

The Easton Planning Commission met on Wednesday, September 5, 2012 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, James Bloom, Robert Sun, Dennis Lieb, William Heilman, Bonnie Winfield and Ronald Shipman. Also in attendance were staff members Becky Bradley, AICP, Director of Planning and Codes; Brian Gish, Chief Planner; Carl Manges; City Planner and Tina Woolverton, Secretary.

The agenda was approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 1st, 2012 meeting was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Ms. Winfield, approved by all.

Privilege of the Floor. None

Special Exception – 650 Northampton Street. Staff recused themselves from the review as the applicant is a City of Easton employee. Mr. Dave Horton of Pennoni Associated performed the review on behalf of the City. Mr. Horton said the Owner, Sharbel Koorie, proposes to repurpose an existing building in order to establish a Food Establishment (Retail and Six Pack Store Beer Store) and an Eating and Drinking Place use in the vacant one story building at 650 Northampton Street. Previous use at this location consisted of a glass repair/replacement store. The property is located in the West Ward Zoning District, Block Class C, where the proposed Food Establishment and Eating and Drinking Place uses are not permitted. However, the property is also located in the Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District, where the uses are permitted by Special Exception

A conversation with Mr. Nick Alfero (Applicant) on June 28, 2012, revealed that he wants to establish a small restaurant, six-pack beer sales and convenience store. The hours of operation will be Monday to Saturday 6am-10pm, and Sunday 10am-7pm. The Applicant indicated that walk-in business is expected to represent a significant percentage of the patronage. The existing structure will be renovated and small additions (i.e. appearing to be less than 200 SF) are to be incorporated. Site features and configuration (grading, parking, entrances, etc) are to remain unchanged. The Koorie family has operated the nearby Beer Brothers distributorship at 1125 Northampton Street for the past 5 years. The restaurant preparation and dining area is to include 1,158 Square Feet while the six pack and convenience retail area is to include 1,413 Square Feet.

Mr. Horton noted Site Alterations were initiated by the Developer in order to waterproof the existing foundation and to promote surface drainage from behind the building to the front of the property. Site alterations resulted in unstable slopes on the property and the Developer was directed to restore the slopes to original grade and to employ E&S controls in order to stabilize the area. In order to address site related issues associated with this application, an engineered Site Plan (and associated reports/calculations/details) was required. He said the site has been temporarily stabilized and the Developer has submitted a Site Plan with associated reports and details addressing the long term slope stability of the property.

Mr. Lieb questioned what types of beer would be sold. Mr. Koorie said primarily imports and crafts. Mr. Elliott said, in general, liquor license issues are dictated by the Liquor Control Act and questions about the character of the business inappropriate. Mr. Lieb said the neighborhood is concerned with alcohol portion of the business. Mr. Dan

Cohen, the attorney representing the applicant told the board the applicant and his family have lived in Easton for many decades and are well regarded and respected. Mr. Shipman asked Mr. Scheer if malt liquor sales were controlled by the state. Mr. Scheer said the sale of the beverages were controlled by the State, but that the Commission still had the right to determine the special exception request which includes this proposed use. Mr. Bloom questioned the required variance for not fulfilling the buffering requirements in the rear of the building. Mr. Horton responded the applicant, for security reasons, does not want to block the rear of the property from view. Mr. Bloom asked if the operation would be a sit down or take out restaurant. Mr. Koorie said it would be both. He added the focal point of the restaurant will be the brick oven, which will be used for some traditional Lebanese foods. Mr. Bloom questioned if there would be outdoor seating. Mr. Horton replied 24 outdoor seats were planned. Mr. Elliott said the plan analysis noted the freestanding sign would also require a special exception. He asked if that was before the Planning Commission as well. Mr. Horton replied it was. Mr. Elliott recommended new language to the draft resolution which would note the Planning Commission was recommending approval to the Zoning Hearing Board for both the special exception for use, and the sign. A motion to approve the revised resolution was made by Mr. Shipman, seconded by Mr. Heilman, approved by all except for Mr. Lieb.

Update – The Easton Home – 1022 Northampton Street. Ms. Bradley told the Commission that the Easton Home has withdrawn their previous submittal and was changing the design. She added a new plan was expected for the October meeting.

FEMA Map Update. Mr. Gish said at the Planning Commission meeting of March 2, 2012, staff had introduced changes to the flood plain maps that were being proposed by FEMA. He said the City sent comments to FEMA and has received comments from FEMA that are less than receptive. He added there is now a second 90 day appeal period, however, the level of detail required for the appeal process would require an engineer. Ms. Bradley said the City is concerned with the impact the proposed changes would have on the Simon Silk Mill site and its future redevelopment. Mr. Elliott asked if the data previously submitted can be resubmitted with the argument it does meet the appeal requirements and questioned whether Lafayette College could provide assistance with the engineering. Mr. Scheer agreed the data should be resubmitted to FEMA. Mr. Elliott summarized nothing would be lost by resubmitting the data.

Comprehensive Plan Update. Ms. Bradley said a Community Fellow from Lehigh has been hired to handle a lot of the public engagement portion of the Comprehensive Plan re-write. She added he will be with the City for a year.

EAC Update. Mr. Elliott said the EAC had met the previous day and the discussion was on the application of herbicides in the park lands along the waterways. He said Dave Hopkins, Director of Public Works and Randy Fey, the City Forester attended the meeting. He said the EAC established a subcommittee to study and create recommendations for the application of herbicides.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.