

MINUTES
ALTOONA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, May 4, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT

Randy Isenberg, Chair
Michael Haire, Secretary
James Dixon, Vice-Secretary
Larry Bilotto

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dave Albright
Charles Myers

GUESTS PRESENT

Adam Long - Keller Engineers for KAVI Partnership
Alyssa Rouser - EADS for Pennsy Properties LLC
William Kibler - Altoona Mirror

STAFF PRESENT

Omar Strohm - Acting City Manager
Rebecca Brown - Codes & Inspections Director
Sabrina Appel-McMillen - GIS/Land Use Coordinator
Nate Kissell – Public Works Director
Kim Carrieri - Administrative Assistant

The Altoona City Planning Commission held its monthly meeting on May 4, 2021 in the City Council Chambers, 1320 Washington Avenue, Altoona. Dave Albright, Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

1. Approval of meeting minutes of April 6, 2021.
The minutes were previously distributed for review. A motion was made by Larry Bilotto for approval of the minutes and seconded by Dick Haines. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Public Comment Period. - None.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

3. **Pennsy Properties LLC. - 1502 11th Avenue - Land Development Plan for Introduction**
Pennsy Properties, LLC. is proposing to construct a new building at the site of the former downtown drug building located at the intersection of 11th Avenue and 15th Street. The property is zoned "C-CB", Central Business District.

The representatives of Pennsy Properties were late in arriving for the meeting, the board went onto hear the KAVI Partnership's presentation and further agenda items. Once the representative arrived, they presented.

We returned to this review after Discussion Items.

Alyssa Rouser from Eads representing Pennsy Properties introduced herself and explained that they are submitting this as a "white box" submittal as they are not sure what they want to do with the building. They wanted to submit Land Development and waivers they are requesting so they will have a better idea on the use of the property for next month's meeting.

Rebecca explained that this came in on the 19th and Stephanie did her review dated the 29th, however EADS has not yet received those comments that just came in on Friday.

Randy asked Alyssa to review the comment letter and see if there are any additional changes or waivers to be submitted for next month.

Alyssa explained that they are currently requesting 2 waivers as follow:

640-65.B – A waiver for the minimum 5’ buffer yard required between the parking lot and the sidewalk. They are proposing a 2.8’ wide landscaped buffer yard in order to provide adequate parking on the tight site.

640-62.C(3)(a) – A waiver for the parking stall dimensions. 18’ long by 9’ standard parking stalls are being proposed in order to minimize impervious area of the site. (instead of the required 19’ x 9’).

Randy explained that they have granted 18’ parking in the past. The aisle way is more important. Alyssa explained that there will be a 24’ wide aisle way.

Larry Bilotto asked about the last two parking spots show a reduced 22’. Alyssa explained that they will be for compact cars and Larry requested that they sign those two parking spots appropriately.

Alyssa explained that their goal is to have everything presented for next month but it depends on the developer.

Randy stated that the board currently does not have any issues on their 2 requested waivers.

The Board went back to #13 Questions from the Media.

4. **KAVI Partnership – New Café – 715 6th Avenue (Formerly known as the New Mixed-Use Building) - Resubmission of the Final Land Development Plan.**

KAVI Partnership previously submitted a Mixed-Use Building Land Development Plan for approval in November 2020 and were granted 6 waivers at that time. They are now resubmitting new plans for a one-story New Café at 715 6th Avenue. (The second and third stories of the building with apartments have been removed from the project).

Adam Long from Keller Engineers introduced himself as a representative of KAVI Partnership. The plan was previously presented and was conditionally approved in January as well as the approval of 6 waivers. The project was redesigned, originally it was a mixed-use building with a café on the first floor and 2 floors of apartments above, however the owners decided to remove both floors of apartments and now it is a one-story café for Greenbean Coffee House. The plans went through redesign and were resubmitted. There are 2 additional waivers that they are requesting.

They will be addressing a few other comments from the latest review letter from Gwin Dobson and Foreman. They do not have their PennDOT HOP’s as of yet. It has been noted that in one of their previous waiver requests the ordinance section reference was incorrect and they will correct that (it is the last one referencing the freeboard requirement).

Their 6 initial waivers were previously approved and they are asking for 2 additional waivers as follows:

Section 640.65.B(2) – Request to eliminate the earthen mound requirement for the building parcel. Due to the steep topography of the site, it is not possible to grade in the berm. However, the 10’ buffer has been provided and the buffer will be planted with a tall evergreen screen.

The building parcel with the drive thru is on one parcel and across the alley towards 5th Avenue will be the parking lot. There is no room to fit an earthen mound as there is a 9’ or 10’ elevation change from the sidewalk up to the alley and they will plant a tall evergreen hedge that can get 15’ to 20’ tall to replace the mound requirement.

Section 640-63. I (3) – Request to allow a speaker system for the drive-thru.

A face-to-face setup is not feasible for drive-thru services.

The ordinance is written that a face-to-face setup is required and it is not feasible and they have not seen any other face-to-face drive-thru services.

Dick Haines asked where the drive-thru speakers will be located. Adam explained that on sheet 3 you can see order boards listed that are not quite at the center of the horseshoe drive-thru the pedestrian access cuts through at the center of the horseshoe and the order boards are to the left of that and then you drive around to the north side of the building on the exit lane and that is where the pickup window is.

Larry Bilotto asked what the hours of operation are for the speaker system. Adam explained that he wasn't quite sure but it is not a late-night operation. He knows they open early in the morning but not open real late in the evenings.

Rebecca stated that the City has no issues with the 2 additional waivers and it is not practical for face-to-face drive-thrus.

Michael Haire stated that their current times are listed as 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM and there are no houses close by that would affect it. Rebecca explained that we have had some complaints in the past at other business locations such as McDonalds on E. 25th Avenue and the one in Garden Heights but they adjusted their volume controls and have quelled the complaints.

Randy asked Rebecca to make note to make an adjustment to the Comp. Plan for this requirement.

Adam Long explained the additional comments, as E&S approval was provided back in December, the soil infiltration testing - they may find a way to dewater the stone under that volume. They will get the signatures on the plans close to final approval, he fixed the one distance missing from a bearing, they will make sure all the seals are on it, comment 4 chapter 640, they just finished that this morning and broke it up into a table. The Sewage Planning was provided a few months ago; Traffic Impact Study or providing ADT is something they have to look into; HOP approvals are still out but getting close; the street trees being placed behind the sidewalk they defer to DPW which they prefer the street trees behind the sidewalks; the earthen berm was discussed; clear site triangle will be labeled; the lighting has been revised and will be resubmitted; the dumpster screen fence has been changed from 5' to 6'; the water and sewer capacity letters were provided several months ago; he added the perforated pipe label on the storm detention and they will figure out the volume and infiltration testing; he just received a letter from Mike Sinisi giving them written approval to connect to the old sanitary laterals with the stormwater detention and he revised the number and sequence on the notes. It is mainly the infiltration testing; the traffic and the HOP permit they are waiting for.

Randy asked to accept a motion to accept the final Land Development for KAVI Partnerships new Café and accepting the two additional waivers as requested. Larry Bilotto made the motion and Jim Dixon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Rebecca stated that the Pennsy Representatives will arrive shortly and asked to move onto #6 the Spot Blight Declaration.

5. Staff Level Reviews - Rebecca stated that they received another land development submission yesterday for a parking lot for Curry Group to use for their downtown businesses. It is the Coptic Church at 1501 12th Avenue beside the Police Station parking lot and that church will be demolished in the next couple weeks. They also received 2 subdivisions, one is for a lot merger for a new home.

The Board went back to informational items.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

6. Spot Blight Declaration - 1329 21st Avenue – Garage Only

Mary Johnson explained that this was brought to her as an emergency demo of the garage only. The garage has been demolished and it is presented here for a determination of blight. There has been no response from the owner and they have filed a lien on the property for the demolition.

Larry Bilotto asked if this was a result of a structure fire. Rebecca explained that it was a structural collapse of the one wall. There have been multiple notices on the property to repair the garage with no responses from the owner. It became an emergency when the wall collapsed. Mary explained that they had no contact from the owner, they even banged on the door to try and get someone to answer with no response.

Michael Haire made a motion to determine the garage at 1329 21st Avenue as blighted and was seconded by Dick Haines. Motion carried unanimously.

Randy asked if Pennsy was on any timeline for grants etc. Rebecca did not believe they were. Randy stated that if they did not show up after the last couple agenda items that they will need to be deferred to next month's meeting.

Randy asked if Rebecca is acting as the Planning person. Rebecca said as of right now she is and has been for about a month. She introduced Sabrina Appel-McMillen who comes from Bedford County and just started working for the City yesterday. She will be assisting with GIS, Land Development and Zoning.

The board went back to #5, Staff Level Reviews.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

7. Staff Reports - None.

8. GAEDC Report - Randy has no information for that.

9. Blair County Planning Commission Report - Randy Isenberg stated that there were a couple things that may pertain to the City such as the Metropolitan Clearing House letters that were sent for the 5th Avenue over Mill Run Bridge Rehabilitation, one for the Water Authority for Homer's Gap. The Commission has hired a new staff member to replace the secretary. They did approve a small addition and change at the Westfall Substation where they are adding some equipment. There is also the Gutshall/Barstow subdivision.

10. Commissioner Forum – Michael Haire asked to correct a clerical error on the letterhead. At the February meeting they appointed him as the Secretary and Jim Dixon was appointed Vice-Secretary. This was missed on the letterhead and we will get that corrected.

11. Discussion Items - None.

Alyssa Rouser from EADS arrived to represent Pennsy Properties so the Board went back to Item #3.

12. Additional Public Comment - None.

13. Questions from the Media

Bill Kibler from the Altoona Mirror asked if Pennsy Properties is Curry Realty. They explained that it is not the same as Curry and it is not Jimmy Columbo. Alyssa stated that it is Brian Irwin.

Bill asked what the use of the building is. Alyssa stated that they have not decided on the use as of yet. He inquired as to the building size and it was determined that the building size is 50' x 60'. He asked what the building could be suitable for. Alyssa stated that it could be for any type of commercial use and it will be multiple stories.

Bill asked if there were any comments on the demolition of the Coptic Church as there was a movement a while ago to save it. Michael Haire explained that it was a handsome building at one time but it is in such deterioration now that it is a point of no return. It is a common theme that the City has run into in the past with having to demolish abandoned churches. It is more a cultural aspect of people not attending church. Randy stated that their goal to look at it is what the plan will be in the future once the church is torn down. Once they receive plans then they will address it at that point.

14. Adjournment – Motion to adjourn by Dick Haines and seconded by Larry Bilotto. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 PM