

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, September 7, 2011 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, William Heilman, Robert Sun and Dennis Lieb. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, Director of Planning & Codes; Brian Gish, Chief Planner; Carl Manges, City Planner; and Tina Woolverton, Secretary.

The agenda was approved with the omission of item #7, a special exception request for 311 E. Paxinosa Road, which was withdrawn at the request of the applicant.

A motion to approve the revised minutes of the July 6, 2011 meeting was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Mr. Heilman, approved by all.

**Privilege of the Floor.** None

**Vacant Property Blight Determinations.** Ms. Bradley told the Commissioners that on August 24, 2011 the Vacant Property Review Committee met to consider properties for the determination of blight. Four properties (373 W. Nesquehoning Street, 430 W. Lincoln Street, 501 Northampton Street and 51 S. Warren Street) were determined as blighted and were being brought before the Planning Commission for further determination of blight. She referenced a map showing 28 blighted properties and said the top four priorities were acted upon.

Mr. Sun questioned who owner 430 W. Lincoln Street, a large industrial site. Ms. Bradley said it was owned by a City resident who had previously run a business out of it. He asked what the Redevelopment Authority would do if they acquired the property. Gretchen Longenbach, executive director of the Redevelopment Authority was present. She said there has been interest in the site, it has a lot of potential. She added the City has attempted to work with the owner over the last two years without success. She said residential development on the site would be possible.

Ms. Bradley said 501 Northampton Street, commonly known as the Cooper House is the oldest residence in the City. She said it has been vacant over 20 years, and the current owner has received a building permit and has been before the Historic District Commission. She said she is concerned with the prolonged vacancy and slow progress of rehabilitation on this significant historic resource. Mr. Sun asked if a property was not intended for human habitation, such as a building used for storage, if the criteria of "Not fit for human habitation" was a valid criteria for determining blight. Ms. Bradley explained that even a non-residential building has minimum code requirements. Mr. Sun asked if the length of vacancy was criteria. Ms. Bradley said it is not.

A motion to approve the resolution determining blight of 373 W. Nesquehoning Street was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

A motion to approve the resolution determining blight of 430 W. Lincoln Street was made by Mr. Bloom, seconded by Mr. Sun, approved by all.

A motion to approve the resolution determining blight of 501 Northampton Street was made by Mr. Bloom, seconded by Mr. Lieb, approved by all.

A motion to approve the resolution determining blight of 51 S. Warren Street was made by Mr. Lieb seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

**Update on the Simon Silk Mill – Demolition of the Francis Building.** Ms. Longenbach, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority, owner of the Simon

Silk Mill complex, explained the site had been purchased through RACP grant funds, and attempts over the years to sell it to developers have been unsuccessful. In 2009 Spillman Farmer Architects and CMX Engineering were hired to create a site analysis and building reuse plan. In 2010 a Request for Interest was released, and responses were received from four firms. After working through a memorandum of understanding with VM Group, an agreement of sale for buildings J & K was entered into. She said the first step is now the design work for the infrastructure, and selective demolition of the Francis Building to allow for a boulevard into the site. She added the 106 review has already been performed, an RFP for the demolition has been released and a firm chosen to perform the demolition, which may not begin until after the Movies at the Mill event on September 24. She said the engineering firm for the boulevard and infrastructure has also been selected, after issuing an RFP. She said a lot consolidation and subdivision plan would be coming before the Planning Commission once the design work was completed on the boulevard. She added there have been very preliminary conversations with PennDOT, and the Redevelopment Authority anticipates performing traffic studies. She said there are currently no public utilities on site, the site was self-sufficient when operating. Mr. Sun asked if the developer for buildings K & J had specific plans for the buildings. Ms. Longenbach said the buildings would be mixed use, with possible indoor parking for the short term. Mr. Sun asked what the time frame was for the infrastructure work. Ms. Longenbach said it would be dependent upon the HOP permit. Mr. Elliott asked if there was other anticipated demolition. Ms. Longenbach said there is not. Mr. Bloom asked if there has been any thought to connecting the site with the nearby bicycle path. Ms. Bradley replied a grant had been applied for to finance options for crossing. Mr. Sun asked if there was a plan for assigning individual addresses to the various buildings on the site. Ms. Bradley said the addresses would be assigned by the engineering department.

**Special Exception – 434 Cattell.** Mr. Manges said the applicant, Monica Wolinski, proposes to establish a D3 –Personal Service (Barber Shop) use in the currently vacant first floor area, 744 square feet, of an existing mixed-use (A12) three-story building at 434 Cattell Street. The first floor has two separate areas for businesses to operate. The area where the proposed Barber Shop will be located was previously a Law Office, and in the other first floor area, an ice cream shop, Cups & Cones, operates their business. The property is located in the College Hill Zoning District; Block Class C where the proposed D3 – Personal Service use is not permitted per Article XII §595-55. However, the property is also located in the Street Corridor Overlay District, where the proposed D3 – Personal Service use is permitted by Special Exception per Article XXIII §595-126.

There will be two employees, with three stations for customers. The applicant currently operates an upscale Barber Shop in Princeton, NJ, and intends to open the same type of Barber Shop in College Hill. Ms. Wolinski lives in College Hill. The hours of operation to start would be Tuesday and Wednesday from 9am – 5pm; Thursday and Friday from 11am – 7pm; and Saturday from 9am – 3pm. There is also a possibility for Sunday hours from 12pm – 3pm, provided there is sufficient demand. The website [www.continentalbarbers.com](http://www.continentalbarbers.com) was provided by the applicant, and this website provided staff with information pertaining to the types of services that are offered at the applicant's current barber shop business. The applicant was present. Mr. Elliott asked the location of the proposed business within the building. Mr. Manges said it would be located in the front of the first floor.

A motion to approve the resolution recommending special exception approval to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Mr. Heilman, seconded by Mr. Sun, approved by all.

**Special Exception – 40 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.** Mr. Manges said the applicant, Jane Nordell, proposes to establish a F2 –Food Processing (Dog Products) use in the currently vacant rear portion of the first floor area of an existing mixed-use (A12) four-story building at 40

N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The applicant is also proposing to establish a C6 – Retail Establishment with this application. The first floor has two separate areas for businesses to operate, both of which are currently vacant. The property is located in the Downtown Zoning District; Block Class B where the proposed F2 – Food Processing is not permitted use per Article XX §595-108. However, the property is also located in the Street Corridor Overlay District, where the proposed F2 – Food Processing use is permitted by Special Exception per Article XXIII §595-126. The proposed C6- Retail Establishment is a permitted use in the Downtown District.

40 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is located on the west side of N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street between Church and Spring Garden Streets.

The applicant intends to establish a Dog Product business in the currently vacant rear first floor of the existing mixed-use building located at 40 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Ms. Nordell stated that she will be making dog biscuits for retail sales and distribution. She also stated that she would be selling dog shampoo along with other dog supplies. The applicant has been operating a Dog Product business outside of the City of Easton for the past 1½ years, and is proposing to relocate her business to 40 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The applicant will be the only employee at this business, and the hours of operation will be 9am – 6pm daily. The applicant was present. Mr. Lieb questioned where the retail portion of the business would be located. Ms. Nordell replied it would be in the rear, in the room with the outside access. Mr. Lieb questioned what percentage of the business was wholesale. Ms. Nordell said wholesale is about 70% of her business. Mr. Sun questioned the square footage of the operation. Ms. Nordell said it is approximately 800 s.f. Mr. Sun asked how many biscuits could be manufactured in a month. Ms. Nordell said maximum output would be 100 cases per month. Mr. Sun questioned truck deliveries and pickups. Ms. Nordell said there is access through an alley in the rear of the building. A motion to approve the resolution recommending special exception approval to the Zoning Hearing Board was made by Mr. Lieb, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

**Municipal Land Use letter for Delaware Canal State Park.** Mr. Gish explained the City had been contacted by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources regarding restoration to the canal path where damage had been occurred in March. Ms. Bradley said the City received a letter asking if the project was consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, however no details of the proposed restoration were provided. Ms. Bradley distributed a copy of the letter she had sent to the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources requesting additional information and plans before the City reached a conclusive position on the matter.

**600 Block Master Plan.** Ms. Bradley said the draft plan is complete, and the final draft is nearing completion. She said staff wanted to create graphics that made it appealing and easy to understand. She explained the project had grown substantially since its inception. She said the primary concept is an "Italian Market" feel. Mr. Sun recommended making the pages with lot of script into two reading panes. Mr. Sun asked if staff had checked with existing downtown restaurants to see where they purchase their produce. He added he thinks the vision is great. Mr. Elliott said it is an incredibly energizing project which gives people the ability to envision.

**EAC Update.** Mr. Elliott said the EAC had met the prior evening and discussed the proposed solar ordinance, the lighting in Riverside Park and the tree planting event for the Karl Stirner Arts Trail on October 15.

Ms. Bradley told the Commission the agenda was already filled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of September, scheduled for September 21, as well as the October 5 meeting. She said it

may be necessary to hold two meetings a month through April, to accommodate the increased agenda items and blighted property designations.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.