

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, September 7, 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 9:14 a.m. in the City Council chamber.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Justin Mateus, Steve Mulcahy, Franklin Paulino, and Jim Woyciechowski.

The following Planning Department staff members were in attendance: Alex Berardo, Planning Technician.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 8/3/22 Meeting (vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the 8/3/22 meeting.

3. "Park Avenue Pharmacy"

Preliminary Plan (vote taken)

Location: 1375 Park Avenue, AP 11, Lots 749, 3599 and 3600
Zoning District: C-3 (General business)
Owner: Park Avenue Plaza, LLC
Applicant: Five Rivers, LLC (dba Park Avenue Pharmacy)
Proposal: The applicant intends to install a drive-thru pick-up window at the rear of the building for customer convenience. No menu board or ordering station will be installed.

Before inviting Atty. Robert Murray (representing the applicant, Five Rivers, LLC) to introduce the project, Chairman Pezzullo informed the Committee that the City Plan Commission heard this matter at the previous night's monthly meeting and gave the proposal a positive recommendation on its Zoning Board variance request.

Atty. Murray introduced the two representatives of Park Avenue Pharmacy who were present for the meeting (Zaheer Akbar and Shahid Bashir) as well as the owner of the shopping plaza (Michael Friedman). He said that Mr. Akbar operates an independent pharmacy in Johnston and wants to open another in Cranston; this would not be a 24-hour operation, Atty. Murray added, but would probably be open 9am-7pm on weekdays, 9am-3pm on Saturdays, and closed on Sundays.

Speaking to the specific proposal, Atty. Murray said the pharmacy will occupy the endcap of a multi-tenant commercial strip building and would like to install a drive-thru window, but although both the pharmacy and drive-thru uses are allowed by-right in the C-3 zone, they need the Zoning Board's approval because of a

stipulation in City Code that these uses are only allowable for standalone buildings. Atty. Murray then distributed photos of the property to aid in the discussion.

Of the five doors at the rear of the pharmacy side of the building, the two closest to the end would be attached to the pharmacy's space. The applicant would like to convert one of those doors into a drive-thru window, without menu boards or order points, for the use of probably fewer than a dozen people per day. Atty. Murray said the applicants did not believe the vehicle queuing would impact the doors; to the contrary, they felt there would be room for adequate circulation behind the building for two travel lanes (a drive-thru lane and a bypass lane enabling emergency vehicles to circulate easily) as well as the existing row of parallel parking. He qualified that statement by noting the electrical transformer surrounded by bollards at the end of the building did tighten the mouth of the drive-thru lane and would require vehicles to cross over the property line as they rounded the corner, but he also said the owner has a perpetual easement to allow for vehicles to travel over the property line.

Chairman Pezzullo then invited the Committee members to offer their thoughts.

Mr. Mulcahy first asked how the drive-thru window would work. Mr. Bashir said customer would ring a bell to alert an attendant to their presence at the window; then the customer would either drop off a prescription or give their name to pick one up. He then asked how far out beyond the rear wall of the building the drive-thru window would project. Mr. Akbar said the window itself would probably be flush with the wall, but Atty. Murray said architectural drawings have not yet been submitted to the Building Department.

Turning to the site plan, Mr. Mulcahy said that the applicant shows an 11-foot-wide traffic aisle (the bypass lane) when City Code requires 13 feet. Given the shortfall between the proposed width and the required width, as well as the limited remaining space once the widths of the parallel parking row and the drive-thru aisle were taken into account, Mr. Mulcahy asked if the applicants felt it was necessary to retain the parking row behind the building. Mr. Friedman said those spaces are usually used only by employees and that he could envision parting with several of the spaces closest to the drive-thru window.

Chairman Pezzullo asked for confirmation that the doors at the rear of the building need to open outwards (in the direction of egress), which Mr. Woyciechowski did confirm. Chairman Pezzullo then said that once the doors opening outward are taken into account, there needs to be some sort of striped buffer to indicate that vehicles cannot come close enough to the building's rear wall that they might hit opening doors. He then observed that the current dimensions proposed on the site plan do not provide adequate space for such a buffer; that to provide a buffer, the drive-thru lane cannot be measured up to the rear wall of the building; that the pick-up window would have to project out from the rear wall to be within reach of vehicles staying outside of the buffer zone; and that 5-6 parallel parking spaces on the drive-thru window side of the building will probably have to be eliminated to provide adequate space for the buffer.

Speaking to the dimensions of the buffer, Mr. Woyciechowski said that City Code calls for a minimum of 10 feet between vehicles and the side of a building from which doors open outward. Atty. Murray questioned whether the rear of the building was a public way, which was the term the Code associated with the 10-foot buffer requirement. Chairman Pezzullo asked whether there could be any flexibility in the width of the buffer, while Atty. Murray wondered if signage on the doors could be an alternate solution for the doors closer to the drive-thru window end of the building so that the travel lane could come closer to the window. Mr. Woyciechowski said that the only real solution to the 10-foot buffer would be to remove the doors on the rear of the building, which he did not recommend. Atty. Murray said he would have to speak with Mr. Friedman after the meeting to find out whether he would be open to giving up the number of rear parking spaces required to accommodate the 10-foot-wide buffer.

Mr. Mulcahy said he needed to see a fully-dimensioned site plan. He requested that the details they had discussed so far -- the precise widths of the travel lane at the entry and mouth of the drive-thru lane, striping to delineate the buffer lane, eliminating the necessary number of parallel parking spaces in the rear, replacement of a rear door with a drive-thru window, and directional arrows -- all be shown on the updated site plan. He also requested the new site plan show crosshatching and signage around the transformer and bollards to block wrong-way traffic into the drive-thru lane.

Mr. Mateus said he would like to see an oil-water separator installed in the drainage basin near the corner of the building because of its proximity to the proposed drive-thru window's location (cars will idle at the window and could drip comparatively more oil in that area as a result). Atty. Murray asked if the separator would require maintenance; Mr. Mateus said yes, but the existing drainage basin already needs maintenance too.

Mr. Paulino said he liked the idea of installing a drive-thru window for added customer convenience and voiced his support for the applicants choosing to open a new pharmacy in Cranston.

Chairman Pezzullo said that given the number of details needing to be finalized and shown on the site plan, he felt the matter should be continued. Atty. Murray asked if it would be possible for the applicants to receive a conditional approval that they could bring with them to the following week's Zoning Board meeting. Chairman Pezzullo said his preference would be to hold an additional meeting one week later, in the morning, so that the applicant could show the updated site plan and receive its approval prior to the Zoning Board meeting which would happen later that evening. Atty. Murray expressed uncertainty that the site plan could be updated in that timeframe, so Chairman Pezzullo said he could accept granting approval now on the condition that the applicant must come before the Committee for Final Plan approval even if the Zoning Board grants its approval to the proposal next week.

Upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the Preliminary Plan application, subject to the condition that the applicant comes before the DPRC prior to Final Plan recording with a site plan showing the following items:

- Separation between the building and the driving lane, including distance of separation
- Inclusion of an oil-water separator
- Elimination of as many parking spaces as are required to accommodate the buffer lane and drive-thru lane

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