

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, March 7, 2012 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, James Bloom, Dennis Lieb, William Heilman, Bonnie Winfield and Ronald Shipman. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, AICP, Director of Planning and Codes; Brian Gish, Chief Planner; Carl Manges, City Planner; and Tina Woolverton, Secretary. Solicitor Joel Scheer was present.

The revised agenda was approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2012 meeting was made by Mr. Heilman, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all.

Privilege of the Floor. None

Special Exception – 161B W. Berwick Street. Ms. Bradley said the applicant, Shaikira Figuerog, proposes to establish a Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (Insurance Office) use in the currently vacant section on the first floor of an existing mixed-use two-story building at 161B W. Berwick Street. The previous use at this location consisted of a Barber Shop. The building currently is divided into 2 commercial units on the first floor. The first unit is vacant, and the applicant proposes to use this area; the other section is currently occupied by Rita's Hair Salon. The 2nd floor has one apartment for residential use. The property is located in the South Side Zoning District, Block Class B, where the proposed Insurance Office use is not permitted. However, the property is also located in the Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District, where the Insurance Office use is permitted by Special Exception.

Ms. Bradley said a conversation with the applicant on February 22, 2012, revealed that she intends to relocate her business (Nationwide Insurance) from its current location at 136-148 W St. Joseph Street to 161B W. Berwick Street, approximately 3 blocks to the south of the current location. The applicant indicated that she has been operating the Nationwide Insurance Office from this location since 2009, and that the business is appointment based.

The business employs 2 people, including the applicant. The hours of operation will continue to be Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, and Saturday 10am - 1pm. The applicant also indicated that there are 5 off-street parking spaces provided at this location for the business.

The applicant was present. Neither the Commission nor the public had any comments or questions on the proposal. A motion to accept the resolution recommending approval to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Heilman, approved by all.

Lafayette College Quad Project Sketch Plan. Mr. Gish said the applicant, Lafayette College, has proposed to close Quad Drive (which runs along the perimeter of the Quad) to vehicular access, converting it to a pedestrian-oriented space. This proposed project seeks to redefine open space connections to create a network of pedestrian pathways. Additionally, new pathways are proposed for the interior of The Quad, including the area in front of the Skillman Library. The project also includes the creation of a reception point immediately east of Pardee Hall, including seven new parking spaces. Finally, the plans include minor improvements along Clinton Terrace, west of McCartney Street, a segment vacated by the city in July, 1971. Improvements to the Quad are intended to dovetail with those previously approved for Watson Hall Courtyard and Pardee Drive. The project is slated to begin following 2012 Commencement (May 21, 2012), with completion anticipated by October, 2012.

Mr. Gish said the applicant proposes that Quad Drive, presently a twenty foot wide asphalt roadway, be replaced by a twelve foot wide pedestrian-oriented, brick-paved pathway. At the same time, the applicant proposes to close Quad Drive to vehicular traffic, resulting in the elimination of eighteen faculty/staff parking spaces, and eight (8) five minute parking spaces. There are two additional parking spaces being eliminated at Clinton Terrace, and three more parking spaces being eliminated on Campus Drive, for a total of thirty-one parking spaces being eliminated by this proposal. A new parking reception area with seven new faculty/staff parking spaces is being proposed at Clinton Terrace. In a letter from Lafayette College dated January 9, 2012, the parking to be eliminated within the Quad will be relocated to the forty-two space Pierce Street Parking Lot (due to be completed by May 2012), and to the seven new faculty/staff parking spaces at the Clinton Terrace reception area proposed with this plan. The letter also mentions that the remaining six parking spaces will be relocated to the Watson Court parking lot. Five parking spaces currently assigned to the Watson Courts parking lot will be relocated to the S. College Drive parking lot.

Mr. Gish stated the applicant proposes to use reinforced turf, an eight inch compacted Stalite aggregate system supplemented by a geocell element, along segments of the proposed brick pathway. The reinforced turf is proposed to extend from the pedestrian walkways in front of the Farinon Center and the Hogg Hall buildings, establishing, when combined with the brick-paved pathway, the width of 20' required for fire equipment outrigger extension. This proposed turf is to be identical to the reinforced turf installed in the College's improvements to Watson Hall Courtyard and Pardee Drive, including all modifications developed to adapt the material to real world conditions.

He said, on behalf of the City, Pennoni Associates, Inc. reviewed the specifications for reinforced turf proposed in this project, and have provided comments based on the plans and a Geotechnical Report prepared by NTH Consultants dated January 19, 2012.

He said, based on the NTH report, the reinforced turf detail should match the detail shown on the Lafayette College Pardee Drive drawing set. Plan sheet L3.01, revised July 18, 2011, which has since been modified to include a geocell system. In addition, the reinforced turf detail shown on sheet LD-16 dated November 30, 2011, does not include the geocell as specified in the NTH report and shall be revised accordingly.

The reinforced turf detail shall be revised to include the comparison requirements for the Stalite material which was developed for and field tested at the Pardee Drive and Watson Hall Courtyard projects.

Mr. Gish stated as with these previous projects, reinforced turf installed along Quad Drive shall be tested to demonstrate its ability to support emergency equipment. Testing shall involve a twelve inch diameter steel plate (corresponding to the surface area of the base of fire equipment outriggers), loaded incrementally at intervals of 10,000 lbs., and demonstrate no more than one (1) inch of settlement at a load of 40,000 lbs. Also, markers shall delineate the edges of the reinforced turf for snow plowing purposes.

Mr. Gish said review by the City's Fire Inspector indicated concerns with the plans as submitted. Per the Fire Inspector, it is preferable to have the product on the opposite side of paved areas, relative to buildings to be serviced from that point, which is not the case as proposed adjacent to the Farinon Center. He said the street shall be realigned to allow for reinforced turf to be placed opposite where it is currently proposed, roughly along Quad Drive's current path. This will also provide improved turning radius. Design also needs be modified to allow fire equipment to turn left from Clinton Terrace at the proposed cul-de-sac feature, with turning templates illustrated on plans. Combined widths of paved roadway and reinforced turf needs to be adequate for all equipment

currently used by the Easton Fire Department, and of sufficient width to allow vehicle passing along fire hydrants.

Mr. Gish said extensive landscaping is proposed with this application, including the elimination of fourteen existing trees, and the planting of seventy-three new trees. The City Forester reviewed the landscaping plans and noted possible conflicts resulting from the proposed planting scheme and suggested some modifications in specie choices. Any tree canopy extending above emergency vehicle access ways (both paved areas and reinforced turf), whether the tree is existing or proposed in this project, shall be at least sixteen feet above ground level. Additionally, new trees planted as part of this project that are anticipated to have canopies that will extend above emergency vehicle access ways shall include directional pruning as part of their annual maintenance; this will limit potential safety, aesthetic and tree health impacts that would result from clearing a sixteen foot canopy only after the trees have encroached upon emergency vehicle access ways.

Mr. Mitch Wein, Vice-president of Business Affairs for Lafayette College was present. He said the college is very excited about the project and would like to begin construction immediately after commencement in May of 2012. Mr. Shipman questioned the purpose of the reception area. Mr. Wein said it will be used for a drop off area, as well as a welcome center and short-term and handicapped parking.

Phil Gauffreau of NTH Consultants, Ltd, the geotechnical engineer for the project said there was a learning curve with using the stalite material for the Watson/Pardee project and that a lot was learned from it. He said the same methodology that worked for the project would be used for the quad project. Ms. Winfield asked if the removal and reassignment of parking would result in more faculty and staff using on-street parking for convenience. Mr. Wein said parking reassignments were being designed to put staff and faculty in parking lots near the buildings they work in. Mr. Lieb asked if the key to successful installation is compaction. Mr. Gish said the key is both the compaction and the use of geocells.

Mr. Leib questioned the extensive pruning requirements and asked if it would be more logical to move the tree placement further from the proposed pathway.

Jonathan Ceci, the project's landscape architect, was present and said he will revisit the planting strategy.

James W. Hatfield of VanDemark & Lynch, Inc., project engineers, said the NPDS permit is substantially complete, and changing the tree placement would alter the area of disturbance on the permit.

Mr. Elliott questioned the varying results of the plate load tests and questioned what changes lead to successful testing. Mr. Gauffreau said the turf was removed and a heavier roller used for compaction, additional moisture was added and the geocells were completely filled with staylite material.

Mr. Elliott expressed concern over neighborhood parking concerns with the removal of 31 on-street parking spaces being removed due to the closing of Quad Drive. He added the parking master plan needs to demonstrate adequate parking for this and future plans. Mr. Wein said he would expedite the parking study.

2011 Comprehensive Plan Review. A copy of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Review had been distributed to the Commission. Ms. Bradley said the Comprehensive Plan re-write would roll out in mid-April to early May. She said advisory committees of

stakeholders will be created, and public meetings held for input. She added that a grant application was just submitted to the Commonwealth to help with the funding of the re-write. Mr. Shipman said the 2011 review was a good summary and suggested some editing. Ms. Winfield said she learned a lot by reading the review. Mr. Heilman said he liked the layout. Mr. Elliott said the review document has been getting better and better and suggested moving forward with the resolution to accept the documents and directing staff to fix any typographical or non-substantive errors and to submit the report to City Council. A motion to accept the resolution was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Mr. Shipman, approved by all.

Staff Updates.

- **FEMA Map Changes.** Mr. Gish said FEMA has updated their floodplain maps. He provided a power point presentation reflecting the changes. He added the City's role in the process was to inform and educate the public of the changes. He said a meeting with FEMA had been held on February 21, which commenced a 30 day comment period. Anticipated adoption of the revised maps is in 2013. Mr. Elliott asked if the City plans to comment on the changes. Ms. Bradley said the City would comment to some extent.
- **ULI Smart Transportation Forum.** Ms. Bradley said the Philadelphia Chapter of the ULI will be holding a Smart Transportation Forum on March 21 at Lafayette College. She is one of the speakers, along with Brian Hare from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Owen O'Neil of LANTA and other traffic and planning professionals.

Expressway Transitional Zone Ordinance. Ms. Bradley said the goal of the ordinance is to carve out areas where billboards are most effective, with the least negative impact, such as the areas in Hackett park, along route 22 and along route 78 on the south side. She added the proposed ordinance had been submitted to Lehigh Valley Planning Commission who determined it was a matter of local concern. She said the proposed ordinance had been advertised, all property owners in the proposed zone had been notified, and all properties posted. A motion to accept the resolution recommending to Easton City Council the amendments be accepted was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Heilman, approved by all but Mr. Lieb.

EAC Update. Mr. Elliott said the EAC had met the previous evening and is still working on their Comprehensive Plan update, which will be shared with staff. The Solar ordinance is still being worked on. Mr. Elliott also said the EAC would have an educational booth set up at the Farmer's Market on Arbor Day.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:51 PM.