CHESTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 14, 2024 at 2:00 PM
City Hall, City of Chester, Delaware County, PA

Planning Commission Members Present:
Leola Williams, Vice-Chair
Shirlene Laws, Member
Harry Cottman, Member

Chester City Personnel and Consultants Present:
Justin Tibbles, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor
Gamil Hall, Director of Community & Economic Development
Paul Fritz, Planning & Zoning Director
Kim Pinder-Garner, Assistant Planning & Zoning Director
Ron Madison, Colliers Engineering & Design
David Schwartz, Colliers Engineering & Design

A. Call to Order

Vice-Chair Leola Williams called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm. Roll Call was taken by Kim Pinder-Garner.

B. Public Comment/Concerns/Questions

Ron Madison asked the Planning Commission to consider amending the agenda to address two additional items. Ms. Williams requested a motion to amend the Agenda. Ms. Laws motioned to amend the agenda. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion to amend the Agenda with a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Madison requested Chester Community Center-Phase II Addition Development be added to the Agenda. Ms. Williams requested a motion to amend the agenda. Ms. Laws motioned to amend the agenda. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion to amend the Agenda with a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Madison requested 1020 Morton Avenue Self Storage Development be added to the Agenda. Ms. Williams requested a motion to amend the Agenda. Ms. Laws motioned to amend the agenda. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion to amend the Agenda with a vote of 3-0.

C. Approval of April 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair Leola Williams brought forth the April 10 meeting minutes for consideration and asked if there were any corrections. Hearing no corrections, Ms. Williams requested a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Laws motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion with a vote of 3-0.

D. New Staff Introduction

Paul Fritz, Planning & Zoning Director introduced himself to the Planning Commission. Paul is a community planner and landscape architect with over 25 years of experience and lives in Nether Providence Township**.**

E. Plans

1. Plan Title: Widener Flats (dated June 27, 2024)
Location: 921-933 East 21st Street
Proposal: The Applicant proposes to consolidate six existing lots into one lot and construct a five story 8,645 square foot apartment building with a total of 35 dwellings.

Kim Pinder-Garner provided a brief overview of the project, which is at the very end of East 21st Street on the south side. All six properties are located within the R-3 Residential Medium Density Zoning District. This is the first presentation of the plan to the Planning Commission.

In attendance on behalf of the Applicant were Joanne Thieu from Studio C Architecture and Kenny Lin from Aqua Economics & Engineering, LLC. Ms. Thieu briefly described the project, including that the proposed apartment building includes two egress stairs and 47 off-street parking spaces, with 9 of the parking spaces located underneath the dwelling units.

Mr. Lin indicated the site is constrained by existing sloping topography. There is a 25 foot difference between the low point and high point of the site. Retaining walls are proposed to accommodate the development. The wall heights range from 5 to 11 feet. The 11 foot high wall is provided for vehicle access to the street on the east side of the site and adjust for a grade difference of 17 feet from the front to the rear of the site.

Two subsurface infiltration basins are proposed to manage stormwater on the site.

Questions and comments:

Ms. Williams requested clarification on the proposed basins. Mr. Lin indicated one basin serves the area around the driveway and the second one manages the rest of the stormwater runoff on the site. Both basins are underground.

Ms. Williams and Mr. Cottman requested clarification of the anticipated residents. Mr. Lin indicated the project is titled Widener Flats due to its proximity to Widener University. A mix of permanent and student residents are anticipated to rent the units.

Ms. Williams requested clarification on the proposed parking locations. Mr. Lin indicated there is a proposed garage accessed from East 21st Street from the northeast side of the site. 37 surface parking spaces are proposed at the rear side of the site. A two-way driveway provides access to the rear side parking.

Ms. Williams requested clarification on how trash is managed. Mr. Lin indicated the trash will be collected in the room located in the parking garage. A trash truck would enter the

garage to collect the trash or trash containers would be rolled out to the street. The service provider chosen would determine how the trash pickup would occur. No dumpsters are proposed.

Ms. Williams asked what the plan is for fire truck access. Mr. Lin indicated the drawings show a vehicle access study for a 48 foot long ladder truck. To access the rear of the site, the fire truck would turn onto the driveway and proceed to the rear side parking area. To leave, the fire truck would have to reverse out of the driveway to get back onto East 21st Street.

Ms. Williams asked loading locations during move in periods. Mr. Lin indicated front side units may unload off of East 21st Street. Occupants of rear-side units would likely using the loading zone on the east side of the site.

Ms. Williams asked how the site would be beautified after removing the existing vegetation on the site and if the Applicant has received comments from the Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Lin had not received comments from the Shade Tree Commission and indicated the landscape plan is included in the site plans. Trees and shrubs are proposed around the site and some existing vegetation is to remain on the west side of the site.

Ms. Laws asked if students would be separated from other types of residents. Ms. Thieu indicated the apartment units will not separate types of occupants.

Ms. Williams asked if there would be any shared amenities or transportation options with the adjacent apartment complexes in the vicinity of the site. Ms. Thieu indicated the nothing in the built environment is proposed to be shared with adjacent apartments.

Mr. Cottman asked if there would be any dwelling units designated for low income people. Ms. Thieu indicated there are no specific users identified.

Mr. Fritz briefly summarized the comments from the Planning & Zoning Department found in the letter to the Planning Commission dated August 12, 2024. Mr. Fritz highlighted comment number 6 about providing a landscaped island every 10 parking spaces aligned in a row. The purpose of this regulation is to beautify the parking lot and help manage stormwater. Mr. Fritz indicated the Shade Tree Commission will provide comments.

Mr. Madison highlighted the comments in the Colliers review letter dated August 9, 2024. He indicated the plan has significant deficiencies and recommended the plan be tabled. Mr. Madison indicated that a sketch plan was reviewed earlier and the Applicant did not address most of the comments from that review. Mr. Madison stated that stormwater management and fire safety and are the two biggest concerns. Infiltration testing (horizontally and vertically) must occur and be witnessed by Colliers to ensure the proposed basins will appropriately handle stormwater. DELCORA also needs to approve of the stormwater management system since drainage will route to a combined sewer system. The basin located south of the building may cause structural issues with the proposed building. The nearest fire hydrant is close to Melrose Avenue and fire flow testing would be required to confirm adequate flow for a sprinkler system. Colliers

recommends a hydrant and shut-off valve be placed near the dead end section of the East 21st Street. The Fire Department has reviewed the drawings and comments are forthcoming. Access all around the building is required. The proposed access does not accommodate a 48 foot ladder truck. Requiring the truck to go in reverse to exit the site is unacceptable per the Fire Department's review. Mr. Lin indicated he would look into both the fire access and stormwater management concerns.

Planning Commission Action:

Based on the stormwater management concerns, Fire Department comments, and pending Shade Tree Commission comments, Ms. Williams recommended a motion to table the decision on the proposal. Ms. Laws motioned to table a decision on the plan until all concerns stated are addressed. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion with a vote of 3-0.

2. **Plan Title:** Tee & Company Playhouse (dated June 27, 2024)
   Location: 408 Avenue of the States
   Proposal: The Applicant proposes a Day Care Center in the Central Business District (CBD)

Kim Pinder-Garner provided a brief overview of the project. The proposed use meets the requirements of the Central Business District (CBD) District. The site is located on Avenue of the States, which is a heavily travelled street in the Central Business District. The area is comprised of several 2nd floor residential dwellings but a majority of buildings are for commercial use. The size of the 3rd floor, where the Day Care Center is proposed, is 4,142 square feet. 700 square feet of the 3rd floor will be used for office space. The first floor, which has a separate entrance, is unoccupied. The Applicant submitted an emergency and evacuation plan.

The Applicant, Tanea Pratt-Sandlin, briefly described her plan. This would be her second location in the City. Her first Day Care Center, open for about two years, is at 407 9th Street. The owner of 408 Avenue of States has updated the space for the Day Care Center. Ms. Pratt-Sandlin clarified that her Day Care Center will occupy the whole 3rd floor. The office space on the 3rd floor is no longer proposed by the building owner.

Questions and comments:

Ms. Laws asked how parking would be addressed. Ms. Pratt-Sandlin indicated parking for parents and employees will occur at two different locations in parking spaces owned by the building owner.

Ms. Williams asked about play areas for the children. Ms. Pratt-Sandlin indicated the entire outside plaza is available for play. This area is fenced and gated for protection.

Ms. Williams asked how the emergency and evacuation plan addresses the 3rd floor location of the facility. Ms. Pratt-Sandlin indicated a front and rear exit is provided. Stairs are accessible if the elevator is shut down.

Planning Commission Action:

Ms. Williams recommended a motion to approve the proposal. Mr. Cottman motioned to approve the Day Care Center. Ms. Laws seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion with a vote of 3-0.

3. **Plan Title:** Chester Community Center – Phase II Addition (dated June 28, 2023, last revised November 17, 2023)
Location: 701 Booth Street
Proposal: The Applicant proposes to construct a 7,750 SF addition to the existing one-story Chester Community Center and an extension to the existing basin. The property is in the R-3 High Density Residential District within the Transit-Oriented Development Overlay and has an area of 1.69 acres. The site also has an existing stormwater basin and 33 parking spaces (2 ADA spaces). There are no additional proposed off-street parking spaces indicated on the plan.

   Mr. Madison indicated this is the second time the Planning Commission has seen the plan. The purpose of presenting the plan a second time is to confirm preliminary/final land development approval recommendation of the plan. There is no documentation of a previous approval by the Planning Commission. Mr. Madison made a recommendation for the Planning Commission to recommend to City Council a Preliminary/Final Land Development approval of the plan with the conditions stated by Colliers stated in their August 9, 2024 review letter to the City of Chester Planning Department.

   Questions and comments:

   No questions or comments were discussed.

   Planning Commission Action:

   Based on the recommendation of Mr. Madison, Ms. Williams asked for a motion to recommend to City Council a Preliminary/Final Land Development approval of the plan with the conditions stated in the Colliers August 9, 2024 review letter to the City of Chester Planning Department. Ms. Laws made the motion to recommend approval to the City Council. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion with a vote of 3-0.

4. **Plan Title:** Proposed Self Storage (dated September 26, 2023, last revised July 26, 2024)
Location: 1020 Morton Avenue
Proposal: The Applicant proposes to construct a 5-story Self-Storage Facility, including a basement, with an overall building footprint of 25,982 SF and a gross floor area of 155,892 SF. The proposed limit of disturbance indicated on the plan is 71,927 SF (1.65 acres). There are 20 proposed parking spaces (1 being an ADA parking space). The property is in the C-2/R General Commercial/Residential District and has an area of 1.77

acres. The building previously present on the property was demolished between 2002 and 2004 and the property is currently vacant.

Mr. Madison indicated this is the second time the Planning Commission has seen the plan. The purpose of presenting the plan a second time is to confirm preliminary/final land development approval recommendation of the plan. There is no documentation of a previous approval by the Planning Commission. Mr. Madison made a recommendation for the Planning Commission to recommend to City Council a Preliminary/Final Land Development approval of the plan with the conditions stated in the Colliers August 9, 2024 review letter to the City of Chester Planning Department.

Questions and comments:

No questions or comments were discussed.

Planning Commission Action:

Based on the recommendation of Mr. Madison, Ms. Williams asked for a motion to recommend to City Council the Preliminary/Final Land Development approval of the plan with the conditions stated in the Colliers August 9, 2024 review letter to the City of Chester Planning Department. Mr. Cottman made the motion to recommend approval to the City Council. Ms. Laws seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion with a vote of 3-0.

F. Chairperson's Report

No report was given due to the absence of the Chairperson. Kim indicated that by-right approvals since March 2024 were included in the Planning Commission packet for this meeting. Kim also introduced two other City staff that were in attendance: Gamil Hall and Alfred Sargent, Jr. Ms. Hall arrived in July and serves as the Director of Community& Economic Development, which oversees the Licensing & Inspection, Planning & Zoning, and the Health Departments. Mr. Sargent is the City's first Zoning Enforcement Officer and will be in the field tracking compliance with the City's zoning ordinance.

G. Planning & Zoning Director's Report

Mr. Fritz indicated that he has attended meetings with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and the Delaware County Planning Department. Both these entities are planning partners that help the region with planning efforts. Also, the Planning & Zoning Department is working on improving policies and procedures. For the Planning Commission, Kim and Paul will seek out and share education opportunities for the Commission to attend. They will find courses the City will pay for.

With no other business, Ms. Williams asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Laws made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Cottman seconded the motion. The Planning Commission approved the motion with a vote of 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 3:02pm.