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Lisa Mancini
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Frank Corrao
Public Works Director

Thomas Zidelis
Finance Director

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

City Hall – 3rd Floor, Room 309
869 Park Avenue – Cranston, RI 02910

MINUTES

James T. Giles Community Room – Cranston Central Library 140 Sockanosset Cross Road 6:30PM – TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Commission President Frias called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the James T. Giles Community Room of the Cranston Central Library at 140 Sockanosset Cross Road.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Commission President Steven Frias, Commission Vice-President Robert Coupe, Nicole Renzulli, David Exter, Kathleen Lanphear, Lisa Mancini, and Ex-officio member, DPW Director, Frank Corrao were present. Thomas Zidelis and Thomas Barbieri were absent.

The following members of the City Planning Department were in attendance: Beth Ashman, City Planning Director; and Jonas Bruggemann, Senior Planner.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 6, 2025 Regular Meeting – Draft minutes not available

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Commission Vice-President Coupe and seconded by Commissioner Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to continue the approval of minutes.

Commissioner Renzulli arrived at 6:35 pm.

EXTENSION REQUESTS

“Champlin Heights”

PUBLIC MEETING

Champlin Heights II, LLC (OWN/APP) has filed an application requesting permission for a one-year Extension Request, to June 30, 2026, for the Preliminary Plan application of a Major Land Development Project with street extension for the project entitled **Champlin Heights**.

Atty. Tenessa H. Azar, of Moses Ryan LTD, 40 Westminster Street, 9th Floor, Providence, RI, 02903, was present on behalf of the applicant to present the extension request.

Ms. Azar requested a one-year extension for the Champlain Heights approval, a 152-unit multi-family residential housing project with accessory uses, forming the second phase of Champlain Hills. The extension allows continued coordination with regulatory bodies, including a new permit from DEM.

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Commission Vice-President Coupe and seconded by Commissioner Exter, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to grant the one-year extension to June 30, 2026. No questions were raised by the Commission or public.

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SUBDIVISION & LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

“Vaughn Lane”

PUBLIC HEARING

Master Plan – Residential Planned Development

Proposal: The Proposal is the extension of public roadways, Wini Street and Vaughn Lane, to create 44 lots for single-family residential use on 30.47+/- acres and preserve 55.95+/- acres through a conservation easement. Applicant/Owner: 777 Main Street LLC; 538 Main Street, Vaughn Lane, Wini Street; AP 30, Lots 83, 84, 85, and 258

Jenna Shea of DiPrete Engineering presented an overview of the proposed subdivision, explaining that wetlands on the site would be preserved within designated open space areas. She noted that the Residential Plan District (RPD) yield calculations were consistent with what would be permitted under a conventional subdivision layout. She stated the proposal includes public roadways with 50-foot rights-of-way and 24 feet of pavement. She indicated that coordination with RIDEM and Providence Water is ongoing to ensure appropriate design and permitting related to drainage and crossings over an existing aqueduct easement.

Commission President Frias raised several concerns, including the absence of a traffic study at the master plan stage, the site's proximity to the M2 industrial zone to the south, and longstanding mail delivery issues affecting the Fiskeville neighborhood. He also inquired about the adequacy of emergency access routes, the impact on school capacity—especially at Orchard Farms Elementary, whether future connectivity could be established with the two excluded lots located within the project area, and the impact of the Providence Water easement running through the proposed development.

Senior Planner, Jonas Bruggemann, confirmed that the project complies with all zoning and subdivision standards at the master plan stage and substantially exceeds minimum open space requirements. Staff recommended that the applicant further explore clustered subdivision design to minimize roadway and utility impacts, incorporate affordable housing to qualify for potential density bonuses, and adopt low-impact development (LID) techniques. Staff also encouraged early coordination with the Department of Public Works and RIDOT to evaluate necessary improvements to Vaughn Lane and Wini Street, as well as accommodation for emergency vehicles.

Commission President Frias invited the public to engage in comment:

- Jessica Salter (6 Vaughn Lane) raised concerns about the narrowness of Vaughn Lane—reportedly less than 13 feet wide—and cited the potential loss of historically protected stone walls if road widening were to occur. She also highlighted the potential loss of access to Vaughn Lane during construction that would restrict access to residents' homes or prevent emergency service access. Ms. Salter highlighted the drainage issues on Wini Street, and urged the developer to seek alternate access points to the development. Ms. Salter voiced environmental concerns that may be caused by the development, including large-scale deforestation, loss of wildlife habitat, and the presence of rare species.
- Sonia Meysembourg (0 Wini Street) spoke about environmental concerns including deforestation, destruction of wetlands, and habitat disruption for local animals.
- Robert Sansone (145 Main Street) spoke in opposition due to deforestation. He additionally spoke at length about the dangers of constructing new houses in an area that floods and shakes. Mr. Sansone was very outspoken about his belief that the development plans were inaccurate and purposefully misleading.
- Janet Jarbeau (78 Vaughn Lane) raised concerns about the gravel extension of Vaughn Lane that is near one of the access points of the development. She stated that the road is in disrepair and hopes that the developers could potentially help improve the situation.

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- Michael Klitzner (1410 Hope Road) stated concerns about traffic as an abutter on Hope Road. He also highlighted the existing slow response times for emergency services to the area. He believes these problems would be exacerbated by the development.
- Nick Lima (Representative of the Cranston Board of Canvassers) expressed concern about the lack of household mail delivery to Fiskeville. He believes that the new development will also have these access issues. He stated communication with USPS has been attempted, but efforts to establish consistent service to Fiskeville are an ongoing issue.
- Michael Camardo (1 Vaughn Lane) reiterated concerns about the widening of Vaughn Lane and potential impacts on private property that this might cause. As a homeowner on Vaughn Lane, he is especially worried about the issues that might arise when his road becomes an access point for over 40 houses.
- Janet Ragno (1439 Hope Road) raised the issue of overcrowded public schools in Western Cranston and being overloaded with students. She stated that the ratio of students to teachers is already high and would be raised higher after this development.
- David Meysembourg (30 Roberts Avenue) expressed concern about the capacity of the police to address the needs of Fiskeville residents if this development were to be built. He brought up the example of kids jumping off the Arkwright bridge, which police were unable to address at the time, as an example of the lack of resources in the area.
- Kirk Rerick (264 Main Street) referenced flooding risks and expressed skepticism about the adequacy of proposed drainage basins, as well as the negative impacts of increased traffic on Main Street.
- Drake Patten (684 Natick Avenue) presented similarities with a project that she has strongly opposed called Natick Solar. Ms. Patten stated opposition to the project in solidarity with the neighbors. Ms. Patten also spoke out against the drainage basin plans and cited various environmental concerns as additional reasons for her opposition.
- Douglas Doe (178 Lippitt Avenue) voiced many concerns about the viability of the project, due to construction and engineering complications. He stated that the lots are not buildable as they are shown on the plans.
- Kirk Rerick (264 Main Street) stated that he spoke with a Providence Water engineer who stated he was specific with DiPrete engineering about not coming within 100 feet of the water main.
- William Hamilton (25 Roberts Avenue) reiterated the flooding risks near Wini Street. He also brought up the dangers of building on ledge, which could lead to damage to nearby properties.

Brook DeMerchant (1409 Hope Road, Hope, RI): A resident from 1409 Hope Road submitted a letter in opposition which will be posted with the meeting materials on the website.

Following public testimony, Commission President Frias stated that although this proposal is a by-right proposal he had many concerns had been raised that were not addressed in the staff memorandum or application materials. He, along with Commissioners Renzulli and Mancini, expressed the need for more time to evaluate the proposal, assess potential conditions, and allow for further community engagement, including the opportunity for site visits. The applicant agreed to a continuation. President Frias also indicated that local boards are under pressure from the state to approve more housing essentially anywhere and as much as can. He opined that some of the land in this state which were not previously not built on, were not built on previously because there were issues with building on those sites. He also expressed appreciation to the public for participating and providing comment. He noted that some recent state law changes reduce public participation. He opined that public participation is important because the people who know the most about their neighborhood are the people who live in the neighborhood, and they are aware of issues that commissioners would not know.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commission Vice President Coupe to continue the application to the July 1, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Exter and passed unanimously (7-0).

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PRELIMINARY PLAN/UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT REVIEW - Minor Subdivision with Zoning Relief Proposal: To subdivide a 128,014 +/- SF lot into two (2) lots. The proposal requires variances for lot size and frontage. Zoning District: A-80, AP 29, Lot 10, Laten Knight Road

Attorney Robert Murray, presented on behalf of the applicants, Nicolas and Cynthia Capezza. There is relief required for the approval of this subdivision. He stated the lot has access to water and sewer now, which were not available when it was initially zoned A-80. He indicated that relief is required for 126 ft of frontage for each lot as well as lot size.

The applicant, Nicholas Capezza, 745 Laten Knight Road, stated that the proposed lots will be serviced by public sewer and private wells. He indicated that if approved the lots will be deeded to his two daughters as their family home. He indicated he was born in Cranston, as were his children, and he wishes for his daughters to be able to build their forever homes in Cranston. He stated that he is not a developer, but he wants his family to stay in Cranston.

Atty, Robert Murray pointed out that in the application package there is analysis pointing out over 20 properties in the 400' radius and beyond that have less than the required 80,000 sq feet or the 200' feet of frontage. He stated this demonstrates how this subdivision would fit into the surrounding neighborhood. He walked through all the criteria for granting a variance and how this proposal meets them.

There was discussion about undersized lots in the vicinity. Mr. Frias asked about whether this is a self-created hardship. Atty. Murray replied that he does not think this is the standard. He argued that nowhere in the Standards under Unified Development or in the Zoning Statute is the term “self-created hardship.”

Ms. Ashman shared slides from the staff analysis and summarized that the positive recommendation from staff stems from the appropriateness of the use in the A-80 zone and the fact that the development is consistent with the “less than 1 unit per acre” density established in the Future Land Use Map.

Commission President Frias invited the public to engage in comment:

- Atty. Tenessa H. Azar, representing Lawrence Moses, an abutter, stated that the proposal would change the general character of the area because the area has larger lots. She pointed out that many of the example small lots presented are considerable distance from the subject lot. She also stated the hardship standard has not been met. The proposal would create two substandard lots out of one standard lot.
- Steve Zarriello (55 Normandy Drive). He stated he was Nicholas Capezza’s son-in-law. He spoke in favor of the proposal and explained he is very involved in the community, and he wants to raise a family near his other family members. He stated that the proposed subdivision is not out of character of the neighborhood.
- Lawrence Moses (380 Laten Knight Road) opposed the proposal. He stated that prospective owners of nearby 5-acre lots do not want lots created that are less than 80,000 square feet. He stated he wished Mr. Capezza had reached out to him sooner about purchasing some land from him to create conforming lots.

MOTION: A motion was made Commissioner Corrao and seconded by Commissioner Mancini to approve the requested zoning variances:

That the proposed 62,580 sq, ft Lot 1 be granted zoning relief from the required 80,000 sq. ft. lot size and be granted relief to have 126’ of frontage where 200’ feet are required.

That the proposed 66,434 sq ft. Lot 2 be granted zoning relief from the required 80,000 sq. ft. lot size and be granted relief to have 126’ of frontage where 200’ feet are required.

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The motion was seconded by Commissioner Exter and passed unanimously (7-0).

MOTION: A motion was made by Commission Vice President Coupe and seconded by Commissioner Corrao to grant subdivision approval. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

DISCUSSION OF ORDINANCE PROPOSALS

Item passed over

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW – PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

ANNA L. STORTI (OWN) and DENALI CORPORATION(APP) have filed an application to allow an existing dwelling to remain on an undersized lot and to separate an adjacent lot previously merged by zoning at **12 Tacoma Street**, A.P. 12, Lot 758; area 4,800sf; zoned C2. Applicant seeks relief by 17.92.010- Variance; Sections 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations, 17.88.010(B)(2)- Lot Mergers. Application filed on 5/6/2025. No Attorney.

ANNA L. STORTI (OWN) and DENALI CORPORATION(APP) has applied to the Board for permission to construct a new single-family dwelling on undersized lot previously merged by zoning at **0 Tacoma Street**, A.P. 12, Lot 756; area 4,800sf; zoned A6. Applicant seeks relief by 17.92.010- Variance; Sections 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations, 17.88.010(B)(2)- Lot Mergers. Application filed on 5/6/2025. No Attorney.

Planning Director Ashman presented the staff analysis and recommendations for abutting properties 0 and 12 Tacoma Street. The lots are each 4800 sq feet. They sit in separate zones. They do not meet the test to be exempt from the merger provision, which is why they are requesting a variance from the merger provision as well as a dimensional variance for lot size. Similar relief was granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals in 2006. The resulting density is within the designated Future Land Use Map range. Ms. Ashman explained that separate votes will be needed for 0 and 12 Tacoma Street.

Mr. Frias called for public comment from the room and online, and there was none.

MOTION: Due to the findings that the requests for dimensional relief are consistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan; and due to the findings that the requests would be compatible with the character of the surrounding area; upon motion made by Commissioner Renzulli, and seconded by Commissioner Corrao, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to accept the Staff Recommendation and forward a positive recommendation on the **12 Tacoma Street** application to the Zoning Board of Review.

MOTION: Due to the findings that the requests for dimensional relief are consistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan; and due to the findings that the requests would be compatible with the character of the surrounding area; upon motion made by Commissioner Renzulli, and seconded by Commissioner Coupe, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to accept the Staff Recommendation and forward a positive recommendation on the **0 Tacoma Street** application to the Zoning Board of Review.

NANCY PATRICIA BARNETT and KERRISSA JANE HEFFERNAN (TRUSTEES/APP) have filed an application for permission to demolish an existing garage structure and to construct a new garage with workshop and pergola within the same 0.9 ft side lot setbacks at **116 Shaw Avenue**, A.P.2, lot 2890; area 8,040sf; zoned A6. Applicants seek relief by 17.92.010- Variance; Sections 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations; Section 17.60.010 Accessory Structure Setbacks. Application filed on 5/12/2025. No Attorney.

Ms. Lanphear recused herself stating she lives within the 400' radius. Mr. Bruggemann presented the staff analysis and positive recommendation for 116 Shaw Avenue. He explained that the proposal is to demolish the existing garage and construct a new larger garage with the same 0.9 ft side setback. The proposed garage would sit on the location of the existing garage, but be extend another 18' back toward

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the rear of the property. Mr. Bruggemann noted that a conforming proposal would set the garage well into the rear of the property and thereby notably increase the impervious surface on the lot. Many neighboring properties with similar substandard frontages have garages and sheds this close to the property lines. The proposed garage is an accessory use for a single-family residence and therefore consistent with the FLUM designation.

Mr. Frias called for public comment from the room and online, and there was none.

MOTION: Due to the findings that the requests for dimensional relief are consistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan; and due to the findings that the requests would be compatible with the character of the surrounding area; upon motion made by Commissioner Coupe, and seconded by Commissioner Renzulli, the City Plan Commission voted (6-0) to accept the Staff Recommendation and forward a positive recommendation on this Application to the Zoning Board of Review. Commissioner Lanphear recused herself.

ROBERT M. MORETTI (OWN/APP) has applied to the Board for permission to raze an existing single-family dwelling to allow the construction of a new two-family dwelling at **40 Ashley Street, A.P. 11**, lots 2235, 2236, 2237, and 2238; total area 16,800 sf, zoned A6. Applicant seeks relief by 17.92.010- Variance; Section 17.20.030- Schedule of Uses. Application filed on 5/20/2025. Robert D. Murray, Esq.

Attny. Murray representing the applicant indicated the proposal is to demolish the existing family home and build a new duplex. The lot has sufficient size for two conforming single-family lots, but the applicants would prefer to build a duplex, which is not allowed in the A-6 zone, thus the request for relief.

Mr. Coupe questioned this being a *use* variance. Director Ashman indicated that single- and two-family homes are separate lines in the table of uses, so the city treats them as separate uses. Mr. Marsella said that in his opinion that this is simply a dimensional variance because both are residential uses. Ms. Ashman summarized the staff analysis and recommendation. The proposal falls within the density range of the FLUM. The proposal has sufficient land to build two single-family units, so the proposal to build two attached units does not increase the neighborhood density.

MOTION: Due to the findings that the requests for dimensional relief are consistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan; and due to the findings that the requests would be compatible with the character of the surrounding area; upon motion made by Commissioner Corrao, and seconded by Commissioner Renzulli, the City Plan Commission voted (6-1) to accept the Staff Recommendation and forward a positive recommendation on this Application to the Zoning Board of Review. Mr. Frias voted “nay”.

BRIEFING ON “SAFE STREETS FOR ALL”

Given the late hour, this item was passed over.

CITY PLANNING DIRECTOR’S REPORT

The next Comprehensive Plan Community Workshop will be June 26th at the William Hall Library. The focus is housing, neighborhood safety, and quality of life.

ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting | July 1, 2025 @ 6:30 p.m.– **Regular Meeting**
City Council Chamber, City Hall, 869 Park Avenue

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Mrs. Renzulli and seconded by Mr. Frias, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to adjourn the meeting.

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