

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Committee Chairman
Director of Planning



Jim Woyciechowski
Fire Department

Stanley Pikul
Building Official

Justin Mateus
Engineering Division

Stephen Mulcahy
Traffic Safety Division

DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES 9:00 AM, WEDNESDAY, October 5, 2022 CRANSTON CITY HALL – 3RD FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBER

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jason Pezzullo called the Development Plan Review Committee meeting to order at 9:11 a.m. in the City Council chamber.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Justin Mateus, Steve Mulcahy, Franklin Paulino, and Jim Woyciechowski.

The following Planning Department staff members were in attendance: Doug McLean, Principal Planner; Alex Berardo, Planning Technician; and Amelia Lavallee, Planning Intern.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 9/7/22 Meeting

(vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the 9/7/22 meeting.

3. “Washville Carwash”

Preliminary Plan

(vote taken)

Location: 1312 Oaklawn Avenue, AP 15, Lots 26 and 1481
Zoning District: C-4 (Highway Business)
Owner: LANCRAN 2018, LLC
Applicant: Washville Carwash
Proposal: The applicant proposes to construct a new carwash facility with associated parking, vacuums, and landscaping.

Atty. Nicholas Goodier introduced the members of the applicant team who were present for the meeting: Jim Waterman (Executive VP of Washville Carwash) and Brady Carlucci (project engineer). Chairman Pezzullo also noted that Sarah Bradford, a Landscape Architect, was present for the meeting as she had conducted the peer review of the applicant's landscape plan.

Atty. Goodier reminded the Committee that the project came before them in early February for a pre-application review, and in the months since they have conducted advanced engineering, prepared a full set of plans (site plan, sign plan, lighting plan, etc), submitted a noise study and a landscaping plan for third-party peer reviews, received approvals from RIDEM on a Stormwater Management Plan and from RIDOT on a traffic study, and incorporated all City staff comments into their plan. Atty. Goodier noted that a car wash is an allowed use in the C-4 zone, which is the zoning of the parcel on which they propose to build. Finally, he said they meet all queuing requirements (able to accommodate roughly 22 cars stacked behind the six mandatory queuing spaces), have provided a good, landscaped buffer between the site and residential abutters, and they welcome the Committee's comments.

Chairman Pezzullo asked Mr. Woyciechowski to begin the discussion by sharing Fire's comments on the plans, as they were only submitted the day before. Mr. Woyciechowski said Fire was recommending the addition of an extra access point onto the property from Bateman Avenue, which would allow for some redundancy in case there were a car fire on the property and emergency vehicles had to fight through a stream of vehicles pouring out of a single access point. Chairman Pezzullo noted that Fire wanted to locate the secondary access point near the southeast corner of the property, adjacent to residential abutters, which would necessitate the removal of street trees and other vegetation in the precise portion of the site where landscaping is most critical. Mr. McLean also observed that the applicant would need to construct a retaining wall due to the change in grade at that corner, which would pose logistical challenges to an access point in that location. Chairman Pezzullo asked if Mr. Woyciechowski would be opposed to an emergency access point being located at the southwest corner of the lot (closer to the intersection of Bateman and Oaklawn Avenues); Mr. Woyciechowski said that alternative would be acceptable.

Mr. Mateus asked if this would require removing grass behind the curb cut for the emergency access, as he wondered if that presented a soil erosion risk. Mr. Woyciechowski said grass or gravel could be suitable groundcover for the accessway -- as long as the ground itself is solid enough to support an emergency vehicle, it wouldn't be an issue. Mr. Mateus and Ms. Bradford suggested permeably pavement and/or geotextiles could also make for adequate, erosion-resistant groundcover. Mr. Mateus then suggested avoiding the need to make a curb cut altogether by replacing the standard curb in that location with an angled curb, which emergency vehicles could climb without much risk or difficulty. Chairman Pezzullo recommended adding limited signage at that spot as well to make clear that the access point would be only for emergency vehicles. Mr. McLean asked Mr. Woyciechowski and Ms. Bradford to review that aspect of the proposal following its incorporation into the site plan during the next round of edits.

Turning to the peer reviews, Atty. Goodier discussed the Noise Study and its impacts on the plan. He said that the analysis that was conducted took a conservative ("worst-case scenario") approach to projecting the noise impacts of the car wash's machinery, but even those estimates were within the range permissible under City Code. He said the applicant team tried to locate the noisiest elements as close to Oaklawn Avenue (and therefore, as far away from residential abutters) as possible, adding vegetated and built screening to further reduce the noise impacts. He added that the applicant would be happy to allow the City to conduct its own tests of the machinery's decibel output once the facility is built.

Speaking to the Landscape Plan, Ms. Bradford said she believed the version of the plan that was presented to the Committee for this meeting solves the problems that the site presents. She noted that the applicant team addressed her concerns over the screening of the dumpsters and vacuums but needed to see the retaining wall shown on the site plan. She recommended planting low shrubs along the top of the wall to prevent anyone from getting too close to the edge, where they could fall over the side. She also requested the 6-foot-tall fence along the residential abutters' side of the property be painted a dark color and would ideally be wooden instead of vinyl, as currently proposed. Director Pezzullo suggested the fence be 8 feet tall, since City Code allows that additional height, and recommended a stockade style wooden fence.

Director Pezzullo then invited the other Committee members who hadn't yet spoken to offer their comments.

Mr. Paulino asked what the facility's hours of operation would be and how many jobs it would create. Mr. Waterman said it would operate between 7:30am-7:00pm Monday through Saturday, and on Sundays it would close at 5:00pm. He added that the vacuums would not be operational after hours. As for employment, Mr. Waterman said it would create about 10 full-time jobs and 5 part-time jobs.

Mr. Mulcahy said he initially had questions about the entry and exit for the washing tunnel, but he considers the plan that is currently proposed to be much improved. He said he felt the Traffic Study's results bear out and noted that RIDOT granted its approval, and he said he had no other questions about internal circulation.

Mr. Mateus offered two additional thoughts. First he informed the applicant team that they would be responsible for reporting annually on their infiltration system. He then asked if the applicants had reached out to Sewer about which cleaning chemicals would get into the water, which they confirmed that they had.

Chairman Pezzullo then opened the matter to public comment.

Matthew Reilly, City Councilor for Ward 6, spoke first. He voiced his opposition to the project and cited various reasons, including 1) the use being more akin to an industrial use than a retail use, 2) doubting the findings of the Traffic Study, 3) firm neighborhood opposition, and 4) anticipated lack of enforcement on the use of the emergency access point.

Atty. Robert Flaherty, representing a group of abutters residing on various streets within the notification radius, also spoke in opposition. He handed the Committee petition signed by 151 people in opposition to the project; he said neighbors worried about the project's impacts on their property values and quality of life as well as the traffic impacts. He asked whether the car wash was truly the highest and best use of the site and whether RIDOT had issued a Physical Alteration Permit.

Maria Manzi, of Bateman Avenue, said she was worried about the noise impacts of the car wash and asked whether the noise study focused only on the machinery itself, since many people have a habit of turning their car radios up so they can hear music over the sound of the vacuum. She also asked if the traffic study had taken future commercial abutters' traffic impacts into account. She also asked whether the work would impact public street furniture at the corner of Bateman and Oaklawn, such as the bus stop and the mailbox. Finally, she asked if the City had any way of knowing the localized impacts of car exhaust on the site and surrounding neighborhood.

Gina Bogda, of 6 Sweet Meadow Drive, agreed with Councilor Reilly's assessment that the use was more industrial than commercial in nature and said the traffic situation is already bad enough at the intersection of Bateman and Oaklawn. She also wondered whether employees would park on Bateman.

Seeing no other members of the public step forward to speak, Chairman Pezzullo asked for a motion to close the public comment portion of the meeting. Upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to close public comment.

Chairman Pezzullo said the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code are both clear that this is a by-right proposal. He said the applicants had worked with City staff, State agencies, and third-party peer reviewers to develop a plan that accounted for all concerns that were raised. He acknowledged that the proposal was not popular with the neighborhood but reiterated that the development was by-right and that the applicant did its due diligence and provided many studies proving its proposal will work.

Mr. McLean said the applicant is requesting a waiver from complying with City Code Section 17.84.140-C-7-B, which requires a minimum of 20% shading for parking areas using deciduous trees. Mr. McLean said the Committee grants this waiver in almost every case, and the applicant only seeks relief for planting trees near its vacuums, where they would be awkward to insert among the machinery.

Reviewing the proposed conditions of approval, Mr. McLean listed the following:

- Site Plan revisions: inclusion of an angled curb, geotextile under the 10-foot-wide grassy strip, and 8" sidewalk with steel reinforcement for the emergency access point near the corner of Bateman and Oaklawn Avenues; inclusion of an 8-foot (or highest allowed by Code), solid wood, dark-painted stockade fence along the residential abutters' side of the property
- Landscape Plan will include a continuous shrub planting along the top of the retaining wall
- Applicant and City Staff will confirm that the Traffic Study factors all approved, but as of yet unbuilt, projects along the relevant segment of Oaklawn Avenue into its estimates
- Signage Plan will be presented at Final Plan

Director Pezzullo read aloud all the Development Plan Review Committee's approval standards as contained in City Code Section 17.84.060 and the Committee members collectively agreed that all standards for approval had been met. He asked for a motion to approve the Preliminary Plan application.

Upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Preliminary Plan application subject to the recommended conditions denoted above.

4. “<u>McDonald’s</u>” *	Pre-application concept review Jurisdictional consideration	(no vote taken) (vote taken)
Location:	1820 Plainfield Pike, AP 37, Lot 3	
Zoning District:	C-4 (Highway Business)	
Owner:	TKG Cranston Development LLC	
Applicant:	McDonald’s Real Estate Company	
Proposal:	The applicant proposed to construct an additional drive thru lane with associated canopy order station, pre-browse boards and menu boards.	

Kelly Bohnenberger, E.I.T., and Geoff Fitzgerald, P.E., both of Bohlen Engineering, introduced their concept to the Committee to add a second drive-thru lane to the McDonald’s located at 1820 Plainfield Pike. Ms. Bohnenberger said that the proposal is rooted in a broad-scale initiative that McDonald’s is undertaking in an effort to capitalize on its growing drive-thru business. The company has begun to prioritize adding a second drive-thru lane to its restaurants, so in the case of the McDonald’s off Plainfield Pike, the work would require the relocation of an existing order point to increase the number of queuing spaces from 14 to 18. She added that the work would ultimately reduce the number of parking spaces on-site from 39 to 27; if it stood on its own parcel, the restaurant would need 30 parking spaces, but in this instance it stands on leased area in a large shopping plaza which, in turn, constitutes one lot. Ms. Bohnenberger and Ms. Fitzgerald sought the Committee’s input given the unique circumstances of this site.

Chairman Pezzullo said he was unconcerned about the loss of parking spaces within the specific leased area on which the McDonald’s stands, given that the restaurant is surrounded by a sea of parking spaces. Mr. Mulcahy agreed that parking was not the concern, but he said he’d like to take a closer look at the geometry of the drive-thru lanes and have an opportunity to ask questions. Chairman Pezzullo suggested that the Committee vote not to take jurisdiction on the matter, which would allow the applicants to proceed to the Building Department to request a permit. He said that Mr. Mulcahy could have an opportunity to work with the applicants directly through that process.

Upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) not to take jurisdiction on the matter.

Finally, upon motion made by Mr. Mulcahy, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the meeting at 10:32 a.m.