

MINUTES

March 5, 2019

Chairman Smith called the City Plan Commission Meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

The following Commission members were in attendance:

Michael Smith, Chairman	Steven Spirito
Fred Vincent	Ann Marie Maccarone
Ken Mason, P.E.	Robert DiStefano
Robert Strom	Joseph Morales
Kathleen Lanphear	

Also present were: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director
Stephen Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor
Douglas McLean, AICP, Principal Planner
Joshua Berry, AICP, Senior Planner
J. Resnick, Clerk

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion made by Mr. DiStefano and seconded by Mr. Spirito, the Commission unanimously voted (8/0) to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2019, Plan Commission Meeting. (Mr. Vincent was absent)

CAPITAL BUDGET AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

Mr. Ed Collins, Director, Plant Operations, School Department, stated that the 6.6 million dollars for the Eden Park School Pathfinder Project should be 8.2 million dollars. Mr. Strom stated that the state usually reimburses 52% on school projects, however, the Eden Park project will probably receive a 70% reimbursement as this proposal is considered an “innovative classroom” project. Concentrating improvements on one school at a time will maximize reimbursement from the state. The department will try to get Eden Park completed in a two month time frame. The project has the approval of “RIBEC”. He stated that 4.2 million dollars will be used to improve middle schools. These projects will be reimbursed at 52%.

Mr. Ken Mason has requested three additional six wheel trucks. He stated that the city currently has about 20 dump trucks. He will also like to replace two pickup trucks, with plows. Regarding paving, he stated that 20 million dollars was approved in 2016 by the voters. He stated that in the next two years he would like to repave 25 more miles of roadway. A paving study was done in October, 2015, that rated every road from 0-100. Main arterial roads are done first. Other major roads will be “crack sealed”. He has also requested funds for Western Cranston traffic improvements at Natick and Wilbur Avenues and at Hope Road, Phenix

Avenue and Wilbur Avenue. The money allocated for catch basin compliance (1.5 million) is a state requirement. He has allocated one million dollars for the relocation of the departments at the Hamilton Building.

Fire Chief William McKenna has requested an engine truck for Station 6. Four hundred thousand dollars] has been requested for station renovations. He stated that Stations 1 and 3 have the original (90 year old) flooring. He noted that air conditioning systems are coming up on thirty years old and that what he is seeking is "for the basics". He stated that many of the stations have original plumbing and electrical. He stated that the Ladder truck at Station 1 is from 2002. He stated that, once ordered, it takes 18-24 months to receive these trucks. He stated that the Fire Department also maintains street lights and the bucket truck used for this purpose is fifteen years old. He is also seeking one more bay to house the new truck.

Mr. Anthony Liberatore, Director, Parks and Recreation, stated that the six hundred thousand dollar request for synthetic turf is for the CHSW football field. He stated that \$3,500,000 has been raised for the city at the Stadium from the rental of the facility. The Doric Avenue Walking Track needs repaving (\$70,000) as tree roots around the track are lifting the pavement. The Narragansett Street tennis court needs resurfacing at a cost of \$65,000.

Library Director, Ed Garcia, is seeking \$40,000 for renovations to the restrooms at the Auburn Branch and \$50,000 for "library security gates". Neither of these projects are eligible for impact fee use.

Planning Director, Jason Pezzullo, has submitted the usual request of \$500,000 for open space. He stated that this money has been used in recent years for voluntary floodplain buyouts.

Upon motion made by Mr. DiStefano and seconded by Mr. Vincent, the Commission unanimously voted (9/0) to approve the Capital Budget and Improvement Plan and forward the document to the Mayor's office with the amendments to the School Department Budget.

SUBDIVISIONS AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

Whiting Street Minor Subdivision (Continued from 1/8/19 & 2/5/19)

Preliminary Plan – Minor Subdivision with street extension

Applicant seeks to improve and connect the final segment of Whiting Street

Five (5) additional single-family house lots are proposed

Whiting Street, AP 12-4, Lots 1065-1070 & 1105, 1106

Senior Planner, Joshua Berry, stated that the applicant has requested a continuance. Upon motion made by Mr. DiStefano and seconded by Mr. Mason, the Commission unanimously voted (9/0) to continue this matter to the April 2, 2019, Plan Commission Meeting.

Mr. Ken Mason, P.E., Public Works Director, stated that he has been in contact with the developer of the Garden Vista Condominiums. He further stated that the water runoff issue with the condominiums has nothing to do with the subject application.

Gray Coach Estates - Phase 2 – Minor Amendment of Final Plan

Final Plan – Major Land Development with private street extension

Gray Coach Lane and Scituate Avenue

Increase in dwelling units from 94 to 108 units (*116 allowed by-right in B-2 Zone*)

Final phases to be constructed as multi-level structure vs. town homes

Gray Coach Lane, AP 36/3, Lot 54

Mr. Douglas McLean, Principal Planner, presented his staff findings to the Commission and stated that the applicant has requested to amend the approved and recorded multi-family housing development

project currently under construction. The amended overall plan proposes a total of 107 units. The approved Final Plan was amended in May, 2013, by request of the applicant to reduce the total number of units on the site to 94; however, it should be noted that this development is vested for up to 116 units based on its Preliminary Plan approval. Per City Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, any proposed amendment to the Final Plan for this development is considered as a "Minor Amendment" as long as it maintains general site design consistency with the previously approved plan and does not exceed 116 units. Therefore as a minor amendment, this alteration does not require a vote of the City Plan Commission. The proposed units will be built on the exact same footprints of the four (4) buildings in the previously approved plan. The height of the buildings will not exceed the height of the surrounding buildings. The roadway and drainage systems will not see any alterations and will not require additional permitting from the RIDEM. Further, he stated that parking on the first plan was not complete. At this final level, detailed engineering has determined that there is sufficient parking.

Attorney Robert Murray, on behalf of Country View Holding, LLC, stated that the existing permits were for 116 units. Engineering documents confirm that no additional impervious surface is being added and, in fact, has been reduced since the original plan. He reiterated that the building footprints remain the same. The buildings will be two stories with a different roofline. They were able to accomplish this by eliminating the "common area".

Mr. Roland Dawait, a condominium resident, stated that "this is a 60% increase in units". He expressed concern with safety as children ride their bikes in the development. He also expressed concern with decreased property value and urged the Commission not to approve this amendment.

Mr. Frank Colucci, a condominium resident who has lived there for nine years, stated that he feels this is a major amendment. He stated that parking is "terrible", the one less unit proposed does not make a difference, and he asked for more room for recreation. He urged the Commission "to consider the surrounding area" as "it is overcrowded already."

Ms. Pam Watowski, Unit 711, stated that she agreed with everything said by the previous speakers. She stated that the parking lot is not the same footprint as originally proposed, she expressed concern with snow plowing and stated that "this is about making money". She stated that this plan is "not what was sold to them." Mr. Laurie Wallace, condominium resident, stated that the property is poorly managed.

Ms. Cheryl Jolly, who bought the last available condominium, stated that she was "told there would only be a few" across the street. She expressed concern with the poor property management and safety.

Attorney Robert Murray stated that the applicant is asking for an additional 13 units. He stated that no misrepresentations were made. He mentioned the problems all over due to the heavy snowstorm the day before. He stated that "these issues should be directed to the property management company." He stated that the building footprints were previously approved.

Public Works Director, Ken Mason stated that Phase 2 has only a "binder coat". Mr. Murray responded, stating that it is the developer's intent to complete the final paving once these final phases are complete. Mr. Mason also reiterated that the city will be taking over trash removal once the project is complete.

Mr. McLean concluded the discussion, again stating that no vote is required on this matter and he will work with the applicant to address any final administrative issues.

West Gate Commons (No vote to be taken)

Pre-Application – Minor Subdivision with street extension
Five additional single-family house lots are proposed
Construction of new cul-de-sac roadway off of Wilbur Avenue
490 Wilbur Avenue, AP 21/3, Lot 19

Senior Planner, Joshua Berry, explained the proposal, stating that the project site is on Wilbur Ave located between Lang Court to the west and Ridgevale Court to the east. The property owner, William Jarvis, is proposing to subdivide a 4.02 acre lot into 5 single family residential A-20 zoned lots and to construct a new public dead-end road with a 40' wide right of way. A sixth lot is proposed as a drainage area to the northeast to serve the proposed subdivision. All of the proposed lots will meet or exceed the A-20 zoning requirements. The project would tie-in to a low pressure sewer line, but proposes to provide water through private wells. The proposed project is allowed by-right per City Zoning Ordinance and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map allocation of [Single Family Residential 3.63 to 1 units / acre] with a proposed density of 1.61 units/acre.

Attorney John DiBona introduced Richard Bzdyra, PLS, Ocean State Planners, stated that 500 ft. of new road is proposed. He reiterated Mr. Berry's comments. He also stated that it is the developer's intent to make this "an attractive subdivision". The developer is also considering a private road with a HOA. He stated that the irregular shaped lot line will be added to the ROW and landscaping will be added. The developer also proposed widening the stone wall entrance and adding an island. He stated that Wilbur Avenue is approximately thirty feet wide, and the developer is proposing to add decorative stone walls.

Mr. Mason stated that it is his belief that, by city ordinance, this subdivision would be required to have public water unless the lots were 80,000 square feet. He stated that "sewer is available and the city may require several stub-ins." He also stated that Wilbur Avenue has recently been paved and that there is a five year moratorium on roadway disturbance. The developer would be required to restore the roadway after utility connections and construction is complete. He stated that the HOA would ultimately maintain the detention pond. He also stated that he is not in favor of the proposed raised island. He is concerned with the curve of Wilbur Avenue for the island.

Mr. Pezzullo stated that private roadways are only allowed in an A-80 zone. He stated that the any landscaping proposed on Wilbur Avenue would need to be maintained by the city. Mr. Bzdyra stated that a 24 ft. roadway is proposed with Cape Cod berm.

Mr. Vincent stated that he would like to see a landscape plan. He also stated that private wells on half-acre lots "is not attainable." Chairman Smith stated that he is in favor of an island. Ms. Lanphear stated that "creativity should be considered."

No public comment was made on this matter and no vote was taken.

ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Ordinance 02-19-05 – Change of Zone – 0 Phenix Avenue (AP 11, Lot 769 – *Former Highway Garage - Knightsville*). **From** C-5 (Heavy Business / Industry) **to** S-1 (Open Space)

Mr. McLean stated that Councilman Christopher Paplauskas has sponsored an Ordinance to change the zoning of a City-owned property located at 0 Phenix Avenue, AP 11, Lot 769 (former Cranston highway garage) from C-5 (Heavy Business/Industry) to S-1 (Open Space). The property no longer has the highway garage structure on it. In its current condition the property most closely resembles a park, including a gazebo and benches at the intersection of Phenix Avenue and Cranston Street.

The Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan designates the parcel as “*Open Space*”. In assigning this land use classification, the City acknowledges that the parcel is better suited for passive recreational uses as opposed to commercial uses.

Mr. Mason stated that the parcel was once the site of the Public Works Garage. There was a leaking underground storage tank on the small, semi-circular portion of the site.

All commissioners seemed to be in favor of this proposal. No public comment was offered on this matter.

Based on consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and the proposed resolution to explore funding options to enhance this parcel as a “pocket park” for the benefit of the surrounding neighborhood and village of Knightsville, upon motion made by Mr. DiStefano and seconded by Mr. Spirito, the Commission unanimously voted (9/0) to forward a positive recommendation on Ordinance #02-19-05.

Ordinance 02-19-06 – MPD Amendment – 950 Phenix Avenue (CubeSmart) – 50’ pylon signage, Clarification / addition of *Commercial Condominium* to the schedule of uses

Mr. McLean stated that the applicant has requested to change the use allowances at 950 Phenix Avenue (CubeSmart) to allow for “commercial condo” types of uses and to allow a 50’ high sign. The applicant and staff have been in discussions about clarifying the use definitions to be allowed in this zone and it is understood that further edits are needed for clarification before this is ready for a Plan Commission recommendation.

Mr. Marsella stated that there are “a lot of ancillary requirements with this type of commercial proposal”. Chairman Smith stated that he would not support a sign along Route 295/37. Mr. Carl Santucci, Conservation Commission, stated that he did not see the need for a sign at that location.

Mr. Philip Tessier, 15 Kimberly Lane North, stated that the sign in that location is “inappropriate.”

Upon motion made by Mr. Vincent and seconded by Mr. Spirito, the Plan Commission unanimously voted (9/0) to continue this matter to the April 2, 2019, Plan Commission Meeting.

PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE

The Oaks at Orchard Valley

Existing Letter of Credit set to expire

Upon motion made by Mr. DiStefano and seconded by Ms. Lanphear, the Commission unanimously voted (9/0) to extend the Letter of Credit for one year; to expire in April, 2020, at the recommendation of the Engineering Division.

SOLAR FARM ORDINANCE – Process / Timeline / Comment

Mr. Berry introduced/presented a power point presentation outlining the process and timeline for the solar ordinance to be created, as mandated by Ordinance 12-18-01 (Ground Mounted Solar Farm Installation Moratorium). He stated that a date and time is needed for the solar ordinance workshop in April.

Mr. Vincent stated that the topics listed for discussion in the memorandum are “absolutely necessary”. He stated that the Commission should think about the stakeholders, including the Economic Development Committee, the West Bay Land Trust and the Chamber of Commerce. He also suggested inviting the State Energy group as well. He stated that we need to show the public and the City Council that we have “reached out.” He also suggested that the city should determine how many megawatts they would like to achieve. He stated that Cranston does not have to take on the burden of achieving green energy; this should be shared with other cities and towns. He also stated that he would like to see some conservation of land.

Mr. Pezzullo stated that there will most likely be a “curtailing” of solar sites going forward. Attorney Murray stated that all of the items listed “are worthy of discussion”. He noted that, in total, the city only has about 45 megawatts inclusive of all projects.

Ms. Lanphear stated that she would like to see ordinances from other cities and towns, and even other states, and possibly with a comparison table.

CITY PLAN COMMISSION POLICY – PUBLIC MEETINGS

Mr. Pezzullo reviewed the Section 1 of the proposed new policy and asked for Commission feedback. Chairman Smith stated that “we have been over accommodating” on many of the applications. He stated that establishing a policy has been talked about for about the last nine years. Ms. Jessica Moreno expressed concern with the last sentence (“Any materials distributed to the Plan Commission from the applicant on the night of the meeting will result in the application being tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting to give staff adequate time to review and report on the additional material). Mr. Vincent suggested the wording perhaps be changed to “any new” information being submitted at the meeting.

As the hour was late, no further discussion on this matter was offered.

PLANNING DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Plan Commission Workshop - March 20th

This meeting will be focused on long range planning, the Comprehensive Plan and ordinances, etc. All agreed to begin that meeting at 6 p.m.; location to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by Ms. Lanphear and seconded by Mr. Vincent, the Commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:30 p.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING April 2nd, 2019, Cranston City Hall – Council Chamber – 6:30PM