

## **PLANNING BOARD MINUTES JUNE 14<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

The meeting of the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville was called to order by Chairman Bernard Navatto at 7:00 PM and stated that adequate notice of this meeting had been provided in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act”.

**Board Members Present:** Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

**Board Members Absent:** Deidre Rosinski, Andrea Adair, Arthur Akins, Jason Kraska, Lisa Werner

**Professional Present:** Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney and Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer

### **Approval Minutes**

Upon a motion by Councilman Roger Vroom, seconded by Mayor Dennis Sullivan, the minutes of May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, were approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call      Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

Abstain: Al Kerestes

### **Hearing**

2019-031P/2020-007P

Avalon Somerville Station Urban Renewal, LLC  
Borough of Somerville Landfill Redevelopment Area  
B123 B124 L 2.01, 3, 3.01, 5, 12.01, 18, 19, 20

Michael Bruno Esq, Attorney for the applicant Avalon Bay Communities advised that the applicant is requesting to amend what was previously approved as retail in the SW corner of Plaza A, entrance nearest to the south side of the train station. Previously approved as approximately 1,400 SQ FT of retail space they are now looking to use the space for shared office space which attorney Michael Bruno believed to be permitted and conforming use. Michael Bruno also advised that he will be addressing parking concerns as well.

Board Attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq. marked the following exhibits into the record.

Exhibit A1 – Letter that was submitted by the applicant requesting a meeting on the evening of June 14<sup>th</sup> in connection with the presentation.

Exhibit A2 – Notice of Publication

Exhibit PB1 – CHA’s review letter dated June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Exhibit A3 – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Unit Mix dated 09/08/2020.

Michael Bruno, Esq. went on to explain that the concept is to have a share office arrangement, the proposal is to have individuals take advantage of these offices using the parking deck for their vehicles instead of the short term parking that exist in front of the building in compliance to

one of the conditions to a previous resolution, no change will be made and short term parking will stay in effect. All occupants of the offices will be directed to use the parking deck.

Chairman Bernie Navatto agreed that this was a permitted use and that if it had been worded the redevelopment plan and agreement different to non-residential instead of commercial/retail that there would have probably not been a need to meet this evening. However, he felt that he needed to come back in front of the board to address parking issues which as per the CHA report there doesn't appear to be any and also appeared to be straight forward.

Mayor Dennis Sullivan inquired if the 1,400 SQ FT of space would be divided or not. Michel Bruno, Esq. advised that it was proposed to be 11 individual offices along with restrooms, common areas with equipment such as copy machines, and kitchenette. Mayor Dennis Sullivan also inquired about the maximum occupancy load, and it was confirmed that there will be a max occupancy, which was confirmed by Michael Bruno, Esq that there certainly will be.

Planning Board Member Christopher Adickes asked out of curiosity what the reason for the change was. Michael Bruno, Esq responded that due to the changing market this use is better suited for the space.

Chairman Navatto opened up to the board for any further questions.

Chairman Navatto opened questions to the public. With no further questions or comments the public session was closed.

Board Attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq. asked the additional question to clarify if they knew what the maximum would be at this point or if it was just what is required under the code. Michael Bruno, Esq responded that they would follow what is required by code. It was also placed on the record that the letter the Chairman had referenced from CHA (Exhibit PB1) dated June 13<sup>th</sup> talked about the fact that there are the same parking requirements for the original approved retail spaces that would be for the shared office spaces. There fore the only thing that the board would be looking at is this change and presumably the applicant would be amending the site plan to reflect the internal changes.

Board members Larry Cleveland asked what the signage, door, and windows would come back to the board or would it be similar to the different use - it was confirmed that it would be similar to what was proposed for the prior use.

Board Attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq. stated that the condition as stated tonight be the building plan to reflect the internal changes and whatever maximum occupancy is required by code.

Upon a motion by Al Kerestes, seconded by Christopher Adickes, application 2019-031P/2020-007P was approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call      Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

Abstain:

### **Land Use**

Ordinance 2710 -23-0605

Amending chapter 102-104 of the borough code to permit two family residence in the professional office-residential “PO-R” zone.

Chairman Navatto explained that this ordinance was proposed at their last meeting and Council had introduced at their last meeting and the exact changes that they requested be made to schedule A. The footnote on schedule A requiring residential use be on the second floor has been removed to allow the mixed-use building to residential/office on any floor. The Chairman didn’t feel as though it required further discussion other than thank you to the Council for taking their recommendation.

Board Attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq. for the record confirmed with Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer that this change was consistent with the master plan – confirmed by Cole.

Chairman Navatto opened questions to the public.

Member of the Public Rich O’Neill – 124 West Cliff Street stated that this was long over due and that the PO-R was great historically but not great in its current standing, time have changed along with economics and that this is the right move and he is glad to see it happen.

With no further questions or comments the public session was closed.

Upon a motion by Al Kerestes, seconded by Christopher Adickes, Ordinance number 2710 -23-0605 was approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call      Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

Abstain: None

See Transcript.

### **Items not on the Agenda**

Board Member Christopher Adickes brought up a systemic issue that he had been noticing that he would like to discuss. The board received a letter from the DSA on Thursday with the request that it be reviewed quickly- which was responded to by Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer with some good thoughts and suggestions. Adickes pointed out that it caught him off guard and wondered if this was the best way to collaborate and get things done. The other piece was that they have seen since the start of the year that proposed ordinances that are being promoted by the DSA come from Council and there seems to be a misalignment with the 3 parties that are involved and feels that more front-end collaborations earlier on in the process would be more productive ensuring that everyone is rowing in the same direction more often. Adickes stated that he wanted to open this up to see if anyone else sees the same issue.

Board Member Larry Cleveland agreed that he would too like to see more collaboration.

Chairman Bernie Navatto agreed as well and stated that the planning board should have been involved in the process rather than being spectators in the process. Chairman Navatto stated that he will reach out to the DSA board to see what we can do about future activity.

Board Member Christopher Adickes added that he did not feel like there was adequate time to review the material that was sent over by the DSA with the time restraints they requested and that he is unsure of what the rush may be or if there was some timeline that they were trying to meet however the document was lengthy and would have been months in the work and that it would have been beneficial to have representation or collaboration.

See transcript.

### **Chairman's Comments**

No comments.

### **Meeting Open to the Public**

No comments.

### **Adjourn**

Upon a motion by Al Kerestes, seconded by Andrea Adair, the adjournment of the planning board meeting of June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, was unanimously approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call      Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

Abstain: None

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m.