scale it down which is understandable. It's a lot of space. Our intention is to bring the best barbeque here. Preserve the community and make it from an eyesore into a beautiful green family friendly environment. Always been our intention. It's what they do in Brooklyn because they're family first.

We can go over the drawings to go over what we're doing now. Many people already understand food; the concern is the scale. We heard last time that people are concerned with parking, so we added spaces: 10 spaces and 84 bike spaces in new drawing. Drive and bike to. With that amount of bike parking, the bike race can begin and end here. They want to give back to the community. One handicapped space. Bike space is up front. There are 74 seats inside, 74 outside. We also heard concerns with noise; we had projector and television, but got rid of it. No speakers now either. They have noise

buffers on fence. Noise shouldn't be a major concern. We're not a club, not a bar, we're a restaurant. Food first. The space in Brooklyn is similar and residents are attached and neighbors have lived next door and people above it have never complained. We're bringing the best food. Food is first. Noise you'll hear is conversation. Kids running around. That's our environment. Not late night, not music pumping until 2 AM. The outdoor space: Joel sees fun space. They have picnic tables and barbeque is family, friends. Picture has 8 picnic tables with umbrellas. Kids running around, a good time. Our original plans had bocce ball which they still intend to do. Family friendly game. We want strollers. Strollers are welcome. They took away outside bar. They're about restaurant life, not club life. TVs removed from plans as well. Indoor outdoor with garage doors opening up. A flowing environment. 84 bikes. The design lends itself to the neighborhood. It blends in and adds green all around.

Q&A

Phoebe Stern: Is there a specific reason you're not making use of the pavement area? Used for stormwater management?

- Joel: It's just a scale down. Originally we had seating there. We don't know what we're allowed to do with it. They don't want us to use everything. We don't know what's possible. We proposed a dog park. Currently it's blocked off.

Bill Joyce: Could you elaborate on the specific variance requests you're seeking? Also, you used the term green: can you please elaborate on the green features?

- Joel: All of our products are green. We're adding planter boxes throughout the exterior. The variances are still a grey area.
- Gavin: With respect to the variances, the reason why it's a bit of a grey area is because there's been revisions. Our intention after this meeting is to go back to City Planning and look at the new plans to see how what relief is needed.
- Bill: May 11th is not a hearing?
- Gavin: May 11th is the hearing. It's going to be more compliant with the zoning code than originally but we're not just exactly sure how City Planning will view it.
- Bill: So you'll meet with the city before the hearing and will an update be distributed?
- Gavin: They will explain what it is that we're trying to do. We're happy to talk with Dave and Matt so they can distribute information before the hearing, whatever lesser request we're making and the change to a more compatible use. They can't say specifically now because they're still editing plans. Can't commit tonight but info will be out as soon as we know.
- Bill: At the moment there's probably setback variances?
- Gavin: We think we're good on setbacks actually. Original plan did not require setback variances. There was a special exception request because of the square footage of the outdoor area but now it's smaller. They were calling it an accessory area for entertainment, which was classified as unindentified accessory, which is a special exception, but because it was beyond 25% of floor area it would require variance. Those are being reduced now because of the overall scope.
- Bill: The proposed architect. Have you chosen?
- Joel: Yes, we have an architect, he's local. He's from Western PA, out of Clarion. He was a friend of a friend in Pittsburgh.

Ashley Brandolph: One of the concerns I have is that the movie screen and other aspects that were in the previous plans (275 capacity, the scale of the outdoor seating) weren't mentioned at the previous community meeting. These plans are now scaled back, but how can we trust that this will be abided?

- Joel: In our first renderings we had projector. Those were available at the first community meeting as I remember it, but I might be wrong. They were on table but didn't get passed out. We added that because we thought it would be a welcome addition because of the love of sports in Pittsburgh. We thought about Steelers, movies, Pirates games. It's not like we're trying to fool. It's family stuff. In NY there are restaurants that have good elements. Community and family friendly and we wanted to put those elements in Lawrenceville. Projector on Sunday might be good for families. Condensing a park to a restaurant where you have restaurant space and fun stuff to do. Intention was never to throw Superbowl Sunday parties and blast sound for neighbors. We are trustworthy guys. Family guys. Trust our background. Go on Yelp. Go on community board and read about our other restaurant.
- Ashley: Let's be honest thought, your goal is to make money.
- Joel: Of course. Any business has to make money.
- Ashley: And I'm not faulting you for that but what we're talking about is the increased capacity, could be 150 plus 12-15 employees, that means up to 165 people.
- Joel: It's 150 people on 24,000 square feet, which is like a city block. They'll be spread out.
- Ashley: That's true, but what about cumulative impact? We experience lots of noise over the weekends past 2 AM and we hear it and it wakes us up. With more people comes more traffic. I wish more people biked and took public transit, but that's still a work in progress, so this I going to bring a lot of cars coupled with foot traffic. You've said you'll close the patio at 11?
- Joel: Yes and 12 on the weekends.
- Ashley: That's reasonable, but people will still be coming out of the restaurant until 2. Those are concerns we have as residents. New Amsterdam is already an impact, not to mention all of these people will be parking on 45th Street. We were shocked by plans prior to the first scheduled zoning hearing because it mentioned 275 people, which was not mentioned in the first meeting.
- Dave: Let's address the plans being presented before us today.

Kento Ohmori: LC board member. I look at this from the community development side, not the resident side. I took the time to look at street view in Brooklyn and the scale of the building compared to outdoor space and it looks like you're moving in that direction. The restaurant has a good urban feel. A wide sidewalk with seating and low fence out front. It looks like engagement is good between sidewalk and restaurant. One of the concerns I have is that the previous version looked like walled off garden. I don't how tall the fence is?

- 6 ft.
- Kento: OK, so that's a privacy fence. When you're walking past it, you can't tell what's going on. This is a walkable energetic neighborhood and I would expect restaurant to have friendly connection.
- Chris: Not 6' in the front, only 6' in the side to shield for residents. The fence in front is mesh and 2-3 feet tall.
- Kento: The acoustical fence—does it work? Most of the ones I've seen...
- Chris: It's hard to soundproof a fence, but it definitely helps.
- Kento: I appreciate that you've gone smaller, but there's a massive bike rack separating from pedestrians so now there are even more pulls away from connections to the community. I don't know what the right solution is but that's why the variances matter. The reaction is that we're asking for too much, scale it back, but hearing out all the various concerns is more important and addressing that instead of just shrinking or sliding in under the rules.

Jill Joye: You mentioned noise buffers during the presentation?

- Chris: [picture shown from slides of Acoustifence] Basically, you build a fence, and the acoustifence is in between, and then build another fence.
- Jill: It's just a piece of canvas? So the fence becomes opaque?
- Chris: Yes, it's canvas essentially.

Joe: I'm all about what you're trying to do, but concern is with trash receptacle. Meat and summertime: the trash receptacle is right by my patio. Will there be containers for the receptacles? Also what about smoke?

- Chris: We moved the smoker away from residents. The smoker burns clean after it's started. If we need to put a precipitator in, we will.
- Joe: Trash? Goldmark is dumping bottles and it can be noisy.
- Chris: The trash will be picked up 6 days a week. We can wheel it to the front and they just come and grab it.
- Mary: So the trash will be picked up on Butler?
- Chris: We'd like that.

Florence: I will be the prime object of all the nastiness that will happen when it opens. Everything they do for fun to bring people to Lawrenceville is pure hell for people in the street. I've lived in that house for 50 years and the conditions are horrendous. Family friendly and 8 bicycles: for all I care and it's nasty for the people and double nasty for me. I can't see what you could possibly do to make me happy.

Kyle: my question was about smell so it's been addressed.

Mary Coleman: I live behind Industry and according to agreement they are not to take trash after 10 because it's noisy and they stick to it. Their trash is behind a fence which people don't see. Are you willing to have your employees abide by similar rules?

- Matt: we have laid groundwork for interacting with other bars and precedent. Cleaning refuse receptacle and screening it appropriately, hours of dumping. The Goldmark comment had me making notes.

Mary Coleman: exhaust fan on roof?

- Chris: Yes.

Adam Brandolph: I live directly across from rear. You initially said you'd be installing precipitator. Is that not the case now?

- Chris: We will if we have to, but they're \$50,000 and we don't expect to need it.
- Adam: What are your hours? Other restaurants close their patios and garage doors at 11. Would you be open to closing earlier than 2?
- Joel: Yeah, we're open for discussion on that.

Q: Will you be using Eden Way?

- Chris: No unloading or loading on Eden Way.

Q: If it's a family restaurant, is there a reason why you have to be open late?

- Joel: Yes, we also have to pay rent. I'm a late night guy and I get hungry late at night.

- We have 34 restaurants in a 20 block radius right now. We don't need another restaurant open that late. The smell from the barbeque could be an issue as many restaurants in the neighborhood you can smell from outside. I can smell the Thai Japanese place, Hana, I can smell the noodle restaurant, New Amsterdam, all these big exhaust all in a small area and it smells bad. If you like that smell, you're lucky, but if you don't, it's bad.
- Joel: Some operators pump exhaust for a crave factor. Eliminating smell is simple. Some people pump that smell to bring in customers, but we don't do that.
- Chris: Some restaurants also don't clean hoods, so you can that oily smell.
- Q: We have these meetings and all these people say oh we'll do this and then they don't. Where will you keep your garbage? Is that far enough away?
- Chris: It goes out every day. It's picked up 6 days a week.
- We have 34 bars in 20 blocks. Many pending liquor licenses. When is enough enough? I guess this question is for the community groups and I guess you can't stop everyone.
- Matt: There's not a limit, but we can talk about that.
- There should be a limit.

Jesse Perkins: I live in the 10th Ward. I appreciate the effort you've made to mitigate the impact. I'm sure it wasn't easy scaling back. Regarding the area not for use in the corner, would you be willing to create permeable paving or any other greening aspect that could be done to mitigate stormwater?

- Yes, it will be permeable.

Bill Joyce: There's a lost opportunity there for some art. Maybe move the sound fence back and take advantage of the corner. A creative solution could be capitalized.

- Matt: I can speak to this a little. To commend them, this is still a work in progress, and we've been making the same suggestions.
- Bill: Art or stormwater, or both. It's a bit of a challenge but it would be nice to see stronger relationship between seating and sidewalk. Not really part of the urban fabric here in Lawrenceville.

Ray Chacowski: When will you know the variances? Will we show up and find out then?

- Gavin: the design professionals we work with hope to give us finalized plans. As soon as we get in to see City Planning we'll know more. It's not a whole lot of lead time but we will make sure Matt and Dave know those plans.
- Ray: So, we're going to show up at the hearing and then hear about the variances.
- Matt: We scheduled this meeting as soon as the last hearing was over. They worked in earnest. As it relates to getting info out, we can get the info out to you all. As we get their information we can pass it along.
- Joel: There is a lot we didn't know coming from NY about how Pittsburgh works. We didn't know all these concerns before we started. As soon as we heard the concerns, we immediately responded so we could figure something out.
- Dave: As was said, their designs have changed substantially so it's been a work in progress and that changes the relief they're seeking from the Zoning Code. Originally, they were going for a Review for the outdoor screen/entertainment, but they've agreed to drop those elements of the plan. They sought a variance for the accessory use of the outdoor space, which is supposed to be 25% of the floor area of the primary use. And then there were two special exceptions: one for setback and one for refuse, but that will probably be changing too. Nothing should be added.

- Matt: And since we met them, the area that would be considered accessory use has been decreased. They have increased spaces. They got rid of the bar. They got rid of the bocce courts. They've hemmed in the project.

Brian Taylor: I think part of all our concern with serving this food until 2 is that you're going to get drunk people wanting food late at night, but living right around the corner, that's what I see happening. It's your business and you need customers, but you did mention the bocce courts were gone, but then you said you'd do them in future? Is that why you're fencing off blank space? Plans to bring back?

- Joel: We scaled down the outside and removed the bocce courts in response to community concerns, but now people are saying we want it. We are new to your problems and issues and we want hear your concerns. We are working with Matt and Dave diligently to make everyone happy and still make money and grow here. This is a great area. That's why people are coming. We want to be a part of the future here. That's why we're here. It's a 6 hour drive to operate here. There's a reason we're here. We're not trying to be slick. We're talking to these guys all the time to figure out the best thing. Fences, bocce, hours, parking, bikes. We didn't even come with this stuff in our original plan. We didn't know you needed parking. Now we know. We've been told to trust the process. We're trying to trust the process.
- Brian: I don't envy you. People are saying mixed messages.
- Joel: At the end of the day, you're going to love the food.

Screening for trash? I believe there is a requirement to do so. It seems like you don't have a trash pick up plan. Your plan is to have trash picked up 6 days a week?

- Joel and Chris: Yes, we'll have trash pick up 6 days per week.

Kyle: You said we'd love your food. Are you going to smoke tofu or veggies for those who don't eat meat?

- Joel: Yes, all of our sides are vegan except for the baked beans. We have a vegan mac and cheese and other options.

Nate Ferrer: I get you don't know what you're doing just yet, but are you going to break down the fence when you figure it out?

- Joel: We're baby stepping it. WE are proving we are who we say we are first, so we'll see. We want o get through zoning first. Our original plan was we could use all of that space and do wedding or street fairs with independent vendors and art shows, but we're trying to respond to the community.

Matt: Q&A is over. We thank our guests and will ask them to leave. Everyone was civil it was great.

Community Discussion

Comments and main themes:

- Concerns about future expansion of the site on areas now planned "not for use"; enforceability of community agreements.
- Would like to see something happen with the "not for use" space that is urban design friendly. Community groups should work with them to do some cool public art or greening project there.
- Concern about parking area: not a lot of room, people entering/exiting from Butler Street could be dangerous, especially if the lot is full and they're forced to back out.

- Are they allowed to use a curb cut there?
 - Are there screening requirements they're under from Zoning for the parking spaces?
- Bike parking: why so many? How to integrate with the sidewalk/street better?
- Residents seemed to support bocce ball and other family-friendly games, as opposed to entertainment uses like speakers/TVs.
- Concerns about trash pick up / plan, and deliveries: hours and location of trash pick up, screening of trash receptacle, noise from employees dumping trash at end of night, concerns about trash trucks and delivery trucks blocking Butler Street traffic
- Concerns about parking impact on neighbors: already very difficult to park on residential blocks. Change RPP program to extended hours?
- If the community wants a building there, we should go for that.
- Green space is not very green.
- Concern about what it looks like during the winter when outdoor area is not in use, feasibility of business plan.
- Need to know what the updated variances are from Zoning