

## MINUTES

### HARRISBURG PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING May 4, 2022

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Joseph Alsberry, Chair  
Vern McKissick, Vice Chair  
Jamesetta Reed  
Anne Marek  
Ausha Green

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jacob Bowen, Deputy Planning Director  
Neil Grover, City Solicitor

**CALL TO ORDER: 6:36 PM**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Commissioner Marek moved, and commissioner Green second the motion, to approve the minutes from the April 6, 2022, meeting without corrections; The motion was adopted unanimously by a (5-0) vote.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1. Variance Applications for 1327 Howard Street**, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Lamont Palmer with Xtreme Management, LLC, to establish an “Auto, RV, Boat, or Manufactured Home Sales” use and an “Auto Body Shop/or Repair Garage” use on-site.

Mr. Bowen stated that through a verbal conversation with the Applicant, they requested the case be continued to the July Planning Commission Meeting. Commissioner McKissick moved to table the application for 60 days. Commissioner Reed second the motion. The motion failed by a unanimous vote (0-5).

Commissioner Green inquired about a potential timeline for the request. Mr. Grover noted there is not a timeline concern, but that the property has multiple zoning violations that will remain unresolved while the property is under review for zoning relief. Mr. Grover stated that zoning cannot pursue the issue of the construction of a non permitted building while the property is in the zoning relief process. He stated that the city recommends the board not approve the continuance request.

Commissioner McKissick moved to Deny the application. Commissioner Green seconded the motion. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (5-0).

- 2. Lot Consolidation and Subdivision Application for 204 Walnut Street & 115 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street**, filed by Second & Locust Investors, LLC, to subdivide a portion of the property at

204 Walnut Street, and consolidate this portion with the adjacent parcel at 115 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Mr. Bowen gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the condition was that:

1. The Planning Bureau would recommend that the Applicant install landscape screening along the perimeter of the parking lot at 115 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to bring the property into conformance with the Zoning Code, enhance the streetscape aesthetics, and help better manage stormwater runoff.

The case was represented by Jordan Cunningham (2323 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110) with Cunningham, Chernicoff & Warshawsky, PC and John Ortinzio (510 Orchard Road, Lemoyne, PA 17043) with Second & Locust Investors LLC. (aka the Applicant)

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable. The Applicant stated that they are not acceptable of the condition due to concerns related to maintenance, safety regarding reducing visibility of the site, and general physical constraints of the property.

Mr. Bowen stated that the lot would likely remain visible if a plant screening were provided as the required height is three feet. He also noted that there may be some physical constraints to providing the plant screening particularly along Locust Street, but there is sufficient room for plant screening along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Mr. Bowen noted the condition would improve the aesthetics of the surface parking lot that is located downtown, which currently has a negative impact on the urban streetscape. He also stated that because a proposal is before the board, the city has an opportunity to encourage the property owner to improve the aesthetics of the property.

The Applicant stated that the future use of the property is still unknown. The Applicant noted that there will likely come a point the property will be developed. The Applicant stated that the property previously had shrubbery but that it had died due to poor soil conditions of the property and lack of water service. The Applicant also noted that from a cityscape standpoint that the property does not look bad.

Commissioner McKissick stated that the property was required to have landscaping improvements as part of a previous conditional approval to operate the property as a surface parking lot, which was never installed. The Commissioner had concerns about creating a precedent at other downtown properties. The Commissioner asked if other aesthetic improvements could be provided to the property outside of landscaping improvements.

The Applicant stated that they are unsure of what improvements they might provide. They reiterated their concerns regarding safety related to reduced visibility created from making any improvements from the property.

Mr. Bowen noted that beyond aesthetic concerns, the property is currently not in conformance with the landscaping requirements for parking lots in the Zoning Code. Commissioner Green noted that improvements could be made to the lot without impeding the visibility of the property. The Commissioner noted small improvements such as landscaping rocks instead of overgrown grass could show that the property owner takes more pride with their property.

Commissioner Marek inquired about the existing stormwater management infrastructure on the site. The Applicant noted that they believe that there is one storm water inlet on site. The Commissioner noted that some type of screening or mulching could improve some of the stormwater impact.

Commissioner McKissick asked about the status of the property. Mr. Grover noted that the previous owner acquired a conditional use permit to operate a surface parking lot at the property. Mr. Grover noted that the conditional use of a surface parking lot expired back in 2012 and that the property has been operating out of compliance for 10 years.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether there was anyone from the public that was for or against the project; there were no comments.

Commissioner Green inquired if the condition was a recommendation or requirement. Mr. Bowen stated that the condition was a recommendation.

Commissioner Green moved, and Commissioner Marek seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a vote (4-1) with Commissioner McKissick voting in opposition.

## **New Business**

1. **Lot Consolidation and Land Development Application for 108-112 Walnut Street**, filed by Rani Rammouni with N & R Group LLC, to convert and redevelop three existing office buildings into an eight unit, "Multifamily Dwelling" use. The project also proposes to consolidate three lots.

Mr. Bowen gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the condition was that:

1. Any exterior work will be discussed with the City's Historic Preservation Specialist, who will determine whether such work can be administratively approved, or whether approval from HARB will be required.
2. The Applicant will coordinate with the Department of Public Works to ensure appropriate location of a trash enclosure, if that is deemed necessary.
3. Per Section 7-327.3 of the Zoning Code, the Applicant will install at least one bicycle rack on-site; the Planning Bureau would recommend that a rack be installed in the rear parking area.

The case was represented by Joshua Weidler (100 Sterling Parkway, Suite 108 Mechanicsburg, PA 17050) with WBCM.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable. They confirmed that they were. He asked whether they had anything to add to the Planning Bureaus case report. The Applicant stated that they are proceeding with the Land Development Plan to fulfill a condition of the previously approved zoning relief.

Commissioner McKissick noted that the project appears to be an appropriate reuse of the property and that he is appreciative that the structures will be preserved. Commissioner Marek noted that she is supportive of the project. The Commissioner asked for clarification in regards to the number of parking spaces that will not be provided for the project. Mr. Bowen noted that the Applicant received parking relief for eight off street parking spaces. Mr. Bowen stated that the off-street parking requirement for the previous office use was 12 spaces.

Commissioner Marek noted that Walnut Street is not available for public parking. Mr. Bowen noted that most portions of downtown does not have available on street public parking that is not paid.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether there was anyone from the public that was for or against the project; there were no comments.

Commissioner McKissick moved, and Commissioner Green seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (5-0).

**2. Lot Consolidation and Land Development Application for 1400 & 1406 Sycamore Street**, filed by George Fernandez with Fernandez Realty Group LLC, to construct a new 23-unit, “Multifamily Dwelling” building. The project also proposes to consolidate two lots and make various site improvements.

Mr. Bowen gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the conditions were that:

1. The Applicant is required to receive a Certificate of Qualification pursuant to Chapter 12-101 of Title 12, Affordable Housing Certification prior to recording the Lot Consolidation & Land Development Plan with the Dauphin County Recorder of Deeds.
2. The Applicant will reconstruct or install new, ADA-compliant sidewalks along the frontages of all properties associated with the development. Additionally, the Applicant will ensure that the proposed curb cut to the rear parking area will use a driveway design that elevates to the height of the surrounding sidewalks.
3. The Applicants will coordinate with the Department of Public Works to confirm the appropriate size and location of refuse collection on-site, and update the billing accounts to reflect the new use.

The case was represented by George Fernandez (4211 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17109) with Fernandez Realty Group LLC and Jonathan Bowser (430 North Front Street, Wormleysburg, PA 17043) with Steelworks Construction. (aka the Applicant)

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable. They confirmed that they were. The Applicant noted that they have received zoning relief for the project and are now seeking approval for the land development portion of the project.

Commissioner Alsberry ask for clarification on the parking requirements under the Affordable Housing Ordinance. Mr. Bowen stated that under the ordinance 0.5 off street spaces are required for each affordable dwelling unit.

Commissioner Green inquired about the location of the main entrance for the proposed rear parking area. The Applicant stated that parking lot access will only be through South 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

Commissioner Marek noted that the plans need to be revised to show 23 units as proposed. The Applicant confirmed that the plan sets have a typo of showing proposed 24 units. Mr. Bowen noted that the project will be in conformance with the maximum impermeable surface area permitted on site.

The Applicant give a brief synopsis on the proposed development. The Applicant stated that the project involves a four-story development with 23 affordable dwelling units. The Applicant hopes the project will house families from Hall Manor which will likely be displaced in the near future. The Applicant noted their passion on bringing a new face on affordable housing and shared personal experiences growing up in Affordable Housing.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether there was anyone from the public that was for or against the project; there were no comments.

Commissioner Marek moved, and Commissioner McKissick seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (5-0).

**3. Street Vacation Application for portions of Wallace Street, Moltke Alley, and Delaware Street**, in the block bounded by Peffer Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Muench Street, and North 6<sup>th</sup> Street, filed by Catherine Hershey School for Early Learning, Harrisburg, to effectuate the consolidation and development of the adjacent parcels. This request will enable the development of various properties within the bounded block stated above as the proposed Catherine Hershey School.

Mr. Bowen gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the conditions were that:

1. If required by Capital Region Water or other utility providers, the Applicant will execute easement agreements with those providers to allow access to and maintenance of existing infrastructure running through or along the right-of-way, or will have such infrastructure formally abandoned.
2. The Applicant will receive final approval of the preliminary Lot Consolidation, Subdivision & Land Development Plan application filed concurrently with this application.

3. The Planning Bureau recommends that the two-way ingress and egress access point and curb cut along North 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Delaware Street be removed to increase pedestrian safety by eliminating a vehicular pedestrian conflict point.
4. The Applicant will hold at least two community outreach sessions as outlined in their Community Engagement Plan and required per the minimum standards for street vacations outlined in Chapter 9-117.4 (f) of the City Code.

The case was represented by Peter Gurt (797 Homestead Lane, Hershey PA 17033) with the Milton Hershey School, Senate Alexander (1265 Ash Lane, Lebanon PA 17042) with the Catherina Hershey School and Kathy Conly (320 Market Street, Suite 550 Harrisburg, PA 17101) with RGS Associates. (aka the Applicant)

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable. The Applicant requested condition three be moved to the land development plan. The Applicant noted that one community outreach session has already been conducted and that the second session is planned to occur during the month of May. The Applicant stated that they are acceptable of the conditions except for condition three.

Mr. Bowen noted that he does not see an issue in moving condition three to the Land Development Plan. Commissioner Alsberry noted that community outreach should occur prior to the Planning Commission meeting. The Applicant noted that they did have one community outreach session at the Nativity School of Harrisburg. The Applicant stated that they held a public information session on April 7<sup>th</sup> at 5<sup>th</sup> and Maclay Street with a second event scheduled for May 21<sup>st</sup> at the Bureau of Fire at Station one. They also stated that there are plans to hold a collaborative townhall with the Friends of Midtown, Historic Harrisburg Association, and the Midtown Action Council in the month of June. The Applicant noted that mailers were sent to over 1000 address surrounding the project site.

Commissioner Reed stated that the location makes sense for the project and that studies have shown that there is a need for the proposal. Commissioner Green expressed support for the project and would like to talk further with the Applicants to learn more. The Commissioner inquired about the feedback received thus far for the project. The Applicant noted that they didn't want to overburden the community by affecting the on-street parking supply. They stated that the proposed community plazas will provide a benefit to the community and they intend to have partnership spaces as part of the project. Commissioner Green again inquired about feedback received thus far from the public.

The Applicant stated that they think the community is excited about the project. They stated that community support is shown from the presence of various individuals present at the Planning Commission meeting including the assistant Superintendent of the Harrisburg School District, the president of the Homeland Center, two Dauphin County Commissioners, two local Milton Hershey School alumni, the City Business Administrator and likely other individual not mentioned.

Commissioner Marek stated that there is a need for the project in the surrounding neighborhood. The Commissioner inquired about the application process for new students for the proposed

school and if the school will be accepting students from outside the city. The Applicant stated that the school will be for students only within the City of Harrisburg.

Commissioner Marek noted that the city has very active neighborhood associations and was surprised that some of the Neighborhood Association representatives were not present at the meeting. The Commissioner noted that she is member of Friend of Midtown and has not heard about information regarding a planned meeting. The Applicant noted that they have been in contact with various organizations and meetings are scheduled in June.

Commissioner Reed inquired about the number students that would be accommodated by the proposed school. The Applicant stated that they plan to accommodate approximately 150 students.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether there was anyone from the public that was for or against the project. Several comments were received, which are summarized below:

Jaqueline Williams (625 Muench Street, Harrisburg PA 17102) stated that she is a lifelong resident of Harrisburg and lives directly across the street from the project. Ms. Williams stated that she owns other properties on the same block and has not received any information regarding the project. She noted that she wants to learn more about the project and noted that she might have some concerns about the project. Ms. Williams stated she wants to be a good neighbor and would be happy to be more involved with the project, noting that she is neither for or against the project.

John Foley with the Milton Hershey School Alumni Association stated that he thinks the project would provide great benefit to the city. Mr. Foley also stated that Milton Hershey School was a great neighbor while serving as the township president of Derry Township. He also expressed that the school would have a life changing impact for residents of the city.

John Hanawalt (2420 Highland Circle, Harrisburg PA 17112) a Milton Hershey School Alumni stated that he supports the project. Mr. Hanawalt noted that he grew up on Curtain Street and has a strong connection to the surrounding community. He also stated that the proposed school would provide a strong benefit to the city.

Dr. Marisol Craig representing the Harrisburg School District, stated that the school district supports the proposed project. Dr. Craig Noted the importance of early intervention for young students and sees a need for early intervention and other services that will likely be created from the use. Commissioner Alsberry inquired if Dr. Craig was aware of the project before the meeting. Dr. Craig stated that the Applicants had reached out to her prior to the meeting.

Dauphin County Commissioner George Hartwick stated that there is a great need for the services that will be offered by the Catherine Hershey School. The Commissioner stated that the proposed use will allow for coordination of various other early childcare services at one location. The Commissioner noted that he wished the services could be provided to all children with the city. He stated that he strongly supports the project.

Dauphin County Commissioner Mike Pries stated that the impact of the Milton Hershey School is a world class facility and impacts thousands of students. The Commissioner noted that there are three other locations for this project. The Commissioner thanked that the Applicant for considering the City of Harrisburg.

Berry Ramper president and CEO of the Homeland Center noted that 60 to 70% of his staff live within 10 blocks of the Homeland Center. He noted that the project is very important. He also stated that early childhood education is a major challenge for his staff and the project will benefit his organization and the region. Mr. Ramper stated that he supports the project.

Commissioner Alsberry stated that he believes the project would be great for the city of Harrisburg. The Commissioner stated that it is important for the Applicant to work more closely with the community and gain more input.

Commissioner Marek moved, and Commissioner Green seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions 1,2 and 4. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (5-0).

**ADJOURNMENT: 8:06 PM**

Commissioner Green moved, and Commissioner Marek seconded the motion, to adjourn. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (5-0).