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Vacant

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, RI 02910

DRAFT MINUTES SPECIAL JOINT PUBLIC SITE VISIT OF THE CRANSTON CITY COUNCIL & CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Wednesday, April 20th, 2022 – 5:30PM

AP 36, Lots 5, 51-53, 36 & 38 – Comstock Crossing

▪ CALL TO ORDER

City Council President Chris Paplauskas called the joint City Council—City Plan Commission Meeting to order at 5:44 p.m. at the Comstock Crossing site, 50 Comstock Parkway.

City Plan Commission Chairman Mike Smith called the joint City Council—City Plan Commission Meeting to order at 5:44 p.m. at the Comstock Crossing site, 50 Comstock Parkway.

The following Council members were in attendance for the meeting: President Chris Paplauskas, Richard Campopiano, Robert Ferri, Aniece Germain, Jessica Marino, and Nicole Renzulli. Councilors John Donegan, Matthew Reilly, and Lammis Vargas were absent.

The following City Plan Commissioners were in attendance: Chairman Mike Smith, James Donahue, Kathleen Lanphear, Ann Marie Maccarone, and Frank Ritz. Commissioners Robert Coupe and Steven Frias were absent.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Douglas McLean, AICP, Principal Planner; Joshua Berry, AICP, Senior Planner; and Alexander Berardo, Planning Technician.

▪ PRESENTATION

The applicant team, comprised of Atty. Brian LaPlante; Julian DeMarco, Jr., owner; Tony and Elizabeth Paul, applicants; Derek _____, registered P.E. and traffic consultant; and _____, project architect, introduced the project to the City officials and members of the public in attendance.

Atty. LaPlante began by introducing the site's current owner, Julian DeMarco, and the applicants, Tony and Liz Paul. He said that the Pauls founded the Latte Love coffee shop directly across the street and have been successful enough that they now want to move to a site that can better accommodate their current and even future needs. He added that the applicants are prepared to invest \$3 million into developing the site and constructing three buildings: a 3,000 ft² structure to host the relocated Latte Love; a 7,000 ft² structure to

accommodate retail tenants; and a 6,720 ft² self-storage facility at the rear of the site, a use which the applicants believe would be low-impact and an appropriate transition to the abutting industrially-zoned parcel.

On the matter of land use, Atty. LaPlante noted that the subject site is currently zoned Industrial, but its small size has so far made it unattractive to potential industrial users. The applicants seek to change the zoning and Future Land Use Map designations for the subject site as well as several nearby parcels from M-2 to C-5, as this would make all the parcels at the corner of Comstock Parkway and Plainfield Pike uniformly commercial. Atty. LaPlante acknowledged that the Comp Plan recommends protecting the City's industrial land, but he noted that the site has never hosted an industrial use and will likely continue to sit vacant.

Atty. LaPlante also discussed the proposal's anticipated traffic situation and predicted it would be an improvement over the current traffic flow on Comstock. He said that Latte Love, whose traffic is morning-heavy, currently generates a large number of left turns because the prevailing direction of morning traffic on Comstock is northbound. With the relocation of Latte Love to subject site (on the right side of Comstock), customers will be taking right turns instead of crossing into the southbound lane to make a left turn. He also noted some features of the design, such as the large vehicle queue and the nearer of the two curb cuts to the intersection of Comstock and Plainfield Pike (which will be right turn in/out only), as additional traffic mitigation factors. Finally, Atty. LaPlante added that Latte Love is an existing business, which means the traffic impact will be comparatively less than it could have been if all of the site's future tenants were new to the area.

▪ Q&A SESSION

The applicant team then opened the meeting to comments.

President Paplauskas asked when Latte Love's peak business hours occur; Mr. Paul said the peak is generally 6:00-9:00 a.m. Councilor Renzulli asked if the hours or service would be expanded if Latte Love moved to a new location; Mr. Paul said in the short-term, they wanted to work within their existing hours and offerings, but might want to expand their business hours and offerings in the future.

Councilor Germain asked if the applicants had received any input from residents. Atty. LaPlante said notice was provided in the mail to abutters within a 400 foot radius and in the newspaper, but they haven't heard from any residential abutters. Principal Planner Doug McLean added that the only residential presence within a 400-foot radius was the house right at the corner of Comstock and Plainfield, and the occupants were receptive to the zone change because they wanted to establish an office in the house.

Mr. McLean noted the next nearest residential area is at the Scituate Avenue end of Comstock and invited two representatives of the Crossroads Condominium Association – William Duarte, President, and Aldo Testa – to offer any comments. Mr. Testa said the condo residents are primarily concerned with whether the project will adversely impact traffic on Comstock. He said that the condominium association isn't anti-development but does want to make sure that any new development won't have negative impacts. He noted that Comstock is already a busy road in the morning and that its lack of streetlights makes it dark in the evening, so traffic impacts need to be considered.

Councilor Renzulli asked if the City will review the traffic study when it is completed. Mr. McLean said yes and noted that the City's traffic engineer already has a copy of the applicant's preliminary traffic report. Chairman Smith asked if the preliminary report projected how many additional trips the project might generate. Mr. ____ (Derek) said that across the three proposed buildings, the site would generate 174 new trips and 120 pass-by trips in the morning, as compared to 149 new and 54 pass-by in the afternoon.

▪ ADJOURNMENT

Council President Chris Paplauskas asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Upon motion made by Councilor Ferri, and seconded by Councilor Marino, the City Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

Plan Commission Chairman Mike Smith asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Upon motion made by Commissioner Donahue, and seconded by Commission Lanphear, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m.