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Joseph Morales
Robert DiStefano
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CITY PLAN COMMISSION
Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, RI 02910

September 7th, 2021 Plan Commission Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

Chairman Smith called the City Plan Commission Meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Chairman Smith, Ken Mason, Ann Marie Maccarone, Robert Strom, Robert Coupe, Kathleen Lanphear, Frederick Vincent, Joseph Morales. Commissioners Robert DiStefano and Robert Coupe were absent.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, Planning Director, Doug McLean, Principal Planner and Joshua Berry, Senior Planner.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion made by Commissioner Vincent, and seconded by Commissioner Mason, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously to **approve** the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 8/3/21. Commissioners Lamphere, and Morales abstained.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Maccarone and seconded by Commissioner Vincent, the City Plan Commissions Maccarone, Vincent, Lamphere and Smith voted to **approve** the special City Plan Commission joint site walk minutes of 8/21/21.

ORDINANCES RECOMMENDATIONS

7-21-10 Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 17 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled "Zoning" (Change of Zone from C-3 to C-2 with condition for a maximum of 8 residential units – 1369 Park Avenue and 0 Park Avenue).

(following item taken out of order as they were presented and considered in tandem including public comment)

"Sprague Covington Plat"

Master Plan – Major Land Development
8 townhouse style condominium units on .81 acre combined site
Zoned C-3, proposal for conditional rezone to C-2
1369 Park Avenue – AP 11, Lots 273 & 4062

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

Principal Planner Doug McKlean gave the staff presentations via PowerPoint for both the proposed conditional zone change as well as the Major Land Development / Master Plan.

Attorney John DiBona gave a brief presentation on behalf of the applicant and owner, Sprague Covington, LLC. He stated the applicant proposed to develop the 23,594 square foot parcel for a total of eight townhouse style housing units. He explained the request to change the existing zoning from C-3 to C-2 *with conditions for a maximum of eight housing units. Mr. DiBona explained this type of development will be consistent with the neighborhood as it abuts a large-scale multi-family development. In addition, he states the C-2 zone is consistent with the Cranston Comprehensive Plan – Future Land Use Map designation of “Neighborhood Commercial”. (This designation calls for C-1, C-2 and C-3), and multi-family housing is allowed by-right within the C-2 zoning district. Finally, he stated the zone change is further in compliance with the Comp Plan in its policy of creating opportunities for “in-fill” housing units. The development will have 24 parking spaces where 16 are required. In addition, the proposal calls for condominium style units will not require the placement of a dumpster (apartment buildings require dumpsters). He requested that the Plan Commission make a positive recommendation on the proposed zone change, as well as to approve the Master Plan / Major Land Development.

Commissioner Mason questioned the development of housing units within 300’ radius of a gas station storage tanks. Solicitor Marcella stated the key difference lies in the development coming to the gas station use, rather than the inverse.

Chairman Smith opened the meeting to comments from members of the public.

Mr. Frank DiZoglio of the Cranston Housing commission spoke in favor of the development to create new housing opportunities within the City. After seeing no additional members of the public wishing to be heard on this application, Chairman Smith closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Principal Planner Doug McKlean concluded staff analysis of the application and moved to the recommendation on both individual applications detailed in each staff report.

After review and consideration, and upon a motion by Commissioner Mason, and seconded by Commissioner Morales, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to **approve** the Major Land Development / Master Plan.

Next, after review and consideration, upon a motion by Mr. Strom and seconded by Mr. Vincent, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to forward the following recommendation on 07-21-10:

*“Based on the findings that the rezone is consistent with Comprehensive Plan and Section 17.04.010 of the Zoning Ordinance, in addition to the findings that the rezone is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, staff recommends that the Plan Commission forward a **positive recommendation** on Ordinance #07-21-10 to the City Council.”*

7-21-17 Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 17 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Zoning” (Change of Zone from A-80 to A-20 – 0 Sage Drive).

Senior Planner Joshua Berry gave a brief presentation via PowerPoint for the proposed change of zone.

Attorney Joseph Shekarchi gave a presentation on behalf of the applicant. He stated that the proposed request is in keeping with the same A-20 zoning for the rest of Alpine Estates. He referenced the Comprehensive Plan – Future Land Use Map specifically stating the request is consistent with the prescribed changes itemized in the plan. The developer, Cassalli Bros., propose to build eight new homes with the A-20 request, where a maximum of four homes would be allowed under the A-80. He stated the proposed single-family homes would be virtually the same as the surrounding neighborhood.

Commissioner Fred Vincent questioned the applicant about drainage in the area. David Provencal P.E. stated he was the engineer of record for the original Alpine Estates. He explained that the wetlands areas have been flagged and approved by the RIDEM. He briefly went into detail about the nature of wetland area in the western portion of the site. Chairman Smith asked the applicant about the yield of lots from the perspective of the A-80 vs. A-20. (staff notes this zone change proposal does not have an associated subdivision).

Chairman Smith then opened the meeting to comments from members of the public. There were no members of the public present to speak for or against this proposal, therefore Chairman Smith closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Senior Planner Joshua Berry presented staff analysis and recommendation via PowerPoint presentation. He stated that the proposed zone change is consistent with the abutting neighborhood. He made positive findings on all the required findings of fact that are detailed in his staff report to the Plan Commission.

After review and consideration, upon a motion by Mr. Strom and seconded by Mr. Vincent, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to forward the following recommendation:

*“Based on the findings that Ordinance #07-21-17 is not just consistent with but **prescribed by** the Comprehensive Plan, is consistent with the applicable purposes of zoning as presented in Section 17.04.010, and is consistent with the surrounding land uses and existing development pattern, the City Plan Commission forwards a **positive recommendation** on Ordinance #07-21-17 to the City Council. “*

“Trolley Barn Plaza”

PRE-APPLICATION

Major Land Development

Proposed bank with drive-thru, gas station / mini mart with drive-thru, drive-thru restaurant, retail auto parts / warehouse distribution on 6.91-acre site

Zoned M-2 (General Industry), Comp Plan amendment & conditional C-5 zone proposed

777 Cranston Street – AP 7, Lot 1

Senior Planner Joshua Berry briefly presented the proposal to the Commission as a Pre-Application / Information session. Attorney Nick Goodier then presented the overall concept to the City Plan Commission. He stated they applicant is proposing a warehouse use with tri-commercial uses to include a drive through bank, a gas station/mini mart, and drive through restaurant. At this time, the applicant does not possess any outside agency approval including RIDEM. The applicant is requesting a Comprehensive Plan amendment that eliminates “Special Redevelopment District” from the Future Land Use Map, as well any other text references to this designation throughout the plan. In its place is a new designation of “Highway Commercial” with an associated zone change ordinance to change from M-2 (General Industrial) to conditional C-5 (Heavy business / Industry). Mr. Goodier stated the proposed major land development will be consistent with the general area. He stated the zoning for this parcel should be adjusted to a conditional C-5 to be consistent with the character of the surrounding Cranston Street.

Commission Vincent stated that he has long awaited a proposal for the redevelopment of the “Trolley Barn” parcel.

Dana Nisbit P.E. of DiPrete Engineering presented the details of the proposal. She stated there is an existing landscape buffer area to the B-1 abutting residential area. There is a substantial distance from residential in addition to a grade change.

The Commission questioned how the Niantic Avenue intersection, currently rated an F, will be further impacted by this development. Mr. Goodier stated that the City’s peer reviewer is looking at this issue currently, and that the developer is proposing mitigation improvements which have been detailed on the concept plan.

Mrs. Nisbit continue with the presentation and stated there are no floodplains or wetlands onsite. There are areas of former foundations which are overgrown and abandoned. There are currently 3 curb cuts proposed (adjusted) for traffic flow. The grading and drainage plans have not been completed at this time but are expected with the full submission. She stated landscaping will be enhanced along Cranston Street.

Commissioner Morales questioned the applicant about the auto parts store and the expected large trucks (18-wheelers). Mr. Goodier stated they do not expect large scale trucks but rather smaller vans to dispatch products to regional stores. They will analyze this issue during the development plan review process.

Commissioner Mason asked about the problematic Garfield Avenue intersection and the northernmost curb cuts not allowing any left turning movements.

Commissioner Vincent mentioned the possible existence of an underground tunnel that led directly to the formers Brewery site. Mr. Goodier stated they would get the answer to whether this is true or simply an urban myth.

Commissioner Strom asked if any leases had been signed by potential tenants. Mr. Goodier stated the proposal was mostly speculation at this point.

Chairman Smith asked if the developer was looking to pay homage to the historic nature of the site in some way. Mr. Goodier stated they are keeping the name "Trolley Barn" as a start.

Mr. Berry asked why the developer needs so much additional parking above what the zoning code calls for.

Chairman Smith then opened the meeting to comments from members of the public. There were no members of the public present to speak for or against this pre-application proposal, therefore Chairman Smith closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

"Comstock Industrial"

PRE-APPLICATION

Major Land Development

Construct 2 new buildings on the 17.31-acre property for the purpose of large-scale industrial (trucking terminal) and office uses.

Zoned M-1 (Restricted Industrial)

Comstock Parkway – AP 36, Lot 46

Principal Planner Douglas McLean briefly gave an overview of the proposed industrial development. Next, Attorney Robert Murray representing the applicant, Comstock Trucking LLC, began his presentation before the Plan Commission. He stated that this parcel is a very valuable piece of real estate in Western Cranston. The proposed trucking terminal is a use allowed by-right under the M-1 zoning district. He further stated than any other associated uses would also be allowed under the zoning district. He stated that the scale of this major land development is on par with the Cranston Print Works in terms of scale. The project will enhance the commercial tax base. He has had many meeting thus far with the city staff, the administration, and has already had an informational meeting for the benefit of the abutting neighbors. In addition, the Planning Director asked that the DPRC hold a pre-application meeting to discuss various issues. The next step is the Master Plan application to the Planning Department so this application may be considered in November.

Mr. Murray stated that the 17-acre site has traditionally been forested. There have been other proposals to subdivide and development this parcel consistent with the M-1 zone, but have not gotten very far. The types of tenants for this parcel are not yet known, but they will be compliant with the M-1 zone. The site is located just north of Sweet Pea Drive which was formally zoned M-2 until it was petitioned to be rezoned to B-2 to allow the multi-family residential development. He understands that change in the neighborhood is difficult be acknowledges that it was a matter of time before this lot would be developed for industrial purposes.

Mr. John Walsh, the owner / developer thanked the Commission for their time. He stated this parcel was selected due to its proximity to I-295. He stated there were different scenarios for development and to put the building farther away from the neighbors. How

ever, this would not work from a practical standpoint and from a noise mitigation standpoint depending on where the openings of the terminal would face.

Mrs. Dana Nisbit P.E. of DiPrete Engineering stated a Class 1 survey has been done for the property. The site is totally wooded with isolated wetlands. The applicant is still analyzing soil types. The proposed curb cut will square off with Western Industrial Drive. The proposed landscape enhancements have not been fully developed at this point. She stated that the proposed development will meet the requirements of the City's sound ordinance. In addition, a traffic study is underway and will be part of the Master Plan / Major Land Development application. This study is expected to undergo a peer review prior to being heard by the City Plan Commission.

Chairman Smith questioned the need for a height variance for this site, and would this require ZBR approval. Commissioner Vincent discussed the southern property line and property line and its proximity to the multi-family development. Mr. Murray responded that a PLA will be employed as part of the overall proposal focusing on this property line. Mr. Murray stated that the height differential (7 ft) will be compensated with the proposed landscaping plans.

Chairman Smith then opened the meeting to comments from members of the public. Mr. William Duarte, president of the Condominium Association (Sweet Pea Drive) spoke at length about the neighborhood's strong opposition to this proposed project.

There being no additional public comments, Chairman Smith closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Mr. McLean made brief comments about the project, and the upcoming steps the application will take during the permitting phase.

Mr. Murray was allowed to speak at the end of the Pre-Application presentation countering some of the claims made by the abutting property owners. He stated that this parcel was part of the western industrial development area, and is not separate and apart. At that time, the Commission moved on to the next item on the agenda.

EXTENSIONS OF TIME

"Fountains at Chapel View" - Master Plan – extension for one year

Upon motion made by Commissioner Mason and seconded by Commissioner Strom, the Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to extend the Master Plan approval for one year to expire on October 3, 2022.

"Champlin Hills" - Master Plan AMENDMENT – extension for one year

Upon motion made by Commissioner Strom and seconded by Commissioner Mason, the Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to extend the AMENDED Master Plan approval for one year to expire on October 3, 2022.

(staff notes that Champlin Heights was already addressed at an early meeting this year and was posted as an agenda item in error).

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS

K J MAUL REALTY, LLC (OWN) and SUGARLY DELGADO (APP) have filed an application to convert an existing non-conforming building to a commercial day care with restricted parking and off-street loading at **51 Manhasset Street**, A.P. 6, lot 1182, 5,000 sq.ft. zoned B1. Applicant seeks relief per Section 17.92.010 Variances; Sections 17.20.120 Schedule of Intensity Regulations; 17.20.030 Schedule

of Uses; 17.64.010 Off Street Parking; 17.68.010 (C) (3) (DPR proposal was denied on 9/1/21 and therefore cannot be considered by ZBR)

City Code Section 17.84.100(C) requires Development Plan Review approval prior to consideration before the Zoning Board of Review. The associated Development Plan Review proposal was **denied** on 9/1/21, and therefore **the Plan Commission did not consider the variance application.**

GRAZIANO BROCCOLI AND MARIA BROCCOLI, TRUSTEES (OWN) and ROBERT CORSI (OWN/APP) have filed an application to expand an existing motor vehicle sales business by converting a non-conforming building on an adjacent lot at **898 Atwood Ave.** A.P. 12, lots 633 & 3130; area 8,516 s.f.; zoned C2. Applicant seeks relief per 17.92.010-Variance; 17.20.030 Schedule of Uses; Section 17.20.120-Schedule of Intensity Regulations. 17.64.010 Off Street Parking; 17.88.030- Structural Alterations.

*Due to the findings that the proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, would improve the existing conditions and would be consistent with the character of the neighboring area, upon a motion made by Mr. Morales seconded by Mr. Mason, the Plan Commission voted (7-0) to forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.*

VASQUEZ PROPERTIES, LLC (OWN) and MARISELA VASQUEZ have filed an application to allow signage installed without benefit of a permit exceeding the allowable square footage to remain at **455 Reservoir Avenue** A.P. 6, lot 1011 zoned C4. Applicant seeks relief per Sections; 17.92.010 Variance, Section 17.72.010 (C) (4) Table 17.72.010 (5) Signs.

*Upon request by the applicant to continue until November, upon motion by Mr. Vincent seconded by Mr. Mason, the Plan Commission voted (7-0) to **continue** this application to the November 2, 2021 Plan Commission meeting.*

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Mr. Pezzullo briefly discussed the following topics with the Commission:

- Comprehensive Plan (grant process, timetable)
- Potential upcoming joint site visit (777 Cranston St)
- Hazard Mitigation Plan 5-year update
- Historic Preservation grant (comprehensive plan element update)

ADJOURNMENT / NEXT REGULAR MEETING – Tuesday, October 5th – 6:30 PM – 869 Park Avenue, City Hall Council Chamber

Upon motion made by Commissioner Mason and Seconded by Commission Morales, the meeting was adjourned.