

**CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE
PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: June 14, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Zoom virtual meeting

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, Octavio Cunha, Michael Robinson (Chair), Michelle Rockwell, William Fazioli (Planning Director), Patrick Hanner (Staff), James Moran (Staff), Nathan Cahoon (Councilman)

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. Crook, seconded by Dr. D’Aiello, on a roll call vote 6-0, the board approved the minutes of February 8, 2021 and March 8, 2021.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Release of improvement guarantee, application # 2017-02-Minor, Applicant/owner: Roberto F. Medeiros and Christina Medeiros, Street address: 106 Walnut Street, Map 105, block 7, parcel 2**

Patrick Hanner stated the City is holding \$5,000 in escrow for necessary improvements that needed to be made per the conditional approval granted on the final plan on April 24, 2018. All of the improvements have been installed and inspected by the Engineering Division and determined to meet City standards. The Planning Department is requesting the Planning Board release the full amount of the improvement guarantee in the amount of \$5,000.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Dr. D'Aiello, on a roll call vote 6-0, the board approved the full release of the improvement guarantee in the amount of \$5,000.

B. Recommendation from the Planning Board to the Waterfront Commission for a comprehensive plan consistency for East Point. Map 203, block 1, parcel 4. Map 203, block 13, parcels 4 & 5. Former Ocean State Steel property (Enclosure)

Patrick Hanner provided an overview of the proposed development. The redevelopment of the former Ocean State Steel property for the construction of 350 residential units is consistent with the following goals of the East Providence 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan: Land Use Element Goal 1.0, Objective 2.9 and 3.6; Economic Development Element Goal 2.0 and Housing Element Goal 1.0 and 5.0.

Attorney John Berlinsky spoke on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Berlinsky provided specific site details and timeline of project.

Members of the board and Mr. Berlinsky discussed the 8 waivers listed in staffs memo as well as the overall site plan.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Ms. Rockwell, the board on a roll call vote 6-0, to provide a positive recommendation to the Waterfront Commission that the East Point development is consistent with the City's 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan.

C. Advisory recommendation to the City Council to amend section 19-103 "Temporary use permit" of Zoning. (Enclosure)

Councilman Cahoon gave an overview of the Temporary use permit of zoning for short-term rentals. Mr. Cahoon provided some history on this issue. He feels the City Council overreached initially. Mr. Cahoon feels the amendment will allow a nice balance between residents and homeowners who wish to receive a permit for short-term rentals.

Sarah Smalley was sworn in. She spoke on behalf of the ordinance and feels it is a positive amendment for both homeowners and neighbors.

Patrick Hanner provided the staffs' memo. It is the opinion of the Planning Department that the proposed amendments to section 19-103 "Temporary use permit" of Zoning is consistent with the City's 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan: Land Use Element Objective 1.4 and 2.2 as well as Housing Element Goal 1.0 and 4.0. It is the opinion of the Planning Department that positive findings can be made on standards of Section 19-2 of Zoning.

The Planning Department is requesting the memorandum w/enclosures dated June 7, 2021 be entered into the record. The Planning Department is recommending the Planning Board provide a positive recommendation to the City Council for the proposed amendments to section 19-103 “Temporary use permit” of Zoning based upon the findings that the amendments are consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and that positive findings were found for the standard of section 19-2 of Zoning.

Mr. Robinson and Mr. Cahoon discussed specific details on the language of the ordinance. Members of the board had a few questions and concerns on the ordinance as written.

Chrissy Rossi was sworn in. She had a concern on how residents would be taxed for an Airbnb.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Dr. D’Aiello, on a roll call vote 6-0, the board recommends a favorable finding to the City Council subject to further review of the factual language of the ordinance with the legal department.

D. Advisory recommendation to the City Council to amend sections 19-1 and 19-442 of Zoning, the City’s sign ordinance. (Enclosure)

Mr. Fazioli gave an overview of the City’s sign ordinance. Mr. Hanner provided further details on the usage of digital signs, especially at drive-thrus. Digital signs or digital menu boards are becoming more frequent at drive-thrus.

It is the opinion of the Planning Department that the proposed amendments are consistent with the Economic Development Element Goal 1 and Objective 4.4 of the goals and policy statements of the City’s comprehensive plan, as well as section 19-2 of Zoning.

Members of the Board had further discussions on the proposed amendments with Mr. Hanner and Mr. Fazioli.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Cunha, the board voted 6-0 to accept the staff memorandum and supporting documents dated June 1, 2021 into the record.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Cunha, on a roll call vote 6-0, to make a favorable advisory recommendation to the City Council to approve the proposed zoning amendments to the City’s sign ordinance.

E. Mixed Use Hub Overlay Districts. Discussion of amending ordinance to allow for Riverside Square overlay district. (Enclosure)

Mr. Fazioli provided an overview on the Mixed Use Hub Overlay district. This will allow for commercial and residential to be in one building.

Mr. Moran went over the staffs memorandum dated June 10, 2021. He provided further details on the Overlay districts and gave a timeline of the draft ordinance.

Board members discussed the proposed Riverside Square Mixed Use Hub overlay district. Dr. D'Aiello and Mr. Crook would like to see some areas of the map expanded. The board feels this is a positive for Riverside.

Ms. Smalley and Ms. Rossi both spoke in favor of the proposed amendment.

F. Platt and Watters Major subdivision. Discussion only. (Enclosure)

Mr. Fazioli gave details on the Platt and Watters subdivision. A total of 11 lots: 8 lots for single-family homes at 7500 Sq. Ft each and 3 lots for duplexes at 10,000 Sq. Ft each. The city would like to deed restrict the duplexes to allow for affordable housing.

Members of the board feel this is a good plan. It is beneficial to the city and will increase the low housing stock. The Planning Department felt the lack of housing in the city outweighs the need for a small park in this area.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Crook spoke on the R.I. General Laws in regards to placement of signs on “Sidewalks”.

5. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Fazioli presented the staff report. The June 29th meeting will be in person in City Council chambers. As a board member, you can still participate remotely.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for June 29, 2021

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Cunha, seconded by Mr. Crook, the board voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 PM

CC: Mayor Roberto DaSilva
City Council
Director of Public Works
City Engineer
City Solicitor
Fire Chief
Zoning Officer