

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Planning Commission
October 2, 2019

The State College Borough Planning Commission (PC) met on Wednesday, October 2, 2019 at the Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street. Zoe Boniface, Chair, called the meeting to order at Noon.

Members Present

Zoe Boniface, Chair; Anita Genger, Vice-Chair; Scott Dutt; Jon Eich; Richard Kalin; Mary Madden; and Ron Madrid

Others Present

Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Greg Garthe, Senior Planner/Zoning Officer; John Wilson, Zoning Officer; Isabel Storey, Planner; Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant; Albert Drobka, Architect; David Peck and Neil Sullivan, Penn State University (PSU); Greg Rogalski, Pennoni Associates; and Tony Farkle, PennTerra Engineering

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Genger and seconded by Mr. Eich to approve the September 19, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Chair Report

Ms. Boniface, Chair, had nothing to report

Public Hour

No comments or concerns were heard during the public hour.

Land Development Plans

Final Plan - Center for Innovation, Making, and Learning; The Pennsylvania State University, Applicant; CID Zoning District; Pennoni, Engineer; Kieran Timberlake, Architect

Mr. Peck and Mr. Rogalski's presentation included:

- The plan proposed to demolish the James Building and construct a new building for the Center for Innovation, Making, and Learning.
- The new structure would be a six-story (94-foot-tall) building containing 82,380 ft² floor area. A total of 31 parking spaces were proposed in an underground parking facility.
- The plan was reviewed by the Historic and Architectural Review Board (HARB) on May 7, 2019. The existing building was a contributing structure in the 1995 National Register Nomination for the Holmes-Foster/Highlands Historic District.

- There would be three main tenants, Launch Box, Invent Penn State and the dean's office of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences and IST.
- The property was between New Alley, Burrowes Street and Miller Alley where current building was.
- Proposed seven stories with six above grade and one level below grade for parking.
- Would be set back incentives on the front of the building.
- Green roof area proposed to help with storm water quality and to enhance views from the meeting space on the upper floor.
- Enhance Burrowes Street side with increased glass.
- A proposed ramp into Miller Alley would be the main access to the garage area.
- They would be meeting incentives.
- Level one would be the main entrance to building with a secondary entrance off of Miller Alley.
- Proposed a small entrance plaza at the entrance to the building with seating and landscaping.

Design Review Board (DRB) comments: Mr. Garthe noted DRB discussed the following from their October 1, 2019 meeting: 1) future solar panels; 2) bicycle racks; 3) roof top visibility; street view on Burrowes Street; 4) color palette of the building; 5) sustainability; 6) green roof - intentions and accessible to public.

Borough Staff comments: Mr. LeClear noted staff's comments were: 1) a number of items from the first submission were still being addressed, 2) work on a demolition permit and a request to Council for a street closure; 3) zoning: incentives would be maxed out for the height; 4) would like more information on lighting fixtures on the outside of the building.

PC comments:

- Mr. Kalin asked how far back were the windows on the rear of building on the north side. Mr. Rogalski stated they were 17 feet from the property line.
- Mr. Madrid asked what the average occupancy was now currently and the projected occupancy as well. Mr. Peck and Mr. Rogalski stated they did not have an answer.
- Mr. Madrid stated his prior question could have addressed whether there were enough exits adequate for the number of occupants. Mr. Rogalski stated occupancy was up to code.
- Mr. Madrid asked what the net increase was overall in square footage. Mr. Sullivan stated that student and faculty occupancy would not increase only space.
- Ms. Genger asked if there would be bicycle parking. Mr. Rogalski stated there would be none in the building but there would be some on Miller Alley.
- Ms. Boniface asked if there would be any interest in the roof becoming a carbon neutral area in the future. Mr. Rogalski stated there would not.
- Mr. Dutt asked if the developers had spoken to neighbors about roof equipment next door. Mr. Rogalski and Mr. Peck stated they had reached out to specific cell carriers directly.
- Ms. Madden asked if the sixth floor would be available to non-PSU users. Mr. Rogalski stated it would not.

- Mr. Eich asked if the buildings were strictly for educational purposes and Mr. Sullivan stated they were.
- Ms. Boniface commended the design staff for their attention to the street façade and activities that enlivened the downtown. Mr. Eich also commended them for the energy efficiency and the green roof. Mr. Rogalski stated they were tracking for Silver LEED but striving for GOLD.

Preliminary Plan - 430 West Irvin Ave; Valient Real Estate Investments LLC, Applicant; CP-3 Zoning District; PennTerra Engineering, Engineer; Albert A. Drobka, Architect

Mr. Drobka's presentation included:

- The plans proposed a 4-unit and an 8-unit building. A total of 36 parking spaces were proposed in an onsite surface parking lot.
- In addition, accommodations for parking 10 bicycles were proposed.
- Noted there would not be any commercial space now and would add more ADA units.
- Mr. LeClear stated the developer would be paying the fee-in-lieu instead of providing inclusionary housing (IH).
- Shared parking to the front and shared underground stormwater below parking.
- There would be two units on each floor with four beds per units accommodating two persons.
- Proposed mechanical room to the back.
- Proposed community room, rental offices, and outdoor patio on lower floor.
- Property would be sprinklered.

Design Review Board (DRB) comments: Mr. Garthe noted DRB discussed at their October 1, 2019 meeting: 1) sustainability; 2) suggested conduit for future solar panels; 3) type of insulation; 4) colors for exteriors; and 5) use of native plants for landscaping.

Borough Staff comments: Mr. LeClear noted staff's comments were: 1) met current zoning regulations; 2) discovered a portion of West Irvin Avenue had been vacated and would be treated as a shared driveway which would need maintenance agreement between all properties; 3) whether it met standards for fire access; 4) IH requirements; 5) needed a lighting plan; 6) staff would need a letter stating the property was exempt for a Traffic Impact Study; 7) minor requested modifications to the recycle/garbage area.

PC comments:

- Mr. Kalin asked if the number of IH units change when going from one lot to two lots. Mr. LeClear stated they did not.
- Ms. Genger noted there were no recycling units noted on the plans. Mr. Farkle stated there would be recycling units placed.
- Ms. Genger suggested placing windows on the ends of the buildings. Mr. Drobka stated, in his experience, many windows were detrimental because of heat loss, etc. He noted a compromise would be to place shutters.
- Mr. Eich noted, according to the numbers, there would be 96 residents and he was concerned there were less than one parking space per resident. He suggested adding more bicycle parking spaces.

- Mr. Eich and Mr. Drobka had a brief discussion on impervious coverage. Mr. Eich stated the sidewalk area along the urban street was a complete waste of impervious coverage and would like to see this repurposed into additional bicycle parking.
- Ms. Madden stated she was concerned about the few windows, the sidewalk issue and moving forward in the zoning rewrite she would like to see some standards included to address the street in some form and not have all the parking in that area. She noted the patio should be treated as something more than a concrete slab.
- Ms. Genger suggested adding a porch roof on the bigger building.
- Ms. Boniface asked about the fireplaces. Mr. Drobka stated they would be half glass screens with electric or gas with the illusion of a fireplace.
- Ms. Boniface asked if the building would have air conditioning. Mr. Drobka stated they were using through the wall heating and cooling units.
- Mr. Eich stated the location was in the center of five different fire hydrants that were not directly accessible. He asked if there would be some kind of recommendation to the State College Borough Water Authority (SCBWA) for a fire hydrant that would be accessible to this location. Mr. Drobka stated they talked to SCBWA who asked for a main extension and to have a separate domestic sprinkler system and he noted the building would be sprinklered.
- Mr. Kalin asked if the Borough allowed a proposal like this to be not adjacent to a public street.
- Ms. Boniface asked if there would be anything affecting the maintenance, design or administration of this building because it was adjacent to a school property. In particular, doing background checks to be on the safe side. Mr. Drobka stated the local school board should be able to answer. Mr. LeClear stated whoever provided management for the company should be able to answer that as well.
- Mr. Eich stated he wanted this concern listed in the review letter to the developer.

Community Planning

Draft Zoning Text Amendment: Cat Cafes in the Urban Village Zoning District

Mr. Garthe stated:

- The Planning Department received a request for a zoning text amendment from Sharon Myers, who wished to operate a cat café in a commercial property located at 616 West College Avenue in the Urban Village (UV) zoning district.
- The applicant had indicated the business would be a typical café where food and beverages are served, but in addition, fully vetted adoptable cats would be present in the café to socialize and interact with customers. The café would not be directly affiliated with an animal rescue operation, but café staff would work with such agencies to facilitate the adoption of cats by interested patrons while on the premises.
- The proposed amendment would include a definition of a “cat café” along with additional parameters such as vaccination requirements. The applicant had indicated the nature of the business might require the overnight boarding of cats, which was not currently permitted in the UV zoning district.
- A maximum of 10 cats allowed on the premise would be added to the current ordinance.

- Mr. Garthe stated staff had drafted an ordinance, received a memorandum from the Borough's Health Inspector, Brian O'Donnell, and received email correspondence from a local veterinarian.
- He noted Mr. O'Donnell suggested different shifts be schedule for food handling and cat handling to keep things separate.
- The local veterinarian's email reiterated what the health inspector stated. She agreed with the cats being fully vetted, be chipped, and have their shots.

PC's comments:

- Mr. Madrid asked if this was an amendment to current ordinance. Mr. LeClear stated it was because it was a use not currently defined.
- Mr. Madrid asked if the ordinance should include other types of animals. Mr. Garthe stated the proposal was for cats only.
- Ms. Genger asked if there would be a separate hand washing area.
- Mr. Eich noted this would be an expensive proposal. He also suggested adding to the language of being in compliance with the health code provisions, if not already in language.

A motion was made by Mr. Dutt and seconded by Mr. Eich to recommend approval of the proposal with members comments to be incorporated into the review letter. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council (BC): Mr. LeClear reported BC would meet on October 14, 2019 to review an alley vacation petition that would then come to the PC. He also noted staff was in middle of budget season, and there would be more material coming from the Borough regarding the upcoming Census.

Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB): Mr. Garthe reported on the following ZHB cases:

- Special Exception - 129 South Sparks Street: On August 27, 2019, the ZHB heard a request for a special exception to allow expansion of an existing office use into an additional floor of the structure. Per Ch. XIX, Section 965: Mixed Use District of the zoning ordinance, the ZHB was authorized to grant special exceptions in the mixed-use area of the R-3H district. The ZHB granted the special exception on September 24, 2019.
- Variance - 230 South Gill Street: On September 10, 2019, the ZHB heard a request for a variance concerning encroachment into a side yard setback. The applicants proposed to construct a side porch on a very narrow lot. The property was located in the R-2 zoning district. The ZHB granted the variance on September 24, 2019.

Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA): Mr. Eich stated the CRPA and the elected officials of the Transportation Land Use committee would be focusing on looking at the Comprehensive Plan Implementation plan and the process that would occur within the next two years.

Upcoming Land Development Plans: Mr. Garthe reported there were no upcoming land development plans.

Staff Updates: Mr. LeClear stated staff was in the middle of advertising for the Senior Planner for Redevelopment position.

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, October 17, 2019 at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at Noon

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Dutt adjourned the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads
Administrative Assistant