

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 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, Robert Sun, Mary Viscomi, James Bloom and Dennis Lieb. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, Director; Brian Gish, Chief Planner; Carl Manges, City Planner; and Tina Woolverton, Secretary. Joel Scheer, City Solicitor, was present.

The revised agenda was approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2010 meeting was made by Ms. Viscomi, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

**Privilege of the Floor.** None.

**Plan Amendment – March Elementary School.** Ms. Bradley said the applicant, the Easton Area School District, is seeking a plan amendment to eliminate tree well grates and simply mulch the tree wells. Conditional final approval had been granted on April 2, 2008, and the recorded plans included the tree grates. Additionally, eight street trees were shown on the plan, while only seven were planted. Terry DeGroot of Terraform Engineering and Henry Guarriello of D'Huy Engineering were present for questions. Mr. DeGroot said the reason the number of trees had changed was due to the utilities in the sidewalk and the addition of handicap ramps. He said while they attempted to work the full number of trees in around the utilities and ramps, they could not find room for the 8<sup>th</sup> tree. He added the tree grates are not required by the code, therefore the school district decided to eliminate them as a cost savings against the expense of additional sidewalk replacement. Mr. Lieb asked if the tree wells as installed were a standard size for grates. Mr. Guarriello said they are not the standard size for the grates, and instead were designed larger, to match the size of other tree wells on the site. Mr. Lieb asked what the cost of the grates would be. Mr. Guarriello said they would cost approximately \$3,500, plus the cost of making changes to the sidewalk to accommodate the grates. Mr. Lieb noted some of the existing trees on the site have some damage, possibly from the recent construction. He added that he was not certain tree grates are best for urban design and listed some disadvantages of them. Ms. Viscomi asked the applicant representatives whether they had conferred with the City Forester on the changes. Mr. DeGroot said they had not discussed the change in tree placement with the forester, instead they just dealt with the existing conditions, but added it was an oversight. Mr. Sun asked if they were willing to work with the City Forester to determine placement of the eighth tree. Mr. DeGroot said they would be. Mr. Bloom asked if there was a written contract with the school district to eliminate the tree grates. Mr. Guarriello said there was, it was part of a larger change order including the additional sidewalk work. Mr. Bloom said there was a lot going on around the new trees, such as children loading and unloading from the busses and mechanical snow removal. He said he feels the tree grates would protect the rootballs of the trees from damage. Mr. Elliott asked how the existing sidewalks would change if the grates were installed. Mr. Guarriello said addition concrete would be poured to make the wells smaller to fit the grates. Mr. Sun questioned what a potential solution was to the grate issue. Mr. Guarriello said to use the lowest cost option for the grating. Mr. Sun made a motion to table action for 30 days to allow the school district to meet with city staff to determine an acceptable course of action. Mr. Lieb seconded the motion. All other commissioners denied the motion. Ms. Viscomi made a motion to accept the resolution by staff recommending denial of the plan amendment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bloom, also approved by Mr. Elliott, and as the majority of the attending Commissioners were in favor, the motion to deny the amendment passed.

**Plan Amendment – Wilshire Villas – E. Nesquehoning Street. 21 Asset Management Holding, LLC.** Mr. Manges said the applicant, 21 Asset Management Holding, LLC seeks to continue with approved plans for Wilshire Villas that received conditional final approval from the Planning Commission on August 2, 2006. The previous owner built six of the fifteen approved dwelling units. The applicant plans to finish the rest of the dwelling units, with proposed changes

to the previous plans including reducing the width of the driveway behind the built dwelling units from 24' to 20', regrading portions of the site and changing building elevations from the approved plans. The applicant, Jim Seitz, was present to answer questions. Ms. Viscomi questioned the change to the driveway width. Mr. Seitz explained once the 4' concrete pads were poured for the air conditioning units, the parking pads were pushed back 4' from the building. To continue with a driveway width of 24' would entail cutting into the rock embankment 4'. Ms. Bradley asked if the facades would remain the same as approved. Mr. Seitz said they would. Mr. Bloom asked Ms. Bradley if the change in driveway width raised any issues with emergency vehicle access. Mr. Manges said the fire inspector reviewed the proposed changes and determined emergency access could be reached from the front of the units. Mr. Tom Castronova of 368 E. Nesquehoning Street, and joint property owner of 416 E. Nesquehoning Street, was present. He said there is existing problems with water run-off that the paving of the driveways would worsen. He said he wants to see the project completed, but is concerned that lot 13, which is to contain the final storm drain access is the last to be completed. Mr. Seitz offered to meet at the site with Mr. Castronova to discuss and see the run-off issues. A motion to approve the resolution granting approval of the plan amendment was made by Mr. Bloom, seconded by Ms. Viscomi, approved by all.

**Amendment to the Planning & Zoning Code – approved Street Tree list.** Mr. Gish explained the Urban Forest Affinity Circle of the EAC has proposed amending the current approved street tree species list for the City of Easton, Article 1367 § 554-11. The purpose of the amendment is promote the use of native, street-appropriate tree species, while discouraging the use of invasive species. The proposed amendments added 17 species to the list and eliminated 3. Ms. Viscomi asked what generated the list. Mr. Elliott said it was done with input from many sources, and the intent is to eliminate non-appropriate while giving more selection of appropriate species. A motion to approve the resolution recommending approval of the amendment to City Council was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

**Comprehensive Plan Review Introduction.** Ms. Bradley said the city is under obligation to review the Comprehensive Plan yearly. She said this year's review was more thorough than previous years and would serve as the starting point for the Comprehensive Plan re-write. She distributed copies of the review and requested the Commissioners review it and provide any comments at or before the March meeting.

**Staff Update – Newsrack Ordinance.** Ms. Bradley told the Commission the newsrack ordinance would become effective the following day. She said all hands were on deck with materials, licenses, etc. She said compliance would be required in thirty days and that existing newsracks would have first priority. After thirty days the multi-racks for Centre Square and the post office would be ordered.

**EAC Update.** Mr. Elliott said he was not at the EAC meeting of February 2, but knows there was a discussion in preparing a sustainability study, which will assist in providing information for the Comprehensive Plan re-write. He said the LEED ordinance is still being worked on, as is the plan for additional bike racks.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.