

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, February 4, 2009 in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Council Chambers, Easton City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Charles Elliott. Present: Charles Elliott, James Bloom, Robert Sun and Mary Viscomi. Joel Scheer, City Solicitor was present. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, Director, Carl Manges, City Planner and Tina Woolverton, Secretary.

A motion to accept the revised minutes of the January 7, 2009 meeting of the Easton Planning Commission was made by Mr. Sun, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

**Public Comment.** None

**Special Exception –125 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street – Small Family Day Care home.** Mr. Manges said the applicant, Christy Williams, proposes to establish a Small Family Daycare Home for three children at 125 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The property is located in the West Ward Zoning District where the proposed I9 Small family Day Care Home use is permitted by special exception. Mr. Manges noted the existence of two means of egress out of the house on the first floor and a fenced rear yard. He said the 1997 Comprehensive Plan supports home occupation at scales and intensities that do not adversely affect the adjacent land uses. Ms. Viscomi asked if the daycare was already in place at another location. The applicant stated it was not. Mr. Sun asked the applicant if her own children would be there. Ms. Williams said she had one child who would be there after school. Mr. Bloom asked if, in the future, the applicant wanted to increase the number of children, the request would need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Ms. Bradley said it would. Mr. Bloom asked if the Codes department would conduct an inspection of the building. Ms. Bradley said it would be required. A motion to accept the revised resolution recommending approval of the Special Exception request to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Ms. Viscomi, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

**Special Exception – 1125 Northampton Street. Establish a Wholesale Beer and Soda Distributor.** Mr. Manges stated the applicant, Steven Koorie, proposes to establish a C3-General Merchandise (Wholesale Beer & Soda Distributor) in a currently vacant one-story building at 1125 Northampton Street. The property is located in the West Ward Block Class C Zoning District, Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District where the use is permitted as special exception. Mr. Manges noted the 10 off-street parking spaces were sufficient for the proposed use, as determined by the Zoning Administrator. He said the planned hours of operation would be from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday through Saturday. Mr. Sun asked if the applicant would only be selling to other establishments. Ms. Bradley said no, in this case wholesale meant only full cases could be purchased, not six packs or single servings. Mr. Sun mentioned the letter from the Salvation Army voicing concerns over the availability of alcohol near schools. Mr. Bloom asked the size of the vehicles which would be making deliveries to the site. Mr. Koorie said they would be standard tri-axles and box trucks. Mr. Bloom then asked what time of day the deliveries would occur. Mr. Koorie stated deliveries would be made during business hours and that a designated off-street loading area existed. Mr. Scheer questioned whether the license was being moved from the previous location on Bushkill Street to the proposed location. Mr. Koorie said it was. Mr. Scheer questioned if the PA LCB notified neighbors of the application. Mr. Koorie said a placard is placed on the building noting the application to sell beer. Ms. Katz of 130 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street pointed out the proposed location is near a youth center, church, synagogue, school and park frequented by children. Mr. Sun asked Ms. Katz if she felt the presence of a beer distributor would alter the character of the neighborhood. Ms. Katz replied she feels the proposed use is not necessary, especially in such a delicate area which already has much to be concerned about. Mr. Bloom said there are numerous bars in the area, which is where most illicit activities take place. Ms. Bradley asked if there was an existing pay phone on the property, or the plan to have one installed. Mr. Koorie said there is not. Mr. White of 933 Ferry Street said it won't be difficult for underage children to get beer, and he voiced the same concerns as Ms. Katz. Mr. Ehly of 305 W. Monroe Street said he is a member of

the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership, and a steering committee has named two intersections of concern, one of which is 11<sup>th</sup> and Northampton Streets. He said he is representing many people who were concerned with the application. He added there is concern with the crime in the area. He questioned the definition of a special exception. Mr. Elliott responded that a special exception is distinguished from an as right use. The City has determined the special exception is an appropriate use, but has characteristics which require a deeper review. Mr. Cannon of 842 Ferry Street said the quality of life in the neighborhood is poor and people turn to alcohol and drugs in tough times. He said he hopes the Commission does more research before making a decision. Mr. Koorie said he appreciates and respects the concerns. He added his family also lives in the neighborhood and has for 44 years. He said his children attend the nearby school. He said the hours of operation were chosen as to not conflict with the surroundings. He also noted the business would be entirely run by his family. Ms. Viscomi asked Mr. Ehly what the concerns of the intersection were. Mr. Ehly said there is drug and gang activity and the loss of businesses. Mr. Cannon questioned how this business would help the neighborhood. Mr. Sun said increased traffic deters crime. Mr. Sun asked the applicant if delaying a decision by 30 days would have an adverse affect on the plan. Mr. Koorie said it would not. A motion to table the application until the meeting of March 4, 2009 was made by Mr. Sun, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

**Special Exception – 516 March Street – Establish a Coffee Shop.** There was no applicant or representative of the applicant present. It was decided the matter would be referred to the Zoning Hearing Board without recommendation of the Planning Commission due to the applicant's failure to appear.

**Amendments to the Planning and Zoning Code.** Ms. Bradley said the existing codes do not speak to the use of or establish definitions for check cashing and pawn facilities. She introduced amendments that would define the use and create supplemental standards and criteria for specific uses in the Adaptive Re-use District. A discussion among the Commission followed, recommending some changes to the proposed amendment. Other proposed amendments were discussed. No action was taken on the amendments and Ms. Bradley said revised amendments incorporating the Commission's input would be brought back at a future meeting.

**Bicycle Friendly Community Designation.** Mr. Elliott said the EAC, at its meeting of February 3, 2009 adopted a resolution requesting the Mayor and City Council to pursue a Bicycle Friendly Community designation for the City of Easton. He requested the Planning Commission do the same. He added the designation would help present Easton with grant opportunities not other wise available. A motion to accept the resolution requesting the Mayor to sign the Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities was made by Mr. Sun, seconded by Ms. Viscomi, approved by all.

**EAC Update.** Mr. Elliott said the update would be a regular item on the agenda. He said at the meeting of February 3, 2009 a discussion was held concerning the evolving role of the EAC. He added the Committee was advisory to the City bodies, including the Planning Commission. They questioned how they can give meaningful advice on projects if they don't know about them. A conversion followed regarding whether the EAC should be notified of all development plans when received, or if certain criteria should be created dictating when they were notified of receipt of a plan. Ms. Bradley expressed concern with having all development plans reviewed by the EAC, sighting the narrow window of time the staff had between receiving plans and completing reviews.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.