

(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).

ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

Regular meeting of the Ordinance Committee was held on Thursday, May 11, 2023 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:50 p.m. by Council President Marino.

Present: Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli
Councilman John P. Donegan
Councilman Matthew R. Reilly
Councilman Robert J. Ferri
Council President Jessica M. Marino

Absent: Councilwoman Aniece Germain, Vice-Chair
Council Vice-President Lammi J. Vargas, Chair

Also Present: Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff
John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor
David DiMaio, City Council Budget Analyst
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
Ron Ronzio, Stenographer

Council President Marino stated that Council Vice-President Vargas had a previous scheduled commitment and Councilwoman Germain had a family emergency to attend to and they will not be present this evening.

Council President Marino asked for a motion and a second for her to Chair this meeting.

On motion by Councilwoman Renzulli, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to allow Council President Marino to Chair this meeting in the absence of Chairwoman Vargas. Motion passed unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the March 16, 2023 meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

Council President Marino asked for a motion to take the agenda out of order to hear proposed Ord. 3-23-05.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to take agenda out of order and hear proposed Ordinance 3-23-05 first. Motion passed unanimously.

3-23-05 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 17 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Zoning” (Change of Zone – 1388 & 1390 Cranston St. – Knights Corner Development Project). Sponsored by Councilman Paplauskas.*

Council President Marino asked Senior Planner, Doug McLean, to address the Committee.

Mr. McLean stated that there was a late change to the Planning Commission recommendation letter that was provided to the Clerk May 5th and that was replaced with a letter dated May 10th. None of the substance of the recommendations had changed on May 10th. Based on Counsel’s guidance, they are revising it to show that there were two separate motions made by the Planning Commission on that evening. One was a motion to recommend that the Council revise the Ordinance and it is a matter of the parking per unit count going from 1.25 spaces per dwelling unit to 1.5. That motion was unanimous. There was a separate motion to send a positive recommendation to this Committee along with that consideration. It is a minor thing, but they wanted to make sure it was conveyed to the Committee correctly if there were any questions or confusion about it.

Council President Marino asked for Developer and or Representative of the Developer to speak.

Robert Murray, Esq., 21 Garden City Dr., appeared to represent the Applicant and stated that the Planning Commission approved the Major Development Master Plan application with conditions and also gave a positive recommendation to the Ordinance itself with one condition relating to the parking requirements for the apartments. He stated that he provided the Clerk with the following documents to be distributed to the Committee: copies of Site Plan and existing condition plan for the property prepared by DiPrete Engineering; copies of Architectural Plans that were what the Committee saw in their site walk in February; one-page matrix of the breakdown of the buildings and the number of units in each building; financial fiscal study prepared by Joseph Lombardo; decision letter of the Master Plan that was recorded today in the Land Evidence Records. He indicated that this Ordinance is similar to the Ordinance approved last month for the Cranston Printworks Project and similar to the Ordinance passed for the Legion Bowl Project. The Ordinance allows for up to 160 units of multi-family. The Plan before the Committee and approved by the Planning Commission was for 156, so they comply. There is also flexibility within the C-2 Zone that allow the existing Church building, that has some historic character, to be utilized as a restaurant as the applicant has envisioned that reuse of the building. When the Ordinance was submitted, it was proposed of 1.25 and in line 82 of the Ordinance, it states 1.25 spaces per dwelling and they will comply with the standard parking requirements for the restaurant. After it was submitted, they refined the parking plan for the Master Plan and, as submitted to the Planning Commission and before the Committee this evening, is a parking scheme of 1.5 parking spaces per unit. The Planning Commission did embrace that concept by vote and it is as a recommendation to the Committee. He also stated that 15 of the 156 units will be designated for affordable housing.

Jenna Shea, Project Manager from DiPrete Engineering, appeared to speak and gave a presentation of the existing site of the property. She stated that the proposed development is for a mixed-use multi-family residential apartment complex with a full service restaurant, which will utilize the existing Church building. The restaurant will have a parking space for every three people and have estimated 96 seats and will have a valet drop off area. There will also be four multi-family buildings and 156 units, which will be a mix of Studios, one bedroom, two bedrooms and three bedrooms and there will be various amenities within the development for the residents. Three of the buildings will have residential parking on the ground floor and the fourth building will have a recreational area on the main floor. They will be providing 1.5 spaces per unit regardless of the size and that will equate to 234 parking spaces that are designated specifically for the Residential use, so in total, there will be 266 parking spaces for the entire development.

Ron Stevenson, Project Architect from South County Architects, appeared to speak and stated that the proposal is for four five-story buildings and floors two through five are all the same. It will be a mix of Studios, one and three bedrooms throughout. Three of the buildings have parking on the ground level and there are eighteen spaces under each building. Three buildings have parking on the ground level as well as bike racks and the fourth building, whole ground level is recreation area and will spill out to tennis courts and pickleball court as well as outdoor kitchen fire pit.

Paul Bannon, Associate with Beta Group, appeared to speak and addressed traffic study. He stated that he reviewed records from the Police Department to determine if there are any safety concerns relative to operations and safety in the area, specifically at the signal and final recommendation, they saw some deficiencies at the signalized intersections and made recommendations to restripe the intersection for separate left-turn lanes on Cranston St. that would help improve safety and efficiency at the intersection.

Council President Marino asked for public comments on any docketed matters.

Steven Frias, 107 Garden Hills Dr., member of the Planning Commission, appeared to speak and stated that the Planning Commission did recommend and he does support this project and recommended approval of the Ordinance as amended. He encouraged the Council to make the amendment on page 2 line 82 of the Ordinance in regards to space per unit. He also stated that he feels the number of students is underestimated. The reason he supported this project is we need more housing, more affordable housing. He indicated that in one year, we have approved over 400 apartment units, of which 78 were affordable. We are doing our part, so what the State should do is help us if they want more housing.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to amend this Ordinance as follows: line #82, amend 1.25 spaces to 1.5 paces.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Donegan stated that he will vote against this minor change due to the proximity of the bike path as well as the fact that it is directly on a RIPTA line. He does not think more space should be taken up for parking.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked how many more spaces is this amendment actually changing the total. Attorney Murray stated, he believes approximately 39 additional parking spaces.

Council President Marino stated that she will be voting in favor this amendment particularly since there are several three bedroom units and even at 1.5 parking spaces, it is going to be tough to fulfill despite close proximity to the bike path and RIPTA lines.

Public comment was re-opened to address the amendment.

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose to the amendment.

Roll call was taken on motion to amend this Ordinance and motion passed on a vote of 4-1. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Ferri, Reilly and Council President Marino -4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilman Donegan -2.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance as amended.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that at the site walk there was some mention of green building standards and use of solar panels. She asked if this has come up again at all. Attorney Murray stated that those comments from February remain true today, they just haven’t gone to the next level of detail, but those thoughts will be incorporated by the Project Architect and the Developer.

Councilman Ferri asked if the Council is going to see whatever traffic plan is going to be presented for that intersection, assuming this passes this evening, before it votes on this because this is something that is really needed. Council President Marino stated that her understanding is it will be in the hands after the Council approves the Ordinance and it will be with the Development Plan Review Committee and within the Planning Commission. She deferred to the Solicitor. Solicitor stated that he would have to defer to Solicitor Marsella, who represents the Planning Commission.

Attorney Murray stated that there is discussions with the Peer Review on behalf of Brady Sullivan at the Printworks. What is envisioned is there will be restriping to add a left-hand turn at Cranston St. He made a commitment to the Committee that when they are at that point going back to the Development Review Committee, he will make sure that the Council is provided with what is planned.

Councilman Donegan stated that this being in Ward 3, he was very excited when this project first came to his attention. This is a great addition to the area and to the revitalization of the area and he encouraged everyone to vote in favor of this.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance as amended and motion passed unanimously.

I. COMMITTEE BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

2-23-04 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 15 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Buildings and Construction” (Lead Safe Homes). Sponsored by Councilman Donegan. Co-sponsored by Councilwoman Germain. (Cont. 3/16/2023 & 4/13/2023).*

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to continue this Ordinance to the June meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS* and/ or NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

A. PUBLIC HEARINGS

B. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

3-23-05 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 17 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Zoning” (Change of Zone – 1388 & 1390 Cranston St. – Knights Corner Development Project). Sponsored by Councilman Paplauskas.*

Discussed and voted on earlier in the meeting.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees