

## MINUTES

### **HARRISBURG PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING**

**March 6, 2024**

**THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CITY GOVERNMENT CENTER  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Joe Alsberry, Chair (arrived at 6:38 PM)  
Vern McKissick, Vice Chair  
Shaun O'Toole  
Jamesetta Reed  
Anne Marek  
Joe Canamucio

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** DeRon Jordan

**STAFF PRESENT:** Emily Farren, Deputy City Solicitor

**CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 PM**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Commissioner McKissick asked whether there were any changes to the February 7, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Marek noted the minutes regarding the review of the Variance for 1901 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street should be revised to reflect that she, and not Commissioner Reed, concurred with Commissioner O'Toole's statement on the proposal. Commissioner O'Toole moved, and Commissioner Reed seconded the motion, to Approve the minutes from the January 8, 2024 meetings with the corrections noted by Commissioner Marek. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (5-0).

**OLD BUSINESS: N/A**

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Special Exception Application for 2501 Market Street, zoned Institutional (INS), filed by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company, to install a new internally-illuminated free-standing sign which will increase non-conforming aspects of the existing signage related to height and size.**

The case was represented by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company (the representative for the property owner), 142 Conchester Highway, Aston, PA 19014 (aka "the Applicant").

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

1. Any electronic messages displayed on the proposed sign will conform to the regulations in Section 7-325.11 of the Zoning Code regarding light and glare and prohibited electronically changing messages.

Commissioner McKissick asked the Applicant whether they read the case report prior to the meeting; he stated that the project was part of a larger package of replacement signs at various facilities around the city owned by the School District, and noted that the intention was to create a uniform look and size. The Applicant noted that they had already received approval for two of the six signs for which they submitted permits, as those were not increasing any existing non-conforming aspects of the signs, and that the other four required zoning relief; he noted that these sites either did not have existing signage on-site or were increasing the size or height of existing signage.

Commissioner McKissick noted that there was only one condition in the case report; Mr. Knight confirmed that the Zoning Code prohibited things like strobing effects for internally-illuminated signage. Commissioner McKissick asked the Applicant if he had any issues with that condition; he confirmed that he did not and stated that the signage would be more effective if there were less embellishments associated with the messaging. Commissioner McKissick asked whether the resolution of the LEDs on the proposed signage was higher than that of the existing signage; the Applicant confirmed that the resolution would be improved significantly and the new signage would be high definition.

Commissioner McKissick asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner Canamucio stated that he had no questions and concurred with the Planning Bureau that the context of the signage location would mean there would be no adverse impacts.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Marek stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner McKissick asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

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

**2. Variance Application for 1313 Monroe Street, zoned Institutional (INS), filed by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company, to install a new, internally-illuminated wall signage which requires relief from two aspects of the signage regulations regarding size and illumination.**

The case was represented by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company (the representative for the property owner), 142 Conchester Highway, Aston, PA 19014 (aka "the Applicant").

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

1. Any electronic messages displayed on the proposed sign will conform to the regulations in Section 7-325.11 of the Zoning Code regarding light and glare and prohibited electronically changing messages.

Commissioner McKissick asked the Applicant whether the condition in the case report was acceptable; he stated that they were.

Commissioner McKissick asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

Commissioner McKissick asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner Canamucio stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Marek stated that she had no questions.

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

**3. Variance Application for 301 Hale Avenue, zoned Institutional (INS), filed by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company, to install a new, internally-illuminated, free-standing sign which requires relief from three aspects of the signage regulations regarding height, size, and illumination.**

The case was represented by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company (the representative for the property owner), 142 Conchester Highway, Aston, PA 19014 (aka "the Applicant").

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

1. Any electronic messages displayed on the proposed sign will conform to the regulations in Section 7-325.11 of the Zoning Code regarding light and glare and prohibited electronically changing messages.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the condition in the case report was acceptable; he stated that they were. Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether he had anything to add to the Planning Bureau's case report; the Applicant confirmed that he did not

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner McKissick stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he had no questions but was surprised to learn that the building was constructed in 1900. Mr. Knight stated that it was unclear whether that information was correct and noted his doubts in the case report.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner Marek stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner Canamucio stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

Commissioner Marek moved, and Commissioner McKissick seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

**4. Variance Application for 1201 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street, zoned Institutional (INS), filed by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company, to install a new, internally-illuminated, free-standing sign which requires relief from three aspects of the signage regulations regarding height, size, and illumination.**

The case was represented by Gregory Feld with KC Sign Company (the representative for the property owner), 142 Conchester Highway, Aston, PA 19014 (aka "the Applicant").

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

1. The Applicant will relocate the proposed sign to the southern end of the property frontage along North 6<sup>th</sup> Street, nearer the vehicular entry point; the proposed location is directly across the street from the Broad Street Market, and an internally-illuminated sign over eleven feet in height would create adverse impacts on a property both located in a Municipal Historic District and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Bureau also notes that the property to the north is intended to be developed as a "Multifamily Dwelling" while the property to the south is an institutional use active primarily during the daytime.
2. If the alternative location results in the proposed sign encroaching into the five-foot setback specified in Section 7-325.10(b)(1) of the Zoning Code, the Applicant shall be granted relief for that location.
3. Any electronic messages displayed on the proposed sign will conform to the regulations in Section 7-325.11 of the Zoning Code regarding light and glare and prohibited electronically changing messages.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable; he stated that they were and also noted that he appreciated the suggestion to relocate the signage to the southern end of the site as it would be more visible and work better for their needs.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner McKissick stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner Marek noted that the proposed sign for the subject property was significantly taller than for the other sites, and inquired as to why the sign was so much taller. The Applicant noted that the proposed sign was fairly close to the right-of-way, and particularly the sidewalk, so they wanted to ensure that it had the appropriate clearance so that pedestrians could walk underneath.

Commissioner Marek reference the Planning Bureau's condition regarding the relocation of the sign and asked where specifically they intended it to go. Mr. Knight confirmed that the intention was to put it at the vehicular ingress point on the south side of the site. He noted that an additional justification for the height of the sign was that given the originally-proposed location, a sign closer to the ground would obstruct drivers' view of the street and sidewalk, creating potentially unsafe conditions, and that the proposed relocation site had fences, landscaping, and parked cars at ground level that justified an elevated design.

Commissioner Canamucio requested clarification on the specific location being recommended by the Planning Bureau. The Applicant referenced a revised site plan and noted that they were proposing to relocate the signage to the vehicular ingress point, set back from the sidewalk. He noted that the School District concurred that the relocated site had better visibility and was less visually cluttered than the other site.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

Commissioner McKissick moved, and Commissioner Marek seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

**5. Preliminary/Final LDP Application for 174 North 15<sup>th</sup> Street, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Reverend Queen Dickey with St. John CME Church, to consolidate the two parcels comprising the project site and develop a new 2,400-square-foot church, 17-space accessory parking lot, and associated site and access improvements.**

The case was represented by John Melham with Melham Associates, P.C. (the project engineer); 2247 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 (aka "the Applicant").

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

1. The Applicant will ensure that sidewalks along North 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Shoop Street are constructed to the full width of the pedestrian right-of-way, reflecting the configuration of the site prior to the demolition of the former structure on-site, and the reconstruction of the sidewalks on adjacent blocks as part of an unrelated development project.
2. The Applicant will ensure that bicycle parking is provided, as required per Section 7-327.3(e) of the Zoning Code; the Planning Bureau would recommend that such parking be located near the main entrance and sheltered if possible.
3. The Applicant should redesign the vehicular egress onto Shoop Street to feature a driveway curb cut as opposed to the current street curb cut design.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable; he stated that they were. Commissioner Alsberry asked whether he had anything to add to the case report; the Applicant stated that he did not and noted that if there were any questions with specifics of the conditions, he'd address them with the Planning Bureau.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner McKissick stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner Marek stated that she had no issues with the proposed site development and configuration, but asked whether the project would have lighting along the western side of the parking lot. The Applicant stated that the property owner was considering installing bollard lighting on that side of the parking lot, but confirmed that there would be adequate lighting of the parking lot to ensure safety and visibility. He noted that the church building and playground would be well-lit. Commissioner Marek stated that if that side of the property was adjacent to a residential use, they should ensure that there isn't excessive light spillover. The Applicant stated that the adjacent property was unoccupied; Commissioner McKissick asked whether it was a rowhome. Mr. Knight stated that the property appeared to be a vacant garage, but confirmed that it was definitely not a rowhome; he also noted that there were no windows on that side of the structure regardless.

Commissioner Marek asked whether there was a utility plan included in the plan set. The Applicant noted that they showed lateral water and sewer connections on the E&S Plan.

Commissioner Canamucio asked Planning Bureau staff for clarification on their condition related to the specific curb cut design. Mr. Knight noted that when driveway access points crossed sidewalks, the Planning Bureau always recommended that they be treated as "driveway curb cuts" as opposed to "street curb cuts;" he noted that these designs advance the City's Vision Zero program by prioritizing pedestrians and making vehicular circulation safer. He stated that it was considered a best practice to promote safety for all users.

Commissioner Canamucio asked the Applicant whether the project could incorporate that recommendation; he confirmed that they could incorporate that element. Mr. Knight confirmed that the recommendation was only for the egress point onto Shoop Street because it previously had a wide sidewalk across it whereas the entrance point from Bombaugh Street did not.

The Applicant stated that his company had tried to understand how to tie into the project in the surrounding blocks, and that he wasn't sure whether the condition in the case report meant that the property owner would have to remove and reinstall curbing, which he noted would be a significant cost. Mr. Knight stated that if the condition regarding the sidewalk width necessitated the removal of the curb, the Planning Bureau would be amendable to a vegetated strip along the curb, but that a sidewalk wider than the minimum five feet was a requirement based on the inclusion of wider sidewalks in reviews of the development project on the surrounding blocks.

The Applicant asked whether a five-foot-wide sidewalk was acceptable; Mr. Knight confirmed that it would not be acceptable and that pedestrians should not be treated as an afterthought who only received the bare minimum infrastructure. He stated that the project should be focused not just on the users of the property, but on the residents of the surrounding community who would also be using the sidewalk. The Applicant stated that he wasn't sure of how wide the former sidewalk was; Mr. Knight confirmed that Google Streets View images confirmed that the property previously featured a brick sidewalk from the back of the curb to the base of the building. The Applicant asked if the Planning Bureau was requiring the same width of sidewalk; Mr. Knight confirmed that they were requiring the sidewalk to run from the property line to the curb with an exception for a small vegetative planting strip along the curb; he noted that the issue had previously been discussed with the Applicant during the zoning relief review for the project in November 2023. The Applicant agreed to discuss the proposed sidewalk and planting strip with the Planning Bureau moving forward.

The Applicant asked whether Bombaugh Street featured two-way traffic, noting the proposed vehicular ingress point off that street. Mr. Knight noted that it was an alley which had no formal traffic flow direction that he was aware of.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether the project intended to allow the public to utilize the accessory parking lot during times the church congregation was not. Mr. Knight stated that he did not believe it was the Applicant's intention to allow such use. The Applicant stated that he did not feel he could answer that on behalf of the property owner.

Commissioner McKissick moved, and Commissioner O'Toole seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

- 6. Preliminary/Final Lot Consolidation & LDP Application for 1719 Market Street, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Capital City Church of the Assemblies of God, to consolidate two existing lots comprising the project site and to establish an accessory parking lot for the church located at 1710 Chestnut Street.**

The case was represented by John Melham with Melham Associates, P.C. (the project engineer); 2247 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 (aka “the Applicant”).

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

1. The Applicant will meet all the conditions of the Zoning Hearing Board decision from the November 2023 meeting.
2. The Planning Bureau recommends that the Applicant coordinate with the City Arborist regarding required landscaping and trees on-site and consider installing native plants and pollinator plants in landscaped areas around the perimeter of the site generally and, more specifically, around the proposed stormwater detention basin.
3. The Applicant will coordinate with the City Engineer’s Office on removal of the curb cut and driveway onto Market Street and reconstruction of the sidewalk along the Market Street frontage in accordance with the City’s sidewalk ordinance and ADA regulations.
4. The Applicant will ensure the development is in conformance with any CRW requirements regarding on-site stormwater management; approval of a Building Permit for the work will not be granted until formal approval from CRW has been received.
5. The Applicant will be permitted to lease spaces to surrounding residents and/or businesses during times in which it is not normally used for church congregants.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable; he stated that they were, but also wanted to clarify whether the condition related to use by those other than the congregants was a requirement that the property owners allow such use. Mr. Knight confirmed that the intention was not to mandate that the parking lot be made available to the public, but to give the Applicants the option to do so in a way that would obviate a requirement to seek zoning relief to do so in the future; he reiterated that it wouldn’t be a requirement and that permission for access to the property and the terms under which such permission would be granted would be entirely up to the property owners. The Applicant confirmed that the condition would be acceptable under those parameters.

Commissioner Alsberry asked Mr. Knight if the commissioners should add a condition that anyone using the site would have to get prior approval from the property owners. Mr. Knight reiterated that the condition did not imply that anyone from the community had a right to access the property. The Applicant noted that the church which owned the property was a community-focused organization which wanted the surrounding neighborhood to utilize the property in a reasonable manner.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner McKissick asked whether the Applicant intended on enclosing the stormwater detention basin with a fence; he confirmed that was the case.

Commissioner O’Toole stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.



Commissioner Marek asked whether the church which the parking lot would serve was located across Zarker Street from the project site; the Applicant confirmed that was the case. She asked whether the street had one-way or bidirectional traffic flow; Mr. Knight confirmed that it did not restrict access in either direction but was a very narrow right-of-way which was only the width of one vehicle.

Commissioner Marek noted that there was no lighting proposed on-site and asked whether the project intended on installing any. The Applicant confirmed that the lack of lighting was intentional and that they felt there was sufficient light from existing utility poles; he noted that the property owners were considering whether to install new lighting attached to the church building. He stated that he had discussed the issue with the property owners and that if they felt it was not lit well enough to provide safety, security, and visibility in the future, they would consider new lighting installations at that time. Mr. Knight confirmed that there was a streetlight on Zarker Street above the proposed ingress and egress points. Commissioner Marek agreed that Market Street was currently well-illuminated.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

Commissioner Canamucio stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Canamucio moved, and Commissioner McKissick seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

**7. Preliminary/Final LDP Application for 2701 Industrial Road, zoned Commercial General (CG), filed by Navnitlal Zaver, to develop the vacant parcel as a commercial parking lot.**

The case was represented by John Melham with Melham Associates, P.C. (the project engineer); 2247 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 (aka “the Applicant”).

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

1. The Planning Bureau recommends that the Applicant coordinate with the City Arborist regarding landscaping on-site and consider installing native plants and pollinator plants in landscaped areas around the perimeter of the site.
2. The Applicant should install a pedestrian walkway in the eastern corner of the parking lot connecting to the sidewalk along Industrial Road nearest to the existing entrance to the hotel parking lot; this will separate pedestrians from vehicles and improve safety for both users. The Applicant should also work with the City Engineer’s Office to get a dedicated, separate, and ADA-compliant path installed across the bridge over Paxton Creek, as no such route exists currently.

Mr. Knight further elaborated on the second condition, noting that he felt the issue was as much the responsibility of the City, as Wildwood Park Drive/Industrial Road was a City-owned right-of-way, as it was the Applicant, and that he encouraged the Applicant to coordinate with the City

Engineer's Office to identify the most effective solution to getting a safe and dedicated ADA-compliant path constructed. Mr. Knight stated that pedestrians currently had to walk along an unprotected shoulder of the road, right next to a significant amount of truck traffic; he noted that there was very little foot traffic across the creek presently, but that pedestrian volumes would increase significantly if a parking lot whose primary purpose was accessory parking for Farm Show events was constructed.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether the conditions in the case report were acceptable; he stated that they were but requested clarification on Condition #2, inquiring as to where City staff anticipated the sidewalk would be constructed. Mr. Knight noted that the proposed site plan did not show any internal sidewalks or pedestrian pathways and that he anticipated the project would retain fencing or have landscape screening along Wildwood Park Drive, and thus that drivers would have to walk out to the vehicular entry point to access the sidewalk. He stated that the project should incorporate a pathway connection to the sidewalk along Wildwood Park Drive near the existing entrance to the hotel, so that pedestrians had a direct connection that allowed them to avoid conflicts with vehicles. The Applicant stated that that should not be an issue.

The Applicant noted that the property owner had informed him that he had previously tried to build a foot bridge over Paxton Creek at some point in the past, but that it had never been constructed. He stated that they had discussed a foot bridge as part of the current project as well, and that they intended on working with the Farm Show, the State, and other relevant parties; he confirmed that they had surveyed the creek in anticipation of such a project. The Applicant stated that pedestrian access into the Farm Show Complex from Wildwood Park Drive was minimal or non-existent; Mr. Knight concurred and reiterated that if 143 vehicles and their passengers were parked in the proposed lot, it would generate a much higher volume of pedestrian traffic, lending urgency to the need to find a solution.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anybody from the public for or against the project. There were no comments or questions from the public.

Commissioner Alsberry noted that while the commissioners did not generally support the establishment of surface parking lots, in this case, given the context of the project location and the lack of any nearby trip generators or destinations, he felt it was appropriate.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether any of the Commissioners had comments or concerns about the project.

Commissioner McKissick stated that he understood the developer was a private entity, but inquired as to who would be the primary benefactor of the project. He asked whether the State or Farm Show entity would be leasing spaces in the lot. The Applicant noted that the property owner had an agreement with the Farm Show to provide overflow parking during larger events at the subject property and a nearby informal lot off of Maclay Street. He confirmed that the property owner did charge a fee for parking during these events. Mr. Knight noted that the same individual owned both the subject property and the adjacent Staybridge Suites hotel; the Applicant clarified that the individual was part of a group which collectively owned the hotel,

but that he owned the subject property separately. The Applicant confirmed that the owner would secure any necessary easements for access to and through the properties.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he had no questions.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner Marek stated that she had no questions.

Commissioner Canamucio stated that he had no questions but wanted to endorse the proposal to construct a new pedestrian walkway or enhance the existing path along Wildwood Park Drive to make it safer for all users.

Commissioner McKissick moved, and Commissioner O'Toole seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

**OTHER BUSINESS: N/A**

**ADJOURNMENT: 7:40 PM**

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