

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers, Alpha Building, One South Third Street, Easton, PA 18042. Planning Commissioners Charles Elliott, Ronald Shipman, Bonnie Winfield, Robert Sun, and Mia Hatzis were in attendance. The following Planning Bureau staff members were present: Chief Planner Carl Manges and City Planner Mike Handzo. City Solicitor Joel Scheer was also present.

Mr. Elliott called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Elliott stated the applicant for 250 Line Street, scheduled for the February agenda, had requested a continuance waiver until March.

Reorganization of the Easton Planning Commission. Mr. Elliott turned the floor over to Mr. Scheer. Mr. Scheer requested nominations for the position of Chair. Mr. Shipman moved, with Mr. Sun seconding, that Mr. Charles Elliott be named Chair. No other nominations were received. The motion naming Mr. Elliott as Chair passed unanimously.

Mr. Scheer requested nominations for the position of Vice Chair. Mr. Shipman moved, with Ms. Winfield seconding, that Mr. Robert Sun be named Vice Chair. No other nominations were received. The motion naming Mr. Sun as Vice Chair passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes. Ms. Winfield moved, with Mr. Shipman seconding, that the minutes of the December 3, 2014, meeting be approved as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Privilege of the Floor. No members of the public wished to address the Commission.

709 Wood Avenue –Special Exception. Mr. Manges read that the applicant, Kelli Houptley, has proposed to establish a D4 – Business Services use (Print Shop) in an 800 square feet vacant commercial space of a mixed-use building at 709 Wood Avenue. This space was last occupied by a motorcycle shop, and there are two other commercial spaces and one residential unit in the building. 709 Wood Avenue is located in the West Ward Zoning District, Block Class C, where the proposed D4 – Business Services use is not permitted per Article XV §595-75. However, the property is also located in the Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District, where D4 – Business Services uses are permitted by Special Exception per Article XXIII §595-126.

A conversation with the applicant, Kelli Houptley, on January 20, 2015, revealed her intent to open a print shop in a vacant commercial space at 709 Wood Avenue. The proposed print shop would personalize a range of items, such as business cards, labels, tapes, and wrappers, for both consumers and small businesses. Equipment utilized would include printers, computers, and cutting machines, and noise levels would not exceed those of a typical office environment. Proposed hours of operation would be from 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. The applicant would be the only employee at the start, but proposes to hire at least one additional employee. A UPS or FedEx truck would make deliveries one to three times weekly, with deliveries received at the front on Wood Avenue. Customers would park on-street and use the Wood Avenue entrance to pick up completed print jobs, with up to ten customer pick-ups expected per day. The business would also be open to walk-ins by the general public.

There are no off-street parking spaces associated with this proposal, and the Zoning Administrator has determined that there is no increase in demand from the previous use. Therefore, this application will not require any variances for parking.

Mr. Manges reported that the proposal was generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and City Codes. Therefore, he communicated that staff advocates Planning Commission's recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board for granting a Special Exception request with conditions to Kelli Houptley for a Business Services use at 709 Wood Avenue.

The applicant, Kelli Houptley, was in attendance. She expressed her intent to serve private consumers and small businesses. Mr. Sun requested details on the type of printing equipment proposed, with Ms. Houptley stating she would use office-grade copy machines. Ms. Hatzis suggested the importance of clear signage to the business' success. Mr. Sun

and Mr. Elliott indicated that the business would provide a useful service in the proposed location. Mr. Sun moved, with Ms. Hatzis seconding, that the Easton Planning Commission recommend to the Easton Zoning Hearing Board that it grants a Special Exception request to Kelli Houptley for a Business Services use at 709 Wood Avenue. The motion passed unanimously.

Lands of JA & JM Associates – Intersection of W. Lincoln & Storm Streets – Subdivision and Land Development.

Mr. Manges read that the applicant, JA & JM Associates LLC., proposes to subdivide a single parcel into five lots to construct five single-family, three-bedroom townhomes on a presently vacant tract at the intersection of W. Lincoln and Storm Streets. The townhomes would be built in a row fronting onto W. Lincoln Street. Vehicular access would be provided by a drive intersecting Storm Street, branching out into five individual driveways leading to garages for each unit. A grass-filled stormwater detention basin would be constructed behind the access drive. The plans propose the construction of sanitary sewer laterals for each unit as well as a new sewer line, extending from the site along the Storm Street right-of-way and connecting to an existing line along W. Berwick Street.

The applicant proposes to subdivide the subject property into five (5) new lots with this application, with each dwelling located on its own parcel. The existing parcel is 22,532 square feet. The proposed subdivision would create three lots of 3,927 square feet for the middle units, and two lots of 5,099 and 5,652 square feet for the end units. The Zoning Administrator has determined that the two proposed end units would be A2 – Single-Family Semidetached Dwellings, and the three proposed middle units would be A3 – Single-Family Attached Dwellings. The subject property is located in the South Side Zoning District, Block Class A, where Single-Family Semidetached and Attached Dwellings are both permitted per Article XIV §595-68.

The applicant previously submitted similar plans to develop five townhomes on this site to the Easton Planning Commission, and received Conditional Final Approval on November 1, 2006. Due to stormwater management issues identified by the City Engineer, these plans were never pursued. The proposed submission maintains the same intent and configuration of the 2006 plans, but with revised stormwater management infrastructure.

Mr. Manges reported that the plans were generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and City Codes, and stated that Pennoni Associates had delivered a satisfactory review of proposed stormwater management facilities. Therefore, he communicated staff's recommendation that the Planning Commission grant conditional preliminary approval of the submitted plans titled, "Land Development for JA & JM Associates LLC."

Neil Policelli and Ryan Dentith of Robert L. Collura Engineering, the applicant's engineer, were in attendance. Mr. Shipman asked when the proposed homeowners' association would assume responsibilities for maintenance. Mr. Policelli responded that the developer would remain responsible for a percentage of maintenance, proportional to the number of unsold units, until all units are sold. Mr. Shipman requested more details on the stormwater issues of the 2006 submission. Mr. Policelli explained that the applicant's prior engineer and the City Engineer reached a professional impasse over stormwater facilities, but that Robert L. Collura Engineering had designed the currently-proposed facilities to the City Engineer's satisfaction.

Mr. Sun stated that the narrow Storm Street provided access to existing homes' driveways, and inquired about potential traffic conflicts. Mr. Policelli and Mr. Dentith stated that conflicts may occur, but City ordinance required access via an alley. Mr. Policelli and Mr. Dentith responded to several questions by Mr. Sun concerning size and pricing of the units.

Mr. Elliott stated that most stormwater flows within the City were managed by public sewer, rather than private detention basins as proposed; he discussed the potential issues created by delinquent maintenance of private stormwater facilities. He read an additional suggested condition, drafted with input from the Solicitor, requiring a maintenance covenant agreement to ease these concerns. Mr. Elliott indicated that this covenant would allow the City to intervene in the event of a maintenance issue, and asked that the plan and individual property deeds reference the covenant. Mr. Policelli assented to this suggested condition. Mr. Shipman and Mr. Scheer asked about the necessity of the detention basin, with Mr. Policelli explaining it was required for Pennsylvania Act 167 compliance. At Mr. Scheer's request, Mr. Policelli and Mr. Dentith confirmed that the pond would lie on all five lots but be subject to a maintenance easement.

Mr. Elliott suggested additional language for condition #5 of the staff draft resolution, concerning the Steep Slope Conservation Overlay District, and repeated his suggestion to insert a covenant condition. Mr. Shipman moved the staff

draft resolution plus Mr. Elliott's amendments, by which the Easton Planning Commission would grant conditional preliminary approval of plans titled, "Land Development for JA & JM Associates LLC." Ms. Winfield seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Declarations of Blight. Mr. Manges reported that the Vacant Property Review Committee met on December 10, 2014, and recommended that the Planning Commission pass Declarations of Blight for 360 W. Wilkes Barre Street and 113 Cooper Street. He listed the blight conditions observed on each property.

360 W. Wilkes Barre Street. Mr. Shipman moved, with Mr. Sun seconding that the Easton Planning Commission issue a Declaration of Blight for 360 W. Wilkes Barre Street. The motion passed unanimously.

113 Cooper Street. Arnold Riback and Hyoungjoon Park, co-owners of the property, were in attendance. They explained they had purchased the property at a sheriff sale in April 2014, and were unaware that the property was being considered for a Declaration of Blight. They indicated they had secured the property, routinely visited to monitor its condition and remove litter, and were prepared to reconnect utilities come March 1.

Mr. Elliott mentioned that Mr. Riback and Mr. Park were the first owners of property being considered for a Declaration of Blight to appear before the Planning Commission. Questioning by the Commission revealed that Mr. Riback and Mr. Park were in arrears for 2014 property taxes, and that they had never requested a code inspection report from the Bureau of Codes & Inspections.

Mr. Elliott stated the property posed no immediate threats to health, safety, and general welfare, and suggested the blight declaration be tabled for one month. He indicated that, if the owners return to the Planning Commission in March having paid back taxes and received a code inspection report, the Commission could consider halting the Declaration of Blight process. Mr. Shipman emphasized the importance of paying taxes and requesting a code inspection report. Commissioners engaged in a brief discussion regarding the appropriate length of time to table the motion. Mr. Shipman ultimately moved, with Mr. Sun seconding, that the consideration of a Declaration of Blight for 113 Cooper Street be tabled until the March 4, 2015 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Update. Mr. Manges reported that Urban Matrix would be conducting "charrette" workshops with neighborhood groups on February 10, and completing urban design work for the North 13th Street corridor. Mr. Elliott asked when Urban Matrix would release the next draft work document, with Mr. Manges indicating this would occur after the February 10 workshops.

Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) Update. Mr. Elliott summarized the following business from the February 2015 Environmental Advisory Council meeting.

- Nurture Nature Center representatives were in attendance to discuss their ongoing "Easton Matters" survey effort.
- The EAC intends to pursue grants for "NO DUMPING – DRAINS TO RIVERS" storm drain marking and the preparation of an urban tree cover study.
- The EAC will prepare comments for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regarding the proposed PennEast pipeline.
- The EAC is seeking a new member to fill a vacancy.
- The EAC held general discussions of climate change and its impacts; the need to enhance the City's tree canopy; the need to increase City recycling rates; dumping and litter concerns; and reduced footprints through green building practices.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.