

CAPITAL CENTER COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of Wednesday, August 12, 2009

A meeting of the Capital Center Commission was held on, Wednesday August 12, 2009 in the 4th Floor Auditorium of the Department of Planning and Development, 400 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903.

1. Roll Call

Call to Order: Chairman Gardner called the meeting to order at 12:10 PM.

Members Present: Leslie Gardner, Wilfrid Gates, Barry Fain, Glenn Kumekawa, Guy Abelson, Rebecca Barnes, Christopher Thomas, Luis Aponte and Josephine DiRuzzo.

Members Absent: Stanley Weiss, Greg Benik, Duncan Johnson and Merlin DeConti.

Staff Present: Christopher Ise and Robert Azar

2. Minutes

- 1) Approval of Commission meeting minutes of June 10, 2009. A motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Ms. Barnes, to approve the meeting minutes of June 10, 2009. All voted in favor.
- 2) Acceptance of Design Review Committee meeting minutes of May 19, 2009 and June 2, 2009. A motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Councilwoman DiRuzzo, to accept the DRC meeting minutes of both meetings. All voted in favor.

At this time, Chairman Gardner gave a brief overview of appointments and reappointments. She announced that Commissioner Stanley Weiss (a Governor appointment) and Commissioner Christopher Thomas (a Providence Foundation appointment) have been reappointed to terms ending 2013. She also announced new member Seth Handy, a Providence Foundation appointment, who will be joining the Commission. Chairman Gardner noted that the Commission still has one vacancy, created when Jennifer Cookke resigned May 2009.

3. Parcel 6: Capitol Cove

Request for site improvements to parcel "C" to include landscaping, paving, parking attendant booth, signage and lighting. Ben LaFrance, of Hawk Design, and Robert Roth, of Capitol Cove, appeared before the Commission to discuss the project.

Chairman Gardner gave a brief overview of the project. Mr. LaFrance noted that the project came before the DRC in July and August and are now back with a revised plan. He presented the site plan, noting that the roadway into the development has been named "Capitol Court." Mr. LaFrance explained that there will be a turnaround for Johnson and Wales University's shuttle buses to easily go in and out of the parking lot. The temporary parking lot has a 2-year approval.

He stated that two parking signs are proposed. The main sign, to be located at the corner of the parking lot, will measure 24" x 30" and have a blue background with white lettering. The sign will be 4' in height and mounted on a 2" black metal post. At the end of Capitol Court, a smaller parking sign to match the larger sign will be mounted on a black metal post. Mr. LaFrance stated that the parking lot attendant booth will be installed on a concrete foundation with a 6" reveal protected by 4 security bollards. The entrance will be curbed with recycled granite blocks to control cars coming in and out of the parking lot.

Mr. LaFrance discussed the main body of the parking lot, which will have 217 spaces on a bituminous mix surface. He noted that it is a permeable surface so there will be no issue with drainage. The planting plan for the entrance of the site will consist of trees, Yews and Spirea, with Day Lilly's bordering the front edge. A hedge row of Yews at the outer edge of the sidewalk is proposed. A cluster of Burning Bush at the end of the sidewalk is to remain. Mr. LaFrance stated that a Yew hedge is proposed along Capital Court, and a 24" inch berm to protect cars from entering the lot. There will be a chain gate with two bollards to give Waterfire workers access to their dumpsters during events. He added that 8 white pines at the end of the building will screen the rear portion of the lot. Regarding the heavy vegetation along the canal wall, Mr. LaFrance stated that it will be pruned and maintained and will provide a buffer to the site. Regarding lighting, Mr. LaFrance stated that three light poles are proposed in addition to the existing pole at the corner. They will have double light heads that will only be aimed at the parking area.

At this time, Chairman Gardner and Mr. Gates discussed the recommendations from the last DRC meeting. Mr. Gates discussed the relocation of the bollards and chain, the relocation of the forsythia plants, and the edge of parking surface defined with granite blocks. Chairman Gardner asked how cars will be restricted from the portion of the lot that is not designated for parking. Mr. LaFrance explained that parking will be controlled. Mr. Gates remarked that the concrete pad for the attendant booth should have curbing and that the planting along Capital Court should be 3' on center. Mr. LaFrance confirmed 59 Yews at 4' on center. The forsythia are to be 5' on center around the light poles. Chairman Gardner asked the Commission if the amount of Yews is satisfactory. Mr. Gates replied yes.

Ms. Barnes asked about the transition between the parking lot and the train station garage. She expressed concern regarding security access. She asked if the developer had considered additional landscaping and the addition of trees in the parking lot. Mr. LaFrance was concerned with irrigation since no system is proposed. Ms. Barnes stated that there should be additional planting given the prominence of this location. Ms Barnes asked if the parking control booth is going to be similar to type shown in the photo submitted. Mr. LaFrance stated there will be an air conditioning unit on the top of the parking booth, which is a white metal prefabricated structure.

Mr. Thomas asked how parking lot patrons will access the site. Mr. LaFrance replied that there will be a walkway from the parking lot to Park Row West. Mr. Fain asked if this will be parking for the public and Johnson and Wales students. Mr. LaFrance replied that it will only be for the public. All Johnson and Wales students will park in the building's parking garage.

Chariman Gardner noted that other parking lots in the Capital Center District that have perimeter plantings. She added that Mr. LaFrance should consider additional plantings on the site, because it is historically typical for other grandfathered parking lots in the district.

Ms. Barnes remarked that the edges of the parking lot are not landscaped enough. Mr. Kumekawa asked who has controlled use of the land. Mr. LaFrance replied that Capital Court LLC owns the land, and there are no plans for development on this portion of the site at this time. Mr. Gates discussed that the site is not intended to be a permanent facility therefore can't agree on additional landscaping. Mr. LaFrance has concerns with the conflict between the grandfathered parking lot and urban design. He remarked that the parking lot has a two-year time limit in place.

Chairman Gardner explained that the commission is trying to be as reasonable as possible, and is aware that it is the front door to the train station. She stated that there is a reasonable resolution and that the Commission will have the opportunity to renew the approval and upgrade if necessary. She added that the Commission has higher standards but at the same time are trying to be reasonable.

Chairman Gardner expressed concern regarding leaving the northern edge of the parking lot open. Mr. Gates asked Mr. LaFrance to discuss the northern edge in more detail. Mr. LaFrance stated that it will be use for snow removal, and the dumpster trucks need access. Mr. LaFrance explained it would be striped off and the bituminous mix would end there, creating an edge and a stop to the surface. Mr. Roth proposed creating a 1' to 1'-6" high berm to prevent cars from passing. Mr. Aponte stated he has concerns with the students that have visitors may park in the lot. Mr. Gates stated that the definition of the parking area is important. Chairman Gardner stated that all Commissioners agree that there needs to be some finished edge. Ms. Barnes remarked that she appreciates the required two-year review.

Mr. Aponte said that the City Council is concerned with the use of this parcel, and that the current use will be permanent. Ms. Gardner stated if there can be more greenery put on the site. Ms. DiRuzzo stated there should be more landscaping on this site. Chairman Gardner requested that the developer consider adding more greenery to the plan. She added that the Commission is satisfied with the plan and the suggestion of the berm. Mr. Kumekawa added that he is concerned with the landscaping and insists that it be maintained.

Mr. Gates stated there should be reasonably orderly appearance of 10 trees. Mr. Gated marked up the plan presented. Ms. Gardner asked what happens to the trees when the site is developed. Mr. Gates added if they are chosen correctly, the trees can be relocated.

Ms. Barnes made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fain, to approve to approve the site plan as presented, with the addition of the berm on the northern end, and addition of ten 10 trees to be selected and located for throughout the site. All voted in favor.

4. New Business

There was no new business at this time.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 PM.

Christopher Thomas
Secretary/Treasurer