

CPC Minutes of June 21, 2011

A regular meeting of the City Plan Commission (CPC) was held on Tuesday, June 21, 2011 at 4:45 p.m. in the Department of the Planning and Development (DPD) 4th Floor Auditorium, 400 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Opening Session

Call to order: Chairman Durkee called the meeting to order at 4:44 p.m.

Members Present: Chairman Stephen Durkee, Andrew Cortes, Meredyth Church and Luis Torrado

Members Absent: Vice Chairman Harrison Bilodeau, Ina Anderson and JoAnn Ryan

Staff Present: Robert Azar, Melanie Army and Choyon Manjrekar

Approval of meeting minutes from May 17, 2011: Mr. Cortes made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to approve the minutes. All voted in favor.

PROVIDENCE TOMORROW

1. Comprehensive Plan Update - Presentation updates to Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan based on the results of neighborhood charrettes and public input – for discussion

Ms. Army presented updates to Chapters 7 and 8 on Mobility and Arts and Culture. She presented a revised version of Chapter 8 to the Commission. Mr. Army presented changes to chapter 7 including updates about transportation funding, increased attention to alternative transportation, public transport pass programs, the sustainable communities initiative, pilot residential parking program, Transit 2020 plan, the Providence Core Connector study and the feasibility study of the bike share initiative. Ms. Army said the startup costs for a bikeshare program could total about \$1.2 million She presented updated transportation Objectives and Strategies that include a focus on car sharing, developing transit hubs, improving intermodal connections and supporting RIPTA's efforts to create new bus routes and service during off peak and late hours. Transit strategies included branding RIPTA, incorporating Transit Oriented Development into the Zoning Ordinance and having rapid bus service. Other transit objectives included striping of bicycle lanes, location of parking garages and enforcement of parking lot standards.

Ms. Army presented changes to Chapter 8, which incorporated the Cultural Plan from the Arts and Culture Department. The chapter included updates and changes relating to the growing arts community, creative professionals as small businesses and more opportunities for creative learning and teaching. She then read the strategies and objectives, including using arts to link neighborhoods, preserving cultural organizations and awareness of historic resources and preservation. Mr. Cortes said that strategy AC-3 E (2), permitting artist space in jobs only districts could interfere with the intent of the district to only allow businesses. Ms. Army said it was meant for artists who only had studios but did not live there. Mr. Durkee said that the document was consistent in classifying art as small business.

Mr. Lemus asked if there were provisions for noticing meetings in the Comprehensive Plan and said he was not notified of a fish ladder adjacent to his property. Mr. Durkee said it was irrelevant to what was being discussed.

2. Case No. 11-017MI – 351 Harris Avenue - Minor subdivision to create three lots, measuring approximately 183,884 SF, 45,943 SF and 56,951 SF out of a lot measuring approximately 287,030 SF – for action (AP 27 Lot 23, Valley)

Mr. Azar introduced the project, describing the extent of the newly created lots. Ms. April Wolf presented the proposal on behalf of the Providence Redevelopment Agency. She said the property is owned by Fry's Metals and lots A and B would be rented to Umicore. The former adjudication building with a Harris Avenue address would be demolished to provide parking. Lot B would be used by Umicore pending remediation. Parcel C would be a development parcel in the future. Mr. Durkee asked about Street access to the lots. Ms. Wolf said that street access

would be provided from Charlotte Hope Street, Sims Avenue and Harris Avenue. Proposed Parcel B did not have street access, but would be accessed through an easement from Kinsley Avenue. Mr. Azar read out the staff report, which found that the development was in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance, the Comprehensive Plan and recommended approval with the condition that staff be delegated final approval. Mr. Cortes made a motion seconded by Mr. Torrado to approve the subdivision per the findings of fact and staff recommendations. All voted in favor.

3. Referral 3336 – Petition for permanent easements on Park Street - The applicant, Veterans Memorial Auditorium, is requesting a permanent easement on Park Street to accommodate expansion of the facility to construct a loading dock and additional restrooms. – for action. (Downtown)

Mr. Azar introduced the proposal, which proposed to make an addition to the west side of the building that would intrude 12 feet into the 16 foot sidewalk as a loading dock, restroom space and a sound buffer. The Capital Center Commission approved the project over which it has jurisdiction. The CPC review of the project would be for recommendation of the easement to the City Council, not for its design. Mr. Azar said that the DPD was concerned that the four feet left by the easement would be too narrow for pedestrians. The applicant responded by proposing a plan that bumped the sidewalk into Park Street to create a 9 foot sidewalk, that would narrow the street. The DPD and the Department of Public Works requested a traffic study to determine the impact on traffic and find alternatives. Mr. Azar said the DPD recommended the CPC to make a positive recommendation to the City Council, with the condition that the easement not be finalized until the findings of the traffic study were released and necessary changes were implemented.

Attorney for the Convention Center Authority, Mr. Bruce Leach said that items required for performances currently need to be hoisted up. The easement would allow for easier access to the building. A discussion ensued on the building's design.

Mr. Cortes made a motion, seconded by Ms. Church to make a positive recommendation to the council per the recommendations by DPD staff. All voted in favor.

4. Major Change to Project 02-095MA – Rising Sun Mills, 166 Valley Street - Presentation of a revised plan showing the addition of 60 parking spaces in a mixed use development through addition of new parking area and restriping of existing spaces – for action (AP 62 Lot 598, Olneyville)

Note: A stenographer's transcript is part of the record

Mr. Manjrekar introduced the project, which was a revised version of a plan presented at the prior month's meeting showing a smaller intrusion of parking spaces into the 25 foot landscape buffer area required for developments near water bodies. Mr. Mark Van Noppen said the new plan addressed the issues raised by the Commission when it was first presented. He said the encroachment into the buffer was significantly reduced and that DEM would review any changes to the site as it is composed of a wetland. He showed changes on the site plan including showing drive aisle width and amount of parking space encroachment into the buffer, which averaged about 40 feet. A discussion on existing parking conditions ensued. Mr. Torrado said that the plan represented a marked improvement from the previous version. Mr. Van Noppen said he wanted to stress that the fish ladder was not part of the development. Mr. Oscar Lemus said he should have received a notification for construction of the fish ladder. He said the applicant should not be granted the request for parking as it was not part of the original development approval. Mr. Durkee said the proposal intended to amend the original plan and would be subject to the regulations of the DEM and probably the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). Mr. Lemus asked if he would receive notice from DEM. Mr. Durkee said he needed to speak to DEM about their noticing requirements.

Mr. Manjrekar read the DPD's findings of fact into the record, which found the proposal to be in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and recommended that the Commission make a positive recommendation to the Zoning Board to approve relief required for reduced drive aisle width, increase in the proportion of compact parking spaces and encroachment of some spaces into the coastal buffer area.

Ms. Church made a motion seconded by Mr. Torrado to approve the amendment to the plan and make a positive recommendation to the Zoning Board for the relief requested. All voted in favor.

4. Case No. 09-050 - 395 Promenade Street (Preliminary Plan Approval)

The applicant is seeking Preliminary Plan Approval to reuse approximately 2,600 SF of the southwest portion of an existing 2 story building and construct a new 23,000 SF one story laboratory building. The plan features an enhanced building design and environmental management plan – for action (AP 67 Lots 341, 522 and 523, Smith Hill)

Note: A stenographer's transcript is part of the record

Mr. Manjrekar introduced the project, an expansion of the existing Blood Center on the adjacent lot, which received Master Plan approval in February 2010. The applicant had returned with a traffic study and an environmental assessment of the site. Attorney John Bolton said that the applicant had not received permits from the DEM and CRMC, but would have them at the final plan stage. Mr. Torrado asked for an introduction to the site and project. Mr. Durkee said many proposals were received for the site in the past.

Ms. Nicole Reilly presented the project, which would consist of office and laboratory space to supplement the adjacent blood center. She said the historic building fronting Promenade Street would be preserved and the building behind would be demolished for the new development. The site is serviced by sanitary sewer, public water and the drainage flows to the river. The building will have fire suppression in it and increased landscaping. Mr. Bolton asked if the development conformed to dimensional regulations and if there was sufficient parking. Ms. Reilly said the building was in conformance with dimensions and had sufficient parking because it shared parking with the adjacent building in addition to parking on site. A discussion ensued on site drainage. Mr. Torrado asked for an explanation of the project. Ms. Reilly explained the project configuration to him. Mr. Torrado asked for a clarification about remarks in the staff report about more transparency on the building façade.

Mr. Keith D'Avignon of Vision 3 architects said that the building plans at the Master Plan stage were conceptual massing plans and the preliminary plan submission featured the required transparent building surface.

Ms. Reilly spoke about landscaping and said the site exceeded the required amount for the zone. She said the light provided did not exceed one footcandle at the property. Mr. John Carter, the landscape architect explained the lighting plan. Mr. Cortes if the excess parking was required. Ms. Reilly said it may be required depending on the volume of donors. A discussion ensued on the use of the building.

Ms. Church asked how many spaces were in the covered traffic garage. Mr. D'Avignon said the intent was to allow donors to use the space. A discussion on the configuration ensued.

Mr. Manjrekar read out the staff's findings. He said the traffic study found that Promenade Street would provide a 'B' level of service to the development, which would entail about a 10 second delay for every vehicle, which the DPD found acceptable. The project was found to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Site lighting was adequate and light poles should not exceed 18 feet. A comment was made by the Technical Review Committee to explore installation of a fire hydrant by the site. Mr. D'Avignon said that the existing hydrants were surveyed and found to be adequate. Mr. Torrado asked if a flow test had been conducted. Ms. Reilly said a test was conducted. Mr. D'Avignon said that truck access was provided and there was more concern about hydrants.

Mr. Manjrekar read out the conditions of approval. All environmental approvals should be obtained by the final plan stage and the applicant should reappear before the board if the approvals required changing the site plan. The final plan should receive approval from the fire department. Light poles should not exceed 18 feet and all light fixtures should be downward facing. Final plan approval should be delegated to DPD staff.

Mr. Cortes made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to approve the preliminary plan per the findings of fact and staff conditions. All voted in favor.

A five minute recess was taken.

6. Presentation of Rhode Island Hospital and Women and Infants Hospital Institutional Master Plan

Renewal and readoption of five year Institutional Master Plan for Rhode Island Hospital and Women and Infants Hospital outlining 5 and 10 year plans for development, capital improvements and operations of both hospitals. – for action. (Upper South Providence)

The Commission reconvened after the recess. Mr. Charles Olmstead of Rhode Island Hospital and Gail Costa of Care New England representing Women and Infants hospital introduced the plan to renew their Master Plan Approval. Mr. Olmstead said there were no plans to expand either campus and that the landscaping plan was almost 90% complete. He said programs like Stepping Up helped youth find employment and contributed \$40 million to charity. Ms. Costa said the major project was the building addition, which had been completed. Mr. Durkee asked Ms. Costa about the hospitals holdings on Richmond Street. She said that the hospital had some property on Richmond Street. Mr. Durkee asked if the hospital intended to redevelop the parking lots around around Prairie Avenue. Mr. Olmstead said he had discussions with RIPTA and talks were ongoing. A discussion ensued on transit approval.

Mr. Cortes said the previous plan centered along redevelopment and landscaping and asked about the progress in implementation. Mr. Olmstead said the plan was almost 90 percent complete.

Mr. Grant Dulgarian asked about the parking policy for both hospitals. Ms. Costa said they were shared parking lots with the same rates as Rhode Island Hospital. Mr. Dulgarian said he commended the hospitals for charging for parking as the Comprehensive Plan discouraged surface parking. He said the Comprehensive Plan should address the parking issue by making tax free institutions charge users for parking.

Mr. David Everett presented the staff's findings to approve renewal subject to the following conditions. Any expansion beyond the existing campus shall require the plans to be amended and adhere to the zoning ordinance. IMP's must be amended prior to development or modifications not included in the IMP. Any modifications should be submitted to staff, who would determine if Commission review is necessary. The applicants should hold semi-annual meetings with DPD staff to discuss implementation of the IMP.

Mr. Cortes made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to approve the plan. All voted in favor.

Mr. Cortes made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Choyon Manjrekar,
Recording Secretary