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Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Planning Director



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Robert Strom
Frederick Vincent
Kathleen Lanphear
Ann Marie Maccarone
Joseph Morales
Robert DiStefano
Robert Coupe

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

JOINT SITE VISIT OF THE CITY COUNCIL & CITY PLAN COMMISSION
AUGUST 21st, 2021
(Cranston Print Works Zone Change / Redevelopment)
DRAFT MINUTES

The gathering place for this meeting was 1381 Cranston Street at the Cranston Print Works (CPW) complex. The group gathered at the main parking area near the corner of Cranston Street and Dyer Avenue.

City Council President Paplauskas called the City Council to order at 9:08 with a rollcall vote. Council members in attendance: Christopher Paplauskas, John Donegan, Lammis Vargas, Jessica Moreano, Nicole Renzulli.

Chairman Smith called the City Plan Commission Meeting to order at 9:10. Commissioners in attendance: Michael Smith, Kathleen Lanphear, Annemarie Maccarone, Robert DiStefano, and Fred Vincent.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, Planning Director and Joshua Berry, Senior Planner and Douglas McKlean, Principal Planner.

Also attending: Cranston Director of Administration, Anthony Moretti, Communications Coordinator, Steve Paiva, Robert Murray, attorney for Brady Sullivan, the applicant, and Christopher Reynolds representing the applicant/developer.

Robert Murray began the presentation by thanking those in attendance for coming and gave a brief description of what we would be doing for the site walk. He stated that this project will require a special zone change from the existing M-1 zone to facilitate this proposal, in addition to the standard major land development review process. Overall the developer seeks to redevelop this site into 225 +/- residential units with the remainder of the site to be used for self-storage and contractor flex space. New single/duplex units are proposed in the rear of the site in addition to a new four-story multi-family housing complex. He then introduced Chris Reynolds of Brady Sullivan (BS) who would take the lead for the rest of the presentation and site tour.

Mr. Reynolds briefly discussed who BS was as a company and their long track record as mill complex developers throughout the region. He stated that his company would be seeking Rhode Island historic tax credits for this project and the overall look and design of the final project would be under the auspices of the State Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission. Additionally he stated that their business model is to keep and re-purpose all of the existing structures and not demolish anything.

Mr. Reynolds discussed how the complex of buildings at this site is not traditionally what they have seen in their other projects. He stated that the areas that have windows will have residential. The parts of the complex without any natural light would be used as commercial mini-storage. In addition, the land on the south side of Cranston Street would be used for commercial-mini storage as well as Commercial Condo contractor space.

One of the major challenges on sites like this is the availability of off-street parking. CPW does not have an issues with available parking and will be able to serve the needs of the proposed residential units as well as the storage units. Mr. Reynolds explained that the self-storage requires much less parking and is utilities infrequently.

Mr. Reynolds discussed how the site is a brownfield and that there are additional issues dealing with the floodplain/floodway from the Pocasset river (running directly adjacent to the existing buildings). These issues need to be vetted and approved by the RIDEM during the major land development process. He also pointed out other areas where buildings have been removed, and have become wetlands, and other artificial wetland areas that may need to be filled in through this process.

Mr. Vincent posed the questions of timing and phasing of the project of this scale. Mr. Reynolds stated that phasing was not needed and that they would prefer to build out the entire site within 12-18 months. As the tour continued farther into the site towards the rear of the property, Mr. Reynolds discussed the limitations of working within the floodplain/floodway areas. He stated that due to the inconsistencies in the elevations onsite, certain first floor areas of the designated residential areas will utilize internal parking areas instead. Also, the amenity spaces (recreation, movie theatre, etc) will be located within these areas rather than use them for living space.

Question was posed from the public about the possibility of including affordable housing units into the proposal. Mr. Reynolds acknowledged this is an issue for the community but their business model does not include affordable units as part of their rental mix. Councilwoman Vargas followed up with that asking about the average rental costs for the smallest units. Mr. Reynolds replied that this is yet to be determined, but estimated somewhere in the range of \$1,200 - \$1,400 per month. Councilwoman Vargas also asked about the State Historic Tax Credit program and if that dealt with the overall look of the structures. Mr. Reynolds stated that the State Historic program would be very thorough with their historic review of the structures. The Councilwoman also asked about any possible plans to incorporate solar panels onto the roofs as part of the development. Mr. Reynolds stated that the State Historic group would not allow that, and also the roofs were not built to hold that additional weight of the panels and equipment. Councilwoman Vargas also asked about dumpsters and the prevalence of rodents on a site of this scale. Mr. Reynolds explained that they do not prefer multiple dumpster areas, but rather smaller ones with trash pickup every two days to mitigate this issue.

Mr. Reynolds explained that how their apartments are pet friendly and encourage dogs. In addition, he stated that robust landscaping will be incorporated as part of the proposal. Mr. Murray stated that landscaping would be reviewed in depth during the major land development and development plan review processes.

A question was posed about the aesthetics of the new self-storage units in contrast to the historic feel of the existing mill buildings. Mr. Reynolds explained that they were unsure of the final look of these structures as the State will have input on the overall look of the façade.

A member of the public stated that traffic flow was heavy at the intersection of Cranston Street and Dyer Avenue when factoring in the adjacent Fire Station. Mr. Reynolds stated that this was indeed a concern that will be looked at in detail. He stated the CPW property already has two additional points of access onto Dyer Avenue that can be utilized in addition to the Cranston Street entrance. Mr. Murray stated this will be analyzed during the major land development process.

Mr. Reynolds concluded the tour as we ended back at our starting point.

Mr. Murray thanked the City Council, the City Plan Commission and all those who were able to attend, and for hosting this joint site walk.

At 10:45 AM, City Council President Paplauskas entertained a motion to adjourn made by Councilman Donegan, Seconded by Councilwoman Vargas. All voted to adjourn the special meeting.

At 10:45 AM City Plan Commission President Smith made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Maccarone to adjourn the special meeting. All voted to adjourn the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT / NEXT REGULAR MEETING – Tuesday, September 7th – 6:30 PM – 869 Park Avenue, City Hall Council Chamber (**vote taken**)