

Kenneth J. Hopkins
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Robert Coupe
Vice-President



Thomas Barbieri
David Exter
Kathleen Lanphear
Lisa Mancini
John Colasante

Frank Corrao P. E.
Public Works Director

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

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

MINUTES

CITY HALL – 3rd FLOOR, COUNCIL CHAMBER 6:30PM – TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

Commission President Frias called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Commission President Steven Frias, Robert Coupe, Thomas Barbieri, David Exter, Kathleen Lanphear, Lisa Mancini, Frank Corrao and John Colasante.

The following members of the City Planning Department were in attendance: Beth Ashman, Planning Director, Jonas Bruggemann, Assistant Planning Director, Brianna Valcourt, Senior Planner; and Jamie Ray, Planner Technician.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- June 2, 2026

MOTION: Motion to approve the June 2, 2026 minutes, made by Commissioner Corrao. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Exter and the motion passed unanimously with a (7-0) vote.

- Commissioner Barbieri abstained from this vote.

SUBDIVISIONS/LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS – NEW BUSINESS

- **“199 Gladstone Avenue Subdivision”** **PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL** **(vote taken)**
REQUEST FOR PRELIMINARY PLAN EXTENSION
Proposal: Request for a one-year extension to August 5, 2027 for an approved Preliminary Plan for a Minor Subdivision. The application was reviewed under Unified Development Review and approved on August 5, 2025 with associated variances subject to certain conditions and is due to expire on August 5, 2026.
Zoning District: B-1
AP 8/3, Lot 90
199 Gladstone Avenue

Andrew Cormier appeared on behalf of the applicants, Conrad Sanchez and Dilaine Rodriguez-Benitez. He explained that the applicants had previously received minor subdivision approval with dimensional relief in August 2025 but had experienced delays in preparing final plans due to personal circumstances. The applicants requested a one-year extension of the preliminary approval.

Planning staff confirmed that the original approval expires on August 5, 2026, and that approval of the requested extension moves the expiration date to August 5, 2027.

MOTION: Motion to approve the one-year extension, made by Commissioner Coupe. The motion was

seconded by Commissioner Mancini and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

- **“Replat Oaklawn Plat Lots 86, 87 & 88” PUBLIC HEARING (vote taken)**
PRELIMINARY PLAN – Minor Subdivision with UDR
Proposal: Applicant seeks to reconfigure three existing lots into two lots which will contain 8,000 sq. ft. and 6,000 sq. ft. The existing dwelling will remain on an 8,000 sq. ft. lot with a nonconforming side yard setback.
Zoning District: A-8 (Single-Family Residential)
AP 18/4, Lots 486, 489, and 490
21 Turner Avenue

Attorney Robert Murray appeared on behalf of the applicant, Richard Cardello.

Brianna Valcourt presented the staff analysis. Staff found the proposal consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use Map, and the zoning ordinance, aside from the requested setback relief.

Public Comment

- Michael Luciano (26 Turner Avenue) Mr. Luciano opposed the application. He stated that the applicant had previously sought relief from the Zoning Board of Review for similar proposals, which he said had been denied. He argued that the current proposal represented another attempt to obtain relief for a project that would increase density and reduce side setbacks in the Oaklawn Village neighborhood. Mr. Luciano expressed concern that repeated exceptions to zoning standards would set a precedent and negatively affect the character of the neighborhood.

Applicant Response

In response to the public testimony, Attorney Murray clarified that the current proposal differed from prior applications. He stated that the existing residence would remain in place and that the requested dimensional relief applied only to the existing side setback. He further noted that the property is not located within a designated historic district, contrary to statements made during public comment. Mr. Murray also advised the Commission that the applicant had requested waivers from sidewalk construction while acknowledging that curbing could be installed if required.

Commission Discussion

Commission members continued their discussion following public comment. Commission President Frias observed that, despite the requested relief, the separation between the existing and future homes would remain approximately twelve feet. He further noted that many homes in the surrounding neighborhood contain nonconforming setbacks due to the age of the subdivision and questioned whether the proposal would be materially inconsistent with existing development patterns.

Commissioner Frank Corrao stated that he supported waiving the sidewalk requirement but did not support waiving installation of curbing, emphasizing that curbing should accompany new development whenever practical. The applicant indicated that he had no objection to installing curbing if required. Before calling for a vote, Commission President Frias acknowledged the concerns raised by Mr. Luciano regarding repeated zoning exceptions. However, he stated that, in his opinion, the proposal did not create a significant public safety concern, remained consistent with the permitted density of the zoning district, and would not adversely affect the character of the neighborhood.

MOTION: Motion to approve the dimensional variance, made by Commissioner Coupe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Corrao and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

MOTION: Motion to approve the subdivision, made by Commissioner Coupe consistent with the staff recommendation, subject to payment of the Eastern Development Impact Fee, a waiver of sidewalks, and installation of curbing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Corrao and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW – PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

LA NONA CONSTRUCTION, LLC (OWN/APP) has applied to the Board for permission to construct a new single-family dwelling on an undersized lot with reduced frontage previously merged by zoning at **0 Beckwith Street**, AP 6 Lot 332; area 5000sf, zoned B1. Applicant seeks relief by 17.92.010 - Variance; Section 17.20.120 - Schedule of Intensity Regulations; 17.88.010 Substandard lots of record and lot mergers. Application ZBR-26-23 filed 05/12/2026.

LA NONA CONSTRUCTION, LLC (OWN/APP) has applied to the Board for permission to leave an existing single-family dwelling on an undersized lot with reduced frontage and setbacks previously merged by zoning at **235 Beckwith Street**, AP 6 Lot 329; area 5000sf, zoned B1. Applicant seeks relief by 17.92.010 - Variance; Section 17.20.120 - Schedule of Intensity Regulations; 17.88.010 Substandard lots of record and lot mergers. Application ZBR-26-22 filed 05/12/2026.

Attorney Richard Pacia appeared on behalf of the applicant, La Nona Construction.

Jamie Ray presented the staff analysis. Staff found that the applications were consistent with the surrounding area and Comprehensive Plan and recommended positive recommendations for both Zoning Board applications.

Public Comment

- Elizabeth Guest (36 Moran Street) Ms. Guest, an abutting property owner, objected to the proposal. She argued that the subdivision would alter the character of the neighborhood by increasing density on a substandard lot. She expressed concerns about traffic, street parking, stormwater runoff, and the reduction of pervious surface. Ms. Guest also argued that the requested dimensional relief did not represent the least relief necessary and that the hardship was self-created because the applicant purchased the property knowing that the lots would be merged under the zoning ordinance.

Applicant Response

Attorney Pacia responded that the proposal had been reviewed for public safety and density considerations. He stated that the site would provide sufficient off-street parking and that stormwater management would be addressed through the applicable state and municipal requirements. He also noted that neighboring lots in the area were of similar or smaller size.

Commission Discussion

Before calling for a vote, Commission President Frias acknowledged Ms. Guest's thoughtful and well-prepared presentation, noting that she had clearly articulated her concerns regarding neighborhood character and zoning standards. He explained, however, that after reviewing the evidence before the Commission, he concluded that the proposed density remained within the limits established by the Future Land Use Map and that the average lot sizes in the neighborhood supported the staff's recommendation. He also noted that many of the legal arguments raised by Ms. Guest would be more appropriately considered by the Zoning Board of Review. In conclusion, he stated that he did not find sufficient evidence to conclude that the proposal was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

MOTION: Motion to accept the staff recommendation and recommend approval for 235 Beckwith, made by Commissioner Lanphear. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barbieri and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

MOTION: Motion to accept the staff recommendation and recommend approval for 0 Beckwith, made by Commissioner Lanphear. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barbieri and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

250 SMITHFIELD LLC (OWN/APP) has applied to the Board for permission to leave an existing four-family dwelling on an undersized lot with restricted street frontage at **90 Wheeler Avenue**; A.P. 2, lot 3934; area 6075sf; zoned B1. Applicant seeks relief per 17.92.010 - Variance; Sections 17.20.090 – Specific Requirements; 17.20.120 Schedule of Intensity Regulations; 17.88.010 Substandard lots of record and mergers. Application ZBR-26-29 filed 06/08/2026.

250 SMITHFIELD LLC (OWN/APP) has applied to the Board for permission to construct a new two-family dwelling on a lot previously merged by zoning at **0 Wheeler Avenue**; A.P. 2, lot 782; area 11,216sf; zoned B1. Applicant seeks relief per 17.92.010 - Variance; 17.88.010 Substandard lots of record and mergers. Application ZBR-26-30 filed 06/08/2026.

Attorney Robert Murray appeared on behalf of 250 Smithfield LLC.

Jamie Ray presented the staff analysis. Staff found that the applications were consistent with the surrounding area and Comprehensive Plan and recommended positive recommendations for both applications.

Public Comment

- Michael Luciano, 26 Turner Avenue: Mr. Luciano attempted to comment on a previous application and expressed dissatisfaction with the handling of public comment procedures. The Commission President explained that his comments on the Turner Avenue application had been heard and entered into the record and that no additional speakers had been identified at the time public comment was closed for that item.

Commission Discussion

Commissioners expressed concerns regarding the intensity of the proposed development, particularly the placement of a four-unit building on a 6,075-square-foot lot where 18,000 square feet is normally required. If approved, the project would result in a total of six units being on two lots with a combined total area of about 17,000 square feet. Commissioners Kathleen Lanphear and Frank Corrao stated that the proposal was not compatible with the general character of the surrounding neighborhood and would not protect or stabilize the existing residential area.

MOTION: Motion to forward a negative recommendation to the Zoning Board of Review for 90 Wheeler Avenue, finding that the application was not consistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan and was not compatible with the general character of the surrounding neighborhood by Commissioner Lanphear. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Corrao and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

MOTION: Motion to forward a negative recommendation to the Zoning Board of Review for 0 Wheeler Avenue for the same reasons stated in the previous motion by Commissioner Lanphear. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mancini and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

DISCUSSION OF 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Jonas Bruggemann provided an overview of recent state legislative changes affecting planning, subdivision, and zoning procedures. Key topics discussed included:

- Technical amendments to subdivision and zoning statutes.
- Changes to administrative subdivision procedures, including circumstances under which administrative subdivisions may require Planning Commission review.
- Changes to findings and procedures for minor subdivisions.
- Limitations on conditions that may be imposed by the Zoning Board of Review.
- Changes related to parking requirements for attached single-family dwellings and multifamily developments near frequent transit stops.

No formal action was taken on the legislative agenda discussion.

The discussion then shifted to changes involving parking requirements for residential development. Mr. Bruggemann explained that the General Assembly had continued its efforts to reduce mandatory parking requirements, particularly for residential projects located near public transit. Under the new legislation, municipalities will have more limited authority to require off-street parking for qualifying developments located within designated distances of frequent transit service. He noted that the changes are intended to encourage housing production, reduce development costs, and support transit-oriented development throughout Rhode Island.

Commission members discussed how these changes could affect future residential development in Cranston. Questions were raised regarding the applicability of the legislation to attached single-family dwellings, multifamily housing, and projects seeking Comprehensive Permits under the state's affordable

housing statutes. Mr. Bruggemann explained that several of the new provisions specifically reference affordable housing developments and transit-oriented locations, although municipalities will retain authority to regulate parking in circumstances not preempted by state law.

Commissioners asked whether the Planning Department anticipated bringing ordinance amendments before the Commission in response to the new legislation. Mr. Bruggemann indicated that staff expected to prepare recommendations after receiving additional guidance from the State and after evaluating how the statutory changes interact with Cranston's existing zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. He emphasized that some amendments would likely be mandatory to ensure local regulations remain compliant with state law.

Commission President Steven Frias thanked Planning Department staff for providing the legislative update and noted that the information would assist Commissioners in understanding changes that may affect future applications. He observed that land use law continues to evolve at the state level and emphasized the importance of remaining informed as new statutory requirements take effect.

CITY PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Planning Director Beth Ashman highlighted several ongoing projects, such as the new tree canopy committee and the mixed-use centers and corridors project. She explained that more details on these projects are available in the Planning Director's report, which is posted on the website.

ADJOURNMENT

Next Regular Meeting | August 4, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. – **Regular Meeting**
City Council Chamber, City Hall, 869 Park Avenue

MOTION: Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Lanphear. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Colasante and the motion passed unanimously with a (8-0) vote.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:22 p.m.