

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Michael E. Smith
President

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Planning Director



CITY PLAN COMMISSION
Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, RI 02910

Vacant
Vacant
Kathleen Lanphear
Frank Ritz
Ann Marie Maccarone
James Donahue
Robert Coupe
Steven Frias

MINUTES

Tuesday, May 3rd, 2022 – 6:30PM

3rd Flood - City Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue, Cranston RI

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Ave.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Chairman Smith, James Donahue, Steven Frias, Kathleen Lanphear, Ann Marie Maccarone, and Frank Ritz. Robert Coupe was absent, and the Commission currently has two unfilled vacancies.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director; Douglas McLean, AICP, Principal Planner; Joshua Berry, AICP, Senior Planner; and Alexander Berardo, Planning Technician.

Also attending: Steve Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 4/05/22 Regular Meeting
- 4/20/22 Special Joint Site Walk

Mr. Frias distributed printed copies of his proposed edits to the draft minutes from the April 5th Plan Commission meeting and read them aloud. The proposed edits further clarified several edits previously made to the March 8th minutes as explained in the Approval of Minutes section of the April 5th minutes; one other requested edit showed Mr. Frias' estimate of how much income the City derives from its public housing to be \$140,000 (the "1" having been omitted in the draft minutes).

Chairman Smith asked if the other Commissioners had any other changes to put forward; none did, so he asked for motions to accept Mr. Frias' edits and to approve the amended minutes.

Upon motion by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission voted 6 to 0 to accept Mr. Frias' recommended edits to the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 4/5/22.

Upon motion by Mr. Donahue, and seconded by Mr. Ritz, the City Plan Commission voted 6 to 0 to **approve** the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 4/5/22 as amended by Mr. Frias.

Chairman Smith then asked if the Commissioners had any edits to propose for the draft minutes for the April 20th Site Walk. Mr. Donohue noted that blank spaces were left in place of two names of members of the applicant team. Planning Director Jason Pezzullo said that Staff attempted to contact Atty. Brian LaPlante (who is representing the applicant) the previous week to ask for their names but had not yet heard back. The Commissioners decided to defer their vote to accept the Site Walk minutes to the following month to allow more time to include the missing names.

SUBDIVISIONS AND MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENTS

- **“Sprague Covington Plat”** **PUBLIC HEARING**
PRELIMINARY PLAN – Major Land Development
8 townhouse style condominium units on 0.54-acre combined site
Zoned C-2 (Neighborhood Business) with allowance for the 8-unit density
1369 Park Avenue – AP 11, Lots 273 & 4062

Principal Planner Doug McLean presented the application for Preliminary Plan Major Land Development for the Sprague Covington Plat. He began by reminding the Commission that Master Plan approval was granted in September 2021 along with a positive recommendation for the zoning amendment that allowed a density increase of up to eight units on the property. He said that the City Council approved it (tied to the layout provided in the Master Plan) and the applicant’s request for 8 units is now by-right.

Mr. McLean continued by presenting several graphics and maps to show the site’s zoning and neighborhood context. He noted that two lots, currently occupied by remnant asphalt and billboards, will be merged into one. He said that the site’s direct abutters are a multifamily apartment complex, a strip commercial development, and a gas station. He added that the property was rezoned from C3 to C2 (a commercial zone which allows residential uses by-right) with conditions, namely that the site can host up to 8 dwelling units.

Speaking to the plan now before the Commission, Mr. McLean said the only change made since the Master Plan stage was to the layout of the parking area: the new configuration has one central curb cut with parking spaces along the front of the lot instead of the sides. He displayed the floor plans and landscape plans and said the applicant is proposing decent landscaping improvements for the site. Mr. McLean said tonight’s approval would be the final stage of public meeting review, with remaining review being handled administratively through to the Final Plan. He reviewed Staff’s findings of fact and asked if the Commission had any concerns with them. Seeing none, he provided the Staff recommendation, which was to approve the plan contingent on the applicant’s payment of the \$4,74.86 Eastern Cranston impact fee at the time of final plan recording.

Atty. John DiBona, representing the applicant, then spoke briefly to the merits of the proposal and offered to answer any questions the Commissioners might have. Mr. Frias asked if the eight units would be apartments or condominiums; Atty. DiBona affirmed the latter. No other Commissioners posed any further questions.

Upon motion by Mr. Ritz, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission voted 6 to 0 to **approve** the Preliminary Plan Major Land Development application subject to the condition of payment of the impact fee.

- **“20 Goddard Drive”** **INFORMATIONAL**
PRE-APPLICATION – Major Land Development
210,000 +/- square foot warehouse development on 16.74-acre site
Zoned M-2 (General Industrial)

20 Goddard Drive – AP 13, Lot 39

Atty. Bob Murray, representing the applicant, 20 Goddard Drive LLC, introduced the applicant team. Richard Corrin, principal of 20 Goddard Drive LLC was present, as well as Sam Hemingway from Garofalo Associates and Paul Bannon, traffic expert. Atty. Murray said the applicant acquired the site last summer and met with the Mayor on-site. He said the vision is to use the property for warehouse distribution or a trucking terminal – uses which the City’s code allows for by-right. He said the applicant hopes to return with a Master Plan submission in short order, perhaps in a month’s time, although the end user of the property is not yet known. Atty. Murray then invited Mr. Hemingway to provide additional detail.

Mr. Hemingway said the property was a former medium security site, and that current plans call for very little expansion or disturbance in areas of the site that weren’t previously developed. The applicant is proposing to shift the building to the west side, to make significant drainage improvements, and to provide for about 300 parking spaces with a possible reserve area in case future parking expansion is merited. He noted that the site is currently served by public utilities and no capacity issues are foreseen. He added that the applicant team expects environmental permitting will be the main concern, but the project will require an ordinance change and potentially other permits. Finally, speaking to Atty. Murray’s comment that the applicant has not yet selected an end user, Mr. Hemingway said the building’s footprint could need to be modified (in conformance with City regulations) depending on what the user’s specific needs will be.

Atty. Murray added that the access out to the surrounding road and highway network is already designed for this sort of use and said he believes the site is attractive for the anticipated use. He asked the Commission to offer any thoughts they had and said the applicant would be happy to take their comments into account to modify the plans if needed.

Chairman Smith asked how far the site was from the intersection of Pontiac Avenue. Atty. Murray said it was near the intersection of Goddard and Slater; the following intersection is the (signalized) corner of Slater and Pontiac. Chairman Smith also asked Atty. Murray to remind the Commission of whether the state sold the land to the applicant. Atty. Murray confirmed this to be the case, saying the applicant was the winner in a state RFP process for the site.

No other Commissioners posed any other questions. Atty. Murray thanked the Commission for its input.

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS

- **SHANE AND JESS WATTS** (OWN/APP) have applied to construct an accessory family dwelling unit addition encroaching into a required side yard setback at 105 Amy Drive, A.P. 20, lot 2155, area 39,012 s.f. zoned A20. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010-Variance; Sections 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations.

Due to the findings that the application is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that it does not alter the character of the neighborhood, upon motion made by Mr. Donahue, and seconded by Mr. Ritz, the City Plan Commission unanimously voted (6-0) to forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.

- **MICHAEL AND STACEY TORTORELLA** (OWN/ APP) have filed an application to construct a new single family dwelling on an undersized lot with reduced lot frontage at 0 Pippin Orchard Road, A.P. 34, lot 22, area 32,395 s.f. zoned A80. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010-Variance; Sections 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations.

Due to the findings that the application is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that it does not alter the character of the neighborhood, upon motion made by Ms. Maccarone, and seconded

by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission unanimously voted (6-0) to forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.

- **PARK AVENUE REALTY, INC.** (OWN) and NICO BELLA CRANSTON, LLC. (APP) have applied to operate a restaurant in an industrial zone with reduced lot area at 1350 Park Avenue, A.P. 11, lot 1768, area 14,748 s.f., zoned M1. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010- Variance; Sections 17.20.030- Schedule of Uses; 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations; 17.72.010- Signs.

Director Pezzullo told the Commission that the applicant had not been able to provide MLCs and therefore their application could not be considered this evening.

Upon motion made by Ms. Lanphear, and seconded by Ms. Maccarone, the City Plan Commission unanimously voted (6-0) to **continue** the matter to the June meeting of the City Plan Commission.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Planning Department Budget – 2022-2023
- Comprehensive Plan Update
- Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Schedule special workshop – affordable housing

Director Pezzullo began his report by stating that although he believes his departmental budget request for an additional staff member will be unsuccessful, there is a better chance than he believed that there will be adequate funding to hire a consultant to begin the Comprehensive Plan update. He reminded the Commission that CommerceRI gave the City a \$125,000 commitment for reimbursement, but the City couldn't begin the process because it wasn't allocating sufficient funds to hire a consultant and undertake the Comp Plan update. He requested a \$70,000 appropriation be placed in a dedicated account for the Comp Plan update in this year's budget and learned that once a consultant is engaged to begin the project, the City is contractually obligated to continue to fund the project. Director Pezzullo said that he would work with the Administration and the Finance Department to confirm the City's financial commitment is solid enough to proceed with an RFP and the eventual hiring of a consultant, theoretically as soon as this summer.

Mr. Donahue asked four questions: how much the consultant would charge in total for the Comp Plan update, how long the project would take to complete, how the CommerceRI commitment would be reimbursed to the City, and whether there was a sunset date on that commitment. Director Pezzullo said the Comp Plan update would probably cost around \$200,000 total and probably take 24-36 months, as the work entails a full rewrite. As for the CommerceRI commitment, he reiterated that it was a reimbursement that would come back to the City at the conclusion of the project and said that he did not think there was a firm date at which CommerceRI's offer would be rescinded due to inaction, but his preference would be to proceed as soon as possible.

Mr. Frias wondered if the consultant would be selected by the Board of Contracts and Purchasing (BOCAP), expressed his enthusiasm for undertaking the Comp Plan update, and noted that the City Council has recently been voicing similar enthusiasm for the work to begin. Director Pezzullo agreed that the City Council's interest is positive but said it remained to be seen if this level of interest will be matched by sufficient financial commitment. Director Pezzullo said that since this is a long-term project by nature, he is worried about beginning the Comp Plan update before he knows resources will be committed to complete it. He then noted the Hazard Mitigation plan is nearing completion and said the data contained within it would save the consultant time and effort on the relevant section of the Comp Plan.

Finally, Director Pezzullo asked if the Commission would like to schedule a dedicated workshop session to discuss affordable housing for some time this month. Chairman Smith liked the idea and wondered if Wednesday, May 18th, at 6:30 p.m. would be acceptable to the other Commissioners. Mr. Frias

mentioned Ms. Lanphear's request from a previous meeting that Staff give the Commission a reading list to help them prepare for the discussion and understand what approaches other communities have taken on the matter; Mr. Ritz echoed the request and thought it would be useful. Director Pezzullo said that Staff would gather some relevant information and provide it to the Commission prior to the meeting; however, he said that few communities in the area have done anything to address affordable housing needs, so they will have little to review in that respect. Chairman Smith suggested looking into the APA's materials and resources in case they have any conceptual information to help introduce the discussion.

ADJOURNMENT / NEXT REGULAR MEETING

- Tuesday, June 7th, 2022 — City Hall Council Chambers, 869 Park Avenue

Chairman Smith reminded the Commissioners that their ethics forms are due and can be filled out online.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 p.m.