

MINUTES

March 3, 2020

Vice-Chairman Vincent called the City Plan Commission Meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. in the City Council Chamber. He announced that the Chairman was ill.

The following Commission members were in attendance: Vice-Chairman Fred Vincent, Ken Mason, Joseph Morales, Robert DiStefano (arrived at 7:00PM), Ann Marie Maccarone, Kathleen Lanphear and Robert Coupe (arrived 6:53 PM).

Also present were: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director
Douglas McLean, AICP, Principal Planner
Joshua Berry, AICP, Senior Planner
Stephen Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion made by Mr. Mason and seconded by Ms. Maccarone, the Plan Commission unanimously voted (5/0) to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2019, Plan Commission Meeting.

Ms. Maccarone made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2020 Joint Plan Commission, City Council Site Visit which was seconded by Mr. Mason, however, Mr. Morales abstained as he did not attend the site walk and with only 5 members present at the time of the vote, the motion did not receive the 5 votes necessary to pass (4/0 Mr. Morales abstained). The minutes will be revisited at the April Plan Commission meeting.

Ms. Maccarone made a note to amend the spelling of JOE "KOECHER" in the minutes for the February 25, 2020 Comprehensive Plan Joint Kickoff Meeting. Upon a motion made by Ms. Maccarone and seconded by Ms. Lanphear, the Plan Commission unanimously voted (5/0) to approve the amended minutes of the February 25, 2020 Comprehensive Plan Joint Kickoff Meeting.

Mr. Mason, on the rationale that City staff was present to speak briefly on their respective budget items, made a motion to amend the agenda to move the 2020-2025 Capital Budget and Improvement Program (CIP) up on the agenda to be heard before the ordinance recommendations. The motion was seconded by Ms. Maccarone and the Plan Commission unanimously voted (5/0) to amend the order of the agenda.

2020-2025 CAPITAL BUDGET AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

Jason Pezzullo, AICP, introduced the topic and had Douglas McLean, AICP, bring up the excel sheet with the budget on the projector.

Edward Collins, Chief of Facilities Management and Capital Projects for the School Department presented the proposed capital budget for the School Department. He explained the \$49M improvements and the 5-year plan. He cited a resolution was passed for a \$147M referendum. Although there are no capital improvement projects this summer. Mr. Collins stated that RIDE approval was anticipated on May

20. He stated that the minimum reimbursement % is 54%, with a potential for reimbursement upwards of 70%.

Ken Mason presented the proposed capital budget for the Department of Public Works. He discussed numerous items, including but not limited to fleet maintenance, highway fleet maintenance, street paving, improvements on Wilbur Ave & Natick Ave, improvements on Phenix Ave, Hope Ave & Wilbur Ave, traffic calming exiting Castleton Estates, and sanitary sewer projects. Mr. Vincent asked which intersection improvement would take priority. Mr. Mason explained that the Natick Ave & Wilbur Ave improvement was simpler because it does not involve taking land.

Stephen MacIntosh, the Fire Chief, presented the proposed budget for the Fire Department. He stated that there are 3 projects, replacing engines, replacing IT equipment and replacing the bucket truck which requires a storage shed to house.

Tony Liberatore, the Director of Parks and Recreation, presented the proposed budget for the Parks and Recreation Department. Notable expenses included the acoustic tiles in the youth center, LED lighting at the Pastore Center, turf improvements for the Cranston Stadium, LED lights for the Cranston Stadium, and turf for the Cranston West baseball field.

Jason Pezzullo noted that the library did not have any budget requests and that he had put in \$500K for the Open Space fund. He stated that this budget was abnormally extremely high due to the School Department requests, even considering the reimbursements.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Morales and seconded by Mr. Mason, the Plan Commission unanimously voted to forward a positive recommendation on the 2020-2025 Capital Budget and Improvement Program (CIP) to the City Council.

ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

(The following two ordinances are related matters and were discussed together)

1-20-04 - Ordinance amending of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Cranston, as amended 2012. (Catherine St. and Bateman Ave)

&

1-20-05 – Ordinance in amendment of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Zoning” (Change of Zone – Catherine St. And Bateman Ave.)

Douglas McLean gave a staff presentation on both ordinances, discussing the project site, the proposal, and the site walk which occurred on February 22, 2020.

Robert Murray, attorney for the applicant Christy, LLC, introduced the present professionals hired by the applicant for this project and complimented the Planning Department for a collaborative effort to get the project to where it is. He thanked the Plan Commission, Council, and the public for participating in the site walk and for productive discussion towards improving the project. Mr. Murray stated that the applicant can redevelop the site under zoning by-right, but that the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and the Zone change are required only to locate the building in the desired location to the east of the site which helps for parking and circulation. He claimed that the site details will be worked out during the Development Plan Review process. He confirmed that there will be no use of Catherine Street. Mr. Murray spoke to the letter from the Warwick Planning Department, stating that they did not look at the plans before issuing the letter and that he is now in correspondence with the Warwick Planning office and the Pontiac Village Neighborhood Association. Mr. Murray acknowledged that a RIPDES permit from RIDEM and a PAP from RIDOT will be required. It was explained that the project includes razing three commercial and three residential buildings in order to redevelop the site as proposed. He concluded by asking the Plan Commission to adopt the staff recommendation to forward positive recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan and zoning amendments.

Mr. Vincent stated that most of the Plan Commission was at the site walk and that a 6' fence on the southern property line would buffer the local historic district. He asked for more information on the potential bank for the pad site in the northwest corner of the property.

Mr. Murray confirmed that the applicant was in discussions with a bank for this site but could not provide more information at this time. He stated that the owner would transfer a liquor license from another property to this site.

Mr. Vincent asked if the applicant had coordinated with RIDOT, as there is proposed projects nearby.

Mr. Murray stated that the RIDOT projects and his clients project most likely will not align time-wise and that they will correspond with RIDOT as appropriate.

Mr. Mason stated that Bateman Ave due south past the mall had a contract which is starting in the spring at its southernmost point with a 1.5 year estimate to complete.

Mr. Murray stated that the applicant will work to minimize the impacts of the demolition of the buildings including dust control.

Mr. Vincent opened the floor to public comment.

Sharon Davis of 239 Bateman Ave stated her concerns about traffic on Bateman Ave, stating there is a bus stop. She stated that the site is currently a dump and that aesthetically she thinks the project will be an improvement. She raised her concerns about Catherine Street usage.

Mr. Mason stated that the City will remove the fence and light poles, will restrict vehicular access and will loam and seed the right of way on Catherine Street.

Lucy Almborg of 11 Jennie Street asked if Catherine Street is to be blocked, who would maintain it?

Mr. Mason responded that the city would not maintain it.

There were no other public comments, so Vice-Chairman Vincent gave the floor back to Douglas McLean for staff's analysis and recommendation.

Mr. McLean listed several aspects of analysis including the public's non-opposition, that the houses can be removed as a right and that therefore the approval of the request would not have bearing on saving housing, that approval may provide more cohesive site design and circulation, that the proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and is in conformance with the general purpose of zoning. Mr. McLean stated that the Planning Department recommends that the Plan Commission forward a positive recommendation on both proposed ordinances to the Ordinance Committee.

Mr. Vincent stated that this project is an example of how redevelopment near residential should be conducted.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Distefano and seconded by Ms. Lanphear, the Plan Commission unanimously voted (7/0) to accept staff's findings and forward a positive recommendation to the Ordinance Committee on Ordinance 1-20-04.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Distefano and seconded by Ms. Maccarone, the Plan Commission unanimously voted (7/0) to accept staff's findings and forward a positive recommendation to the Ordinance Committee on Ordinance 1-20-05.

Mr. Murray gave Mr. McLean the applicant's planning Consultant, Ed Pimentel's report to be included in the record.

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW

(staff report missing)

The board considered a variance application by Renaissance Development Corporation (OWN) and Navigent Credit Union (APP) for a bank with a drive through facility at 200 Phenix Avenue, A.P. 12 Lots 217, 218, 219 and 322 for relief from landscape standards, stacking, and setbacks for audio devices from residential property. Upon a motion made by Mr. Coupe and seconded by Mr. Distefano, the Plan Commission unanimously voted (7/0) to accept staff's recommendation to forward a positive recommendation on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Pezzullo thanked the Commission for attending the kickoff meeting the week prior. He reminded the Commission that the next Comprehensive Plan meeting will be held on March 25 which is intended to be specific to Ward 2. There were no other significant updates at this time.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT –

Mr. Pezzullo thanked the Plan Commission for the numerous meetings that it had the preceding month. He stated that the proposed budget for the Planning Department would be submitted soon.

Mr. Vincent requested that the scope of work be established for the anticipated consultant for the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Pezzullo stated that the budget should be set before the scope of work, but Mr. Vincent suggested that the scope be articulated first and then work backwards to calculate the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by Mr. DiStefano and seconded by Mr. Morales, the Commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:56 p.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING – April 7th - 6:30PM City Hall Council Chamber