

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Michael E. Smith
President

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Planning Director



Thomas Barbieri
Robert Coupe
David Exter
Steven Frias
Kathleen Lanphear
Lisa Mancini
Justin Mateus
Thomas Zidelis

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, July 11th, 2023 – 6:30 PM

3rd Floor - City Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue, Cranston RI

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Chairman Michael Smith, Thomas Barbieri, Robert Coupe, David Exter, Steven Frias, Justin Mateus, Lisa Mancini, and Thomas Zidelis. Commissioner Lanphear was absent.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director; Gregory Guertin, Senior Planner; Alexander Berardo, Planning Technician; Amelia Lavallee, Planning Department Intern.

Also attending: Steve Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(votes taken)

- 6/6/23 Regular City Plan Commission meeting

Upon motion by Mr. Zidelis, and seconded by Ms. Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to amend and approve the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 6/6/23 with Mr. Frias' suggested edits.

ORDINANCES

- 4-23-01 Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 17 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled "Zoning" (Change of Zone – 0 Bedson Road, AP 4, Lots 2606-2609).

Planning Technician, Alex Berardo gave the Staff presentation, noting that the applicant seeks to establish a commercial flex space overlay (see Staff memo for further details and findings).

No commission members had questions regarding the proposal/presentation.

No member of the public had questions or comments regarding the proposal/presentation neither in-person nor online.

Chairman Smith then asked for a motion to close public comment. Upon motion made by Mr. Coupe, and seconded by Mr. Exter, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to close the public comment period.

Chairman Smith asked for a motion on the ordinance recommendation. Upon motion made by Mr. Zidelis, and seconded by Mr. Coupe, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to accept the findings of fact and forward a positive recommendation on Ordinance #4-23-01 to the City Council.

SUBDIVISIONS & LAND DEVELOPMENTS

- **“Sharpe Drive Solar” PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL** (vote taken)
 MASTER PLAN – Major Land Development
 .4 MW (400 KW) solar energy installation on a previously disturbed 2.4-acre footprint portion of a 50+/- acre site. Zoned M-2
 Sharpe Drive
 AP 13, Lot 47

Senior Planner, Gregory Guertin provided the Staff presentation. Mr. Guertin noted that the lot is located on AP 13, Lot 47, currently zoned M-2, FLUM designation of Open Space. Mr. Guertin showed various maps and graphics and noted where the solar field would be constructed within the broader 50-acre site. Mr. Guertin noted that the parcel is located within 100-year FEMA flood zone but the solar area is in Zones X and AE, and that there are rare species (Natural Heritage Map) on-site, but that the applicant will work collaboratively with RIDEM to ensure that they are not impacted.

Mr. Guertin notes that RIDEM approval is anticipated at the Preliminary Plan stage, which has been included as a condition of approval in Staff’s recommendation.

On behalf of Staff, Mr. Guertin acknowledged the inconsistency between the existing zoning of M-2 (General Industry) and the Future Land Use Map designation of Open Space but notes that the proposed solar area would exist on a previously disturbed site surrounded by open space. Mr. Guertin also notes that the owner of the property, Pawtuxet River Authority, intends to use the funds generated via the lease agreement to pay for their headquarter costs to maintain and further their environmental preservation goals.

Mr. Guertin provided relevant Staff findings (see memorandum from 7/11/23 meeting). Mr. Guertin then provided a recommendation of approval to the City Plan Commission.

Attn. Robert Murray, representing Revity Energy LLC and Sharpe Solar LLC, the applicant, introduced the project team, including Ralph Palumbo, Managing Director of Revity Energy, legal counsel for Revity Energy, Nicholas Nybo and Kyle Palumbo, Jenna Shea from DiPrete Engineering, and wetlands biologist Scott Rabideau from Natural Resource Services.

Mr. Murray provided further context for the proposal, stating that his client has entered into a lease agreement with Pawtuxet River Authority to construct the proposed solar farm. Mr. Murray provided background on the site, stating that the Pawtuxet River Authority acquired the site in 2003, located at the easterly side of Howard Industrial Park in Cranston. Mr. Murray stated that there are no particular use restrictions, or limiting language in the deed that conveyed the land to the Pawtuxet River Authority. Mr. Murray also noted that the Pawtuxet River Authority has the authority to hold, lease, and/or sell property.

Mr. Murray reminded the Commission that the application before them is for the Master Plan phase, a conceptual approval, and that upon approval, the applicant will proceed with necessary permits from RIDEM, followed by technical review by the Development Plan Review Committee before returning to the City Plan Commission for Preliminary Plan approval.

Mr. Murray stated that he believes this application to be the first solar project under review following the revised ordinance enacted by the City regarding solar energy systems. Mr. Murray states that this is considered a Major Land Development under the recent solar energy systems ordinance, and that the proposed use is allowed by-right in the M-1 and M-2 zones.

Mr. Murray provided a copy of the Environmental Land Use Restrictions (ELUR), common on properties with a history of contamination, applicable to Lots 47 and 75. Residential uses and utilization of groundwater beneath the lot are restrictions outlined in the ELUR.

Mr. Murray stated that the application also includes a report from land use consultant Edward Pimentel, though Mr. Pimentel was absent for the meeting.

Mr. Murray states that prior to the proposal, the site was leased by the Pawtuxet River Authority to an individual/entity that operated greenhouses. The greenhouse structures have since been removed, but concrete pads remain. Mr. Murray passed around photos of the site to the Commission.

Mr. Murray called up Jenna Shea, Project Manager from DiPrete Engineering to testify.

Ms. Shea provided overview of existing conditions: zoned M-2, access to site off of Ross Simmons Drive. Ms. Shea stated that other nearby abutters are industrial with extensive surface parking. Ms. Shea stated that the entire subject parcel is approximately fifty (50) acres, approximately thirty (30) of which are of upland area, and approximately twenty (20) acres are wetlands. Wetland areas directly adjacent to the project have been flagged by Natural Resource Services. Ms. Shea noted that the plans presented do not include a boundary survey, but will be submitted at the Preliminary Plan stage.

Ms. Shea recalled that only 2.4 of the 50 acres will host the "project area". The project area was previously cleared for the two greenhouses belonging to the previous tenant. The previous structures were removed, but the concrete pads remain. The applicant proposes to remove the existing concrete pads. Ms. Shea states that there is an existing National Grid easement for maintaining the substation on-site. The easement runs through the "project area", with existing utility poles and overhead wires on-site. The ELUR on the property exist because groundwater was found to be contaminated. Ms. Shea stated that solar development is not prohibited by the ELUR and will have no impact on groundwater quality.

Ms. Shea continues, stating that the applicant does not seek waivers or variances for the proposal. The M-2 zone allows maximum solar coverage of 85% of the property. The applicant is proposing 2% coverage (3.3% of upland area), providing 20-foot spacing between panels and a fence for maintenance/emergency access. The applicant will remove existing concrete pads and plant grass below solar panels. No additional screening/buffering is required, as there are no residential abutters. Only access will be improvements to existing roadway, with no increase in impervious surface. New lights, sewer, or water are not proposed. A small portion of solar area will be in FEMA Zone AE, as with a small portion of access road, but the applicant is not proposing to change the grade or cover. Ms. Shea also noted that due to the previously disturbed areas on the site, the applicant does not believe that the proposal will impact the existing species on site.

Ms. Shea introduced Mr. Rabideau for further comment.

Mr. Rabideau from Natural Resource Services introduced himself and provided context surrounding the proposal. Mr. Rabideau noted that the state wetlands regulations have changed significantly as of recently, changing how wetlands are classified and how buffers are set. In August of 2022, Mr. Rabideau's staff delineated the wetlands on the proposed site. According to Mr. Rabideau, this project exists within the Urban River Region, which carries specific buffer requirements. With regard to the subject site, it is subject to a 200-foot jurisdictional area (triggering a permit from RIDEM); this portion of the Pawtuxet has only a 100-foot buffer zone. Portions of the stream area will get 50-foot buffers and others will get 20-foot buffers. Entire solar array falls outside of the 200-foot jurisdictional area and the 100-foot jurisdictional area of the freshwater wetland delineated on the property. The access road, however, does fall within the jurisdictional/buffer area. Mr. Rabideau explained that the state differentiates between naturally-vegetated areas considered "buffer," but in this instance, the access road is pre-existing as of 1981, thus the access road is not considered buffer despite being in the buffer zone.

Mr. Rabideau clarified that this proposal will be submitted as an application for freshwater wetlands permit without any need for variance. If RIDEM required any screening vegetation, Mr. Rabideau believes that it would not be for the solar facility, but for only for portions of the roadway.

Mr. Rabideau then displayed a graphic of the existing wetlands to the Commission, explaining the different wetlands types supporting different species in the vicinity. Mr. Rabideau noted that the subject parcel is surrounded by an urban area, so the project is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on wetland habitat.

Mr. Murray then reviewed the new solar ordinance criteria [Section 17.24.020], noting that there is no land involved in this proposal with a conservation easement, and that the applicant will be subject to the building permit process once the project receives final plan approval. Mr. Murray also stated that the

proposed solar facility will comply with existing height, setback and visual screening requirements/restrictions and lot coverage limitations. Mr. Murray noted that there are no residential abutters nearby.

Mr. Murray rebutted the idea that the proposed use is not incompatible with wildlife/plant habitat occurring on other nearby portions of the site. Mr. Murray also noted that the applicant's team will prepare a Stormwater management and erosion control plan, as required by the State.

Mr. Murray spoke briefly about grid connection, stating that the National Grid substation is located directly across the driveway from the solar array, thus there is no need to run miles of wire underground, and given the ELUR, underground connection would likely be prohibited.

Mr. Murray then noted Warwick Representative Joseph McNamara's letter opposing the project on public access grounds. In collaboration with legal counsel and members of the Pawtuxet River Authority, Mr. Murray stated that there is no basis in law or existence of the Howard Conservation Area, with no legal document that exists creating it, and that counsel believes it to be a label that appears on City maps, with no official documentation or records as an area for conservation.

Staff raised the fact that the project will generate income for the PRA, to which Mr. Murray responded that nothing exists officially in their bylaws prohibiting them from raising money. The prior leasee of the property, the greenhouse entity, paid the PRA rent, for example. These funds support the other conservation activities they carry out, according to Mr. Murray.

Chairman Smith opened the floor to questions from the commission following Mr. Murray's testimony.

Commissioner Frias inquired about the "slight sliver of land" between the road, river, and sewer area. Mr. Frias asked if this was an area where people hike. Mr. Frias asked if it was trail, scenic in any way. Mr. Murray responded that he does not know specifically whether or not the land is used as a trail. Mr. Murray deferred to the PRA as to whether the only people who travel down that road are associated with National Grid versus any member of the public pursuing recreation.

Mr. Murray stated that the applicant is not putting forth a proposal that would impact the non-project area of the site. Mr. Murray notes that solar does not utilize city services, does not intend to impede on existing wildlife, or block public access. Mr. Murray also stated that Director Pezzullo agreed that the survey is going to be limited to the project area and its immediate environment.

Chairman Smith asked the commission for further comment. Seeing no new comment, Chairman Smith asked for comments from the public. Among those present;

- Heather Thibodeau, 137 Blackamore Ave, read aloud a letter "from the West Bay Land Trust".
- Steve Stycos, 37 Fern Crest Ave, asked the Commission to review the proposal carefully. Mr. Stycos' major concern regards runoff, stating that Revity Energy LLC had previously caused environmental damage by not controlling erosion in other projects and RIDEM could not prevent that from happening. Mr. Stycos suggested the Planning Commission should look to the environmental section of the Comprehensive Plan for further guidance. Mr. Stycos continued, stating that water will run off of the proposed solar panels, erode the riverbank, and expose the contaminants under the ground. In response to Frias' question, Mr. Stycos said he's been involved with an informal conservation group, Friends of the Pawtuxet, and that they once built a trail in the general area of the proposed project area. Mr. Stycos said that he hasn't been there in years and does not know its current condition, but that the PRA's website discusses the trail's existence. To conclude, Mr. Stycos referenced the note Staff made in the project memo surrounding potential economic benefit to the PRA. Mr. Stycos states that the comment is inappropriate and should not impact the Commission's decision. Furthermore, Mr. Stycos wants the Cranston Planning Department to refrain from extraneous comments regarding economic benefit.
- Lynn Harrington, Taft Street read comments relative to the project. Ms. Harrington finds the PRA's involvement in this project antithetical to their mission of conserving the Pawtuxet River. Ms. Harrington also notes that the parcel should have been previously rezoned from the M-2 designation. Ms. Harrington is also concerned about the scope of work being proposed,

specifically that there was not a request for purchasing on this project when the PRA issued other RFPs before for other projects. Ms. Harrington inquired if there is any guarantee that the other four buildable acres will not be developed for solar in the future, or if solar panels will be put in flooding area. Ms. Harrington requested a topography map be overlaid onto the proposed panels. Other concerns included the project budget. Ms. Harrington concluded by asking the Commission to deny the project due to a lack of transparency regarding the aforementioned concerns.

- Doug Doe, 178 Lippitt Ave. noted that his comments were mislabeled on the website and requests the recorded be changed to comments provided by the PAR, not as an individual.

Chairman Smith opened the floor to online viewers. None among online viewers provided comment on the proposal.

Mr. Murray approached the stand to address some of the issues prior to the closing of public comment. Mr. Murray stated that a feasibility study was submitted, in which Rhode Island Energy clarified that there are available connections to the grid. The costs are not entirely defined, but that information can be provided. The PRA financial discussion is not within the Commission's purview.

Mr. Murray reiterated that there is no existing prohibition to the PRA leasing the land, as it was previously leased to a greenhouse owner who may have had fertilizer and other chemicals on-site with no complaints of record. Mr. Murray stated that he was disappointed in Mr. Stycos' comments about Revity Solar previously causing environmental damage. Mr. Murray stated that the applicant worked with RIDEM, and in previous projects that were mentioned, issues were addressed and are no longer outstanding. Mr. Murray stated that the issue of runoff is considered by RIDEM. Furthermore, Mr. Murray stated that the PRA most likely isn't required to do a RFP; it is within their authority to enter into that lease agreement. Mr. Murray stated that he is disappointed that people spend time and energy opposing a "good-faith" proposal, and that if the applicant ever wanted to expand it would require a new series of hearings and approvals.

Seeing no further public comment, neither in-person nor online, Chairman Smith asked for motion to close public comment. Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis and seconded by Commissioner Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to close public comment.

Chairman Smith invited further questions from members of the Commission.

Commissioner Frias stated that he supports the proposal for a number of reasons, namely that the land had been previously disturbed with the erection of a greenhouse. If the site had not been previously disturbed he would not be in support. In regard to the "screening issue", Mr. Frias states that to the west is a commercial industrial area, and to the southeast is an electrical facility, in which he does not see the incapability in use. Mr. Frias referenced his prior question about the sliver of land to the east as a walking trail, but because it does not seem to have aesthetic, or recreational value Mr. Frias sees no particular need to screen it.

Mr. Guertin re-read the Staff recommendation and conditions of approval associated with the proposal.

Chairman Smith accepts a motion by the Commission.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis and seconded by Commissioner Barbieri, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to **approve** the Master Plan – Major Land Development with conditions.

- **“Gladstone School” PUBLIC HEARING** (vote taken)
PRELIMINARY PLAN - Major Land Development
Gladstone Elementary School 115,000 +/- sq.ft reconstruction on the existing 7.82 acre site
Zoned B-1
AP 7-4, Lot 2357
50 Gladstone Street

Michael Zavalía, on behalf of the Cranston Public School (CPS) Department introduced the proposal and the applicant's team, including Ed Collins from CPS, Douglas Ostler from Commonwealth Engineering, Dustin Powell, Traverse Landscape Architects, and Regan Shields-Ives from Finegold Architects.

Mr. Zavalía presented the application, noting that the existing school dates from 1951 and is now functionally obsolete. Mr. Zavalía stated that enrollment will increase from 500 to 800 students. The existing building will be demolished, and the proposed building will have a gross floor area of 115,000 ft², with a 3-story exposure on front façade, 5-story in rear. Mr. Zavalía noted that the proposed structure meets all setback and lot coverage requirements, and that a height variance was granted in February.

Mr. Zavalía then turned the presentation over to Mr. Collins who provided further clarification regarding demolition logistics. Mr. Collins stated that the Rhode Island Department of Health has approved abatement plan for removal of asbestos material. The applicant's team is working with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management toward permits addressing water runoff, erosion, and dust control which will be monitored by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Chairman Smith opened the floor to questions from the commission following Mr. Zavalía and Mr. Collins' presentation.

Commissioner Frias asked if individuals from the applicant's team were present to address traffic and/or Stormwater concerns. Mr. Zavalía stated that Commonwealth Engineering conducted a traffic count study in February of 2022 during school session, then conducted an analysis and traffic count in consideration of future increased enrollment and the new circulation patterns. Mr. Zavalía stated that most intersection's level of service (LOS) will either be maintained or slightly improved, particularly at the Lawrence Street and Gladstone Street intersection, previously closed by crossing guards during drop-off/pick-up times.

Mr. Zavalía states that the proposed design remedies the existing traffic through a number of changes, namely a dedicated zone for non-bus drop-off queuing, with overflow also being contained within another on-site parking lot, and a dedicated bus pickup/drop-off loop from Lawrence Street. Mr. Zavalía states that the proposed design is not going to obstruct local roadways. The proposal seeks to maintain the existing driveway between Asia Street and Gladstone Street. Also adding on-site parking. Traffic analysis was submitted to the Development Plan Review Committee and the Traffic Safety Manager for review.

Commissioner Coupe asked Mr. Zavalía to clarify whether Gladstone Street is currently a one-way street, and if so, does the applicant plan to maintain that restriction. Zavalía clarified, stating that Gladstone Street is a one-way street at certain hours during the school year, and that the applicant plans to maintain that restriction. Commissioner Coupe inquired about increased traffic down Cranston Street, to which Mr. Zavalía responded, stating that parents would travel up Asia Street into queuing driveway and exit onto Lawrence Street, potentially turning right down Gladstone Street, or left towards Laurel Hill Avenue.

Mr. Coupe inquired about the potential impacts on intersections on Cranston Street. Mr. Zavalía noted that intersections on Cranston St. were evaluated in the traffic study.

Commissioner Frias observed that traffic at the eastbound intersection of Cranston Street and Gladstone Street would worsen as a result of the proposal – changing from the LOS classification of a "D" level to an "E" level. Mr. Zavalía stated that he believes it would be unlikely to improve the traffic classification from a "D" to a "C" given the increase in student population. Mr. Frias asked Mr. Zavalía and the applicant's team what "E" level would look like practically.

Mr. Zavalía introduced Douglas Ostler, traffic engineer from Commonwealth Engineering to expand upon the proposed traffic changes. Mr. Ostler explained that the LOS ratings equate to the range of delay, in which the D range is 25-35 seconds of delay, and the E range is 35-55 seconds of delay. Mr. Ostler stated that measures for improvement would be influenced by the surrounding neighborhood. An example given by Mr. Ostler would be the change from a two-way road to a one-way road with separate right and left turning lane, though this option has merits and demerits. The worst times observed were a 15-20 minute delay within a 45-minute window. Commissioner Frias asked Mr. Ostler if the one-way road option would be suitable to change the LOS rating from an E to a D. Mr. Ostler responded, stating that he is uncertain whether or not the one-way road change would improve the LOS rating without a thorough evaluation.

Mr. Zavalia approached the Commission. He noted that the proposal includes 100 parking spaces on-site, an increase from the 68 existing, striped spaces. The projected staffing is 113. Current zoning regulations require one (1) parking space for every two (2) staff members, or .5 parking spaces per staff member. The application proposes a 0.88 staff/parking ratio in practice. Mr. Zavalia clarified that spaces will be separated in different areas considering existing constraints in terms of size and the amount of space that needed to be dedicated to Stormwater management, playgrounds, outdoor learning space, etc.

Commissioner Frias asked how many spaces per staff member exist currently. Mr. Zavalia stated that the existing staff/parking space ratio is approximately 1:1. Commissioner Frias then asked where the influx of staff members will park. Mr. Zavalia did not clarify.

Mr. Zavalia continued on to discuss Stormwater management. He noted there is a small watershed area on-site. Existing drainage includes catch basins and pipes on-site to collect and route water toward the existing driveway and then down Asia Street. The project exists under RIDEM's jurisdiction, thus the applicant was required to submit an application for a RIPDES permit. Mr. Zavalia noted that RIDEM's comments will be resolved. He anticipates receiving RIPDES permit for Stormwater management shortly. The City's standards exceed those of RIDEM so applicant will have to mitigate runoff rates to City's satisfaction. Mr. Zavalia noted that the Sand filter basin will be adjacent to the northern detention basin, and the southern basin will be adjacent to the parking lot and will also regulate the outflow, which will connect to existing Asia Street drainage infrastructure. Mr. Zavalia stated that the Development Plan Review Committee will be reviewing this proposal in detail.

Commissioner Frias asked the applicant why a Stormwater system with a capacity limited to handle 25-year storms was chosen. Mr. Zavalia clarified that a 25-year storm capacity is a design standard set by RIDEM. Mr. Zavalia continues the presentation by providing a brief overview of on-site project management, stating that RIDEM reviews and oversees Stormwater management practices. Mr. Zavalia also made reference to the proposed landscape design plans, specifically stating that there are two playgrounds, two outdoor learning areas, and a playfield proposed, in addition to preserving the existing playground area in the west corner.

Mr. Guertin read the Staff findings (see memo) and the recommendation associated with the proposal.

Chairman Smith then invited the public to comment on the matter.

- Steve Kelley, 25 Ridge Street, inquired about blasting during the demolition phase of the project. Mr. Collins clarified that blasting would not be one of the mechanisms utilized during the construction phase.
- Erica Laros, 490 Laurel Hill Avenue, expressed concerns about disturbing wildlife or pests into the neighborhood during the construction phase. Mr. Collins explains that the applicant has ordered a pest contractor to the site to abate any potential issues concerning pests or rodents.
- Jimmy Marinelli, Brown Street voiced various traffic concerns.

Seeing no other commenters neither in-person nor online, Chairman Smith asked for a motion to close the public comment period. Upon motion made by Commissioner Coupe, and seconded by Commissioner Exter, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to close public comment.

Mr. Frias voiced concerns about inadequate parking for staff and worsening traffic at one intersection. Mr. Frias stated that the Cranston Public School Department and the City should work collaboratively to mitigate these issues.

Mr. Barbieri noted that increased traffic is typical at the start of the school year. Mr. Barbieri also noted that all staff members will likely not be present at the same time due to differing schedules, absenteeism. Lastly, Mr. Barbieri stated that he believes that the proposed reconstruction will rejuvenate the neighborhood.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Commissioner Coupe, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to **approve** the Preliminary Plan – Major Land Development application as proposed.

- **“Summit Estates, LLC” PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL** (vote taken)
PRELIMINARY PLAN – Minor subdivision without street extension
Four conforming new house lots – Zoned A-8
Summit Drive, Glen View Drive, Meshanticut Valley Pkwy, AP 16-4, Lots 449 & 459

Senior Planner Gregory Guertin gave the staff presentation. Mr. Guertin reviewed the application, a minor subdivision without street extension in the A-8 zone. The applicant seeks to combine and subdivide two conforming lots into four, with a total area of 36,000 ft². The proposal is in conformance with the Future Land Use Map designation of Single Family Residential (7.26-3.64 units/acre). Mr. Guertin noted that there are no wetlands, floodplains, historic/cultural districts associated with the proposal, and that each parcel meets dimensional standards prescribed by the zone. Staff has no concerns. Mr. Guertin provided the findings of fact and the staff recommendation.

Jeff Caffrey Esq., and Kevin Wilbur, Principal of Summit Estates, LLC, representing the applicant were present. Mr. Caffrey reiterated the proposal, and noted that there is an existing easement with Providence Water Supply Board over one of the lots, but the applicant has an agreement to abandon that easement and remove the pipe. Mr. Marsella asked if final plan will show the easement being removed. Mr. Caffrey verified that the final plan will depict the removal of the easement.

Chairman Smith then invited the public to comment on the matter.

- Celeste O’Connell, 400 Meshanticut Valley Parkway, expressed concerns about potential overdevelopment of the lots and the lack of affordable units.

Commissioner Mancini stated that she lives in the surrounding neighborhood and noticed that the lot has been excavated. Ms. Mancini asked if the proposal were to be denied, would the applicant be required to fill in the foundation. Mr. Caffrey clarifies that the applicant was allowed to build one dwelling by-right on the existing lot, in which the previous construction is beyond the purview of the City Plan Commission.

Seeing no other commenters neither in-person nor online, Chairman Smith asked for a motion to close the public comment period. Upon motion made by Commissioner Exter, and seconded by Commissioner Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to close public comment.

Commissioner Frias asked Mr. Marsella, Assistant City Solicitor if the application is a by-right project. Mr. Marsella stated that the application does not require relief to be approved by the Zoning Board of Review. Mr. Frias continued, stating that the proposal meets density requirements and dimensional standards for the A-8 zone. Mr. Marsella asks Atty. Caffrey to confirm for the record whether or not the proposal requires variances. Atty. Caffrey confirms that the proposal does not require any variances.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Coupe, and seconded by Commissioner Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to **approve** the Preliminary Plan – Minor Subdivision without street extension application with conditions.

- **“Lanes End” PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL** (vote taken)
PRELIMINARY PLAN – Minor subdivision without street extension
Two additional house lots (10,848 sf & 40,934 sf) – Zoned A-8
Eva Lane
AP 18, Lot 1759

Amelia Lavalley, Planning Intern gave the staff presentation. Ms. Lavalley presented various graphics, provided an overview of the request, showed the site plan, and reviewed staff findings. Ms. Lavalley stated that the density of the proposed subdivision falls below the density designated for the subject area on the Future Land Use Map, but otherwise complies with all zoning standards. Furthermore, there are no wetlands, floodplains, historic/cultural districts associated with the proposal. Staff recommends approval.

Atty. Murray representing the applicant, Professional Land Surveyor, Walter Skorupski, and the principal of the owning entity were present. Atty. Murray noted that the lots will be serviced by public water, but otherwise the presentation noted all relevant facts and findings associated with the application.

Chairman Smith then invited the public to comment on the matter.

Seeing no commenters neither in-person nor online, Chairman Smith asked for a motion to close the public comment period. Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Commissioner Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to close public comment.

The Commission did not discuss the application further. Chairman Smith opened the floor for a motion.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Frias, and seconded by Commissioner Barbieri, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to **approve** the Preliminary Plan – Minor subdivision without street extension proposal.

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW – RECOMMENDATIONS

(votes taken for all items)

- **AMIR H. JOURABACHI & PAMELA JOURABACHI (OWN/APP)** have filed an application to construct a new single-family dwelling on an under- sized lot with restricted frontage at **0 Oaklawn Avenue**, A.P. 16, lot 305, area 5,975 s.f. zoned A8. Applicants seek relief per Section 17.92.010- Variances; Section 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations. ***(After Staff review, it was determined that no variance is necessary for this proposal.)***

* Due to the fact that the application did not require a variance, the City Plan Commission was not required to review, discuss, or vote on this proposal.

- **CRANSTON STREET ASSOCIATES, LLC (OWN) and COLBEA ENTERPRISES, LLC (APP)** have applied to the Board to construct a new Fuel station minimart with drive- through coffee shop exceeding the allowable height and signage relief on number of signs, total area, and height at **777 Cranston Street**, A.P. 7, lot 1, Building Pad No. 3, area 44,915 s.f. zoned C5. Applicants seek relief per Section 17.92.010- Variances; Sections 17.72.010- Signs; 17.20.120- Schedule of Intensity Regulations.

Amelia Lavalley, Planning Intern gave the staff presentation. Ms. Lavalley presented various graphics, provided an overview of the request, showed the site plan, and reviewed staff findings.

Members of the applicant's team including Sheryl Guglielmo from DiPrete Engineering and Atty. Danielle Dufault provided further context regarding the site.

Chairman Smith then invited the public to comment on the matter.

Seeing no commenters neither in-person nor online, Chairman Smith asked for a motion to close the public comment period. Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Commissioner Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to close public comment.

Mr. Mateus raised a technical question regarding a traffic light on Cranston Street.

Two modifications were suggested by the Commission following the presentation by the applicant's team.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Coupe, and seconded by Commissioner Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to forward a **positive recommendation** to the Zoning Board of Review.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Comprehensive Plan Update
- Staff turnover
- Upcoming workflow (ordinances, regulations)

Director Pezzullo provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan process. Mr. Pezzullo stated that the consulting firm Westin & Sampson was selected by the selection committee to be the consultant for the City's Comprehensive Plan update. The contract is currently being finalized. Additional information is required regarding the CommerceRI grant to further advance the project.

On staff turnover, Planning Technician Alex Berardo is joining former Principal Planner for the City, Douglas McLean in the town of Coventry. The solicitation for Planner Technician in the Cranston Planning Department will ensue shortly. Mr. Pezzullo also stated that the department has chosen a replacement Principal Planner who should be on-boarded prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Pezzullo distributed a breakdown of recent changes to state law, created by Statewide Planning. He noted that Staff, in collaboration with Solicitor Marsella, will be working on these changes in-house during the next few months. Mr. Pezzullo noted new changes in the administrative process. The Planning Department will plan to draft updated ordinances to be presented before the Commission and the City Council before the new laws are enacted at the start of 2024.

Chairman Smith commended Mr. Berardo for his stellar work in his capacity as Planning Technician, and as a part of the Planning Department.

UPCOMING MEETINGS / ADJOURNMENT

(vote taken)

- Tuesday, August 1st, 2023, 6:30PM – **Regular City Plan Commission Meeting** – City Hall Council Chambers, 869 Park Avenue

Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Commissioner Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to adjourn the meeting at 10:14pm.