

Kenneth J. Hopkins
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Michael E. Smith
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Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Planning Director



Richard Bernardo, P.E.
Michael Igoe
Kathleen Lanphear
Frank Ritz
Ann Marie Maccarone
James Donahue
Robert Coupe
Steven Frias

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, RI 02910

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 4th, 2022 – 6:30PM

3rd Floor - City Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue, Cranston RI

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Chairman Mike Smith, Richard Bernardo, Robert Coupe, James Donahue, Steven Frias, Michael Igoe, Kathleen Lanphear, Ann Marie Maccarone, and Frank Ritz. No Commissioners were absent.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director; Douglas McLean, AICP, Principal Planner; Alexander Berardo, Planning Technician; and Amelia Lavallee, Planning Department Intern.

Also attending: Steve Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 9/6/22 City Plan Commission Meeting (vote taken)

Chairman Smith asked if the Commissioners wished to recommend any edits prior to voting on the minutes. Hearing none, he then asked for a motion to accept the draft minutes as submitted and approve them.

Upon motion made by Mr. Ritz, and seconded by Mr. Frias, the City Plan Commission voted 8-0 (Mr. Coupe abstained) to accept the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 9/6/22 as submitted.

SUBDIVISIONS AND MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENTS

- **“20 Goddard Drive Warehouse” PUBLIC HEARING** (vote taken)
PRELIMINARY PLAN – Major Land Development w/o street extension
210,000 +/- square foot warehouse development on 16.74-acre site
Zoned M-2 (General Industry)
20 Goddard Drive – AP 13, Lot 39

Atty. Robert Murray apologized on behalf of his client, Richard Baccari (owner/applicant), as well as Steve Garofalo, P.E., neither of whom were able to attend the meeting, before re-introducing the 210,000 ft² warehouse construction project. Atty. Murray reminded the Commissioners that they had given Master Plan approval for the project in June, and said that in the time since, the applicant team has appeared before the Development Plan Review Committee and received approval from that body. A week following DPRC approval, the applicant received a RIPDES permit for the building and drainage. Atty. Murray added that the plan as submitted meets additional City requirements for elements such as landscaping.

Atty. Murray then addressed a few other topics related to the project. He said that the project does not yet have a confirmed tenant waiting in the wings, which is consistent with industry trends that have seen major companies that might be prospective tenants wait until all permits are in place before formally expressing interest. As for the project's fiscal impact, it would bring a property that was non-taxable in its previous use (medium-security prison) onto the tax rolls. Finally, Atty. Murray noted that the applicant did seek an opinion from the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission as to whether the building was historically significant. RIHPHC supplied a report from 2020 that documented the building's historical context and value, but the agency also confirmed that if no federal or state funds were to be used in the demolition of the structure, they would not prevent the demolition from taking place.

Chairman Smith invited the Commissioners to pose any questions they might have.

Mr. Frias said he had a few questions based on reading the RIHPHC report and a letter submitted by Cornelius DeBoer, who wrote the report. He first asked if it would be possible and/or feasible to incorporate some or all of the building into the warehouse concept. Atty. Murray said it would be technically possible, but financially it was infeasible considering the project the applicant is pursuing. Mr. Frias then asked whether it would be possible to salvage the more decorative elements of the building during demolition, as Mr. DeBoer recommended, to which Atty. Murray said the applicant would probably be willing to entertain that idea.

Mr. Frias then asked if Atty. Murray could speak to the Stormwater Report in any detail, particularly if the project was designed to accommodate a 100-year flood event. Atty. Murray acknowledged that it was not his area of expertise, but observed that DPW staff as well as state regulators felt the report as well as the Stormwater Operations and Maintenance Plan would adequately address drainage on the site. Planning Director Jason Pezzullo concurred and said that RIDEM reviewed and approved the plan against its own standards. Mr. Frias explained that he considers stormwater runoff management to be one area where planners can make a practical difference in the face of climate change, and since the development of the site would result in an increase in impervious surface, he wanted to know that the project design had taken this element into consideration.

Mr. Bernardo said he had provided input which formed the basis of the first condition of approval that the Staff Memo recommended, but he added that his comments were misinterpreted. While the condition as worded in the Memo recommended repaving Goddard Drive for the full length of the lot's frontage on Goddard Drive, Mr. Bernardo said he felt that would be onerous for the applicant. He instead recommended that the condition be changed to require curb-to-curb repavement only for the disturbed portion(s) of the roadway.

Chairman Smith then opened public comment. Seeing no members of the public who wished to speak on the matter, he then asked for a motion to close public comment. Upon motion made by Mr. Donahue, and seconded by Mr. Bernardo, the Plan Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to close the public comment period.

Director Pezzullo reminded the Commission that the project had proceeded in a fairly straightforward fashion, especially considering its scale. He said it has not changed much since its Master Plan iteration and he added that all materials Staff had requested have been received.

Director Pezzullo then reviewed the Findings of Fact, Recommendation, and Conditions. Per Mr. Bernardo's request, he suggested Condition #1 be reworded to the following: "Prior to the issuance of any

Certificate of Occupancy, the applicant shall repave Goddard Drive curb-to-curb along portions where there has been disturbance related to utility connection.”

Upon motion made by Mr. Bernardo, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to adopt the Findings of Fact and approve the Preliminary Plan – Major Land Development subject to the recommended conditions.

- **“Wayside Drive Plat”** **PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL** (vote taken)
 PRELIMINARY PLAN – Minor Subdivision w/o street extension
 2-lot minor subdivision resulting in one additional conforming lot
 Zoned B-2 (Multi-family)
 90 Wayside Drive, AP 10, Lot 1041

Atty. Murray introduced the project. He said that the applicants, Bruce and Mindy Lane, own a 19,000 ft² lot in a B-2 zone near Garden City which they wish to subdivide. They propose to leave their existing two-family house on one lot of approximately 11,000 ft² and create a new buildable lot of 8,000 ft² for future development of a house. Atty. Murray noted that this would be a by-right proposal which met all required Findings of Fact as defined in state law and would meet all dimensional requirements for the B-2 zone. He said that if the plans are approved, the existing garage would need to be demolished, as the new lot line would run through it. Finally, he said that the applicants reviewed DPW’s comments in the Staff Memo pertaining to edits that will need to be made to the site plan, and they are happy to accommodate.

Chairman Smith invited the Commissioners to offer their thoughts.

Mr. Frias asked whether the applicants were proposing to build a single- or two-family house on Proposed Parcel B. Atty. Murray said they show a two-family house on the site plan and the applicants have all but fully decided to go that route. He shared an elevation drawing of the proposed house with the Commissioners.

Chairman Smith asked Atty. Murray to elaborate on how the applicant plans to accommodate and incorporate DPW’s comments into their proposal. Atty. Murray said that the Chief Engineer’s comments were comprehensive and described the work that would need to be undertaken, both on the ground and on paper, so that will be the guide the applicants follow as the project proceeds.

Chairman Smith then opened the matter to public comment.

Gregory Warren, of 74 Wayside Drive (direct abutter to the north), spoke in opposition to the proposal. He said he was concerned about the impacts of the proposed two-family house on his property values and quality of life. He said the proposed house would stand only 8 feet from his property line and cause increased noise and loss of privacy.

Seeing no other members of the public wishing to speak, Chairman Smith asked for a motion to close public comment. Upon motion made by Mr. Coupe, and seconded by Mr. Bernardo, the Plan Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to close the public comment period.

Planning Technician Alex Berardo then reviewed the Findings of Fact, Recommendation, and Conditions of Approval. The conditions primarily itemized the details that DPW requested be shown on the Final Plan, but also included the submission of an alternate site plan showing one driveway per lot instead of two per lot.

Ms. Lanphear, partially addressing the neighbor who spoke during the public comment period, said she personally did not like the proposal but was obligated to vote in favor of it because it was a by-right proposal that met the required Findings of Fact. Mr. Frias expressed his agreement.

Upon motion made by Mr. Bernardo, and seconded by Mr. Coupe, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to adopt the Findings of Fact and approve the Preliminary Plan – Minor Subdivision subject to the recommended conditions.

EXTENSION OF TIME

(votes taken on both items)

- **“Champlin Hills”** – Master Plan Amendment – 1 year extension of time request

Director Pezzullo reminded the Commission that Phase 1 of the Champlin Hills project has already been recorded, while the Master Plan Amendment for which the applicant seeks an extension is Phase 2. He said that Staff recommended approval of a one-year extension for the Master Plan Amendment before yielding to David Taglianetti, Vice President of Development for the Carpionato Group, to discuss the matter in further detail.

Mr. Taglianetti said that he and other members of the Carpionato team met with Staff a few weeks prior to discuss where they stood on this project. He said that the impacts of COVID-19 on the price and availability of building materials not only delayed the project, but also rendered their earlier concept unworkable once they conducted a pro forma. He added that they are now engaged in value-engineering for the site as well as the building and hope to resubmit their application in the next few weeks.

Chairman Smith invited the Commissioners to comment. Mr. Frias asked where the project was located, while Ms. Lanphear asked whether they had requested an extension of time before. Mr. Taglianetti answered both of their questions. Chairman Smith also invited the public to comment if they wished, but none stepped forward.

Upon motion made by Mr. Ritz, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to grant a one-year extension of time for the Major Amendment to the Master Plan Application.

- **“The Fountains at Chapel View”** – Master Plan – 1 year extension of time request

Mr. Taglianetti, again representing the applicant, requested a one-year extension of time for the Master Plan for this project as well. He said the Carpionato Group presented a new plan for this project at the same recent meeting with Planning Staff that he referenced during the previous discussion. He said Carpionato is working with RIDEM as well as RIDOT on significant off-site improvements associated with the project, and once Carpionato feels reasonably sure that the state agencies will approve the desired improvements, the applicant will bring their Master Plan application back before the Commission.

Chairman Smith asked for Commissioners’ comments.

Ms. Lanphear asked if the new Master Plan would require the Commission to follow the same process as it had before, which included an Ad Hoc Committee. Director Pezzullo said the proposal that was approved at Master Plan is still the proposal, so the applicant would not be submitting a new Master Plan application. He recalled that the Ad Hoc process had been required as an informal extra step to create an opportunity to study the traffic impacts in greater detail. Director Pezzullo said the Committee would review the findings of the ad hoc process relative to the new concept, but it would be the same Master Plan. Modifications to the overall concept would result in changes to the Preliminary Plan.

Mr. Frias asked if there was a hard limit on the number of years that extensions of time could be granted, or if the Commission would simply decide whether it no longer made sense to grant an extension based on knowledge of changes in the law. Director Pezzullo said the latter was correct: if so much time has passed since a project was first conceived that state law, local zoning, stormwater regulations, etc had changed, then it would no longer be sensible to grant extensions of time. Mr. Frias said he suspects that traffic and population figures have changed since this project began; Director Pezzullo agreed and said

the Ad Hoc process was established in the first place because of the potential importance of the project's traffic impacts.

Upon motion made by Mr. Coupe, and seconded by Mr. Bernardo, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to grant a one-year extension of time for the Master Plan Application.

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS

(votes taken for all ZBR items)

- **RICHARD and ELIZABETH RUGGIERIO (OWN) and CARMIN AQUINO (APP)** have applied for permission to convert an existing legal non-conforming retail store into a Religious Place of Worship with reduced number of parking spaces at 132 Gansett Avenue, A.P. 6, lot 2449; area 6,400 s.f.; zoned C2. Applicant seeks relief per 17.92.010- Variances, Section 17.64.010- Off-Street Parking.

Due to the finding that the application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and due to the finding that the application is compatible with the surrounding properties, upon motion made by Mr. Bernardo, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission voted 9-0 to forward a **positive recommendation** to the Zoning Board of Review.

- **ANNYONG SUK WOO (OWN/APP)** has filed an application for permission to construct an addition to an existing two-family house to create two additional living units at 1340 Plainfield Street A/P 12, Lots 406 & 409, zoned C-2. Applicant seeks relief per 17.92.010 Variances, Section 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations.

Due to the findings that the application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, that it does not alter the character of the neighborhood, and that it was previously approved by the Zoning Board of Review in January 2017, upon motion made by Mr. Coupe, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission voted 9-0 to forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review., subject to the two conditions that the Zoning Board required in its previous approval:

1. The accessible parking space shall be reviewed and approved by the Building Official to be installed closest to the entrance providing an ADA-compliant accessible route.
 2. Any landscaping and planting areas disturbed as a result of parking reconfiguration shall be reviewed and approved by the Building Official.
- **FJ INVESTMENT, LLC (OWN) and INGRID GUZMAN d/b/a DULCE VIDA (APP)** Have applied for permission to operate a banquet facility with reduced number of parking spaces from a portion of an existing building at 804 Reservoir Avenue, A.P. 9, lots 572, 573; area 9,189 s.f.; zoned C1. Applicant seeks relief per 17.92.010, Sections 17.20.030- Schedule of Uses; 17.64.010- Off-Street Parking. Application filed 9/14/2022. Robert D. Murray, Esq.

Upon motion made by Mr. Coupe, and seconded by Mr. Igoe, the City Plan Commission voted 5-4 (Mr. Frias, Ms. Lanphear, Mr. Ritz, and Mr. Smith voted No) to forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

(no vote taken)

Director Pezzullo introduced the Commission to the newly-hired Senior Planner, Gregory Guertin, who came to observe the meeting. He said that Mr. Guertin would formally begin working for the City in early November.

Director Pezzullo reported that several large projects are coming into view that may require site walks.

He said the first is the Omni Group's conversion of a vacant office building on Pontiac Avenue into an 18-unit multifamily residential building with 15% affordable housing. He said the project needs a zone change and may warrant a site walk because the Department has already received comments from the surrounding neighborhood that indicate some level of discomfort with the idea of affordable housing. Mr. Frias said if the public is already commenting to that effect on the project, then it makes sense to invite the Council to a joint site walk and hold an open discussion with the developer, the public, the Council, and the Commission all present. Mr. Donahue expressed his agreement. Solicitor Marsella suggested they wait until after the election, but Director Pezzullo said the application is already slated to be decided in November. He said he would report back with potential dates, but hoped to find a weeknight with a 5:30pm start time.

The other two projects Director Pezzullo mentioned were a 100,000 ft² industrial expansion off Cranston Street and a substantial industrial redevelopment of a lot off Plainfield Pike. He said that he couldn't go into detail until these applicants formally submit their applications, but he said the former project would have indoor space available to hold the site walk discussion (making it possible to arrange a weeknight meeting), while the latter project's site walk would have to be held outdoors, probably meaning a Saturday morning date would be best.

Finally, Director Pezzullo said he had no updates to report on the Comp Plan, as the hiring process consumed most of the Department's attention over the past month.

ADJOURNMENT / NEXT REGULAR MEETING

(vote taken)

- Tuesday, November 1st, 2022 — City Hall Council Chambers, 869 Park Avenue

Upon motion made by Mr. Coupe, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, the City Plan Commission unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m.