

**CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE
PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Monday, July 10, 2023

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: City Hall, Room 306

Present: Michael Robinson (Chair), Christopher Grant (Vice-Chair), Greg Miller, Octavio Cunha, Eric Crook, Michelle Rockwell, Keith A. Brynes (Director), Dominic Leonardo (Staff)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

No minutes were voted on.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Land Development Project Master Plan submission proposing to convert 330, 350, and 354 Taunton Avenue into 160 affordable apartments and an early childhood learning center. #2023-06-LDP Master Plan, Applicant/Owner: ONE Neighborhood Builders, Street location: 330, 350, 354 Taunton Ave, Map 306, Block 1, Parcels 12.1, 13, 14.

Attorney Ken McGunagle, Jr., Esq., representing ONE Neighborhood Builders who is the owner and developer of the subject property, presented an overview of the development proposal to the Board which includes 160 affordable housing units, a 5,500 square foot early childhood learning center, community space, and offices for project partners and onsite property management. The project is located at 330, 350, and 354 Taunton Ave and is referred to as Center City Apartments.

Grace Evans, Chief of Staff at ONE Neighborhood Builders provided a background on ONE Neighborhood and the development partners Foster Forward, Family Service of RI, and Crossroads RI.

Michelle Bleau, the lead project manager for Center City Apartments, testified on the expenses and financial factors of the project.

On a motion by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Grant, the Board recognized Joe Haskett AIA, LEED AP, CPHC, and Principal Architect at Union Studio as an expert in the field of architecture. Mr. Haskett described the development which includes retaining the existing four-story building at 350 Taunton Ave, and constructing two new four-story buildings on-site. The buildings are proposed to be used for housing which will be deed restricted to be affordable to extremely-low to moderately-low-income households.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Mr. Miller, the Board recognized Timothy Behan, P.E. as an expert in the field of engineering. Mr. Behan described the existing storm water issues on the parcel and the conceptual storm water management plan for the development proposal and that it will be created to meet the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) standards. Mr. Behan testified that there are no wetlands on the site and that the application proposes .75 parking spaces per unit, totaling 120 parking spaces. Behan testified that due to the childhood learning center they will request the required zoning relief in the amount of 9 spaces from the Zoning Board.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Mr. Miller, the Board recognized Paul Bannon as an expert in traffic and engineering. Mr. Bannon presented on the parking, traffic, and circulation plan of the development and surrounding area. Mr. Bannon testified that in his opinion the proposed uses to this area will not result in a substantial increase in congestion to this area and that all best practices and procedures have been utilized in the design to minimize adverse traffic effects on the city. And that all best practices have been used to design for the safe access and circulation within the property.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Mr. Miller, the Board recognized Nancy Letendre as an expert in the field of planning and municipal land use. Ms. Letendre testified on the consistency of the proposed development with the East Providence Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Letendre described the proposed parking spaces of 120 spaces is based on the parking demand of 114 spaces by the tenants. Ms. Letendre also discussed the proposed bike storage and the accessibility of a RIPTA bus stop on Taunton Ave in front of the building which will reduce the need for off street parking in her opinion.

Solicitor Marcello informed the Board that a recommendation from the Planning Board to the Zoning Board on the zoning relief requested by the applicant will appear before the Planning Board at their next meeting.

Director Brynes provided the recommendation from the Planning Department to grant conditional approval of the Master Plan as proposed subject to conditions listed in the memorandum dated July 3, 2023.

The Board discussed the applicant's waiver request to provide state permits at the Final Plan stage as opposed to the Preliminary Plan stage. Attorney McGunagle explained the applicant will submit their development plans to state agencies immediately upon Master Plan approval and the reason they are requesting the waiver is because state agencies may not review and approve their application by November 2023, which would prevent the applicant from obtaining Preliminary Plan approval by the end of 2023, and would prevent the applicant from scoring as high as

possible in affordable housing funding opportunities.

Mr. Grant discussed the zoning history associated with these parcels and the previous requirement that the C-2 zoning designation for 350 Taunton Ave was allowed if the parking agreement with the former Duck Pin Bowling stayed, if it did not, 350 Taunton Ave would revert back to a C-3 zoning designation. The Board discussed that previous condition may no longer be applicable due to the adoption of the Taunton Avenue Overlay District adopted in 2016.

Chairman Robinson asked all in attendance if anyone would like to provide public comment.

David Sisson, a member from the public and an immediate abutter explained his opposition to the project. Mr. Sisson described his issues with the density and scale of the project. Mr. Sisson also described he believes the project does not meet the burdens required to obtain zoning relief from the City's Zoning Ordinance, that the project does not comply with the Comprehensive Plan, and that approval of this project would set a negative precedent for the future of East Providence.

Jerry Fiske, who owns property on Edmund Street which abuts the project, provided comments asking questions about the traffic, drainage, and road conditions on Edmund Street. Mr. Behan informed the Board they are working on the drainage plan which will be provided at the Preliminary Plan stage.

Eric Gurna, a member of the public and an abutter explains his concerns about storm water runoff and traffic safety. Mr. Gurna also asked about plans for community engagement.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Mr. Miller, the Board recognized Joseph Lombardo as an expert in municipal finance. Mr. Lombardo described the financial impact the proposed development will have on the municipal budget.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Crook, the board voted 6-0 to accept the Planning Department's Staff Recommendation with attachments dated 7/3/23, Plan set, Certificate of Completeness dated June 23, 2023, Memorandum from E. Skadberg dated June 13, 2023, Memorandum from E. Pimentel, dated May 13, 2023, Memorandum from Fire Captain Brian Poland, dated May 31, 2023, and all supporting exhibits and materials submitted by ONE Neighborhood Builders into the record.

On a motion by Mr. Crook, seconded by Mr. Miller, the board voted 6-0 to grant the applicant's request for a waiver to submit the necessary state and federal permits at Final Plan instead of Preliminary Plan.

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Cunha, the board voted 6-0 to grant conditional approval of the master plan as proposed subject to the conditions of the Planning Department's July 3, 2023 Memorandum, based upon the information presented and that the proposed master plan is consistent with Section 1-2, "General Purposes" and that the General Purposes were addressed as part of Staff's review, and that positive findings were stated to all of the standards of Section 5-4, "Required Findings" of the East Providence Land Development and Subdivision

Review Regulations, and that the master plan, as proposed, is fully consistent with the East Providence Comprehensive Plan. The conditions are as follows:

1. That all comments in the memorandum from E. Skadberg are addressed at the preliminary stage of review;
2. That all comments in the memorandum from E. Pimentel are addressed at the preliminary stage of review;
3. That all zoning relief required as determined by the City Zoning Officer is obtained from the Zoning Board of Review;
4. That the Preliminary Plans and supporting documentation be based upon this Master Plan Approval;
5. That all other pertinent state permits associated with this development be obtained prior to the submittal of the Final Plan;
6. That all expenses incurred for the public notification and public hearing requirements are paid for by the applicant prior to a final plan approval;
7. That the proposal shall meet all applicable City, State, and/or Federal regulations and requirements.

5. STAFF REPORT

Director Brynes provided an update to the Board on potential agenda items for the next Planning Board meeting and that new Rhode Island General Laws have been adopted that will impact the Planning Board.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Robinson announced the next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2023.

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Crook, the Board voted 6-0 to adjourn.

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