

Planning Commission Notes – September 6, 2022 – Submitted by Judd Vickers

The meeting of the Planning Commission was conducted in person and via WebEx.

Back up materials can be found at:

https://www.choosecambridge.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_09062022-1138

Chair Mary Losty introduced Theresa Stafford, new Planning Commission member appointed by City Commissioner Sputty Cephas, Ward 4.

Chair announced Planning Commission Member Jerry Burroughs passed away in August. He served on the Commission for over two decades.

New Business:

PZ 2023-003 – 201 Mill Street, School Property – Davis Strategic Development has acquired the Mill Street school property and presented a preliminary development plan for the school and immediately surrounding lot (consisting of approximately 40,000 sq ft) which is subject to the NC-3 zoning overlay. The NC-3 overlay, approved by the Planning Commission in 2020, was to allow for 8 residential units in the school building, to be renovated partly with grant funding from the Maryland Historic Trust. It was stated to the Planning Commission that the grant funding required the school to be retained by the developer for 5 years. Therefore, the Planning Commission, with the input of the community, required the school be converted to an owner-occupied ownership/condominium regime in 5 years. It has now been stated that the Grant funds require the developer retain the property for up to 10 years, and Davis has indicated the apartments are being designed with longer term rentals in mind, and does not plan to convert them to an ownership or condominium regime. Therefore, Davis is requesting an amendment to the overlay at Planning staff has recommended that in place of the requirement to conversion to ownership, that the overlay require market rate rentals, in keeping with other apartment buildings in the downtown core area. Multiple neighbors spoke in opposition to the project, citing storm water issues and lack of a stormwater plan, which is not traditionally completed until the final approval stage. Comments were also made that the development that is inconsistent with the neighborhood. Several individuals advocated that it is perhaps time to consider razing the structure and developing the lot in a consistent manner with the single-family neighborhood. Davis presented only a plan for approval related to the school and the overlay area, and not the remainder of the property, which they own and propose to develop with duplexes/townhouses. The Planning Commission deferred consideration until October, at which time Davis will need to return with a plan for the entire site, not just the school property. It is possible the City might acquire a portion of the rear lot to provide a stormwater management facility for the area. At the August meeting there was discussion regarding the widening of School Street between Mill and Choptank, to provide for 2 way and to accommodate increased traffic. Davis clarified at this meeting they do not intend to pursue widening of School due to expense and the necessity to

relocate telephone poles/power lines. This issue will need to be further reviewed by the City's traffic and safety committee.

PZ 2023-005 – 200-208 Sunburst Highway – Additional review related to site conditions, parking, landscaping and impervious coverages. Commissioners cited challenges in the development of this site in a commercial manner, specifically citing problematic turning onto Maryland Avenue to the site and the development of 3 restaurants on 1.297 acres. The plan provides for 43 parking spaces, and only 21 are required, which might be sufficient given the nature of these restaurants as “order ahead and pick-up” type service. The Planning Officer recommends increased use of pervious pavers, requiring routine maintenance to function properly, architectural screens on the roof to screen equipment; and a substantial 8-foot fence, serving as noise buffer, along the side that borders the rear lots of Rambler Road. Planning Commission formed a subcommittee to review architecture. Applicant sufficiently addressed concerns of the Planning Commission and the applicant can move to next steps.

From the August 2022 meeting:

PZ 2023-005 – Concept plan presented for 200-208 Sunburst Highway (southeast corner of US50 and Maryland Avenue) for two buildings, containing three franchise type restaurants. Proposed restaurants are a Chipotle Grill, Mike's Subs and Smoothie. Prior consideration for this site was for a 7/11 and considerable concern was indicated regarding traffic issues and larger trucks accessing the property. Neighbors on Rambler Road raised continued concerns related to traffic and activity in the parking lots, suggesting a buffer fence along the residential area and better addressing the access to Maryland Avenue.

Pintail Subdivision – Original approval required a community amenity that consisted of a playground and pavilion. Dan Ryan Builders is ready to proceed with additional development, and is requesting a modification of the approval to allow the construction of the pavilion only. The HOA Board provided a letter that they do not want to have a playground, and is advocating only a covered picnic area. The Planning Commission requested the minutes, or additional information from the HOA supporting that a majority of the residents are advocating this change, and not simply a smaller group that is potentially more vocal.

Discussion:

Revised Critical Area Map – Discussion of updates to the 2005 Critical Area map. Many of the older areas of Cambridge and the Creek are exempt from Critical Area, due to the age of the City. Some small, proposed changes from 2005 and the Planning Commission recommended sending to City Council for approval.

Green Street Policy – Discussion of Green Street Policy being implemented by the City Council, that would be adopted into the UDC. Plan is for “Complete Streets” which provide for vehicular, pedestrian, bicyclists, motorists, freight vehicles, emergency vehicles and transit riders. It would

come into practice when the City might apply for grants for street improvements. Planning Commission cited potential expense of implementation, as well as longer term maintenance. For example, Commissioners cited the poor maintenance of Maryland Avenue. The Planning Commission intends to provide comments and recommendations to the Council for changes to the language.

Short Term Rentals – The Planning Commission had planned to draft Short Term Rental regulations, and identified a work group of citizens to contribute to the regulations. However, this matter has now been taken up by the City Council. Commissioner Malkus drafted the STR ordinance for the City Council, researching regulations in various communities throughout the US.