

HERMITAGE

City zoners OK Chipotle variance

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By Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*

Hermitage Zoning Hearing Board on Wednesday approved a variance for property on which a Chipotle Mexican Grill will be built, setting the stage for round two before the Hermitage Planning Commission, which panned the exterior design of the building.

Visconsi Land Co. Ltd., Pepper Pike, bought the former Hermitage Middle School property from Hermitage School Board, and has subdivided the property into four lots. McDonald's will build in the spring in the northernmost lot, and Tim Hortons and Cold Stone Creamery have begun building a shared restaurant on the lot to the south of the golden arches.

Chipotle wants to build next to Hortons. The two middle lots are squeezed because developers want to preserve the southern lot for development. It has a stream, Indian Run, next to it, and contains a Hermitage sanitary sewer line. Visconsi Director of Development Jeffrey A. Deeds said the line probably cannot be relocated because it has little or no fall.

"The variance affords the ability to have viable fourth lot," Deeds said. Deeds asked the zoning board for a 10-foot variance from the south side yard setback requirement - 20 feet - on the Chipotle property. The board in April approved a four-foot variance from the side yard setback on the Hortons lot.

Deeds argued that, since his company owns the neighboring lots, the variance affects only Visconsi. The setback will not impact health, safety or welfare, and does not disturb any city functions, he said. The building cannot be made thinner without rendering the interior layout not viable for a restaurant, Deeds said.

Although it was not pertinent to the board's decision, Deeds said a new, all-brick facade design has been proposed for the building. Chipotle had proposed its latest design, made of two-tone gray corrugated metal panels, but Hermitage Planning Commission on Dec. 5 balked at it, with commission Chairman Charles E. Rogers calling it "ugly."

While the metal exterior was more, "contemporary," Deeds said the brick façade makes for a "much nicer looking building." The brick adds an extra foot onto the width of the building, and developers will reduce the width of the driveway on the north side of the building by one foot, Deeds said.

The commission tabled action on the Chipotle land development plan until January.