

Hon. Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Beth E. Ashman, MCP, AICP
Chair / City Planning Director



Armand Niquette
Fire Marshal

Stanley Pikul
Building Official

Frank Corrao, P.E.
Public Works Director

Stephen Mulcahy
DPW: Traffic Safety Division

DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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

MINUTES

CITY HALL – 3rd FLOOR, COUNCIL CHAMBER 9:30AM – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

All interested parties are welcome to participate during the public comments portion for docketed items on this agenda. All materials will be posted to the City's website prior to the meeting at:

<https://www.cranstonri.gov/departments/planning/>

CALL TO ORDER

Beth Ashman – Planning Director and Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m., in the City Council chamber.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Frank Corrao - DPW Director, Stephen Mulcahy - Traffic Safety Manager, Armand Niquette – Fire Marshal, and Stanley Pikul – Building Official.

Also present: Jonas Bruggemann – Assistant Planning Director, Brianna Valcourt – Senior Planner, and Jamie Ray – Planner Technician.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- June 3, 2026 – Regular Meeting

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Mr. Mulcahy and seconded by Mr. Pikul, the Committee voted (3-0) to approve the June 3, 2026 minutes.

- Mr. Corrao and Mr. Niquette arrived shortly after this vote.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>“5 Aborn Street”</u>
Preliminary Plan
Proposal: Adaptive Reuse of an existing building using first floor for two (2) commercial garage units and the upper floors for two (2) residential units. Requires waivers for landscaping, drainage, sidewalks, and curbs.
Zoning: C-3 (General Business)
AP 1, Lot 30
5 Aborn Street | PUBLIC MEETING | (vote taken) |
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Chair Beth Ashman explained that the application for the adaptive reuse of the existing building at 5 Aborn Street had been on the May 20 agenda; however, all abutter notices had been returned after

inadvertently being mailed without postage. As a result, the item was re-advertised, noticed to abutters, and brought back before the Committee without prejudice at today's meeting.

Director Ashman read the specific waivers that staff recommended as necessary for this application.

- Waiver from Section 17.84.110(B)(3) – Drainage Report and Plan.
- Waiver from Section 17.84.140(C) – Landscape Standards.
- Waiver from Section 17.84.160 – Drainage and Erosion Standards.
- Waiver from Section 10(B)(18) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations regarding sidewalks, subject to the approval of the Director of Public Works.

Attorney Bob Murray, representing the applicant and Bridge Group LLC, explained that the proposal involved renovating the long-vacant building to create commercial garage/storage space on the ground floor; and two residential units above. He stated that the project was being pursued under the City's adaptive reuse ordinance and complied with the requirements of the C-3 zoning district and Special Flood Hazard Area. Mr. Murray explained the proposal with reference to the plan set from the application.

Public Comment

Peter Scotti (32 Sheldon Street)

Mr. Scotti raised several concerns regarding the application, including:

- The online materials did not clearly identify the requested waivers.
- He had contacted the Planning Department seeking information and did not receive a response.
- He questioned whether the ground-floor garages constituted a legitimate commercial use, arguing that they appeared to function as residential garages.
- He questioned whether the proposal relied on information presented during the prior meeting for which abutters had not received notice.
- He expressed concern over the building's encroachment into the public right-of-way.
- He argued that the application was defective and indicated that he intended to pursue legal remedies.

Director Ashman explained that residential occupancy is prohibited on the ground floor because the property lies within a Special Flood Hazard Area. She stated that the proposed commercial garage/storage use satisfies both zoning requirements and Special Flood Hazard Area regulations.

Attorney Murray noted that previous attempts to convert the building entirely to residential use had been challenged because residential-only use is not permitted in the C-3 district. He emphasized that commercial storage space beneath residential units is an allowed use.

Requested Waivers

Attorney Murray and planning staff explained the basis for the requested waivers:

- The lot is almost entirely occupied by the existing structure.
- A full drainage report would be addressed during the building permit process.
- Strict application of the landscape standards is impractical on this adaptive reuse project with minimal open area.
- Sidewalk installation is constrained by the existing building location and surrounding conditions. There is no sidewalk network adjacent to the site.

Director Ashman noted that adaptive reuse ordinance is intended to provide flexibility for reuse of existing buildings that were constructed under different standards.

Questions were raised regarding the building height. Attorney Murray indicated that the existing flat roof is approximately 20 feet high while the peaked roof is approximately 24 feet high. A third floor is proposed, and the completed structure will remain below the 35-foot height limit permitted in the C-3 district. No expansion of the building footprint is proposed.

Discussion occurred regarding the fact that a portion of the existing structure extends slightly into the public right-of-way.

Attorney Murray and Director Ashman explained that:

- The encroachment is longstanding.
- The structure predates current regulations.
- Similar situations exist elsewhere in the City.
- Adaptive reuse was created specifically to allow continued use of older buildings with nonconforming characteristics.

Re-Presentation of the Application

In response to concerns that the Committee was relying on the previous meeting record, Director Ashman requested that Attorney Murray provide a complete presentation.

Attorney Murray emphasized that:

- The Committee was considering the application anew.
- Proper notice had been provided for the June 17 meeting.
- The project proposes two residential units above commercial parking.
- Floodplain regulations limit the use of the first floor.
- The proposal conforms to zoning requirements.
- Landscaping and drainage issues would be addressed through reasonable waivers and permitting.

Committee Comments

Mr. Pikul stated that the proposal represents a creative use of the recently adopted adaptive reuse legislation as well as improves the appearance of the area. He confirmed his support for the application.

Director Ashman commented that adaptive reuse allows the city to preserve the character of older areas without imposing unreasonable modern requirements. Additionally, older buildings should not be forced to conform completely to current standards where doing so would create undue hardship. She also emphasized that the Committee's role is technical review rather than denying uses permitted by right.

Mr. Mulcahy noted that the proposal appeared reasonable and consistent with the purpose of adaptive reuse. He added that existing encroachments are common in older buildings and relocation of a structure for minor encroachments would be impractical.

Mr. Corrao reviewed the sidewalk issue and observed no sidewalk network in the area. He stated that requiring sidewalks would create an isolated segment without meaningful connectivity. He added that the proposed landscaping treatment would improve the streetscape and avoid conflicts with the fire hydrants and existing conditions.

Mr. Niquette commented that the proposal would retain the building's historic character and that the project represents an appropriate balance between preservation and compliance with current standards.

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Niquette, the Committee voted (5-0) to approve the application with the following waivers and conditions.

Waivers/Conditions:

1. Approval of waivers from the following sections of the Development Plan Review requirements of the Zoning Ordinance:
 - a. Section 17.84.110(B)(3) - Drainage Report/Plan
 - b. Section 17.84.140(C) - Landscape Standards
 - c. Section 17.84.160 - Drainage/erosion standards
2. Approval of waivers from the following sections of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations:
 - a. Section X.B.18 – “Sidewalks”
3. The project must comply with:
 - a) Special Flood Hazard Area requirements;
 - b) Flood vent requirements; and
 - c) All applicable building codes.

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| <p>▪ “Crave Café”
Waiver of Application
Proposal: Request for waiver from DPR process for a change of use with no extensive construction of improvements for a new café.
Zoning: C-4, A-6
AP 6, Lots 747, 758, 748, and 749
599 Reservoir Avenue</p> | <p>PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL</p> | <p>(vote taken)</p> |
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Representatives of Crave Café returned to the Committee with revised plans following comments received at a previous meeting.

Committee Discussion

Drive-Through Use

Committee members explained that a drive-through requires:

- Unified Development Review through the Planning Commission because variances are required;
- Additional design standards and more extensive planning requirements;
- Possible traffic studies; and Rhode Island DOT approval.

Staff clarified that the Development Plan Review Committee could not approve a drive-through.

Landscaping

The applicant proposed artificial turf in portions of the site.

Director Ashman stated that:

- Artificial turf was acceptable within the outdoor seating area;
- Natural plantings, which could include low-maintenance plantings, were required elsewhere.

The applicant agreed to utilize shrubs and ornamental landscaping instead.

Traffic Circulation and Parking

Stephen Mulcahy identified several concerns:

- Parking aisle widths were insufficient.
- Perpendicular parking with one-way circulation could result in unsafe vehicle movements.
- The lower parking area should utilize angled parking to establish directional flow.
- Parallel parking dimensions were inadequate.

- Vehicle movements near Reservoir Avenue could create operational conflicts.

Director Ashman stated that the Committee's feedback was intended to help move the project forward and encouraged the applicant to incorporate the recommendations.

Jurisdiction and Completeness

Jonas Bruggemann explained that the applicant had originally sought a waiver from the full development review process. However, the addition of the drive-through intensified the proposal and changed the nature of the review.

Mr. Bruggemann noted that a complete Development Plan Review application would likely require:

- Engineering drawings;
- Compliance with detailed site standards; and specific waivers from individual regulations, if necessary.

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Committee voted (5-0) to take jurisdiction/deny the waiver of the application.

Guidance to Applicant

Committee members advised that:

- The project could likely proceed more easily without a drive-through.
- Several circulation issues could be resolved through redesign.
- A revised application addressing the Committee's comments could potentially receive approval quickly.
- Staff would provide additional guidance regarding applicable code requirements and standards.

Adjournment (Next Meeting | July 1, 2026)

MOTION: Upon a motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Committee voted (5-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.