

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, June 4, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers, Alpha Building, One South Third Street, Easton, PA 18042. Planning Commissioners Charles Elliott, Bonnie Winfield, Ronald Shipman, William Heilman, and Mia Hatzis were in attendance. The following Planning & Codes staff members were present: Director of Planning & Codes George Kinney and Planner I Mike Handzo.

Mr. Elliott called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The agenda was approved as presented.

Mr. Elliott requested a change of phrasing to the May 7 meeting minutes. Mr. Shipman moved, with Ms. Winfield seconding, that the minutes of the May 7, 2014 meeting be approved as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Privilege of the Floor. Bradley Carter, 714 Pearl Street, was present. He reported he had submitted a Special Exception application, and requested information on initiating the review process. Mr. Handzo asked for the address of the property in question, and Mr. Carter replied 134 S. 6th Street. Mr. Handzo stated he was presently reviewing Mr. Carter's application, and requested Mr. Carter call him to discuss the Special Exception.

1 Adamson Street – Special Exception. Mr. Handzo read that the applicant, SimTek Fence, has proposed to establish a C8 – Wholesale Trade (Distribution Center) use in a portion of the existing 30,000 square feet commercial building at 1 Adamson Street currently occupied by Technical Oil Products. The distribution center would be used for fencing products made from polyethylene plastic and steel. The applicant proposes to receive fencing sections shipped on tractor-trailers from a factory in Utah, repackage the fencing to customer specifications, and ship these orders out through third-party trucking firms. The proposed distribution center would fulfill orders from over 400 Home Depot stores in the region, as well as smaller retailers throughout the Northeast. No manufacturing activities are proposed with this application. Materials stored onsite would include fencing, shrink-wrapped wooden pallets, shipping boxes, office equipment, and a forklift.

1 Adamson Street is located in the River Corridors and Other Green Areas Zoning District, Block Class A, where the proposed C8 – Wholesale Trade use is not permitted per Article XVIII §595-88. The property is also located in the Flood Hazard Overlay District. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map 42095C0286 D, 1 Adamson Street is located in the 100-year floodplain, with a base flood elevation of 195'. Therefore, this application requires Special Exception approval for Use in the Floodplain per Article XXV §595-143(B)(3). A Use Variance shall also be required from the Easton Zoning Hearing Board.

Phone conversations with the applicant's representative, Steven Haddock, on May 23 and 27, 2014, confirmed SimTek Fence's intent to establish a distribution center at 1 Adamson Street. There would be 3-4 employees associated with this business. The business would operate from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday – Friday, but Mr. Haddock indicated these hours could change based on business volume. Deliveries would arrive in the morning, with outbound shipments leaving the facility in the afternoon. Deliveries and shipments would be made by tractor-trailers, and no trucking activities would occur outside of the applicant's business hours. In a standard week, SimTek Fence would generate up to 16 truck trips, divided as follows: 2 outbound shipments each day, and 1-2 weekly deliveries of 3 trucks each. Technical Oil Products, the building's other occupant, receives 2-3 truck shipments per week. Trucks would generally access the distribution center via Lehigh Drive and Larry Holmes Drive to US-22 or I-78.

Mr. Handzo reported that the applicant's flood evacuation procedures were satisfactory and the proposal met the criteria for Special Exceptions outlined in Article XXXVIII §595-251. Therefore, he communicated that staff advocates Planning Commission's recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board that the request for Special Exception for the proposed Use in a Floodplain be granted.

The applicant's representative, Steven Haddock, was in attendance. Mr. Elliott inquired if the applicant planned to extend business activities beyond the hours of operation stated in the staff report. Mr. Haddock indicated that operations could begin at 6:00 a.m. if business volume required, but trucking activities would not occur prior to 8:00 a.m. In response to further questioning by Mr. Elliott, Mr. Haddock revealed that the scope of SimTek Fence's operation was unlikely to expand significantly from that described in the staff report.

Mr. Shipman moved, with Mr. Heilman seconding, that the Easton Planning Commission recommend to the Zoning Hearing Board that it grants a Special Exception request with conditions to SimTek Fence for a Use in a Floodplain. The motion passed unanimously.

Draft Floodplain Ordinance. Mr. Kinney presented the Commission with a draft motion endorsing the Floodplain Ordinance to City Council. Mr. Heilman moved, with Mr. Shipman seconding, that the Easton Planning Commission recommends to the Council of the City of Easton that it adopts the draft Floodplain Ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Update. Mr. Handzo reported that Urban Matrix was preparing to circulate a draft of the “existing conditions” portion of the Comprehensive Plan the week of June 16, and that the www.VisionEaston.org website would be ready for public roll-out in mid-June. Mr. Shipman asked about the possibility of an internal review of the website prior to its public launch. Mr. Handzo and Mr. Elliott suggested that a review session could be scheduled with the Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Task Force and Urban Matrix.

Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) Update. Mr. Elliott thanked Mr. Kinney for attending the EAC’s June meeting. He reported that the EAC discussed the need to acknowledge climate change in the Comprehensive Plan, means of incentivizing green building practices in the City, and its role in the plan review process.

The Commission engaged in some brief informal discussion regarding the use of LEED standards in the City and the construction of the new City Hall.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.