

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 10, 2022 – 5:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL MEETING**

Participants: Commission Members – Mr. Melosky, Mr. Malozi, Mr. Barker, Ms. Cohen and Mr. Burgos. City staff included Darlene Heller and Tracy Samuelson of the Planning and Zoning Bureau, Basel Yandem, Amy Rohrbach and Tiffany Wells of the Engineering Bureau, and Attorney Matthew Deschler as Solicitor to the Commission. Attending in person were Mr. Matt Flath, Mr. Ryan Whitmore, Atty. Joseph Fitzpatrick, Mr. Monty Kalsi, Mr. Christopher Geary, Mr. Plamen “Rocky” Ayvazov, Atty. Jim Holzinger, Mr. Francis Placka, Mr. Steve Walsh and Martin Romwell.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 10, 2022.

Ms. Cohen made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2022 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Burgos and passed with a 5-0 vote.

2. FACADE REVIEW – 26-44 W. BROAD STREET (Boyd) Mixed Used Building

Mr. Rocky Ayvazov explained the updates to the façade at the property. He stated they were able to preserve the “Boyd” signs. Mr. Melosky asked can they explain how they changed it from having a glass facade to what the changes are now whether it’s a brick front and so on. Mr. Placka explained they changed the design to show a base, middle and top to the building. He continued to say the first floor is a recessed back about 5 ft. off the sidewalk with some planting and it will be storefront glazing. The second floor is a dark fiber cement panelized system with the middle portion being industrial brick. There is also some structural steel accents on the exterior and the top floor will be board and batten siding. Mr. Melosky stated the changes look good and the industrial look compares to the rest of the buildings on Broad St.

Mr. Melosky asked if there were plans to do a mural on the side of the building. Mr. Ayvazov responded that it was in their minds to do a mural on that wall and bring over Southside especially when it pertains to Steel Stacks. Mr. Barker asked Ms. Heller if Mr. Ayvazov had to get approval from a committee for the mural. Ms. Heller responded that the City has a fine arts committee that reviews public art. The committee looks at how it’s adhere, what is the messaging, is it advertising, and how would it be maintained. Ms. Heller mentioned that they do not approve or disapprove art.

Mr. Melosky brought up the glare windows on how birds crash into the windows. Mr. Ayvazov stated that he is looking into a different kind of glass to avoid the issue of the birds. Ms. Samuelson stated EAC has sent her a publication regarding this issue which she will be sharing with all developers that are doing large buildings.

Ms. Cohen stated that it is not the contemporary facade she was looking for but it is well done.

Mr. Malozi appreciated the effort in accommodating the Planning Commission’s request to return and discuss the new facade. He stated it’s an attractive building and a great project.

Mr. Martin Romwell, , 26 W. Market St., wanted to know if the building sign on top will it be illuminated at night. Mr. Ayvazov stated that they were not sure what they were doing with the sign but he assured Mr. Romwell that it would not disturb the neighbors.

3. SITE PLAN REVIEW

A. (22-002 Site Plan Review) – 22020009 – 218-226 W. UNION BLVD. – SITE PLAN REVIEW – Ward 8, Zoned CL, plan dated February 9, 2022.

Mr. Holzinger explained their reason for being at the meeting which is to get a recommendation from the Planning Commission to give to the Zoning Hearing Board for their variances. Mr. Holzinger introduced Mr. Steve Walsh to explain the project.

Atty. Holzinger explained the variances needed for this project from the Zoning Hearing Board. He stated this property is located in the CL zone which allows one dwelling unit per 1200 sf. and they are proposing one dwelling unit per 1017 sq. which would be a total of 39 dwelling units. He also mentioned they will need a special exception for parking spaces. The City requires 75 spaces and they are proposing 57 spaces. They feel because this property is along public transportation, bus line and there's a city parking lot across the street.

Mr. Melosky asked if either Ms. Heller or Ms. Samuelson can explain Comment # 2 under General on the March 4th letter from the City. Ms. Samuelson stated an 8ft. buffer yard is required around the rear and side property line in the CL district. They are proposing a 4ft high privacy fence. With a solid fence, you would need some vegetation and I'm not sure if they would have room for it. We would need to review the neighborhood in order to determine.

Mr. Burgos asked about flooding, he wanted to know if the parking was going to be elevated. Mr. Walsh stated it would not.

Mr. Malozi made a motion that the Planning Commission adopt the comments that are in the March 4th letter from the City of Bethlehem with a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board for the necessary relief for this project to move forward. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barker and passed with a 5-0 vote.

B. (22-003 Site Plan Review) – 22020014 – 1746 ELLIOT AVENUE (Elliot Avenue Apartments) – SITE PLAN REVIEW – Ward 13, Zoned RG, plan dated February 7, 2022.

Mr. Monty Kalsi and Mr. Chris Geary introduced the project.

Mr. Melosky asked if the Planning Bureau had any comments on the City's March 4th letter. Ms. Samuelson stated that there are 7 dwelling units permitted and 8 are proposed. Ms. Samuelson continued to state that she and Ms. Rohrbach made a visit to the site and the paving is broken up all the way to the train site and it is heavily wooded. She also mentioned there will need to be a water main extension, trees will need to be viewed and paving and curb and sidewalk will need to be discussed with Engineering. Ms. Samuelson stated that the biggest issues are the density with the units and the wooded nature of the lot.

Atty. Deschler commented on the streets being vacated or past the point where they've been reverted on this property. Mr. Melosky asked the applicant what is the plan from a buffering and visual standpoint is the intent to keep some of the trees or remove them all. And if all trees are being removed, what is the plan to buffer from the train noise. Mr. Kalsi responded that he actually was at the property when the train passed by and the noise was not bad at all. His intent is to buffer the area as he wants the residents to hear less noise and have a pleasant experience living there. He also mentioned he would like to preserve the trees as much as he can and would replace any that are removed.

Mr. Malozi is in agreement with Mr. Kalsi to get this lot developed. Mr. Melosky concurred with Mr. Malozi. Mr. Melosky stated anytime an area can be cleaned up, it's a positive thing for the City.

Mr. Malozi made a motion to adopt the comments made on the March 4, 2022 letter from the City of Bethlehem regarding this project along with a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board for the relief required. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barker and passed with a 5-0 vote.

4. LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

A. (21-008 LD&S – 21060017) – 2285 & 2425 SCHOENERSVILLE ROAD (Westgate Mall), Land Development & Subdivision Plan (Phase 3) – Zoned CS, Plans dated June 4, 2021 and revised January 27, 2022

Atty. Joe Fitzpatrick introduced Mr. Ryan Whitmore to explain the project. Mr. Whitmore mentioned on the southern side of the mall - the old Dempsey Diner will be taken down and replaced by the credit union that will have a drive-thru. On the northern side it will have a new fast food restaurant also with a drive-thru. The newest addition in Phase 3 is the reconstruction of the infill section of the interior section of the mall which two buildings will be constructed. It will have a branch bank with a drive-thru in one building and the other building will consist of Starbucks, Jersey Mikes and Qdoba.

Mr. Whitmore went into discussing the March 3, 2022 letter from the City. The first comment is on page #2 under Public Works Traffic comment #1 in regards to the access of Schoenersville Road closest to the fuel canopy. Mr. Whitmore stated there was a lot of focus on this when they were in Phase 2 with City staff and the master plan was approved. As such, it is their preference to leave the drive-way as it's currently proposed. The next item on the letter has to do with page #3 second comment under General comment #2 regarding the parking surplus that is offered on the plan. Mr. Whitmore stated the applicant has reduced the parking over the course of the entire land development.

Mr. Melosky asked Ms. Samuelson if she had any comments regarding the City's March 3rd letter to add. Ms. Samuelson asked if Ms. Wells could respond on the Statten Avenue comment. Ms. Wells stated the comment was a recommendation not a requirement. Ms. Samuelson stated she was happy to see that most of the comments on the City's letter can be met.

Mr. Melosky asked the applicant is it possible to do a drive isle in front of the Starbucks which looks like it would probably lose 12 parking spaces. Mr. Malozi concurred with Mr. Melosky. Mr. Whitmore stated it is a reasonable request that they would consider.

Mr. Malozi mentioned the accommodations of the LANTA bus stops. Mr. Malozi asked if one was a shelter and the other a stop. Mr. Whitmore stated they are still working it out with LANTA but he stated they can accommodate a shelter.

Ms. Cohen asked about a previous comment she had mentioned regarding proving a landscape buffer to the drive-thru of the credit union. She wanted to know if that was being considered. Mr. Whitmore stated that they would accommodate in a future revised plan.

Mr. Malozi made a motion that the Planning Commission approve the land development and subdivision plan for 2285-2425 Schoenersville Road (Westgate Mall) conditioned upon meeting all the requirements outlined in the City's March 3, 2022 review letter. Noting that comment #1 on page #2 in the Public Works Traffic section was a request for consideration and not a condition of approval of the alignment of the driveway across from Statten Avenue. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barker and passed with a 5-0.

5. DISCUSSIONS:

No discussion items were discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

ATTEST:



Darlene Heller, Commission Secretary