

The Easton Planning Commission met on Thursday, May 17, 2012 in the 6th Floor Council Chambers, Easton City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Charles Elliott. Present: Charles Elliott, Robert Sun, Dennis Lieb, Bonnie Winfield and Ronald Shipman. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, AICP, Director of Planning and Codes; Brian Gish, Chief Planner; and Tina Woolverton, Secretary. Solicitor Joel Scheer was present.

The agenda was approved.

A motion to approve the revised minutes of the April 4, 2012 meeting was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

Privilege of the Floor. None

Special Exception – Development in the Floodplain – 30-32 Sitgreaves Street. Ms. Bradley said the applicant, Jay Miller, has proposed to establish two (2) Two-Family Semidetached uses in two buildings located at 30 & 32 S. Sitgreaves Street. Each building is proposed to have two dwelling units, each being approximately 1,000 square feet. The buildings are currently being used as a construction office, which the applicant owns.

She said the properties are located in the Downtown Zoning District; Block Class B, where the proposed Two-Family Semidetached uses are permitted by Special Exception. The properties are also located in the Flood Hazard Overlay District, requiring Special Exception approval for Use in the floodplain from the Easton Zoning Hearing Board. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Maps, 30 & 32 S. Sitgreaves Street are both located in a Federal Emergency Management Agency defined 500-year floodplain.

Ms. Bradley said the minimum lot size for a property in the Downtown District, Block Class B is 2,500 square feet, and each lot size is 1,120 square feet, thus requiring variances from the Zoning Hearing Board.

During a conversation with the applicant on April 10, 2012, Mr. Miller informed staff that the buildings are currently being used commercially for his construction office. The applicant indicated that no flood waters have reached the building during the last four flood events that have occurred in the City, and this has been verified by staff through City Codes records. The applicant has informed staff that notification will be made to the tenants in case of a flood warning/event for evacuation purposes. The applicant indicated that he will register the dwelling units with the City's Rental Housing Licensing Agency, if the approvals are received.

The applicant was present, and had no further presentation. Mr. Shipman questioned if there were requirements of the Historic District Commission to be met. Ms. Bradley said the HDC would only come into play if exterior renovations visible from the street were being made. Mr. Elliott suggested a slight modification to condition #7 regarding the off-street parking requirements. A motion to approve the revised resolution recommending approval to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Mr. Sun, approved by all.

Special Exception – 698 Northampton Street. Mr. Gish said the applicant, Riken Patel, proposes to establish a Food Establishment (Corner Grocery) use in the currently vacant first floor of an existing mixed-use three-story building at 698 Northampton Street. The previous use at this location consisted of a corner grocery store, which did not have the proper zoning to operate at this location. The property is located in the West Ward Zoning District, Block Class B, where the proposed Food Establishment is not permitted. However, the property is also located in the Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District, where the Food Establishment use is permitted by Special Exception.

Mr. Gish said a conversation with Mr. Patel on April 11, 2012, revealed that he wants to establish a Corner Grocery store at 698 Northampton Street. The applicant will be the only employee when this business starts, and there is a possibility of hiring additional employees in the future if business does well. The hours of operation will be Monday thru Saturday 8am – 9pm, and Sunday 8am - 5pm. The applicant also indicated that there is no off-street parking provided at this location. The applicant believes most of the customers patronizing his store will be walk-ins

from the neighborhood. According to the applicant, deliveries will be made in small trucks and delivery vans from the same distributor that delivers to Ricky's Food & Tobacco. There will be no tractor-trailer deliveries associated with this business.

The applicant was not present at the time, but arrived later. A motion to approve the resolution recommending approval to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all.

Land Development and Subdivision Pomeroy Phase II. Mr. Gish said the applicant, Pomeroy Development, LP, proposes to develop the vacant rear portion of the seven-story mixed-use Pomeroy Building located at 322-336 Northampton Street. The first floor, approximately 7,528 square feet, is proposed to be used as a Professional Services (Doctor Offices), with the remaining six floors to contain 22 apartments. The entrances for the Doctor Offices and apartments are proposed to be along Pine Street, with additional access on the eastern side of the building along Bank Street. The applicant intends for the basement to be utilized as storage, containing lockers for the residential tenants who reside in this portion of the building. The applicant also proposes to subdivide the property, currently one parcel, into two separate parcels. With the subdivision, each parcel will have a separate building located on it. These submitted plans detail Phase II of the Pomeroy Building development. Phase I was approved by the Easton Planning Commission on April 7, 2010. According to the applicant, it is anticipated the medical offices will begin operation within 8 months, and the apartments being completed in early 2014.

The 1st Floor Professional Services for Phase II will consist of:

- Outpatient service for Easton Hospital
- 4 Doctor Offices
- 12 Exam Rooms

The apartment units for Phase II are as follows:

- 4 –two bedroom and 3 –one bedroom units on the 2nd and 3rd Floors
- 1 –two bedroom and 1 –one bedroom units each on the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Floors

Mr. Gish said the proposed improvements to the Pomeroy's Building are located in the Downtown Zoning District, Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District, Block Class B, where the proposed Mixed Residential/Business uses are permitted. The Professional Services use is also permitted in the Downtown Zoning District, and received the necessary zoning approvals for operating this use at this location.

Ms. Bradley said a letter was received earlier in the day from LVPC stating the development is in accord with the County Comprehensive Plan. The applicant, Mark Mulligan was present. Mr. Shipman questioned the drainage of the concrete patio between the two buildings. Mr. Mulligan said it sheet drains toward Bank Street. Mr. Lieb questioned the rear façade for the medical office. Mr. Mulligan said both entrances will have awnings. Mr. Sun questioned why the property was being subdivided. Mr. Mulligan explained it makes financing easier to have two smaller projects versus one larger one, and makes sense since the buildings are completely separated. Mr. Elliott noted the parking is grandfathered and the applicant has no requirement to provide off-street parking but will lease spaces in both the parking garage and the lot at S. 4th Street. Mr. Elliott asked if the financing is secured for the project. Mr. Mulligan said it is, based upon subdivision approval. A motion to approve the resolution granting conditional preliminary approval was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

Karl Stirner Arts Trail amendment – 13th Street Parking Lot. Mr. Gish said the applicant, the City of Easton, has proposed a plan amendment to improve an existing 10-space gravel parking lot along N. 13th Street, as a component of the Karl Stirner Arts Trail. The gravel lot currently serves as a parking area for the public utilizing the trail. This proposal will enhance this area for the public to park their vehicles safely while enjoying the amenities the trail provides. The site design incorporates a number of features to promote safety and enjoyment to the park visitors:

- The lot will be paved, and the parking spaces will be delineated
- Brick columns and 6'- high black ornamental fencing will be located at the entrance of the parking lot
- Landscaping in the form of 2 Tatarian Maple trees, and 41 shrubs Goldfinger, Potentilla, Hummingbird Summersweet, Goldmound Spirea, and Brilliant Red

Chokeberry are being provided as a buffer between the parking lot and neighboring uses

The Karl Stirner Arts Trail plans received conditional final approval from the Easton Planning Commission on November 4, 2009, and the Zoning Hearing Board granted a Special Exception for development in the floodplain on December 21, 2009. The trail was officially opened to the public in September 2011.

Dave Horton of Pennoni Engineering was present to answer questions on behalf of the City. Mr. Shipman questioned the addition of impervious surface and the outflow to the creek. Mr. Horton said the area of impervious surface is less than 5,000 s.f. Mr. Lieb said he would like to see the bridge over the Bushkill Creek re-designed to appear similar to the original open rail design. Mr. Sun questioned if lighting was proposed for the parking lot. Ms. Bradley said one light has been previously approved and would be installed. A motion to approve the resolution for conditional final approval was made by Mr. Sun, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all.

Sketch Plan – Silk Mill Phase 1. Ms. Bradley recused herself from the review as she was grant manager for the project. The review of the project had been performed by Dave Horton of Pennoni Engineering, the City's Alternate Engineer. Mr. Gish said The applicant, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Easton, has proposed a series of developments, redevelopments and property line reconfigurations (by both subdivision and reverse subdivision) along the 600-Block of North Thirteenth Street, at the site of the Simon Silk Mill.

These changes are to take place in phases, the current submission representing Phase I. The project is located in the River Corridors & Other Green Areas Zoning District, Block Class A, where the proposed use, Mixed Residential/Business (A-12), is permitted by Special Exception. The site, however, is also located in the Street Corridor Overlay District, where the proposed use is permitted by right.

Mr. Horton said the applicant proposes to redevelop the existing Building K as a mixed residential/commercial use building, including 11,070 sq. ft. of retail space on the first floor, and 36 one- and two-bedroom apartments on floors two through four. Building L is proposed to be converted into an indoor parking structure with parking spaces for 22 cars. The proposed structures and uses are to be accompanied by the construction of a 61-space surface parking lot.

Proposed site improvements for Phase I of the project also include construction of a thru street, extending 1,370 ft. from North Thirteenth Street to Bushkill Dr., with the ultimate intention to dedicate the road to the City.

Proposals for the future development (Phase II) of the site include the conversion of other existing buildings on-site, along with the creation of additional surface parking and a parking deck structure.

"Silk: A Creative Community Master Plan," prepared by Spillman Farmer Architects in 2009 outlines the specifics of the mill site revitalization and the development plan is consistent with it. One of the primary goals of the revitalization project is historic preservation.

The site currently contains 18 buildings, with a gross floor area of 306,986 sq. ft. The buildings have been used from the late 1800s for textile manufacturing, with production ending in the 1970s. The existing buildings are no longer in operation as a light industrial use, now sitting vacant.

There are no functional potable or waste water systems located on the property, though the site is located in the service areas of the Easton Suburban Water Authority (potable water) and the City of Easton (waste water).

Surrounding properties located along North Thirteenth Street and Bushkill Drive consists of commercial, industrial and single-family residential uses. With the exception of the City's Karl Stirner Arts Trail, no other parks, public recreation, Source Water Protection, or other critical uses areas adjoining the site. The site is located in a FEMA-defined floodplain along the Bushkill Creek, which will require Special Exception review by the Planning Commission and approval by the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Shipman asked, if in addition to the proposed roadway running easterly from 13th Street to Bushkill Drive, if other streets were planned for the site. Mark Bahnick, of Van Kleef Engineering, the project engineer, said the overall master plan only contains one public street. He added that additional driveways and parking areas will be needed, but no other points of access are planned. Mr. Lieb asked what the tunnel entrance on 13th Street would be used for. Mr. Bahnick said it would be utilized by pedestrians. Mr. Lieb suggested that the landscape plan be urbanized. He also suggested bring the street level up to the sidewalk height to eliminate the need for handicapped ramps. Mr. Bahnick said sidewalk and street concept has already been incorporated in the plans.

Mr. Sun asked where the nearest sewer line was. Mr. Bahnick said it is on the south side of the Bushkill Creek, and the plan is to create a gravity system to pump to 13th Street. Mr. Sun asked if the possibility of dam removal and the affect it would have on the site had been explored. Mr. Gish said the effect would be minimal. Mr. Sun asked if pollution was an issue. Mr. Helmer, of Taggart Associates, the Bushkill Creek Corridor Manager, said significant environmental studies had been performed at the site, and it had not been presented as an issue. Mr. Elliott questioned whether there would be curbside parking on the internal roadways. Mr. Bahnick said allowing the necessary roadway width to allow for curbside parking would render the sidewalks almost non-functional and have a negative impact on pedestrian movement. Mr. Elliott said the Karl Stirner Arts trail will be the primary recreation for the site and thought needs to be put into how the trail will be accessed. Mr. Sun asked if the plan to subdivide the site was for financing purposes. Mr. Mulligan said the project lends itself to the planned subdivision. He explained the property is currently 5 parcels, and the intent is to create one parcel, which will then be subdivided into 2 parcels when the roadway is created through the middle and dedicated to the City. He said the plan is to create condominium agreements for the individual buildings. Mr. Elliott asked if an interior crossing of the creek had been considered. Mr. Mulligan said at this point it was a funding issue. Mr. Helmer added the Spillman Farmer master plan had included a very conceptual one. Mr. Sun asked what the proposed completion date was for the first phase of the project. Mr. Mulligan said 2014. As this was a sketch plan presentation, no action was required by the Commission.

Determinations of Blight. At the Vacant Property Committee meeting of April 11, 2012 the Committee had determined the following properties as blighted:

- 48 N. Delaware Drive
- 616 Northampton Street
- 680 Pine Street
- 56 S. 5th Street
- 617 Ferry Street

The properties were brought before the Planning Commission for their determination of blight. The following motions were made:

48 N. Delaware Drive – motion made by Ms. Winfield, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

616 Northampton Street – motion made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all except Mr. Lieb who abstained from voting.

680 Pine Street – motion was made by Ms. Winfield, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

56 S. 5th Street - motion was made by Ms. Winfield, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

617 Ferry Street - motion was made by Ms. Winfield, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

EAC Update. Mr. Elliott said the tree planting brochure he distributed at the meeting had been created by EAC to educate property owners on the benefits and availability of street trees. He added the EAC will continue to work on the Comprehensive Plan re-write.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM.