

CPC Minutes of January 15, 2013

A regular meeting of the City Plan Commission (CPC) was held on Tuesday, January 15, 2013 at 4:45 p.m. in the Department of the Planning and Development (DPD) 1st Floor Meeting Room, 444 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Opening Session

Call to order: Chairman Durkee called the meeting to order at 4:48 p.m.

Members Present: Chairman Stephen Durkee, Harrison Bilodeau, Christine West, Meredyth Church, Ina Anderson, and JoAnn Ryan

Staff Present: Robert Azar

Approval of meeting minutes from November 20th 2012 and December 18th 2012: Ms. West said that the CPC should be replaced with the word DPD on the third page of the November 20th minutes. Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to approve the minutes with Ms. West's correction. All voted in favor.

Director's report: Mr. Azar said the City Plan Commission's bylaws had been reviewed by the City Solicitor's office who found them to be appropriate.

MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1. Case No. 12-011 MA – 257 Thayer Street (Final Plan Approval)

The applicant is seeking preliminary plan approval to construct a four story mixed use building with 95 dwelling units intended for student housing with a retail area on the ground floor. Underground parking and a landscaped interior courtyard will be provided – for action (AP 13 Lots 42, 48, 104, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238 and 241, College Hill)

Mr. Azar said the final plan would not be reviewed as the preliminary plan for the development was appealed. Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to continue the item. All voted in favor.

INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN

2. Amendment of Providence College's Institutional Master Plan (IMP)

The applicant is seeking to amend the IMP to reflect the institution's requests for street abandonments and changes to the Institutional Overlay Zone – for action (Elmhurst)

CITY COUNCIL REFERRAL

3. Referral 3359 – Abandonment of portions of Huxley Avenue, Wardlaw Avenue and Cumberland Street

Petition by Providence College to abandon Huxley Avenue between AP 119 lot 8 and lot 229 and Cumberland Street between AP 81 lot 189 and lot 195 and Wardlaw Avenue from AP 81 lot 186 to lot 189 – for action (Elmhurst)

4. Referral 3360 – Extension of I-2 overlay zone

Petition by Providence College to extend the I-2 overlay district to include certain lots on Wardlaw Avenue and Cumberland Street – for action (Elmhurst, AP 81 Lots 186, 188 and 189-196)

Items two through four were jointly considered. Mr. Azar said the street abandonments were being sought in conjunction with an agreement to make payments in lieu of taxes, between Providence College (PC) and the City. He said PC was also looking to amend their Institutional Master Plan (IMP) and seeking a change to the zoning ordinance to include certain lots within the I-2 overlay.

Mr. John Sweeney and Mr. Mark Rapoza of PC discussed the changes. Mr. Sweeney said PC had discussed abandoning Wardlaw Ave and Cumberland Streets with the City as they are used by PC and it owns property on both sides of each street. He said PC proposed abandonments to increase the college's payments in lieu of taxes. He said PC would study campus circulation with a design firm and study means to restrict all of PC's parking on campus. A discussion on circulation ensued.

Mr. Azar said part of the proposal included extension of the I-2 overlay. He directed the CPC toward the map submitted by PC outlining the proposed extension of the overlay. He said the map included some lots that were not owned by PC. Mr. Azar said that PC should look to confine the extension of the I-2 zone to lots owned by PC. Mr. Azar said that the institutional overlays would be looked at holistically when revising the zoning ordinance. A discussion on the extension ensued.

Ms. West said she had some concerns about the design of the parking lot. Mr. Rapoza said the design would be refined as what was submitted was only intended to provide an impression of what would exist on site. He said PC would work with adjacent property owners. Mr. Durkee said PC should retain its stormwater management resources on site. Mr. Rapoza said PC was working with the Narragansett Bay Commission for stormwater management.

Ms. Diane Izzo said she was representing Steve Emma, an abutter to the abandonment area. She said abutters weren't noticed of the change and the abandonment of Huxley Avenue would adversely impact surrounding properties. Mr. Azar said the street abandonments and zoning changes required the City Council to hold a public hearing. He said the hearing for the zone change would be noticed in the newspaper and abutters within 200 feet would be noticed for the public hearing on the street abandonments. Mr. Azar said one of the requirements of approval for PC's institutional master plan was that there be documented efforts for public outreach prior to public hearings before the council. Mr. Rapoza said the hearing would be held in a few weeks. A discussion on the location houses ensued.

Mr. Sweeney said Huxley Avenue would not be closed until plans for development had been finalized. A discussion on use of the abandoned streets ensued. Ms. Izzo said she felt Brown and Johnson and Wales were treated differently compared to PC. Mr. Azar said PC was going through the same process as the other institutions. Councilman David Salvatore said the city council ways and means committee vetted the memorandum of agreement and would vote on the matter after the public hearing on February 6. Ms. West said that larger maps explain proposed circulation patterns and ownership would be useful at the city council public hearing.

Mr. Steve Emma said he lived on the corner of Ventura and Huxley and the chosen traffic pattern could make access to his property difficult. Mr. Sweeney said traffic calming measures like speed bumps had been explored but were opposed due to the damage they could cause to vehicles. Mr. Azar said items 2-4 should be voted on separately. He said the DPD recommended approval of the IMP amendment subject to the condition that the I-2 overlay only include lots owned by PC.

Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Mr. Bilodeau to approve the IMP amendment subject to the condition that the I-2 overlay only includes lots owned by PC. All voted in favor.

Mr. Azar read out the DPD's staff report for the proposed street abandonments and recommended that the CPC make a positive recommendation to the City Council.

Ms. West made a motion seconded by Ms. Church that the CPC make a positive recommendation to the City Council for the abandonment of portions of Huxley and Wardlaw Avenue, subject to the applicant complying with landscaping, stormwater and lighting regulations and PC providing limited public access to the abandoned areas. The recommendation was also subject to the applicant carefully considering patterns of traffic flow on campus.

Ms. West made a motion seconded by Ms. Ryan to make a positive recommendation to the City Council to approve the proposed extension of the I-2 overlay district subject to the condition that only lots owned by PC be included in the overlay. All voted in favor.

CPC ADMINISTRATION

5. Election of Officers

Election of CPC officers – for discussion and action

Mr. Durkee nominated Ms. West as Chair of the Commission. Ms. Church seconded the nomination. All voted in favor of Ms. West.

Mr. Durkee announced his resignation from the CPC. Mr. Azar said Mr. Durkee had chaired meetings that were instrumental in transforming how the CPC worked. Mr. Azar read out a resolution in honor of Mr. Durkee.

Mr. Bilodeau made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to adopt the resolution honoring Mr. Durkee. All voted in favor.

Mr. Gonzalo Cuervo read out a citation issued by the Mayor to honor chairman Durkee.

Adjournment

Mr. Bilodeau made a motion seconded by Ms. Church to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 5:51 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Manjrekar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Choyon Manjrekar,
Recording Secretary