



Department of Planning and Development

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MEETING MINUTES (APPROVED)

PLAN COMMISSION

Location: Heman Park Community Center (975 Pennsylvania Avenue), and via Videoconference (Zoom)
6:30 pm; Wednesday, April 26, 2023

The Plan Commission held its regular session via video conference on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. The meeting commenced at 6:30 pm and concluded at 8:14 p.m.

Call to Order – (6:30 pm.) Chairwoman Holly called the meeting to order.

1. Roll Call

Present

Al Fleischer Jr.
Charles Gascon
Ellen Hartz
Mark Harvey
Margaret Holly
Patricia McQueen
Jeff Hales (Council Liaison)

Absent

Tori Gonzalez

Staff Present

John Wanger, Director of Planning & Development
Mary Kennedy, Planner
John Mulligan, City Attorney

2. Approval of Minutes

- a. The February 22, 2023 Plan Commission meeting minutes were approved with no changes.
- b. Approval of the February 24 and March 30 Special Plan Commission meeting minutes were tabled until the next Plan Commission meeting.

3. Public Comments

- a. Chris Chesley of Starbuds Dispensary offered an apology to the Plan Commission for misunderstanding and violating the City's ordinances by operating a recreational marijuana facility prior to being authorized to do so. The Plan Commission unanimously accepted Mr. Chesley's apology, initiated by a motion from Commissioner Harvey.

4. Old Business – none

5. New Business

a. **Conditional Use Permit – CUP-23-03 (CONTINUED TO FUTURE MEETING)**

Applicant: Neighborhood Properties, LLC (Fernando Cepeda)

Request: Approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a development of 100 townhome units

Address: 7711 Canton Avenue

(VOTE REQUIRED)

This agenda item was not discussed and was continued to a future Plan Commission meeting due to insufficient application materials.

b. **Conditional Use Permit – CUP 22-13**

Applicant: Washington University in St. Louis
Request: Approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for “Schools, private: including college or university-level facilities”
Address: 6900 Delmar Boulevard and 6901 Washington Avenue
(VOTE REQUIRED)

Chairwoman Holly introduced the agenda item and reminded the Plan Commission and audience of the Conditional Use Permit review criteria (400.2710) and the Commission’s authority to approve, deny, or approve with conditions (400.2700).

Mary Kennedy, Senior Planner, presented the staff report and provided a brief overview of the previous public meetings at which the subject CUP was discussed.

Chairwoman Holly asked if the applicant would like to provide any further details.

Steve Condrin (Assistant Vice Chancellor for Real Estate at Washington University) provided a brief statement that the current plans are the result of significant community input and thanked the public for their engagement.

Chairwoman Holly opened the public hearing.

Kelly McHoney (Neighboring resident—6912 Washington Ave) expressed concerns about converting green space to a parking lot; insufficient parking; and traffic, particularly near the roundabout at Trinity Ave and Delmar Blvd. Ms. McHoney also asked that the Plan Commission share the proposed conditions for the CUP approval.

Brad Hershey (Representative from University Methodist Church, current owner of 6901 Washington; 3 Ricardo Ln) expressed his support of the proposed CUP, emphasized to the audience that the church does not have an alternative buyer, and shared his concern that if the CUP is not approved, the two properties will sit vacant and introduce other problems to the neighborhood.

John Oldham (Neighboring resident—6905 Washington Ave) expressed concerns about privacy with students using the walkway between the church building and his property; hours of access to students; noise and odors (smoking); and parking and traffic. Mr. Oldham shared that he consulted a realtor to weigh in on the potential impact of the CUP on his property values, which is expected to be negative according to the realtor. He also shared that the parking garage on the 560 Music Building property appears to be underutilized with only 27 cars.

Sarah Oldham (Neighboring resident—6905 Washington Ave) expressed concerns about the green space at 560 Trinity Ave, which will be converted into parking. Ms. Oldham stated that this green space contradicts the Civic Complex Historic District master plan. Ms. Oldham reiterated that Washington University should better utilize the parking garage.

Ben Ellermann (Neighboring resident—6911 Washington Ave) pointed out that the actual building occupant capacity is much higher than the number of students and faculty members proposed to be using the building. Mr. Ellermann was also concerned that students will be able to access the building 24 hours/day, 365 days/year. Mr. Ellermann stated that he believes the proposed parking lot at 560 Trinity Ave is unacceptable, and that the private subdivision will

take steps, to prevent the City from approving the parking lot. He shared a packet of alternative solutions with the Plan Commission.

Ruth Decker (Neighboring resident—6900 Washington Ave) informed the Plan Commission that any change in use for the properties in CUP-22-13 requires an amendment to the University Heights II Declaration of Trust Agreement and requested that the City treat their subdivision as an equal partner.

Chairwoman Holly closed the public hearing and opened the floor to Plan Commissioners.

Commissioner Hartz asked the applicant to explain why they are proposing a new parking lot instead of using the existing parking garage on the 560 Music Building property. Mr. Condrin (Washington University) explained that this decision was based on limitations and provisions in the City's zoning ordinance, and that the entitlement for the parking garage reserves parking spaces for COCA, the 560 Building, and the Castlereagh apartments, so there were not enough spaces to satisfy the parking requirements for the reuse of 6901 Washington and 6900 Delmar. Additional discussion was had on the options that Washington University pursued, and it was apparent that the proposed parking lot plan is their most viable solution to meeting the parking requirements.

Commissioner McQueen asked for more information from the Applicant on the parking lot landscaping plans. Jeff Ryan (Design Principal at Christener Architects) explained that the parking lot surface will be pervious pavers to mitigate stormwater runoff, and that they will provide high-quality native landscaping surrounding the parking lot. Commissioner Hartz commented that native plantings paired with pervious papers will be an improvement to the existing turf grass lawn, which is not conducive to managing stormwater.

Chairwoman Holly asked the applicant to provide an update on their engagement with the surrounding neighborhood since December 2022, when the Plan Commission last discussed the CUP. JoAnna Schooler (Washington University) stated that prior to the December 2022 meeting, they had two separate meetings—first with the subdivision trustees, and another meeting where all neighbors were invited to provide input. An additional meeting with the neighbors was held on April 17, 2023, where they provided an update on the site plans and gained further input from neighbors. The current site plan reflects this feedback.

Commissioner Holly asked why the stub street on Trinity Avenue is not proposed to be replaced with green space. Mr. Condrin responded that was the result of feedback from the residents and Historic Preservation Commission, to preserve the symmetry of the street layout.

Commissioner Fleischer asked whether they have heard how many residents are in favor or opposed to the CUP. Ms. Schooler explained that there has been a mix of positions.

Council Member Jeff Hales (Ward 1) added that he has heard from the neighborhood that people are in favor of the proposed reuse but are concerned about traffic and parking impacts. Mr. Hales emphasized his concern that the number of building users will increase in the future. Mr. Condrin responded that it is Washington University's expectation that they would have to apply for an amended Conditional Use Permit to increase the number of students, faculty, and staff using the building, beyond what is indicated in CUP-22-13. Mr. Condrin stated they would like to work with the City on writing a condition to address this concern.

An additional member of the public wished to share a comment:

Cirri Moran (Neighboring resident—6652 Kingbury Ave; Trustee of Ames Place subdivision) stated Ames Place supports the CUP, with the conditions added by the Traffic Commission and Historic Preservation Commission. They do not want to see the buildings sit vacant.

Commissioner Gascon motioned to approve CUP-22-13 with the conditions in the staff report and amended condition #4:

Amended Condition #4: There shall be no large assembly, such as performances or lectures, in either building. Spaces within the building shall not be available for event rental.

Some additional discussion followed the motion:

Commissioner Hartz asked the applicant to confirm that Washington University is a tobacco-free campus. Mr. Condrin confirmed.

Council Member Hales asked the applicant to confirm the hours of operation, possible class schedules, and the idea of restricting the applicant from offering evening classes due to parking conflicts. Mr. Condrin said that hours would be similar to other academic buildings, but they do not yet know the exact schedule. Students will have access to the buildings at any time of day. Mr. Hales stated that he would like to address schedule concerns further with the applicant.

Commissioner Hartz asked whether there would be practice rooms. Mr. Condrin said he's not sure yet whether there would be practice rooms, but added that there are currently practice rooms in the ground floor of Castlereagh Apartments.

Commissioner Hartz motioned to add a condition that evening classes would not be permitted. Some debate was had about this proposed condition among the Plan Commission, and Ms. Hartz withdrew the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

6. Other Business

- a. Plan Commission subcommittees:
 - i. Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee: Commissioner Gascon volunteered to chair the committee, with Commissioners Hartz, Harvey, and McQueen as committee members.
 - ii. Code Review Subcommittee: Commissioner Fleischer volunteered to chair the committee with Commissioners Hartz and Gonzalez as committee members.
- b. Definition of "dormitory": City Manager Gregory Rose has asked the Plan Commission to refer review of the "dormitory" definition to the Code Review Subcommittee. Director of Planning & Development, John Wagner, added that this will require support from staff for analysis. Plan Commissioners briefly commented on how University City's zoning code, particularly with its definitions of family, is outdated.
- c. Next Plan Commission Meeting: May 31, 2023 at 6:30pm. Ms. Kennedy asked whether the Plan Commission would like to hold this meeting virtually since the main agenda item is a

presentation from planningNEXT, who will be attending remotely. The Plan Commission agreed to hold the 5/31 meeting virtually. Going forward, however, the Commission would prefer holding hybrid meetings to give people options.

7. Reports

- a. **Housing & Third Ward Revitalization Task Force Report:** Commissioner McQueen provided an update that the Task Force chose a consultant for their plan but they are waiting for this to be approved by the Council.
- b. **Council Liaison Report:** Council Member Hales provided an update that the Council held a joint meeting with the Housing & Third Ward Task Force to discuss the hiring of a consultant. He also provided an update on the fire at Three Kings that occurred that morning.

8. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.