

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, March 20, 2013 in the 6th Floor Council Chambers, Easton City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Charles Elliott. Present: Charles Elliott, Dennis Lieb, Bonnie Winfield and Ronald Shipman. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, AICP; Director of Planning and Codes, Carl Manges; City Planner, Tina Woolverton, Secretary. Solicitor Joel Scheer was also in attendance.

A revised agenda removing the EAC update and adding the Solicitor's discussion on the definition of land development was approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2013 meeting was made by Mr. Shipman seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all.

**Privilege of the Floor.** None

**Special Exception - 698 Northampton Street.** Mr. Manges said the applicant, Danny Roman, Sr., proposes to establish a Food Establishment (Corner Convenience/Grocery Store with a Deli) 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. The property is located in the West Ward Zoning District, Block Class B, where the proposed Food Establishment use 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. In May 2012, a Special Exception request was made by a different applicant for a Food Establishment use at this location, and the Easton Planning Commission made a recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board to grant this request. In June 2012, the Zoning Hearing Board granted this Special Exception request. However, the previous applicant never established the use at this location nor did he obtain a Certificate of Occupancy or a Health License.

A conversation with Mr. Roman on March 6, 2013, revealed that he wants to establish a Corner Convenience/Grocery store which has a Deli at 698 Northampton Street. This will be a family operated business, and the applicant and another family member will be the only employees. The hours of operation will be 6am – 10pm every day. 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. There will be no tractor-trailer deliveries associated with this business.

The applicant was present. Mr. Shipman asked what the occupancy is in the rest of the building. Mr. Lieb said it is apartments, which are occupied. Mr. Lieb asked Mr. Roman if he was moving his business to this location from his current location on Bushkill Street. Mr. Roman said he was. A motion to accept the resolution recommending approval to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all.

### **Lafayette College Development Plan for the Oechsle Center for Global Education.**

Mr. Manges said the applicant, Lafayette College, proposes the development of a three-story building for the creation of the Oechsle Center for Global Education. This proposed 16,500 square foot building will consolidate existing functions from the College. These functions include Anthropology, Sociology, Community-Based Learning, Research & Service, and Internal Affairs/Area Studies. Within the building will be offices, research space, classrooms, conference rooms, computer labs, and a reception area. He said landscaping will be incorporated with this proposal in the form of 3 Paperbark Maples and 3 Red Maples, 190 various shrubs, and 933 garden plantings. The proposal for the Oechsle Center includes the elimination of 8 existing trees, and the planting of 6 new trees for net loss of 2 trees. It is the College's plan to start construction once all their approvals are received.

Mr. Manges said the construction of the Oechsle Center building would result in the elimination of 12 parking spaces along the S. College Drive parking lot. The parking lot along S. College Drive was constructed to alleviate the displacement of parking from the Quad improvements project. A parking study has been conducted by Lafayette College to determine the adequacy of the parking on campus. City staff and the College have been working together to find a solution with the number of parking spaces needed compared to what is on the campus now. Mr. Mages said representatives from Lafayette College will provide a presentation to the Planning Commission to discuss how parking will be addressed.

Mr. Manges said this project is a portion of Lafayette College's overall Master Plan. Lafayette College's Master Plan seeks to "strengthen the identity of the campus by reinforcing the portals and edges that identify Lafayette College as a memorable place; enhance college community gateways by improving off-campus properties to reflect the College's commitment to revitalizing city-campus transitions; define open spaces and connections to create vibrant and intimate quads, lawns, and courtyards connected through an enhanced network of pedestrian paths; and develop a plan that builds upon spatial relationships and programmatic adjacencies to accommodate future new construction, renovations, and the removal of antiquated facilities."

The proposed E1-Educational Services is located in the Institutional-1 Zoning District, Block Class A, where it is a permitted use.

Mr. Manges noted that numerous minor stormwater concerns had been noted by Dave Horton of Pennoni Associates, and would need to be corrected prior to final approval. Dan Cohen, Esquire was present to represent the college. He said the technical issues will be addressed. He added the proposed building will be devoted to the same uses as existing buildings and will not add staff or students.

Mary Wilford-Hunt, Director of Facilities Planning and Construction for the College was present. She gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the parking on campus. Mr. Shipman said he appreciates the global overview of the campus parking. Ms. Winfield recused herself from comment. Mr. Lieb questioned where the on-street parking issues are located. Ms. Wilford-Hunt said the parking permit program eliminated the bulk of the issues and she does not anticipate issues with this development. Mr. Elliott asked if the allocation of parking would be submitted to the staff. Ms. Wilford-Hunt said it would. Mr. Elliott questioned the stormwater detention system. Mr. Dave Calhoun, project engineer,

said it will be a subsurface detention facility between the building and the street, wrapped in impervious line. Mr. Elliott asked if this is to slow water entering into the existing system. Mr. Calhoun said it is. Mr. Shipman asked if the proposed structure will be fire accessible. Mr. Calhoun said he has worked with the fire inspector, and the building will be sprinklered, which the older college buildings are not. Mr. Elliott questioned where the emergency access was from. Ms. Bradley said from the street. A motion to approve a revised resolution for conditional preliminary approval by adding a condition that requires the applicant to demonstrate that adequate parking exists to accommodate the proposal and the elimination of 12 parking spaces along College Drive, was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all but Ms. Winfield who was recused.

**Intermodal Facility Land Development Plan Amendment.** Ms. Bradley recused herself from the review, as she is part of the design team. Mr. Manges said the applicant, the City of Easton, in cooperation with the Lehigh and Northampton Transit Authority (LANTA), and the Easton Parking Authority, has proposed a plan amendment to improve the building and to relocate both the building and the plaza area for the previously approved Intermodal Transportation Facility project. Within the proposed building will now be City Hall, which will occupy 2 of the 3 stories. The other story will be used for commercial space. This proposal will also make it more accessible for the public to access the parking garage, the bus station, and the building itself. The site design incorporates some changes from the previous approved plans. These changes include the building being enlarged from 39,950 square feet to 45,231 square feet, the building is being relocated south from the previous approved location, and the plaza is now being relocated to the north side of the building.

Mr. Manges said the applicant received Historic District Commission approval for the footprint of the building at the March 11, 2013, meeting. This approval shall be noted on the plans.

The Intermodal Transportation Facility plans received conditional final approval from the Easton Planning Commission on February 2, 2011, and the Zoning Hearing Board granted a Special Exception for development in the floodplain on February 22, 2011.

Mr. Manges noted the applicant does not propose to change the intent of the plans with this plan amendment.

Mr. Shipman asked what has changed on the plans. Ms. Bradley said the plaza has changed from the south to the north of the site to make it more useable. Dave Horton, of Pennoni Associates, project engineer, said the site has significant grade issues and the very southern portion is on a flood plain.

Mr. Lieb said there are issues that require detailed scrutiny. He said he has received public feedback about the project and there are fears of design intent, need, and financial consequent. He said this project is one of the first tests of the City's Context Sensitive Design Guidelines and he feels it does not meet the goals. He listed some specific areas of the design guidelines where he feels it fails. He added he had conversations with individuals experienced with these types of facilities and security was a concern. He added this project turns 300 linear feet of frontage into dead facades. He

added he has not seen a benefit analysis, nor has there been adequate time and information to view this project. He said initially there were three scenarios, the first being the building being a private development, the second being a city project with tenants, and the third being not to build it at all. He added he is not including the LANTA and bus portion in the critique; he is in favor of those components. He said he needs to see due diligence on the benefits of moving City Hall.

Ms. Bradley reminded the Commission that they are only reviewing the plan amendment, as the plan has already received final approval. She then addressed the design standards that Mr. Lieb had listed, and how the plan does meet the intent of those standards. She added that architecture evolves with time, and great cities have a variety of styles from various eras.

Mr. Elliott said only the SALDO plan amendment was before the Commission and that the façade would go before the Historic District Commission. He added the plan has received final plan approval.

Reverend Susan D. Ruggles, Pastor for St. John's Lutheran Church at 330 Ferry Street was present. She said the church is excited about the new facility, but has concerns of emissions entering the church with busses idling in front of their facility while waiting in a traffic queue.. Additionally, she is concerned that the Church's low brick wall will be struck by a car or bus. She asked if the utilities would be underground. Mr. Horton said the wires will be underground, and the turning movement projection utilized the largest of bus sizes. In regard to the busses idling in front of the church, he said the signalization will be adjusted to meet the need.

The resolution was revised to add that a certificate of appropriateness needs to be received prior to a certificate of occupancy being issued. A motion to approve the revised resolution granting conditional final approval was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all except Mr. Lieb.

**Comprehensive Plan Re-write Update.** Mr. Manges said staff has met with 20-30 groups so far. He added by the end of April, the group interviews should be completed.

**Solicitor's Discussion – Definition of Land Development.** Mr. Manges said the discussions arose because of some projects that were difficult to determine whether they were a land development per the interpretations of the MPC. Mr. Scheer said he had previously distributed his draft opinion to the Planning Commission and was looking for any feedback before making it a final opinion. He requested any feedback within the next week.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.