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Director of Planning



Jim Woyciechowski
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David Rodio
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Nick Capezza
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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, July 20, 2022 CRANSTON CITY HALL – 3RD FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBER

1. Call to Order

Principal Planner Doug McLean, as designee of Chairman Jason Pezzullo, called the Development Plan Review Committee meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. in the City Council chamber.

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

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Joshua Berry, Senior Planner, and Alex Berardo, Planning Technician.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 7/6/22 Meeting (vote taken)

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Woyciechowski, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the 7/6/22 meeting.

3. "Cranston Print Works Self Storage"

Preliminary Plan (vote taken)

<i>Location:</i>	1381 Cranston Street, AP 8, Lot 195, 1617, 2711
<i>Zoning District:</i>	M-1 (General Industry) Lots 195, 1617 B-2 (Single-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings.) Lot 2711
<i>Owner:</i>	CPW True Storage LLC & CPW Apartments, LLC
<i>Applicant:</i>	CPW True Storage LLC
<i>Proposal:</i>	The applicant is proposing an adaptive reuse of a portion of an existing industrial building into climate-controlled self-storage. Interior renovations will be accomplished to facilitate the new storage layout with minimal exterior work. No exterior earthmoving operations are required, only the re-stripping of the existing pavement to better delineate the proposed parking.

Atty. Robert Murray introduced the proposal accompanied by members of the applicant team, which included Chris Reynolds, P.E., of Brady Sullivan Properties, and Michael Malynowski, P.E., of Allen & Major Associates. Atty. Murray said Brady Sullivan Properties has extensive experience in mill conversion redevelopment projects and noted that an affiliated entity acquired the Cranston Print Works complex earlier this year. He said that the proposal before the Committee today was Phase I of the planned redevelopment and consisted of the creation of 99,000 ft² of self-storage inside the building. He said later phases of the project will entail creating multifamily dwelling units and require rezoning and Major Land Development approval, and that he had submitted requests for waivers of lighting and landscaping plans for Phase I with the assurance that they would be provided for later phases of work. The applicants will, however, conduct a

traffic study to confirm that the site won't generate traffic issues that could impact the neighborhood or the fire station across the street from the mill complex.

Mr. Reynolds then provided some background about the developer. He said it had already redeveloped mills in Coventry, Pawtucket, Providence, and Warren, and the Cranston Print Works site is unusual, but ideal, in that there is plenty of space on-site for parking. He added that the complex is well-suited to their preferred business model of mixing self-storage with residential because of the vast, windowless interior spaces that were the product of successive building additions. Brady Sullivan Properties does not intend to demolish any of the complex, but is working with the RIHPHC to secure tax credits that will aid in the mill complex's preservation. Some of the interior retrofitting could include adding an additional floor where the ceiling is 20-30 feet high, and basic maintenance work like restoring utilities, sprinklers, and the roof will be addressed as part of the Phase I work.

Mr. Reynolds went on to note there were two existing tenants in the front office building; that the site is surrounded by water features and as such, the applicant has been working with RIDEM to ensure there will be no wetlands violations; and that self-storage is an allowed (by-right) use in the M-1 zone.

Mr. Berry asked for more detail regarding the parking scheme near the front office building, as the plan showed that portion of the site to be located in a B-1 zone. Mr. Malynowski said the number of spaces shown as striped in that area of the plan was based on the roughly 25,000 ft² of office space in the front building. The Committee agreed that since the striping of existing pavement is a permitted activity, and the work that Phase I entails is exempt from securing related permits, there would be no reason to delay this phase of the project by asking for a full landscaping plan. Speaking to the split zone condition, Atty. Murray said the single mill house across the street on Dyer Avenue, which the applicant also owns, is currently used as the residence of the mill's caretaker but will be incorporated into the future zone change and may one day be used as a business office for the property.

Mr. McLean asked the applicants how many parking spaces they intended to dedicate to the self-storage use, to which Mr. Malynowski replied 14. Mr. McLean said that the City only requires self-storage facilities located in industrial zones to provide as many dedicated parking spaces as there are employees of the storage facility. Mr. Malynowski said there would probably only be one or two employees, so Mr. McLean asked the applicant team if they wanted to revise their parking allocation as it currently stood. Mr. Reynolds said the site had so much space for parking that they weren't particularly concerned about economizing on their spaces, but he understood Mr. McLean's point. He noted that the finished mill reconversion would have around 30 separate access doors, so it was difficult to decide exactly where to put designated self-storage spaces. Mr. Berry wondered if a condition could be added to approval that would allow the lighting, landscaping, and parking plans to be reconsidered at the Major Land Development phase of the project. Atty. Murray agreed with Mr. Berry's idea.

Mr. Mateus, as designee of Engineering Division, asked what provisions the applicants had made with regards to accessibility in their redevelopment plans. Mr. Reynolds said they were intending to make sections of the mill complex accessible where possible but noted that the RIHPHC sometimes exempts developers from following normal ADA standards (for example, requiring a handicapped-accessible means of accessing the front door) when it judges the impacts to be too significant on priority historic elements. Mr. Malynowski added that the storage areas will have a number of at-grade access points, which are de facto handicapped-accessible.

Mr. Paulino asked how many apartments were envisioned for the complex's full redevelopment and how many of those units the applicant intended to designate as affordable housing. Atty. Murray said the applicant was contemplating 129 residential units total but added that Brady Sullivan Properties doesn't carry affordable housing elements in their portfolio. Mr. McLean also said that the City sees plenty of other value in the project, particularly the historic preservation element.

Mr. Pikul asked for confirmation that the applicant did not plan for any outdoor storage, which Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Malynowski confirmed. He then asked how the applicants planned to address the complex's varying floor heights. Mr. Malynowski said they would try to unify the heights of the different sections of floor at a

level that was above the floodplain. Mr. Pikul then advised the applicant to incorporate a signage plan into the future zone change request and said he would be interested to see more detail regarding how the applicant would separate the self-storage and residential uses within the building.

Mr. Woyciechowski asked for confirmation that no vehicles or hazardous materials would be stored in the self-storage units; Mr. Reynolds said the storage units would be small and suited for individual residential use. Following up on Mr. Pikul's last statement, he then asked how many residential units would be located above the self-storage section, to which Mr. Reynolds said roughly 45. Mr. Woyciechowski wondered how the Fire Department would access that area of the building, as it abuts the canal, but Atty. Murray said they would supply a traffic plan, sprinkler plan, and other relevant information at Phase II, when the residential aspect is introduced.

Mr. McLean then opened the matter to public comment.

One member of the public, Jaime Volpe, of 1400 Cranston Street, did come up to speak. She said that she was an abutting property owner and wanted to state that the property boundary as shown on the applicant's plans encroached into land she owns. Atty. Murray said he suspected it could be an adverse possession situation or a title issue. Mr. McLean assured Ms. Volpe that the Committee's decision on the matter before them did not constitute any sort of judgment on her property boundary situation, and Atty. Murray said she would receive notices for future meetings and could revisit the matter with the applicant.

Mr. Berry reviewed the conditions of approval, which entailed granting waivers as necessary for the overall landscaping, lighting, and parking plans at this phase of the development, with the understanding that they shall be reviewed at the Major Land Development phase.

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the Preliminary Plan application, subject to the condition discussed above.

4. "Dulce Vida" *

Pre-application (no vote taken)

<i>Location:</i>	800 Reservoir Avenue, AP 9, Lots 572 & 573
<i>Zoning District:</i>	C-1 (Office business)
<i>Owner:</i>	FJ INVESTMENT LLC
<i>Applicant:</i>	Ingrid Guzman of Dulce Vida
<i>Proposal:</i>	The applicant is proposing to change the use of a portion of the existing building on the property to serve as an office for an event planning business and to use the property to host events. This change of use will also require a Use Variance and Dimensional Variance application to the Cranston Zoning Board of Review.

Atty. Murray, joined by the applicant, Ingrid Guzman, discussed the proposal with the Committee. Atty. Murray said the applicant is an event planner who operates her own business and entered into a long-term lease at 804 Reservoir Avenue to serve as office space for the company and as a venue for small-scale events. In the process of working with the Building and Fire Departments to secure the necessary permits, they discovered there could be issues with the event venue use and the question was raised as to whether the matter rose to the level of warranting Development Plan Review.

Atty. Murray argued against the Committee taking jurisdiction on the grounds that it would set a precedent that would discourage productive reuse of smaller buildings in areas like Reservoir Avenue. He questioned whether the parking issue was in the Committee's parameters of review and pointed to the availability of official and unofficial parking spaces along Reservoir Ave and Ivanhoe Dr, and asked how much could reasonably be expected of the applicant given the site's constraints.

Ms. Guzman briefly addressed the Committee as well. She said she has been successful in attracting high-end clientele who she suspects are uncomfortable leaving their cars parked outside her existing Broad Street

office in Providence, so she wanted to move to a safer location and found one in Cranston. She said she was also interested in hosting smaller events (which she quantified as having 40-50 guests total) such as birthday parties, bridal showers, micro-weddings, and conferences. She maintained that she would continue to hold larger events in larger venues, as she currently does.

Mr. Paulino spoke in support of the applicant and provided additional background. He said the City only noticed shortly before her ribbon-cutting that the permit she had was for 800 Reservoir Ave and not technically 804 Reservoir. He thanked her for wanting to rectify the issue instead of trying to sweep it under the rug and said the City should be proud to support a minority business owner in a minority-majority Ward of the City.

Mr. McLean said that he had discussed the project beforehand with Mr. Paulino as well as Steve Mulcahy, who was not able to attend the meeting, and that his position was that the Committee should take jurisdiction but work with the applicant to define a path to approval. He said he was sympathetic to her situation and found both the limits on event size and the applicant's active pursuit of off-site parking leases to be encouraging, but noted issues with the inadequate on-site parking situation and the intensification of use that the applicant's business would represent for the site. He said that Mr. Mulcahy told him he would be more comfortable with on-street parking occurring on Reservoir Avenue than on the surrounding neighborhood's side streets and that the two nonconforming, on-site parking spaces closest to Reservoir should probably be eliminated. He then said that he and Mr. Pikul both felt the proposal wouldn't require a Class 1 survey.

Mr. Pikul asked what purpose would be served by the Committee taking jurisdiction on the project, since the proposal wasn't modifying any features on the site. Mr. McLean said it would provide the Committee an opportunity to directly influence the public safety aspects of the site's layout. Mr. Mateus similarly questioned the need for the Committee to take jurisdiction on the matter; Mr. Woyciechowski had no particular concerns and thus agreed with the majority that the Committee did not need to take jurisdiction on the application. The project will instead go before the Zoning Board of Review for variance requests.

5. "51 Washington Avenue Redevelopment" *

Pre-application (no vote taken)

<i>Location:</i>	51 Washington Avenue, AP, Lots 75, 79-88
<i>Zoning District:</i>	M-2 (General Industry)
<i>Owner/applicant:</i>	Bahlmann Group, LLC c/o Casper Bahlmann
<i>Proposal:</i>	The applicant proposes to restore the existing building and develop a 284-unit self-storage facility (2020 interior and 82 drive-up) comprising a total of 37,000 ft ² .

The applicant team, comprised of Bill Lavery, Project Manager with Joe Casali Engineering; Peter Hess, project architect; and Alexis Dupras, Project Manager with Bentley Builders LLC, introduced the project. Mr. Lavery said the applicant had applied for a building permit and was asked to provide a site plan, so they felt it best to discuss the vision for the overall site, which is presently comprised of multiple small parcels that will need to be merged. Mr. Lavery asked for the Commission's input on whether the project could be handled in phases, and what a phased construction would entail from the Planning Department's standpoint as well as that of Development Plan Review.

After Mr. Lavery noted that Phase I would entail renovating the existing building on-site for self-storage, which is a by-right use in an M-2 zone, Mr. Hess said the vacant land on which the subsequent phase would be developed was most recently used as light manufacturing. Mr. McLean said he imagined the move from light manufacturing to self-storage represented a reduction in intensity of use for the site, and Mr. Berry agreed with the notion that pursuing a phased development strategy would probably allow the project to get underway faster. Mr. Lavery asked what would trigger a Major Land Development. Mr. Berry said a project would be considered a Major Land Development if the development surpassed 100,000 ft² cumulatively (across all phases of work). He then said that this project would not be large enough to be a Major Land Development, but would still need to go to the City Plan Commission for a recommendation.

Mr. McLean asked if the applicant team wanted the Committee to reach a consensus on whether it should not take jurisdiction on the project, to which Mr. Lavery replied yes. Given that Phase I would entail only reusing the existing building, which in and of itself would not imply major changes to the site itself, Mr. Lavery asked what the site plan would need to show beyond the parking scheme (which would account for the storage business' anticipated one or two employees per shift). Mr. Berry said the Development Plan Review process is more concerned with matters such as landscaping and site design. Mr. Lavery said the site would pose some grade challenges in Phase II that might necessitate a reduction in scale. Mr. McLean said the Garfield Avenue side of the lot would probably be the priority frontage for minimizing visual impacts, and regrading of the site could affect the vegetation on the slope that currently serves as a visual screen.

Mr. Mateus, Mr. Woyciechowski, and Mr. Pikul each agreed with Mr. McLean and decided that the Committee did not need to take jurisdiction on Phase I of the project, as it only amounts to reuse of the interior of the existing building. Mr. Paulino mentioned that the building was the subject of a call to Constituent Affairs because it had been tagged with graffiti, which Mr. Pikul considered a maintenance concern to be handled with the Building Department.

6. "Tasca Expansion" *

Pre-application (no vote taken)

Location: 1300 Pontiac Avenue, AP 13, Lot 76

Zoning District: C-5 (Heavy business, industry)

Owner/Applicant:: *TASCA ENTERPRISE INC*

Proposal: The applicant is proposing to expand upon the existing building on the property in 2 different locations, as well as adding one (1) additional new building, as well as associated site plan modifications

No representatives of the applicant were present for the pre-application meeting, and as the Committee is not required to reschedule pre-application informational discussions, the Committee members decided to proceed with the matter.

Upon motion made by Mr. Pikul, and seconded by Mr. Woyciechowski, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:55 a.m.