

**CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE
PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: July 21, 2020

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: City Hall, Room 306

As a result of Covid-19 and the closure of City Hall, this meeting was conducted virtually through an application called “Zoom”.

Present: Eric Crook, Alan D’Aiello, Christopher Grant, Burton Batty (Vice-Chair), Michael Robinson (Chair), Travis Costa, William Fazioli (Planning Director), and Patrick Hanner (Staff), Jim Moran (staff), Michelle Rockwell.

This is an open meeting of the East Providence Planning Board and is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Raimondo’s executive order 20-25 issued on April 15, 2020 and extended by executive order 20-46 on June 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency in R.I. due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus. In order to mitigate the transmission of the Covid-19 virus, we have been advised and directed by the state to suspend public gatherings and as such the Governor’s order suspends the requirements of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a publicly physical location. Further all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The order allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as adequate means of public access are afforded so the public can follow along.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of Allegiance was cited.

3. APPROVAL OF PLANING BOARD MINUTES

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Grant, on a roll call vote, the board voted 5-0 to accept the minutes of May 11, 2020.

4. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Land Development Project # 2020-07-LDP - Master plan submission. Wampanoag Meadows. Applicant: John Flatley Company, Owner: Driscoll Development LLC, Map 711, block 3, parcel 15.

Mr. Fazioli introduced the team involved with the development. Stephen Antonucci, the attorney representing the applicant, presented the master plan and introduced various members of the development team. All members of the development team were sworn in.

Kevin Walker, an engineer with the John Flatley Company, spoke about the John Flatley Company and provided an overview of the proposed project with a slideshow

Brandon Carr, also an engineer with the John Flatley Company, provided greater detail of the current site and the development plans going forward. Mr. Carr spoke of the relief being requested for building height and required parking. He also spoke of the sewer and drainage design.

Amy Archer with Pare Corporation gave details on the traffic, access, and safety of the proposed development.

Mr. Crook is asking Ms. Archer where the documentation is for the traffic study she is addressing. Mr. Carr stated the study was recently completed and that can be provided to the city. Mr. Crook is questioning the data being presented. Ms. Archer provided Mr. Crook with specific details as to how the study and data were compiled.

Mr. Fazioli and Mr. Hanner provided Mr. Crook details as to when the traffic reports will be presented. Mr. Hanner stated that this is a concept plan and that a traffic report will be required at the preliminary stage.

Mr. Hanner presented the staff findings. He stated this is a master plan, which is a concept plan. Mr. Hanner reviewed and gave specifics of the overall plan presented by the applicant. He stated this master plan is consistent with the future land use map. He referred to the planning staff memo prepared. The master plan is consistent with the comprehensive plan and meets the standards of the subdivision regulations. The Planning Department recommends 4 items to be submitted into tonight's record.

1. Plan set with last revision dated June 24, 2020
2. Memorandum from Erik Skadberg dated May 27, 2020
3. The certificate of completeness issues June 11, 2020
4. Master plan narrative and supporting materials revised in June 2020

The planning department is recommending to the Planning Board grant a conditional approval, subject to the following 6 conditions:

1. All copies and any correspondence from DOT regarding design of Wampanoag Trail.

2. All state permits from DOT and DEM to be obtained prior to preliminary plan approval
3. All expenses to the city for required public publications paid for by applicant.
4. The title block of the master plan be revised to indicate preliminary plan status.
5. Preliminary plan based on master plan.
6. Proposal shall meet all applicable city, state, and federal requirements.

It is also being requested that the Planning Board grant the Planning Department the Requesting authorization to proceed with a peer review of the traffic and drainage reports as soon as they are submitted with the preliminary plans submission.

Mr. Grant refereed to a plan from 2013. Mr. Hanner provided more details to Mr. Grant. Mr. Grant is prepared to vote yes, Mr. Robinson agreed with Mr. Grant.

Mr. Antonucci stated this is a better plan than the one in 2013. Mr. Batty questioned Ms. Archer on the traffic plans. Ms. Archer provided details on traffic to Mr. Batty. Mr. Crook and Mr. D'Aiello are concerned with traffic flow on Wampanoag Trail.

Mr. Robinson would like the Planning Department be required to do a peer review. Mr. Crook and Mr. D'Aiello agreed.

Mr. Robinson opened the floor to the public.

Frank Foti of 71 Hospital Road was sworn in. He is very excited about this plan. He spoke about heavy traffic already on Wampanoag Trail from school buses and spoke on the deterioration of the current road conditions.

Mr. D'Aiello asked the Planning Department for specific details about Hospital Road. Mr. Hanner provided the details.

Mr. David Thereon asked via a typed in question, does the public get to vote on these projects. Mr. Fazioli stated typically no.

Susan Yan whose parents reside on 14 Virginia Lane was sworn in. Her concern is with tress being removed. Mr. Carr provided specific details to Ms. Yan.

John DeMacedo of 32 Hospital Road was sworn in. He asked if there will be some type of retaining wall built to separate them from the new buildings being proposed. Mr. Carr provided details on the landscape of the current plan.

Melissa Larancko of 24 Hospital Road was sworn in. She wants to know why the proposed units increased from 308 to 416 units. Mr. Walker stated this developer was not involved in the previous project. This plan fits with the comprehensive plan and overall city guidelines. She is concerned with the height of units being proposed.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Crook, on a roll call vote, 6-0 to accept the documents set forth on page 6 of the staff memorandum.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. D'Aiello, on a roll call vote, the board voted 6-0 to accept and to direct the Planning Department to require a peer review of the traffic and drainage reports with all fees paid by the applicant.

B. Newport Avenue/New Road Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map Amendment application, Zoning Map Amendment application and Land Development Project application Master plan submission #2020-05-LDP. Applicant: Schiavo Enterprises, LLC; Newport & New Road, LLC, Mary H Costa, Joseph W. Sturm & Rebecca A. Reis and City of East Providence.

Mr. Shekarchi, the attorney for the applicant was sworn in, as were all members of the development team. Mr. Shekarchi presented the plan on behalf of the applicant via a slideshow. The applicant is seeking master plan approval, and a positive recommendation to amend the comprehensive plan and change the zoning.

Mr. Carr provided further details of the current site as is and the plans going forward.

Mr. Lombardo gave additional details in regards to consistency with the comprehensive plan. He spoke of the rezone and mixed uses.

Mr. Moran presented the Planning Departments staff report. He gave a brief overview of the process required going forward. Mr. Moran mentioned 2 petitions were submitted to the Planning Department. One was a change.org petition, and a hand written petition, both submitted to Ed Pimentel the zoning officer. Mr. Moran spoke in detail on documents submitted by the developer and the required documents needed to move forward. The Planning Department feels the plan is consistent with the city's comprehensive plan. The planning department is recommending approval for the master plan, providing a positive recommendation to city council for a rezone, and a positive recommendation to the city council for the amendment to the comprehensive plan based upon the findings of the reports provided.

Mr. Crook asked for more details on the traffic information given. Mr. Carr provided further details on the landscape and traffic concerns. Mr. Clinton the traffic engineer also provided greater detail on traffic concerns with Newport Avenue.

Mr. Robinson opened the floor to public comment.

Breann Hicks at 9 Alma Avenue, Rumford was sworn in. She is concerned with traffic on New Road. Mr. Shekarchi said a detailed analysis plan will be done and the public will have access to review the findings. She is also questioning the height of buildings being proposed.

Patricia Buteau of 1 Fern Drive Rumford was sworn in. She is concerned with traffic in the area. Mr. Moran clarified details with Ms. Buteau in regards to the traffic.

Mr. Crook is concerned with the façade design. Mr. Manship spoke more on the design of the buildings. Mr. Lombardo spoke on the impact on local schools.

Brandon (inaudible last name and address) was sworn in. He is concerned with the market value of neighboring properties and heavy traffic already in the area. Mr. Shekarchi gave additional details on a traffic study that will be provided. He does not feel property values will be decreased. He feels the community will be enhanced.

Diana Richardson of 60 Pinegrove Street was sworn in. She is concerned with traffic in the area. Mr. Shekarchi stated a traffic study will take a few months to finalize. DOT will make adjustments based on current conditions.

Mr. Schiavo spoke on existing developments he has developed and provided details on the proposal.

Rebecca Reis of 11 Pinegrove Street was sworn in. She is in favor of the development. She feels the lot currently is a dumping ground and not kept up. She feels the change is positive for the neighborhood.

Joseph Sturm of 11 Pinegrove Street was sworn in. He is favor of the development. He feels currently the lot is unsightly and unsafe.

Tommy Lynch of 209 Bourne Ave was sworn in. He is in favor of the development. The current area is so rundown. He is excited for new development that will provide tremendous improvement and economic development.

Diane Vincent of 22 Moore Street was sworn in. She is questioning the apartments being proposed. Mr. Shekarchi stated apartments will be owned by one entity.

Lidia Cruz-Abreau of 31 Hornbeam Road in Coventry was sworn in. She owns property in East Providence. She asked if the board has authority to recommend any architectural standards. Mr. Fazioli stated the board does not have this authority, and provided further details.

Santo Alvarez (last name inaudible) at 6 Fern Drive was sworn in. He asked why apartments were being proposed in the back of the development. He would prefer single family houses, not apartments. Mr. Shekarchi stated to be economically feasible the apartments are the only responsible way. Mr. Alvarez is very upset more apartments are being built that won't get filled. Ms. Rockwell spoke on big demand needed for the apartments being proposed. Stated developer will not make money on single family homes.

Ms. Buteau asked if there will a public follow up meeting. Mr. Fazioli stated there will be other public hearings on this development going forward. She agrees the area has been neglected, but feels that multi-unit apartment building is too many.

Mr. Shekarchi thanked members of the board and the public.

Mr. Robinson wants entered into record 19 items on page 6, 17 and 18 of the staff memorandum, plus the 2 petitions that were submitted to zoning, plus the staff memorandum dated July 16, 2020. On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Crook, on a roll call vote 6-0 to accept.

Mr. Robinson supports conditional approval of master plan submission as proposed. Meets general purposes stated in Article 1 of the regulations and because of the required findings of section 5-4 of the regulations can be met and also support a favorable advisory opinion to the city council both for an amendment to the land use map of the comprehensive plan as requested and to change the zoning designation as requested.

Mr. D'Aiello agrees with Mr. Robinson. He feels it's a very positive development. Mr. Crook feels the proposal meets the bare minimum, but agrees with the chair that the board will have another opportunity to review. He is in favor of the project. Mr. Batty feels this is a positive development. Ms. Rockwell also feels the development will be positive.

First motion the chair will entertain is with regard to request for a favorable advisory opinion to the city council with regard for an amendment to the city's generalized land use map of the comprehensive plan from retail and low density residential to mixed use for the properties at map 401, block 8, parcels 1, 2, 3 and 4.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Mr. D'Aiello, on a roll call vote, the board voted 6-0 to accept.

With respect as to whether or not we provide a favorable advisory opinion to the city council regarding approval of the applicant's request to change the zoning district designation of map 401, block 8, and parcels 1, 2, 3 and 4 from commercial C-3 and residential R-4 to mixed use.

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Grant, on a roll call vote, 6-0 to approve.

With respect as to grant a conditional approval of the land development project master plan submission as proposed subject to the conditions set forth in the staff memorandum at page 19 with the indication in regard to condition #6, the applicant must submit an accompanying subdivision application identifying 3 separate parcels within the development.

Motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Batty, on a roll call vote, 6-0 to accept.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

None

7. STAFF REPORT

None

8. COMMUNICATION

None

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next planning board meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2020

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 PM