

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, May 4, 2011 in the 6th Floor Council Chambers, Easton City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Charles Elliott. Present: Charles Elliott, Robert Sun, James Bloom, William Heilman, Dennis Lieb and Ronald Shipman. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, Director of Planning & Codes; Brian Gish, Chief Planner; Carl Manges, City Planner; and Tina Woolverton, Secretary. Joel Scheer, City Solicitor, was present.

The agenda was approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2011 meeting was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Sun, approved by all.

Privilege of the Floor. None

Lafayette College Master Plan. Mr. Mitchell Wein, Vice President of Business Affairs for Lafayette College distributed copies of the college's 2009 master plan. He said the college focused on enhancing existing properties, such as the Hubcap Store, the N. Third Street properties and the High and Cattell property. He added the plan received community input during its creation and has been available on the College's website for a year and a half. Mr. Wein said the plan is multi-generational and is long-term in its phasing. He added that economics will play a role in the how the college proceeds on various components of the plan. He said the theme of the plan is to live within existing bounds, not acquiring additional property or adding students. Mr. Sun questioned that the College was not planning any new acquisitions. Mr. Wein said the master plan did not assume any new properties, and the plan is not conditioned upon any acquisition. He added that the privatization of city streets was incorporated in the plan. He said a lot of time was put into thinking about Hamilton Street, which is bordered on both sides by Lafayette College owned property. Mr. Sun asked what the City's policy was on privatizing streets. Mr. Scheer explained that City Council would need to approve it, as an interior street it would need to be abandoned by the City, and once that occurs; ownership reverts to the parties on both sides of it, which in this case would be the college. Mr. Sun asked if there was an over all parking plan for the college. Mr. Wein said in 2007 there were over 1300 parking spaces, and once the changes in the master plan are complete, there will over 1500. He added that parking in the proximity is key. Mr. Sun questioned if the college did not anticipate the parking needs growing in the next 5-10 years. Mr. Wein said plans for additional parking have not been developed. Mr. Elliott said making the campus more pedestrian friendly was a positive. He referenced the City's ordinance re-write in 2007 and asked how much input the College had from Planning Staff. Mr. Wein said the zoning re-write was already in place when the master plan was done, and the requirements for zoning were known. Mr. Elliott said while the plan in general seeks to be consistent with the ordinance, there conflicts in some of the details, and discussions with staff during the plan creation could have produced a more harmonious master plan. He noted the first plan review on the evening's agenda was going to require a use variance. Mr. Wein noted that there were other projects that fit within the ordinance. Mr. Elliott said the proposed plan for parking at the Pierce Street tennis courts pushed into a residential zone and additional conflicts between the master plan and the Zoning Ordinance required conversation. Colin Mangler of 631 Pierce Street said parking is already problematic and questioned how much parking was going to be pushed into the community. Mr. Wein said the plan is to create additional off-street parking before eliminating any on-street parking. Mr. Mangler said with a possible closure of Hamilton Street, the College's parking needs would be pushed into the community. Mr. Wein said before that on-street parking would be eliminated, additional off-street parking would be furnished, possibly at the Hummel Lumber site. Mr. Mangler questioned how community input had been gathered, and said he had not received any notifications of public meetings. Mr. Wein said information had been furnished through press releases and the College Hill Neighborhood Association. Ms. Mary Ann Barrett of 627 Coleman said the tennis courts are in her backyard, and 42 spaces will not begin to alleviate the parking woes. She also questioned who would be using the spaces. Mr. Wein said the spaces would be for students, staff, faculty or visitors of the college. Ms. Barrett said the proposed parking was invading the peace of the rear

yards, places to be peaceful and quiet. She said events cause noise, as will the construction. Mr. Wein replied the courts are no longer in use, and the College seeks to accomplish the goals of the master plan. Pat Bacelli of 115 Cattell Street said the college owns four properties across the street and said the college plans to tear down 512 March Street now and said he believes the Clinton Terrace property will soon follow, as it is deteriorating as well. Mr. Wein said 512 March Street is not in good condition, and is impractical to renovate. Janice Aponavicius of 621 Coleman Street said the entire landscape of the neighborhood will be changed if the parking lots are built, and said 42 parking spots will not alleviate the parking problems. Mr. Scheer suggested the meeting minutes note that members of the public made comments on the specific plans before the Commission during the Master Plan Overview portion of the meeting.

Land Development Plan 701 Pierce Street – Lafayette College. Mr. Manges said the applicant, Lafayette College, proposes to create two parking lots on adjacent parcels along Pierce Street, between Hamilton and Coleman Streets. The project includes the demolition of existing tennis courts, and the paving of portion of Catherine Street, an unimproved street which separates the two parcels. The two proposed parking lots would have a total of 42 spaces and would be reserved for Lafayette students, personnel and possibly visitors. The lots are proposed to be lit with lighting directed away from adjoining residences. Jonathon Ceci and Stephen Young of Ayers/Saint/Gross were present to answer questions, as well as Lisa Donlon of Vandemark and Lynch. Mr. Ceci said the grading work would keep the existing terracing and that the deteriorated walls would be replaced. He said stormwater management would be added, as well as a strong buffering of plants and an ornamental fence around the perimeter of the lots. Ms. Donlon added stormwater would be collected in a biofiltration system. Mr. Ceci said they would be working with the existing configuration and grading and would be replacing sidewalks on Pierce Street. Mr. Elliott questioned the fencing material. Mr. Young said it would be ornamental aluminum, painted black and similar to the fencing at the Snyder Street parking lot. Mr. Leib asked if any on-street parking would be eliminated. Ms. Donlon said 5 on-street spaces would be eliminated for site triangle purposes. Mr. Elliott questioned why, on the north side of lot one, the planting only consisted of two canopy trees and 5 evergreens. Mr. Ceci replied that extensive plantings already exist on the neighboring property. Mr. Elliott questioned the illumination sheet, which did not show calculations for light spillage onto neighboring properties. Mr. Young said the lights will have shields which prevent the light from shining onto neighboring properties. Mr. Elliott questioned the change in impervious surface. Ms. Donlon said it would be reduced by approximately 10%. Mr. Sun said the use of a light shield is conceptual and he would like to see illumination calculations for the neighboring properties. Mr. Sun asked if there was a plan for snow removal. Mr. Young said the proposed plantings are pushed to the back of the planting beds, giving room for snow to be piled in front of them. Mr. Shipman noted that parking is solid on the street and the parking lot will not favorably impact street parking. Mr. Ceci said the lot will relieve demand of the street spots from Lafayette students. Mr. Lieb asked if there were any plans to reduce the number of cars on campus. He added while the landscaping is a positive and small pocket lots are more desirable than one huge one, it is still taking on-street parking away from the neighborhood. Mr. Wein said it is the goal of the college to remove Lafayette affiliated cars from the streets and to make the campus more pedestrian friendly. He added the College is looking at car sharing programs and expanded shuttle service. Mr. Heilman said when new stadium lighting was before the Commission, a detailed plan showing light spillage was provided and he would like to see something similar for this plan. Ms. Mary Ann Barrett of 627 Coleman said the stadium lights are on almost constantly. She said the tennis courts have not been used in a longtime and questioned how they could be suitable for parking. She suggested having people park at Metzgar field for events and shuttling them to the campus. Mr. Ceci said the existing pavement will be removed, any sinkholes will be repaired and the surfaces repaved. Mr. Sun questioned, if the lighting was for security purposes, wouldn't ground mounted lighting work as well. Mr. Wein said it would not. Mr. Sun then asked if the lots could be closed and lights turned off a certain time. Mr. Bruce Ferretti, Facilities Manager for the College, said closed circuit TV would be installed to prevent vandalism. Mr. Josh Rea of 633 Pierce Street said he will be looking at the parking lot from his yard, and feels it is still a little sketchy as to who will actually be using the lot. Mr. Wein said it would primarily be used by

staff. Mr. Rea questioned taking away public street parking and putting in a private lot. He said the addition of 42 parking spaces dedicated to the college was not a value added. Mr. Wein said the tennis courts are vacant and located across the street from a highly used facility and it made sense to turn them into parking. Mr. Rea also noted that there are not traffic control devices on Pierce Street and asked what could be done. Ms. Bradley suggested he talk to the City Engineer. Mr. Sun said he concurs the College proposes first class development plans, but has concern for the lack of regard for the total community, such as not showing the impact of proposed lighting on neighboring properties. He asked if the college would be amenable to signing a continuance waiver. Mr. Wein said the College is committed to providing the lighting details and was willing to sign a waiver and come back before the Commission with the lighting details. A motion to accept the continuance waiver was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Heilman, approved by all.

Land Development Plans Watson Courtyard and Pardee Drive – Lafayette College. Ms. Bradley said the applicant, Lafayette College, proposes to transition the campus core into a pedestrian oriented academic quad area. Phase 1A is the proposal to remove a portion of High Street between the Hugel Hall of Science, the Acopian Engineering Center and Watson Hall to create a lawn/courtyard area to the front of Watson Hall. The lawn area would interface the remaining portions of High Street/Sullivan Road by means of vehicular pavers abutting an elevated speed table and small paved plaza in front of the Hugel Hall of Science. The elevated speed table will serve to slow traffic, and will create a pedestrian link to the Watson Hall Courtyard area. Benches for informal seating are also located within the proposed courtyard. Decorative lighting and landscaping will be incorporated into the courtyard as well. Phase 1B is the proposal to close Pardee Drive to vehicular traffic, converting it to a pedestrian walkway. The applicant proposes to reduce Pardee Drive from 19' to 16' in width, and to replace remaining surface of Pardee Drive with brick pavers. The closing of Pardee Drive to vehicular traffic will result in the elimination of approximately 31 existing off-street parking spaces. Ms. Bradley noted the plan submitted does not indicate where the eliminated parking spaces are to be relocated. She said the plan was particularly concerning to the Fire Department. Fire Chief John Bast was present. Mr. Bast said his concern was being able to get fire apparatus to the buildings, given the narrow width of the cartways. He said the plans contain insufficient details, but that reinforced turf, as shown, is not suitable for aerial equipment. Mr. Elliott asked if the proposed plan was an improvement over existing conditions. Mr. Bast said it is not. He added Pardee Hall is a major concern because it is not a sprinklered building. Mr. Sun asked what width of a street was needed for the aerial equipment. Mr. Gish said 26' was needed. Mr. Sun questioned the impact on the aesthetics of the plan should the street be widened to 26'. Mr. Wein said it would eliminate a stand of very old trees. Mr. Elliott said staff notes indicated this submission was not a full development plan for the Pardee Drive and asked if Pardee Drive and Watson Hall are a joint plan. Ms. Bradley said they are. No action was required on the plan and Mr. Wein said he would like to continue to work with staff on the plan.

Land Development Plans 512 March Street – Lafayette College/Radnor Property Group. Ms. Bradley said the applicant, Radnor Property Group, has proposed to demolish the existing three-story apartment building located at 512 March Street and construct a four-story Residential Midrise building consisting of twelve dwelling units, intended to house 35 students. The current building has six dwelling units housing 18 students. 512 March Street is owned by Lafayette College, and the Residential Midrise will serve as student housing for Lafayette College. Radnor Property Group will own and operate the building while Lafayette College will continue to own the land. Mr. Dave Yeager of Radnor Property Group was present. He distributed visual materials. He explained Radnor would work as an auxiliary developer for the College, and that Radnor has done over 18 similar developments throughout the Commonwealth. He explained the existing condition of the building is dilapidated and the building is not a good candidate for rehabilitation. He said Spillman farmer created the design to keep the building in the scale of the neighborhood. He said the proposed height is within the height limits of the zoning district. He said a parking agreement will be needed with the college to provide the additional 6 spaces that are not currently available off-street. He said tenancy will be Lafayette upper classman and staff

or faculty. Mr. Sun asked whose responsibility it would be to determine who would live in the building. Mr. Yeager said it would be the college's decision. He added that the building will be fully taxed. Radnor and the College will have a signed lease, and the only entity that could eventually buy the building would be the college. Mr. Lieb asked if the applicant was seeking design direction from the Commission. He said of the two designs presented, the mansard design was more appealing and in better keeping with the neighborhood. Mr. Sun questioned the height difference between the existing and proposed buildings. Ms. Bradley said the proposed building was approximately 12' higher. Pat Bacelli of 115 Cattell Street said the proposed building does not appear to be in scale with the rest of the neighborhood, and the rear windows will overlook into other yards, interfering with the privacy of the neighborhood. He added even if parking is assigned in a college-owned lot, the students who reside there will park as close as possible, not in their assigned spots. A motion to approve the revised resolution recommending conditional preliminary approval of the Development Plan and recommending Special Exception approval to the Zoning Hearing board was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Bloom, approved by all.

EAC Update. None

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 PM.