



CITY OF COLLEGE PARK ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
8400 BALTIMORE AVENUE, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND 20740
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ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION

Approved Minutes of Meeting

August 5, 2021

(Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, this was a Virtual Meeting)

<u>Members</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Stephanie Stullich, Chair	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Santosh Chelliah, Vice-Chair	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Daejauna Donahue	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Vernae Martin	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Kiersten Johnson	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Malaika Nji-Kerber	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>

Also Present: Planning Staff – Terry Schum, Miriam Bader and Theresheia Williams;
 Attorney - Susan Cook

- I. **Call to Order and Amendments to Agenda:** Stephanie Stullich called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. There were no Amendments to the Agenda.
- II. **Approval of the Agenda:** Vernae Martin moved to approve the agenda as published. Malaika Nji-Kerber seconded. Motion carried 5-0-0.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Malaika Nji-Kerber moved to adopt the minutes of July 1, 2021. Santosh Chelliah seconded. Motion carried 5-0-0.
- IV. **Public Remarks on Non-Agenda Items:** There were no Public Remarks on Non-Agenda Items.
- V. **CPV-2021-07** Variance to reconstruct and widen a driveway
Applicant: Jacqueline Lincecum
Location: 9605 51st Avenue

Stephanie Stullich explained the hearing procedures and placed witnesses under oath. Miriam Bader summarized the staff report. The applicant is requesting a variance of 150 square feet to widen a driveway to allow parking in front of the house. The property is a rectangular 60-foot by 125-foot lot with a total area of 7,500 square feet. The property was built in 1964 and is improved with a 1,155square foot frame house and shed.

The driveway was resurfaced and widened without obtaining a building permit to accommodate the needs of a family member with mobility issues. The widened driveway helps the individual exit an SUV vehicle from either side while utilizing a wheelchair or walker. Prior to widening, the driveway encroached by 2-feet in the front yard.

A violation notice was issued on April 12, 2021, for failure to obtain required County and City permits. The driveway encroachment ordinance was adopted in 2002.

Staff recommends approval of the requested variance to permit a driveway encroachment in the front yard of 150 square feet (5 feet x 30 feet).

Vernae Martin asked if not obtaining a permit would have any impact on approving the variance request?

Miriam Bader stated that the variance should be weighed on its own merits.

Terry Schum stated that the permit is a factual piece of information that can be considered when making the recommendation. If the variance is approved, then the permit will be obtained.

Jacqueline Lincecum, applicant, testified that she is not familiar with the permit process and thought that her contractor had obtained the permit before starting the project. She is doing her due diligence by making it right following all the city and county regulations.

Stephanie Stullich asked what would be the hardship if the variance was not granted?

Jacqueline Lincecum stated that she would continue to park on the grass to accommodate her father getting in and out of the vehicle.

Commissioners reviewed the criteria that need to be met before the variance can be granted and determined that:

- 1) The property has an extraordinary condition in that the original 1964 construction of the driveway (before the driveway encroachment amendment to the County Zoning Ordinance in 2002) encroached in the front yard. An additional 3-feet is needed to provide handicapped accessibility.
- 2) The strict application of the Zoning Ordinance will result in a practical difficulty by not allowing the driveway widening that is needed to accommodate a family member with mobility issues who uses a wheelchair and walker.
- 3) Granting the driveway variance will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the applicable County General Plan or County Master Plan since most of the properties with driveways in the subject block have encroachments in the front yard.

Vernae Martin moved to recommend approval of variance CPV-2021-07 based on staff recommendation and the criteria outlined in the discussion. Kiersten Johnson seconded. Motion carried 6-0-0.

VI. Update on Development Activity Terry Schum reported on the following:

There are no new major development projects to report, but construction is ongoing throughout the city with student housing and market-rate projects. In response to questions, Ms. Schum provided the following information:

- 1) The application for a proposed cultural center in the Old Town residential neighborhood utilizing a single-family home and addition has been postponed to the October 7th APC meeting. The applicant is still working on the design and clarifying variances that might be needed as part of the project.
- 2) Several years ago, the City Council supported the construction of a Marriott Residence Inn with ground-floor retail to be constructed across from the College Park Metro Station. This project was also approved by the County Planning Board. Unfortunately, because of the impact of the pandemic, the hospitality industry has suffered. At the City Council August 3rd meeting, the developer asked for the City Council to support an alternate project to construct a multifamily, market rate project with retail. This project would be geared towards young professionals, workforce housing and those 55 and older. A new plan would be submitted and reviewed. The City Council supported the request and will take action officially when they approve a letter to the County Executive at their next meeting. Currently, there is no timetable for this project.
- 3) Terry Schum attended the City Hall project team meeting last week, and the construction substantial completion date is tentatively scheduled for October 9th. The building will not be occupied at this time or open to the public. The furniture still has to be delivered, other punch list items have to be addressed and the final inspection has to be signed-off by DPIE. If everything goes as planned, staff should be able to move in by the end of November.

VII. Discussion on continued Zoom and/or Hybrid meetings:

The City Council discussed this item at their August 3rd meeting but there was no resolution. There was an expression of interest in getting everyone back to in-person meetings. Since switching to virtual meetings, there has been an increase in citizen participation in meetings across the board. If hybrid meetings were held, they would be at Davis Hall or the new City Hall in the future. Staff would have to be present at the location, but others would be able to join virtually.

The commissioners discussed this topic and since it is unknown how the pandemic is going to unfold, members agreed, for now, the meetings should remain virtual through Zoom. Commissioners are open to exploring hybrid or virtual meetings in the future. Members also mentioned that hybrid meetings allow commissioners who are unable to join in person to attend virtually, which would make it easier to obtain a quorum.

VIII. Other Business: Terry reported on the following:

- 1) The Economic Development Coordinator position was moved to the City Manager's office and the position has been retitled to "Economic Development Manager". Currently, the position is vacant.
- 2) The City Council held another recruitment for the City Manager's position. The City Council will be meeting in a special session next week to review a number of applications that were submitted. The City Council will carefully review all applications before convening interviews with the community and staff. There is currently no schedule for this process.

XI. Adjourn: There being no further business. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Theresheia Williams