

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Committee Chairman
Director of Planning



Jim Woyciechowski
Fire Department

Stanley Pikul
Building Official

Justin Mateus, P.E.
Engineering Division

Stephen Mulcahy
Traffic Safety Division

DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910

MINUTES

9:30 AM, WEDNESDAY, February 15, 2023

CRANSTON CITY HALL – 3RD FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBER

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jason Pezzullo called the Development Plan Review Committee meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. in the City Council chamber.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Justin Mateus, Steve Mulcahy, Franklin Paulino, Jason Pezzullo, and Stanley Pikul.

The following Planning Department staff members were in attendance: Gregory Guertin, Senior Planner; Alex Berardo, Planning Technician; and Amelia Lavallee, Planning Intern.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 2/1/23 Meeting

(vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted (5-0) to approve the minutes of the 2/1/23 meeting.

3. "721 Reservoir Avenue"

Pre-Application

(no vote taken)

Location	721 Reservoir Avenue, AP 9, Lots 3084 and 3090 - 3095
Zoning District	C-4 (Highway Business)
Owner	JMEC REALTY ASSOCIATES LLC C/O JOHN B CHRISTY III, 48 WAYSIDE DR CRANSTON, RI 02920
Applicant	Gaspee Companies, East Greenwich, RI
Proposal	Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure and develop the site for an exclusive drive-thru restaurant operation with no indoor dining.

Chairman Pezzullo invited the applicant team, consisting of Atty. Robert Murray, Stephen Hardy (Principal, Gaspee Companies), and Christopher Needham (Principal, Gaspee Real Estate Partners), to introduce their concept to the Committee.

Atty. Murray said his clients have the property at 721 Reservoir Avenue (currently vacant, but most recently home to RI Rehabilitation Institute) under agreement and would like to hear the Committee's feedback on their first idea for redevelopment: to establish a drive-thru only (no indoor dining) restaurant. Atty. Murray noted the use is allowed in a C-4 zone; the site would accommodate double order boards/lanes as well as a separate lane for delivery services (i.e. Grubhub, Uber Eats, etc); and they don't have an end user identified since this is only a concept. Mr. Hardy said other drive-thru only facilities in the model of what they are proposing exist elsewhere in the country but have not yet become commonplace in Rhode Island.

Atty. Murray then said the idea would need relief from the Zoning Board because the section of code discussing drive-thru uses indicates they'll fall short of requirements for factors such as lot size and curb cut width. He distributed copies of a chart showing other drive-thru establishments located on undersized lots for the Committee's consideration with the qualification that some are grandfathered.

Chairman Pezzullo said that the redevelopment proposal would notably increase the landscaped area of the site, which would be welcome along Reservoir Ave, but then asked whether they would need the 25 parking spaces shown on the site plan if the business was drive-thru only. Atty. Murray passed out copies of an alternative site plan showing fewer spaces and said they were thinking of constructing a small patio on-site to accommodate walk-up customers. Mr. Mulcahy asked where the order point would be for pedestrian customers; Mr. Hardy said it would be inside the building, accessible by a crosswalk from the parking area.

Mr. Mulcahy asked whether the applicants were confident the on-site stacking would be adequate as proposed; Mr. Hardy said it would be sufficient based on industry data for this sort of establishment; Chairman Pezzullo recalled the Committee reviewed split queuing for a Burger King several years prior and found it would be an improvement in efficiency. Mr. Mulcahy asked about the functioning of the delivery queue; Mr. Hardy said by keeping it separated from the normal drive-thru lanes, it should flow without issue, and in the case of food preparation-related delays, delivery vehicles would simply park in the adjacent parking area and wait there. Mr. Mulcahy also asked if it might make sense to align the Handy St curb cut with that of the CVS across the street; Mr. Hardy said it could probably be done, but at the expense of landscaped area, and it might inadvertently encourage drivers to cut through the CVS parking lot to avoid Reservoir Ave.

Mr. Pikul asked what their signage plans would be. Mr. Hardy said they would ideally reuse the existing sign on site.

Mr. Paulino asked how many jobs the project would create. Mr. Handy said around 5-6 employees would work in the building during a given shift, but it is too early to know the precise breakdown of full- and part-time employees.

Mr. Mateus said the increase in landscaped area should be a clear improvement for stormwater capture and noted the project would require a Physical Alteration Permit. Atty. Murray asked if the applicants would need to have the PAP in-hand before receiving Preliminary Plan approval from the DPRC/seeking relief before the ZBR. Chairman Pezzullo said it would probably be ok for the Committee to grant conditional approval for a proposal of this nature before the PAP is formally issued.

Mr. Guertin asked the applicants why they did not intend to reuse the existing building, as the proposed building would be set further back from the road, which is generally worse for streetscape and pedestrian comfort considerations. Mr. Hardy said the building itself would need a lot of work to retrofit and there is a grade issue in the rear that would make deliveries difficult. He also said they had contacted some companies that could be potential tenants and they'd expressed a preference for parking on the Reservoir Ave side of the site. Atty. Murray observed the site's proximity to the intersection of Park and Reservoir means vehicle traffic will be slower there than on southern stretches of Reservoir, and Chairman Pezzullo again said the introduction of more greenery to the site would be a benefit.

As this was a pre-application discussion, no vote was taken.

4. Adjournment (next meeting date TBD)

(vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul, and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 a.m.