

Planning Commission Meeting – June 13, 2023 – submitted by Judd Vickers

Hearn Building Update – Presentation from Green Street Housing related to the redevelopment of 505-509 Race Street. The renovations will include 44 multi-family housing units of one- and two-bedroom apartments. Parking for 66 cars will be located to the rear of the buildings and accessed via Race Street, over the vacant lot where 507 was torn down several years ago and there will not be any access through Grace Church. 35 units will occupy the entirety of the upper floors of 509, which is the Hearn Building and there would be space at street level that would be available for lease as retail. 9 of the 44 units would be located in 505 Race Street and Green Street is proposing to remove and build a new façade due to structural issues. Planning Staff indicated a preference to restore and maintain the historic façade. At street level at 505 there would be a leasing and management office for the complex, tenant lounge and laundry facilities. HPC approvals are necessary for all exterior changes and modifications. 8 of the 44 units will be reserved for handicapped individuals with incomes below the poverty level and the remaining 36 will be reserved for households earning 60-80% of the area median income. There will be space allocated to provide social support services to the residents. Green Street indicated that units will be marketed to Cambridge residents. However, it would appear Fair Housing Laws would prevent units from being restricted to those that are already residents of Dorchester County. Concerns and discussion ensued among the Planning Commission members as to the role of the Commission related to the Government subsidy of the complex over the long term. The Hearn building will have 2,853 square feet of commercial, which is less than 6% of the space of the entire project, making this more of a residential development as opposed to commercial. The UDC states the downtown core should “sustain the densely spaced buildings located close to the street with multiple floors housing commercial and civic activities and upper floor residential patterns.” Green Street Housing is based in Salisbury and none of the owners live in Dorchester County. The cost of renovations will be approximately \$21,000,000 (approximately \$473,000 per unit), mostly funded by Government sources. Green Street will also seek a PILOT, or Payment in Lieu of Taxes from the City Council.

Old Business:

PZ 2017-013 Egypt Road solar energy system – review of final conditions – deferred to a future meeting.

New Business:

PZ 2023-013 The Planning Commission reacted positively to a proposed Concept Plan for an industrial building at the corner of Woods Road and Chesapeake Drive. Mr. Hank Warner presented his current plan and has developed several other buildings on Chesapeake Drive, which are now fully occupied by an engine manufacturer and Treehouse Foods, which, according to their website, produces and sells a comprehensive portfolio of private label foods and beverages for retail grocery. Staff indicated that one reason the City’s industrial sector has struggled is due to the inadequate ceiling height of many of the older industrial buildings. Mr. Warner is building to accommodate more modern industrial standards. Mr. Warner and his team will now move toward a more formal concept plan.

Public Hearing:

TA 2023-004 – Planning Commission voted unanimously to send a recommendation to the City Council to approve a text amendment related to accessory structures and the use of the term midpoint when determining height. There was no public comment.

From the 5/2/2023 meeting: TA 2023-004 – Discussion continued from April related to building heights related to new accessory structures; change would provide for slightly greater height as it would measure to the midpoint of a pitched roof; neighborhoods with somewhat more narrow lots might retain greater restrictions related to height.

Discussion Items:

TA 2023-005 Define various types of health care facilities that are currently silent in the UDC – Deferred to July.

Recreational Marijuana – Planning Officer and Commission discussed where it should be permitted. Discussion related to whether or not recreational marijuana should be permitted in similar locations to alcohol sales, etc. There have been issues in other communities where recreational marijuana sales have massed in certain areas and created problems. Further discussion at future meetings and this would most likely become an issue after January 1, 2024, when new recreational facilities might be permitted.

Planning Director updates:

- Three contiguous properties, consisting of several acres on Airpax Road, located behind Tractor Supply, will be used for storage containers. This area is not visible from US50, and this is a permitted use as is considered warehousing. Planning Commission requested the property owner come forward at the July meeting to discuss;
- RAR will install four 35' granary tanks behind their building in the parking lot, which will provide for operations. HPC has approved and they are within the appropriate height limit. It was discussed as to how it might affect nearby residential areas and that the neighbors should receive some type of notice. Planning Commission requested the property owner come forward at the July meeting to discuss.
- Final site plan for Chipotle has been approved, located at the corner of US50 and Maryland Avenue. Three small restaurants were contemplated originally for this site and only Chipotle is moving forward at this time.
- Final site plan for Dunkin Donuts approved, grading permit has been issued and the building permit is under review.
- A work session had been planned with the City Council regarding Mural Guidelines and it has not occurred. The prior Council had not been favorable to the guidelines. The conversation needs to be restarted with the Council and a work session is needed. Currently, the UDC prohibits murals and guidelines are needed to define what is appropriate and in what locations.
- The City Council will need to designate a new liaison to replace Commissioner Malkus, and perhaps further define the role, which in many ways is a Commissioner Ex-Officio.

YMCA Rezoning, 201 Talbot Avenue:

The YMCA has indicated an interest to relocate and the property at Talbot Avenue is currently zoned for Institutional Use. Some institutional uses may not be acceptable for this site, which is in the middle of a residential neighborhood. It was discussed that the YMCA and CWDI might be contemplating a land swap, which might allow CWDI to take control of the Talbot Avenue site and potentially locate an institutional use there that was originally contemplated for Sailwinds/Cambridge Harbor. The City is moving forward with a sense of urgency and an NC-1 overlay will be brought forward at a special meeting on July 5. The NC-1 overlay would limit institutional uses to those typically found in residential neighborhoods, such as churches or schools. Discussion ensued related to non-profit entities that do not pay property taxes locating on high value property, and how that also tied into the Hearn Building, requesting a PILOT as opposed to paying full property taxes.