

**Albemarle County Planning Commission
DRAFT Minutes MARCH 14, 2023**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending: Corey Clayborne, Chair; Fred Missel, Vice Chair; Karen Firehock; Julian Bivins; Luis Carrazana; and Lonnie Murray.

Members absent: None.

Other officials present: Kevin McDermott, Director of Planning; Andy Herrick, County Attorney's Office; Jodie Filardo; Rebecca Ragsdale; Alberic Karina-Plun; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commission (remote).

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Mr. Clayborne called the meeting to order.

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Clayborne established a quorum.

Other Matters Not Listed on the Agenda from the Public

There were none.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Missel moved to adopt the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Firehock and passed unanimously (6-0).

Public Hearings

SP202200012 – City Church Expansion

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager, stated that the City Church was a religious assembly use, and it was located across from Belvidere Boulevard, between CATEC and the City neighborhood of Greenbrier, and near Dunlora and the John Warner Parkway. She said that the site had existing structures, parking, and a wooded buffer separating the property from Greenbrier. She said that the existing property was zoned R4, and the surrounding properties were zoned R4 and commercial. She said that the parcel was designated as urban-density residential in the master plan. She said that religious assembly uses were considered secondary use in residential areas.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the concept plan for the site was provided. She said that the existing use had been in operation since the 1980s. She said that there were existing entrances to the site from Rio Road. She said that there was a previous special use permit which included a request for up to 500 seats and redevelopment of the property, but there had been a reevaluation of the church's needs. She said that the present request was for 320 seats, to expand the existing

structure and parking, and to build a multi-purpose building to use as a gym and office space. She said that grading and stormwater management facilities were associated with the requested use.

Ms. Ragsdale said that other major elements of the proposal included the 20-foot buffer along the western property line. She said that there was a height limit of 35 feet, and the building would be located at the rear of the parcel. She said that staff did not identify concerns related to the impacts of the development. She said that the site plan would contain the final landscaping details. She continued that the existing parking areas would be brought to compliance with the code requirements for tree canopy, landscape islands, and parking lot landscaping requirements.

Ms. Ragsdale noted that the concept plan for the site did not make any proposals that would preclude the implementation of the Rio Corridor Plan continuous green-T. She said that staff did not identify concerns related to additional traffic impacts. She said that a community meeting was held, and there were several questions regarding traffic that had been answered at the meeting. She said that Greenbrier residents expressed concerns about stormwater runoff, but the stormwater management would improve with the site plan. She said that there may be drainage from other areas that generated concerns for the City residents.

Ms. Ragsdale noted that the proposal was for an existing use seeking to expand to meet current needs. She said that proposal was not out of character with the longstanding use. She said that the comprehensive plan recognized the need for secondary uses in residential areas. She said that the staff recommended approval and did not identify concerns with the use.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the recommended conditions were typical special use permit conditions that stipulated consistency with the concept plan, established a maximum capacity and provided the necessary area to implement the Rio Road Corridor Plan. She said that it was typical to include an expiration for the use to commence, and five years were allotted for the proposal. She noted that the previous special use permit would expire in May.

Mr. Bivins clarified that the applicant was not requesting for the previous special use permit to be extended past the May expiration date.

Ms. Ragsdale responded yes.

Mr. Missel clarified that the parking did not intrude into the 10-foot parking buffer.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the buffer was along the western property line. She said that the other setbacks were consistent with residential requirements.

Mr. Missel asked if the parallel parking spaces were within the buffer.

Ms. Ragsdale responded that there was no setback requirement for parking, and staff did not recommend a buffer requirement along the property line with CATEC.

Mr. Missel asked how the critical slopes on the site would be handled.

Ms. Ragsdale responded that the site was within the development area, so there were managed and preserved slopes. She said that the impacted slopes were managed slopes, and they met the design standards of the ordinance.

Ms. Firehock asked whether trees would be removed to install the stormwater management pond.

Ms. Ragsdale responded that there would be tree removal. She said that the wooded areas to remain had to maintain a 20-foot buffer.

Mr. Murray asked whether the stormwater management would be a biofilter or retention pond.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the final design would be addressed with the site plan. She said that the applicant would be able to provide more details.

Mr. Clayborne asked whether the project would be built before the intersection improvements.

Mr. McDermott said that it would be likely because the intersection project was not currently funded. He explained that the intersection project could be identified for funding in FY 25, and then it would probably take four years to complete.

Mr. Clayborne opened the public hearing. He read the rules for public comment.

Mr. Chris Becker, Operations Pastor of City Church, stated that they had been hosting services at Charlottesville High School, but they had to move to their current space due to the pandemic. He said that their services had required more space and facilities as more people joined the congregation during the pandemic.

Mr. Craig Kotarski of the Timmons Group, representing the applicant, said that the proposal included the addition of a multi-use structure for the church. He said that the request was for 10,600 square feet, 40 additional parking spaces, and 320 seats. He noted that they were not proposing more seats than the current attendance, which was about 310. He said that the prior special use permit was no longer being pursued. He said that they anticipated starting construction a year after the permit was approved and intended to complete the project before the Rio Road corridor improvements were to occur.

Mr. Kotarski said that some trees would be removed. He said that the site would be brought into compliance with the tree canopy requirements. He said that the parking site was void of trees in the parking area, so they sought to reduce heat islands. He said that the stormwater management would likely either be a biofilter or stormwater retention pond, but they were hesitant to have standing water around children. He said that they wanted to enhance the water quality of the stormwater runoff.

Mr. Bivins asked about the potential for a road connection between the church site and the CATEC site to facilitate entering and exiting.

Mr. McDermott explained that in the Rio Corridor plan, a connection between the City Church parking lot and CATEC was conceptualized, but they had not moved forward with the plan. He said that if the project to improve the intersection moved forward, there was a funded project for a roundabout on John Warner Parkway, which was projected to begin construction in 2025. He said that if the project were to move forward, a U-turn location would be available at the next street, Greenbrier Terrace.

Mr. Carrazana clarified that the applicant would be bringing fill to the site for grading.

Mr. Kotarski responded that the site grading was only conceptual, and they wanted to limit the use of fill. He said that there was a retaining wall that could be extended. He said that grading would be addressed in the site plan.

Mr. Carrazana suggested that the applicant address the slopes at the back of the building.

Mr. Kotarski said that the steeper slopes were on land that was harder to use.

Mr. Missel noted that the plan included in the staff report was different from the report shown by the applicant. He asked if the applicant had a preference for one plan or the other.

Mr. Kotarski said that if the plans were different, then they were fairly close in content because few items were changed in response to comments from the County staff.

Mr. Missel said that the proposed parking was different between the plans.

Mr. Kotarski said that they were looking for ways to maximize parking on the site, but there were limitations to the site.

Mr. Missel asked how the stormwater flow from the parking lot would be addressed.

Mr. Kotarski responded that the addition was sited near the parking lot, and the stormwater flow went toward the building. He said that they would later address the placement of inlets and backup systems.

Ms. Firehock asked what the applicant intended to use the new building for.

Mr. Becker said that they used the building seven days a week, and they struggled with capacity. He said that local groups had requested to meet in the church. He said that they currently utilized the gym at the church across the street. He said that the youth group currently met in the sanctuary. He said that the proposed building would include a gym and office space. He said that there would be space throughout the week for small groups to use the facility.

Ms. Firehock asked whether they anticipated community groups to use the facilities to host meetings.

Mr. Becker said yes. He said that they received several requests from the community and from groups within the church.

Ms. Firehock asked if there were plans for the lawn area on the site.

Mr. Becker said that during the pandemic, they created an open field with a platform to host services outside. He said that the field was also used as a meeting spot for children. He said that they would continue to keep the area as greenspace.

Mr. Murray noted that parking islands could be used to treat stormwater. He said that allowing stormwater flow to the plants in the islands reduced the need for watering. He said that Crozet Elementary provided informational pavers about the local plants.

Mr. Clayborne asked if they would be able to maintain the minimum amount of parking during

construction.

Mr. Kotarski responded that the church had an agreement with CATEC, and a lot of the parking occurred at CATEC, and there was a path that led to the church.

Mr. Clayborne asked what other sustainability measures were being considered by the applicant.

Mr. Kotarski said that they were always trying to consider sustainability measures. He said that they wanted to ensure that they used native plants.

Mr. Clayborne noted that the dumpster was located at the front of the entrance.

Mr. Kotarski said that the site would likely be screened. He said that there was space in the rear of the building, but they wanted to consider access to the dumpster.

Mr. Missel asked what the maximum assembly was for the service.

Mr. Becker said that it was around 340 people.

Mr. Missel noted that the staff recommendation was to limit the seats to 320. He asked whether the requirement would reduce the capacity.

Mr. Herrick responded that the current condition limited the capacity to 320 seats, so the proposed condition was just a continuation of the previous condition.

Ms. Ragsdale responded that the prior special use permits did not limit the number of seats, and the most recent amendment was for 500 seats. She said that they typically included a condition to establish the sanctuary.

Mr. Clayborne asked how big the congregation was.

Mr. Becker responded that they typically hosted about 500 people on Sundays, but there were three services.

Mr. Clayborne opened the hearing for public comment. He noted that there were no speakers and closed the public hearing.

Ms. Firehock noted that the proposed use was appropriate for the site. She said that she did not have any concerns.

Mr. Bivins said that he did not have any concerns.

Mr. Carrazana said that there were some issues to address during the site plan, but otherwise, the proposal was straightforward.

Mr. Clayborne clarified that there would be a requirement for entrance and exit signage on the site.

Ms. Ragsdale responded yes. She said that landscaping and additional pedestrian infrastructure would be addressed in the site plan.

Mr. Missel motioned for the Commission to recommend approval of the special use permit, SP2022-00012 City Church Expansion, Attachment D, for the reasons stated in the staff report and with the conditions presented by staff at the meeting. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (6-0).

Adjournment

At 7:53 p.m., the Commission adjourned to March 28, 2022, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m. in Lane Auditorium.

Kevin McDermott, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date:
Initials: