

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Committee Chairman
Director of Planning



John Ireland
Fire Department

David Rodio
Building Official

Nick Capezza
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, MARCH 16, 2022 TELECONFERENCE

1. Call to Order

Chairman Pezzullo called the Development Plan Review Committee meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. on Zoom.

The following members were in attendance for the meeting: Chairman Jason Pezzullo, Stephen Mulcahy, Carl Santucci, John Ireland. Ken Mason attended on behalf of member Nick Capezza.

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

Also attending: Brett Neilan, James Canty, Mary Beth Pacillo, Brian Kortz, and Bob Johnson for RIPTA.

2. Approval of Minutes

- **1/19/22 Meeting** (vote taken)
- **2/2/22 Meeting** (vote taken)
- **2/16/22 Meeting** (vote taken)

Chairman Pezzullo asked whether the Committee preferred to vote to approve the three sets of minutes individually or at once, in the manner of a consent agenda. As the Committee preferred the latter option, Chairman Pezzullo asked for a motion to approve the slate of minutes from the Committee's three previous meetings held in 2022.

Upon motion made by Mr. Mason and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the 1/19/22, 2/2/22, and 2/16/22 meetings.

3. "Electric Bus Charging Station" *

(Pre-Application / no vote taken)

Location: Broad Street and Montgomery Avenue – AP 2, Lots 1581, 3373 & 4020
Zoning District: C-3 General Business
Owner/applicant: RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)
Proposal: RIPTA is seeking to redevelop three separate areas: (i) for RIPTA's use of turn-around and electric charging for new transit vehicles, (ii) an asphalt paved parking lot to be utilized by the adjacent God's Family Church, and (iii) a gravel surfaced parking lot on the western extent of the project.

Mr. Neilan, of GMZ, introduced the project. He said the applicant, RIPTA, sought to develop three lots at the intersection of Broad and Montgomery Streets. Two of the lots would serve as parking areas: one would be paved with asphalt and used regularly by the congregation of the adjacent God's Family Church, while the other would be encapsulated with gravel to serve as overflow parking space for the church and/or RIPTA. The third lot would host an electric bus charging facility, which could consist of four charging stations as well as a small maintenance/restroom building. Mr. Neilan added that RIPTA is seeking to route water and sewer connections from the lots to Montgomery Ave to comply with RIDEM standards for discharge without disrupting traffic on the busier Broad St. Finally, he said that RIPTA proposes to include a de-icing (snow melt) system powered by generators located at the western edge of the charging area.

Chairman Pezzullo then invited the Committee members to ask questions or raise any comments they might have.

Mr. Mulcahy asked what the traffic flow for the site would look like. Mr. Canty said that the charging facility would support 14 electric buses traveling between the facility and Kennedy Plaza for RIPTA's R-Line service, but aside from the additional bus traffic, there would be no further intensification of traffic to and from the site as compared to current conditions. Mr. Mulcahy asked if the church currently uses the site for parking; Mr. Neilan said yes, which is why RIPTA would like to pave the lot adjacent to the church. Finally, Mr. Mulcahy asked if sidewalk improvements would be made; Mr. Neilan said RIPTA had not planned to improve the sidewalks but could review the existing conditions and reconsider.

Mr. Mason advised that RIPTA would be expected to shoulder road repaving costs associated with any utility connections to Montgomery Street, as the City just repaved the street this year. He also recommended a landscaped buffer for the western edge of the property and expected the applicant would need a stormwater management plan; Mr. Neilan said the applicant was actively working with RIDEM on the plan.

Mr. Santucci asked to know the surface on which the buses would drive; Mr. Neilan said it would be concrete. Mr. Santucci also asked whether buses would be parked on the site when not in use for any length of time; Mr. Canty said that buses are returned to the main garage so nothing would be parked there overnight. Mr. Santucci expressed support for maintaining the usual 15% landscaping requirement and asked if the applicant had considered covering the site in solar panels, to which Mr. Canty said that RIPTA did not intend to do that. Chairman Pezzullo wondered if the site was suitable for a solar panel canopy in the first place, but said the process would probably consist simply of obtaining a building permit if RIPTA ever decided to reverse course on that decision.

Regarding the use of the site, Mr. Berry said the applicant's proposal could be considered a pre-existing/non-conforming use, but that would be for Zoning Officer Stan Pikul to interpret – he raised the point to note that it is an outstanding matter at this point and will eventually need to be settled. Mr. Kortz said the applicant received a zoning certificate a year ago that indicated the charging facility was an approved use, so Mr. Berry said the matter was evidently settled.

Mr. Berry asked if there would be public access to the lot containing the charging facility. Mr. Neilan said the lot would only be accessible to RIPTA employees. Mr. Mulcahy asked about the physical access restrictions for the lot – whether there would be a gate that opens only for RIPTA buses, for example – but Mr. Neilan said RIPTA would restrict access through use of signage as opposed to gates or fences. He also asked what noise the electrical equipment would generate, if any; Mr. Neilan said there would be very little noise.

Regarding buffers, Mr. Berry suggested the applicant consider adding a few extra feet of vegetated space to the western edge of the parcel to comply with the City's landscaping standards. He also noted the presence of the historic cemetery to the south of the site, which also needs a buffer. Mr. Neilan said the applicant plans to maintain the existing fence lines on these boundaries.

Mr. Neilan asked Mr. Berry what the approval process would entail and how long it might take before the proposal is shovel-ready. Mr. Berry and Chairman Pezzullo said that the City Plan Commission would not be involved (the project would be handled within the DPRC and require only one public hearing), but because of the adjacent historic cemetery, the applicant would have to go before the City Council to seek approval. Mr. Berry said the applicant can secure a spot on the next agenda if they submit three weeks in advance and said if the proposal requires few modifications, it could take a month or two before approval is granted through DPR. Chairman Pezzullo added that the application appeared straightforward at present and suspected it would not take too long to review. He suggested the applicant direct more of its attention towards ensuring a timely review by the City Council.

Upon motion made by Mr. Capezza and seconded by Mr. Pikul, the Development Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to conclude the meeting at 9:38 a.m.