

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

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES 9:30 AM, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21st, 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 9:33 a.m. in the City Council chamber.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Justin Mateus – DPW Director, Stephen Mulcahy – Traffic Safety Manager, Franklin Paulino – Economic Development Director, Jason Pezzullo – Planning Director, and Stanley Pikul – Zoning Official.

The following Planning Department staff members were in attendance: Alex Berardo, Planning Technician, and Amelia Lavallee, Planning Intern.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 5/17/23 Meeting (vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted (3-0) to approve the minutes of the 5/17/23 meeting. Traffic Safety Manager, Stephen Mulcahy abstained.

3. “Cranston Christian Fellowship - Expansion” - Jurisdictional Review (vote taken)

Location	111 Scituate Avenue, AP 27, Lot 85
Zoning District	A-20 (Single-family dwellings on lots of minimum areas of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet.
Owner/Applicant	Cranston Christian Fellowship
Proposal	Entryway expansion, parking lot reconfiguration

Chairman Pezzullo invited the applicant team, represented by Dan Decesaris of DiPrete Engineering to share a newer, simplified version of the previous site plan. Decesaris proposed the expansion, including a 1,800 s.f., 2-story addition to replace the existing entrance vestibule, classroom/meeting space, and basement storage. The proposed entry to the addition will be located on the ground floor.

The committee noted that the plan would require relocation of handicapped parking spaces closer to the accessible entrance due to curb cut modifications.

Mr. Mulcahy stated that the proposed site had sufficient parking.

Mr. Paulino inquired about job creation; Mr. Decesaris estimated that no new jobs would be created as a result of this expansion.

Mr. Mateus had no concerns regarding storm water or engineering on the site.

Mr. Pikul asked to see architectural drawings, advising Mr. Decesaris to consider height restrictions on a wood-framed building. Mr. Pikul noted that he is otherwise satisfied with the proposal.

Mr. Pikul also inquired about signage on the proposed expansion, and how it complied with the City's signage standards. Mr. Decesaris said that he would follow up if any requests arose.

Mr. Mulcahy asked if there were plans to install a kitchen in the proposed addition to which Mr. Decesaris responded no.

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul, and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) not to take jurisdiction on the matter.

4. "The Achievement First Illuminar School" – Preliminary Plan (vote taken)

Location	85 Garfield Avenue
Zoning District	C-4 (Highway Business)
Owner/Applicant	Achievement First Rhode Island, Inc.
Proposal	Applicant seeks to renovate an existing office building into a charter school and make associated parking lot and landscaping improvements.

Chairman Pezzullo invited the applicant team, including Eric Roise, landscape architect for Kaestle Boos Associates, and various staff members from The Achievement First Illuminar School to share their proposal. The applicant seeks to build a new gymnasium, special education classrooms, and offices. No additional students or staff are anticipated. According to Mr. Roise, the applicant originally started the design process a year ago, submitting in February following approval by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. The proposal has since been refined based on associated issues.

Mr. Roise explained (per display of proposed traffic patterns) that school buses will circulate around the site counterclockwise, but students' parents will have a more circuitous path for pick-up and drop-off. The applicant noted that the main issue is stacking of cars at afternoon pick-up, as they are unable to fit 50 stacking spaces on-site. Mr. Roise seeks input from the committee.

Mr. Mulcahy noted the previous issue was designating parking spaces on either side of the driveway. Mr. Roise explained that by deed they are unable to do that. Mr. Mulcahy echoed concerns of having adequate parking, particularly in the afternoon.

Mr. Roise referenced a letter sent by the applicant the previous day proposing the idea of staff-directed traffic pick-up. Chairman Pezzullo asked how staff would accomplish this. Mr. Roise explained that they have 23 parking spaces where 30 are required, and are anticipating a combination of double-stacking and staggering of pick-up times. Mr. Mulcahy raised the question of traffic management, and if it would require staff direction every day.

Chairman Pezzullo asked if the applicant had considered purchasing more land, as the proposed traffic flow makes use of land not exclusively owned by the applicant. Mr. Mulcahy and Mr. Pikul agreed. Mr. Pezzullo said that the proposal feels "very tenuous" due to safety concerns surrounding traffic and is apprehensive about approval.

A traffic engineer from The Achievement First Illuminar School team said that the addition is not generating more traffic, to which Mr. Mulcahy responded that there has been a history of queuing outside of the property, and that the existing traffic pattern relies on the use of land that the applicant does not own. A staff member from The Achievement First Illuminar School noted that the school has vested rights of first refusal, or preferential rights, to the abutting property but that the property is unavailable for purchase.

Mr. Mulcahy repeats that it is concerning to depend on careful staff management of traffic in a constrained location. Mr. Mulcahy cited snow accumulation as taking up space on-site. Another staff member from The Achievement First Illuminar School referenced prior experience with stacking during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Mulcahy questioned the efficiency of the proposed stacking plan based on varying arrival and departure times of parents.

Chairman Pezzullo said that the City would be held liable if this proposal were to be approved and someone was injured. Mr. Pikul asked if the applicant had a parking analysis to determine their needs. Mr. Roise responded that there is a parking table among the application materials that was vetted by a third-party peer-reviewer, but only covers staff/administration parking.

Another member of The Achievement First Illuminar School (unidentified) inquired about the committee potentially making their approval of the application contingent upon the purchase of additional land, further stating that the proposed addition is necessary for student enrichment, and that the Rhode Island Department of Education is in support of their proposal. Chairman Pezzullo claimed that he was not aware of any comparable situation with similar terms, and that the proposal would still require review. Mr. Mulcahy and Mr. Pikul shared the same concerns. Mr. Pikul mentioned a potential influx of traffic following events in the proposed gymnasium.

Mr. Mateus noted that the parking/traffic scheme is a “design based on maintenance”, in which staff is facilitating traffic. Mr. Mateus also noted that based on engineering standards, the design is incomplete.

Chairman Pezzullo repeated that he was uncomfortable with the idea of approving the addition and parking scheme as proposed.

An architect from The Achievement First Illuminar School (unidentified) explained how school officials have worked in collaboration with the neighboring Cranston Police Department to manage traffic more efficiently and minimize traffic impacts.

Mr. Mateus inquired about the size of the proposed expansion. A member of The Achievement First Illuminar School responded that the area of the proposed addition would be approximately 13,000 s.f. Mr. Mateus inquired whether or not the property is serviced by an underground retention basin. A member of The Achievement First Illuminar School clarified that the property is serviced by an underground retention basin.

Chairman Pezzullo suggests continuing the discussion to which Mr. Mateus and Mr. Pikul agreed.

An architect from The Achievement First Illuminar School asked what the committee requires of the applicant in order to approve the proposal. Mr. Pikul suggested a parking analysis including transient traffic external of staff. Chairman Pezzullo suggests continuing the discussion offline in order to work through the issues that were raised.

Upon motion made by Mr. Mateus, and seconded by Mr. Pikul, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the matter to address the deficiencies.

5. *Adjournment* (next meeting date TBD)

(vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (3-0) to adjourn the meeting at 10:23 a.m.