

Hon. Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Michael E. Smith
President

Jason M. Pezzullo, MCP, MPA, AICP
City Planning Director



Robert Coupe
Vice-President

Thomas Barbieri
David Exter
Steven Frias
Kathleen Lanphear
Lisa Mancini

Justin Mateus P.E.
Public Works Director

Thomas Zidelis
Finance Director

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

MINUTES
CITY HALL – 3rd FLOOR, COUNCIL CHAMBER
6:30PM – TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Chairman Michael Smith, Thomas Zidelis, David Exter, Thomas Barbieri, Steven Frias, Kathleen Lanphear, Justin Mateus, and Lisa Mancini. Commissioner Coupe was absent.

The following members of the City Planning Department were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director; Kenneth R. Kirkland, AICP, Asst. Planning Director

Also in attendance: Steve Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(votes taken)

- 1.2.24 Regular Meeting **(continued from 2/6 Meeting)**
- 2.6.24 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Lanphear offered an amendment to the 1.2.24 minutes, providing specific language that clarifies previous statements made by Commissioner Coupe.

Upon motion made by Ms. Lanphear, and seconded by Mr. Frias, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to approve the minutes of the 1.2.24 meeting, as amended.

Chairman Smith stated that the meeting minutes of the 2.6.24 regular City Plan Commission meeting were to be held for review and subsequent vote at the April regular meeting.

RE-SCHEDULE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

(vote taken)

Chairman Smith suggested that the Commission consider re-scheduling the next regular meeting of the City Plan Commission, as the April meeting falls on an election day.

Director Pezzullo stated that Wednesday April 3rd and Thursday April 4th were dates compatible with the city calendar. Chairman Smith suggested re-scheduling the meeting to Wednesday, April 3rd following election day.

Upon motion made by Ms. Mancini, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to reschedule the next regular meeting of the City Plan Commission to April 3rd, 2024.

CAPITAL BUDGET & IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

PUBLIC HEARING

(vote taken)

- “FY24-29”

Final Draft presentation and discussion with Department heads.

A representative from the Fire Department provided a presentation of the departmental budget requests.

Commissioner Frias inquired about the cost of continuing to use a neighboring community's training facility for use by the CFD compared to owning and maintaining their own training facility. Chief Ryan agreed that using the facility in the neighboring community would likely not cost \$500,000, as proposed for the construction of a new facility.

Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the Commission, and to the public. There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

Commissioner Zidelis, City Finance Director, clarified that the 2024-2029 Capital Budget and Improvement Program includes budget requests by the School Department of \$76M in approvals, not expenditures or borrowings.

Chairman Smith invited a representative from the School Department to present budget requests.

Edward Collins, Chief of Facilities Management and Capital Projects for the Cranston School Department presented departmental budget requests.

Commissioner Frias inquired about the line item regarding professional development. Mr. Frias discussed the difference between capital improvements requests and operating expenses, and that professional development is an expense, not a tangible capital item. Mr. Frias also inquired about the Laborers' charter school, specifically regarding the population of the school and specific programs offered. Mr. Collins stated that the program is evolving to include numerous programs.

Mr. Frias asked if vocational programs could be offered at Cranston High School East and/or Cranston High School West. Mr. Collins stated that CHSE is not fit for vocational programs, lacking appropriate facilities. CHSW is at capacity for the vocational programs offered.

Mr. Frias inquired if the Cranston School Committee had considered utilizing vacant school buildings such as the Waterman Elementary School, Chester Barrows Elementary School or the Arlington Elementary School. Mr. Collins stated that the Waterman and Chester Barrows Schools are not conducive to vocational programming, but the Arlington site is a good site

Mr. Frias asked Mr. Collins to clarify the budget request for the Apprenticeship Exploration School. Mr. Collins stated that this estimate of about \$14 million includes \$2.5 million for purchasing the property, \$10 million for renovations, and the rest were soft costs included in projects. Mr. Collins clarified that the budget requests presented are a collective request between the city and school administration.

Mr. Frias asked Mr. Collins why the Laborers would not be responsible for purchasing and modifying new facilities. Mr. Collins stated that he would not speak on behalf of the Laborers' Union. Mr. Frias stated that this facility is a district charter school. He noted that in Providence the district charter school, Times Squared, owns its property and building, and the City of Providence does not. Mr. Collins could not answer those questions. Mr. Frias noted that under the proposal by the School Department the taxpayers, at the state and local level, would pay 100 percent of the cost, but if the charter school paid for the building and the modifications to it, the charter school would get some reimbursement from the state and the taxpayers would pay less than 100 percent for these costs. .

Mr. Frias asked Mr. Collins about school enrollment across the city, except in the western part of the city. Mr. Collins stated that certain schools have more consistent enrollment than others. Mr. Collins also acknowledged that a new middle school was on the wish list of the School Department.

Mr. Frias inquired about potential reimbursement of 54-74% offered to the city of Cranston for school construction projects from the Rhode Island Department of Education, including 74% of any interest

accrued. Mr. Collins stated that all reimbursement submissions have been met with a 74% reimbursement rate thus far.

Commissioner Barbieri clarified that the budget request for professional development is a cost to maximize the efficiency of a new building being utilized by students and staff. Regarding the vocational programs, each high school building has the unique ability to utilize existing space to maintain programs and to accept local students and students from neighboring communities.

Seeing no further discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public.

- Steve Stycos, 37 Ferncrest Avenue; Mr. Stycos provided comment on the reimbursement rates by RIDE and opposed the proposed expenditure for the charter school. He believed that millions should not be spent on an aging factory building, and other options should be reviewed.

Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff, stated that Mayor Hopkins supports all proposed programs and investments submitted for reimbursement through RIDE.

There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

Chairman Smith invited a representative from the Department of Public Works to present departmental budget requests. Commissioner Mateus, Director of Public Works, presented such requests.

Mr. Frias commented on the budget request regarding soundproofing the indoor police range, stating that the noise emanating from the range aligns with city standards and regulations for sound, not to exceed acceptable noise levels. Mr. Mateus stated that he believes Mr. Frias to be accurate. Mr. Frias also noted that there are other shooting ranges in the state that are outdoors.

Mr. Frias inquired about a sewer pump on Plainfield Pike, if sewage capacity is currently being exceeded. Mr. Mateus confirmed, stating that the sewage pump is currently up to capacity. Mr. Frias inquired about the potential capacity of the proposed improvements. Mr. Mateus stated that the increase in storage is to accommodate developments of single-family and other residential units, unsure of percentage increase off-hand.

Mr. Frias asked about the lifespan of proposed vehicle purchases for DPW facilities management. Mr. Zidelis stated one truck has a potential lifespan of use of twenty years, another with a proposed lifespan of use at approximately eleven years. The city is looking to match the useful life of assets to the life of the bonds.

Seeing no further discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public.

- Steve Stycos, 37 Ferncrest Avenue; Mr. Stycos inquired about a line item from the proposed CPD budget. Mr. Stycos inquired about proposed improvements to the police station as a leased building, specifically HVAC system updates.

Mr. Mateus responded, stating that the final payment of the leased property is proposed for 2026, ending the existing lease, in which the property would be owned by the city. Mr. Zidelis stated that maintenance and improvements have been the responsibility of the city for a period of time, per the existing lease agreement. Asst. City Solicitor Steve Marsella stated that the city has been required to maintain the facility per the lease agreement and until purchase finalization.

There were no other members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

Chairman Smith invited a representative from the Parks and Recreation Department to present departmental capital budget requests.

Director Ray Tessaglia presented the department's capital budget requests.

Commissioner Frias inquired about the demand for a dog park in the city. Mr. Tessaglia stated that he does not get daily requests for a dog park. Mr. Frias noted that dog socialization was given as a reason for having a dog park, and he questioned the necessity of spending \$60,000 for dog socialization.

Seeing no further discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public.

There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

Mr. Zidelis presented the budget requests for the IT and Library Departments, respectively.

Seeing no discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public.

There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

Commissioner Frias reiterated that capital budget requests concerned tangible improvements, as opposed to operating expenses, inconsistent with the charter. Mr. Frias proposed an amendment to the budget; to remove the professional development request from the school department section of the capital plan.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (7-1) to remove the professional development request from the capital plan. Mr. Barbieri opposed the amendment.

Mr. Frias proposed a second amendment to the budget; to delete the item on the AES school building. He explained the charter requires that a capital expenditure must be necessary. He indicated that the Arlington location could potentially be used. He noted that building currently housing the charter school was not designed to be a school. He stated there was no explanation as to why the city must own the charter school building, when in Providence the district charter school owns the building. He asserted that there are other less expensive options to the taxpayers that have not been explored.

Mr. Barbieri opposed the amendment, stating that the programs offered are important for Cranston students.

Ms. Mancini inquired about the return on investment of the proposed improvement. Mr. Frias reiterated previous comments made about the Laborers' Union potentially purchasing and maintaining the property.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Ms. Lanphear, the City Plan Commission voted (4-4) to delete the item on the AES school building. Chairman Smith, Mr. Mateus, Mr. Barbieri, and Mr. Zidelis opposed the amendment. The motion failed.

Mr. Frias suggested a motion to approve all the remaining items in the school budget except the charter school and the professional development items following the tie vote. Chairman Smith noted that professional development was already removed.

Mr. Frias proposed a motion to approve the remaining school department budget as proposed, without the charter school item.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (5-3) to approve the school department budget, sans the item regarding the AES school building. Chairman Smith, Mr. Barbieri, and Mr. Zidelis voted nay.

Mr. Frias proposed a motion to remove the line item on the engineering police shooting range.

Mr. Barbieri and Chairman Smith dissented.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (5-3) to remove the line item on the engineering police shooting range from the Department of Public Works capital improvements requests. Ms. Mancini, Mr. Barbieri, and Chairman Smith opposed.

Mr. Frias proposed an amendment to remove the training facility item from the Fire Department's respective capital budget requests.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Zidelis, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to remove the training facility item from the Fire Department's capital budget request.

Mr. Frias proposed a motion to remove the dog park item from the Parks and Recreation Department's capital budget request.

Upon motion made by Mr. Frias, and seconded by Mr. Zidelis, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to remove the dog park item from the Parks and Recreation Department's capital budget request.

Ms. Mancini noted a clerical mistake to be amended, changing "baseball court" to "basketball court" in the Parks and Recreation budget.

Upon motion made by Ms. Mancini, and seconded by Mr. Zidelis, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to amend the typographical mistake, as noted.

Mr. Frias proposed a motion to improve the Capital Improvements Program, as amended.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Frias, and seconded by Mr. Zidelis, the City Plan Commission voted (8-0) to approve the CIP as amended.

ORDINANCE WORKSHOP

(no vote taken)

- **"2-24-02"** **PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL**
Ordinance in amendment of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Cranston
(Change of FLUM Designation – 20 Goddard Drive, Plat 13, Lot 39)
Government/Institutional (GI) to Special Redevelopment Area

Atty. Robert Murraray, on behalf of the applicant, made a presentation regarding the ordinance request.

Seeing no discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public. There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

As this item falls under the designation of public informational, no vote was taken on the matter.

ORDINANCE WORKSHOP

(no vote taken)

- **"2-24-03"** **PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL**
Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 17 of the Code of City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled "Zoning"
(Change of Zone – 20 Goddard Drive, Plat 13, Lot 39)
M-2 to M-2 with Conditions

Atty. Robert Murraray, on behalf of the applicant, presented the ordinance request.

Seeing no discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public. There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

As this item falls under the designation of public informational, no vote was taken on the matter.

SUBDIVISIONS & LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

(vote taken)

- **"Residences at Oaklawn Ave"** **PUBLIC HEARING**
PRELIMINARY PLAN – Major Land Development Project

Two-story, twelve-unit multi-family residential building
Zoning District: B-2 with Conditions
AP 17/3, Lot 670
Oaklawn Avenue

Atty. Tenessa Azar of Moses Ryan LTD, on behalf of the applicant, provided brief introduction, presentation, and context of the site and the application. Ms. Azar stated that the applicant is seeking preliminary plan approval following previous master plan approval with applicable approvals from RIDOT, RIDEM, and State Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission. Ms. Azar also stated that the development will include an affordable component.

David Taglianetti, VP of Development of the Carpionato Group, provided architectural design context and minimal landscaping changes to site plan.

Commissioner Frias voiced concerns about a major flooding episode that had recently occurred in a nearby residential apartment complex.

Mr. Taglianetti stated that he was unsure of the stormwater/storm mitigation system(s) in place at the complex referenced by Mr. Frias. Mr. Taglianetti stated that the proposed project includes two surface detention basins adjacent to Oaklawn Avenue, and subsurface chambers to mitigate potential flooding events. Mr. Taglianetti stated that, relative to the size and scope of the proposal, mitigation efforts are significant.

Ms. Lanphear asked if the development team has visited the site following recent rain events to observe whether any adjustments or alterations to the plan are necessary. Mr. Taglianetti responded, stating that the engineers developing stormwater management systems use rainfall intensity that is adjusted by FEMA or REMA to account for increased frequency of different storm events.

Seeing no further discussion by the Commission, Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public. There were no members of the public present online, nor in-person to comment on this discussion.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Barbieri, and seconded by Ms. Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted (8-0) to accept staff recommendation with specified conditions.

PERFORMANCE GUARANTEES

(votes taken on each item)

- **“Lantern Hill Estates”** PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL
f/k/a Lippitt Hill Estates
Phase I: Bond Release Request
- **“The Estates at Camden Woods”** PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL
Phases I – III: Bond Release Request

Commissioner Mateus stated that the DPW is awaiting as-built plans for final review by the department, which have not yet been received by the applicant, for both respective applications.

Director Pezzullo stated that staff recommends continuing both applications for one month, to be heard at the April Regular City Plan Commission meeting.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Mateus, and seconded by Mr. Zidelis, the City Plan Commission voted (8-0) to continue both applications to the 4.3.24 Regular City Plan Commission meeting.

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

(votes taken on each item)

- **495 INVESTMENTS LLC (OWN/APP)** has applied to seek use and dimensional (parking) relief to change a pre-existing, non-conforming use (doctor’s office) to a salon (personal care)

services) at 495 Atwood Avenue, AP 12/4, Lot 3116; Area 13,300 sq. ft., zoned M-1. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010 – Variances; Section 17.20.030 – Schedule of Uses; and Section 17.64.010 – Off-Street Parking.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Mancini, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (8-0) to continue this matter to the 4.3.24 Regular City Plan Commission meeting.

- **KNIGHTSVILLE ENTERPRISES LLC (OWN/APP)** has applied to seek use and dimensional (parking and setback) relief to construct a 315 sq. ft. addition to a pre-existing, non-conforming structure (pub/tavern) at 1669 Cranston Street, AP 8/1, Lot 391; Area 6,962 sq. ft., zoned C-2. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010 – Variances; Section 17.20.010 – Schedule of Intensity Regulations; Section 17.20.030 – Schedule of Uses; Section 17.64.010 – Off-Street Parking; Section 17.88.010 – Substandard Lots of Record; and Section 17.88.050 – Structural Alterations to Non-conforming Structures.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Barbieri, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to accept staff recommendation. Ms. Mancini did not vote on the matter.

- **SOKHENG RITHY (OWN/APP)** has applied to seek dimensional (setback) relief to construct a two-family dwelling on a pre-existing, non-conforming lot (area) at 0 Narragansett Street, AP 2/4, Lot 672; Area 6,450 sq. ft., zoned B-2. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010 – Variances; Section 17.20.010 – Schedule of Intensity Regulations; Section 17.20.030 – Schedule of Uses; Section 17.64.010 – Off-Street Parking; Section 17.88.010 – Substandard Lots of Record; and Section 17.88.050 – Structural Alterations to Non-conforming Structures.

A motion for a positive recommendation was made by Commissioner Barbieri, and seconded by Chairman Smith. It was defeated by a vote of the City Plan Commission (2-6) Chairman Smith and Barberi voted in the affirmative.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Frias and seconded by Commissioner Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (6-2) to forward a negative recommendation on the basis it is inconsistent with the density requirement of the Future Land Use Map and Land Use Goal 9.3 regarding preserving the existing density of established neighborhoods.

- **DEVIN BELIVEAU & WALTER MARTI (OWN/APP)** have applied to seek dimensional (area, width, and frontage) relief to construct a single-family dwelling on a pre-existing, non-conforming lot (area) at 0 Piedmont Street, AP 4/4, Lot 1416; Area 4,500 sq. ft., zoned A-6. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010 – Variances; Section 17.20.010 – Schedule of Intensity Regulations; and Section 17.88.010 – Substandard Lots of Record.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Lanphear, and seconded by Ms. Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted (8-0) to forward a **negative recommendation** to the Zoning Board of Review.

- **EARLY FOUNDATION ACADEMY LLC (OWN/APP)** has applied to seek dimensional relief to construct two (2) 32'x32' additions to an existing daycare center at 181 Princess Avenue, AP 8/3, Lot 1552; Area 25,600 sq. ft., zoned B-1. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010 – Variances; Section 17.20.010 – Schedule of Intensity Regulations; Section 17.20.030 – Schedule of Use; and Section 17.20.090 – Specific Requirements.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted (8-0) to accept staff recommendation.

CITY PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

(no votes taken)

- Open positions / ongoing hiring process

Director Pezzullo provided an update on the ongoing hiring process for the department. Mr. Pezzullo stated that two candidates had been offered positions to fulfill the two vacant Senior Planner roles.

- Comprehensive Plan Update Process

Director Pezzullo thanked the Commission for attending the comprehensive plan update workshop held in February. Mr. Pezzullo shared that draft chapters of the comprehensive plan would be shared for review over the next month, as they become available by the consultant.

ADJOURNMENT

(votes taken)

Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 p.m.