

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Committee Chairman
Director of Planning



Jim Woyciechowski
Fire Department

David Rodio
Building Official

Nick Capezza
Engineering Division

Stephen Mulcahy
Traffic Safety Division

DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910

MINUTES

9:00 AM, WEDNESDAY, June 15, 2022

CRANSTON CITY HALL – 3RD FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBER

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jason Pezzullo called the Development Plan Review Committee meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. in the City Council chamber.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Stephen Mulcahy, Franklin Paulino, and Stan Pikul.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Joshua Berry, Senior Planner, and Alex Berardo, Planning Technician.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 5/18/22 Meeting

(vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the 5/18/22 meeting.

3. "Trolley Barn Plaza" *

Pre-Application (No vote taken)

Location: 777 Cranston Street, AP 7, Lot 1

Zoning District: C-5 (Heavy business, industry)

Owner/Applicant: Brewery Parkade, Inc., and Charles Montague Realty, LLC and Charlotte Montague Realty, LLC, as Tenants-in-Common

Proposal: The applicant is proposing a multi-use commercial project including a carwash, gas station/mini-mart, fast food restaurant and a 35,000 ft² AutoZone with both retail and warehousing/distribution components. The carwash, mini-mart and restaurant all have drive-thru features.

Atty. Nicholas Goodier, joined by Dana Nisbet of DiPrete Engineering and Herman Peralta of Beta Group, provided a summary of project updates to the Committee. Following a basic explanation of the project itself, Atty. Goodier said that the landscape plan, traffic study, environmental report, and engineering plans are now in place. He added that tenants are currently finalizing their leases, so the owner is eager to secure full approval and begin construction. Regarding the traffic study, he noted that Fuss & O'Neill's review of the internal site circulation seemed to have drawn the most comments to be reviewed, but the change of tenant from a bank to a car wash is expected to improve the site's overall traffic impact.

Director Pezzullo invited Mr. Berry to provide Staff comments on the proposal.

Mr. Berry began by noting that he has sent the landscape plan out for peer review to Bradford & Associates and that the City Plan Commission had previously expressed interest in how the site would be landscaped for screening by making it a condition of master plan approval. In that vein, Mr. Berry asked why plantings were proposed to be located at the base of the retaining wall along the western property line instead of on top of the wall, which would better allow the vegetation to screen the site. Ms. Nisbet said she would follow up with Beta Group but at a quick glance, she suspected there would be enough space for that modification to be designed. She added that there are proposals for a Geotechnician to work on the wall, but nothing had been signed yet.

Turning to the matter of landscaping more broadly, Mr. Berry asked for confirmation that the proposal would meet the minimum 15% landscaped area target and that the Remedial Action Plan would not delay the project. Ms. Nisbet said the Remedial Action Plan called for a cap of clean soil, which would be simple to achieve as the site needed to be filled anyway. Mr. Berry then asked whether the gas station's tanks would be put in the ground at the same time or whether there would be soil disturbances after the clean fill cap is put in place. Ms. Nisbet said the work will be undertaken in a single phase, but RIDEM will approve that aspect of the work as well. As for the precise location of the tanks and connecting utilities, Ms. Nisbet noted the Utilities Plan has a placeholder that indicates the approximate location, but the end user will determine the gas station's precise configuration.

As a follow-up, Mr. Berry noted that there was no tangible progress on the issues of EV charging stations and accessory solar energy uses, which master plan conditions of approval mandate that the applicant explore. He asked why the tenants/end users, as opposed to the owner, will be expected to take the lead on researching and implementing electric vehicle charging stations as well as solar carports or rooftop solar. Atty. Goodier said some tenants will construct their own buildings, and as the green energy elements will be supplied by third-party vendors, the applicant feels the tenants are best positioned to determine whether and where to include these elements on their premises. Mr. Berry said that it is preferred that the carports and charging stations be part of the Preliminary Plan phase and asked that if this decision can only be made by the tenants, could AutoZone provide rooftop solar, carports or EV charging stations by the Preliminary Plan phase? Director Pezzullo decided there wasn't enough information to continue the discussion and suggested the Plan Commission could choose whether to make conditions on these issues as part of the Preliminary Plan review/approval.

Finally, Mr. Berry reported that he hadn't heard anything from Providence regarding the bike path; Atty. Goodier added that Providence had told him their comments would be forthcoming, but he hasn't received them yet. Mr. Berry asked to see the 15-foot easement on the site plan to confirm it is all set. Atty. Goodier said the land has been set aside for the easement but they intended to formally entertain the easement and add it to the site plan some time in the future. Director Pezzullo said he would prefer to see it included in the plan from the outset and let it dissolve later if the bike path doesn't come to fruition.

Director Pezzullo then asked the Committee members to offer their own feedback.

Mr. Pikul said he agreed with the parking calculation the applicant used, but he wondered whether there would be a dedicated parking area for employees working at Building 1 (AutoZone). Atty. Goodier and Ms. Nisbet said they did not think it was necessary because company vehicles driven by employees are parked and stored at local AutoZone branches. As this location would be the AutoZone "mega-hub" for the area, employee vehicles would be parked on-site just long enough for employees to pick up supplies to bring back to their own branches. Mr. Pikul then asked how vehicles would enter and exit the site during construction and during which hours construction would occur. Ms. Nisbet said the access point was visible on Sheet 5 and would be located near an existing curb cut, and Atty. Goodier said the crews will be expected to comply with City ordinances for hours of operation. Mr. Pikul also asked how space on the shopping plaza's main sign would be divided among the tenants, to which Mr. Berry said the owner typically arranges that with the tenants, but an anchor tenant like AutoZone would probably have the largest sign. Finally, regarding the fast-food tenant's driveway opening being located less than 60 feet from Cranston St., Mr. Pikul said he didn't believe it would require a variance – he noted the issue comes down to whether to interpret the access as a driveway or a private internal road.

Mr. Paulino asked when the site would be operational; Atty. Goodier said they intended to be fully online by spring or summer 2023.

Mr. Mulcahy said he agreed with the way that some of Fuss & O'Neill's suggestions for improving internal traffic flow, such as aligning intersections and providing pedestrian pathways, had been reflected in the new site plan. Ms. Nisbet pointed out a few of the changes she made with Paul Bannon, including pedestrian connections between Buildings 1, 3, and 4; creating a four-way intersection to align with the rear of the car wash; and restricting the access point on the Cranston Street end of the fast-food tenant as entrance only. Mr. Mulcahy asked why the traffic study didn't anticipate traffic impacts on the side streets off Cranston Street between Huntington and Webster. Mr. Peralta said a Future Conditions Analysis was generated using conservative assumptions, and with signal optimization timing (which would need to be coordinated with the City) being implemented, the development would lead to an improvement over the current traffic flow situation – anticipated to be Level D or better. He noted that optimization would only happen post-construction and that Fuss & O'Neill advised the implementation occur within one month of the site's opening to afford enough time to see what the pass-by trip situation is in practice.

Director Pezzullo asked what will be done with any soil that needs to be taken off-site. Ms. Nisbet said they will attempt to keep as much of the soil on-site as possible, which should not be difficult since the site mostly needs to be filled with a soil cap, but Atty. Goodier added that any soil that does need to be taken off-site would be monitored by RIDEM. Director Pezzullo then said the plans would have to be wrapped up soon if the project is to be ready for an early July Preliminary Plan review with the DPRC and then a review before the Plan Commission the following week. He suggested scheduling an offline conversation in the next few days to discuss the peer review.

Mr. Berry noted that advertising deadlines also impact the timing, and he said that although Fire had relayed to him a comment that fire trucks wouldn't be able to reach two sides of the AutoZone building as the site is currently designed, their concerns would not delay the project.

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 a.m.