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Rachel M. Udabe

City Planning Commission Meeting

MINUTES
April 17, 2025
5:00 P.M.

I. Opening

A. Call to Order – Chairperson Donovan Smith called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Attendees: Adrian-Keith Bennett, Kenneth Daniels, David Esparza, Ritchie Harrison, Gwen Lewis, Frederick Russell, Donovan Smith and Rachel Udabe

A quorum was present.

C. Amendments to and approval of agenda

Commissioner Russell moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Harrison. Motion Approved.

II. Meeting minutes will be provided at the next meeting.

III. Public Hearings, Discussions and Presentations

A. 5:15 PM PUBLIC HEARING – to consider the request of the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority (DRCFA) to show a PC (Public Center) zoning district where a B5 (Major Business) zoning district is currently shown on two parcels commonly known as 560 and 580 Civic Center Drive. Additionally, a PC District review of a proposed addition to the Huntington Place Convention Center. **(JM) (SAME-DAY ACTION REQUESTED) 45 min**

Commissioner David Esparza disclosed on the record that he must recuse himself from this 5:15 pm Public Hearing due to a Board of Ethics conflict of interest. Therefore, he exited the table and did not participate.

Present: Katie Rinaldi, Michael Guthrie, Michael Marks, and Gordon Wilson
Jamie Murphy, CPC Staff

Jamie Murphy presented via PowerPoint and based on CPC reports dated April 11, 2025 and April 16, 2025, a two-part request. The first portion of the request is to rezone two parcels from B5 to PC to permit an addition to the convention center (Huntington Place). According to the CPC report the two parcels to rezone are, “commonly known as 560 and 580 Civic Center Drive (also known as Steve Yzerman Drive).” The second part of the request is a special district review.

Ms. Murphy described that the site is in District 6 (downtown Detroit), and Hart Plaza is immediately adjacent to the east and to the west is new hotel (under construction). She displayed a map showing the existing convention center and photos of the current construction site. Ms. Murphy described the surrounding zoning in the area, i.e., Riverfront zoned PC and majority of downtown zoned Major Commercial. The main objective of the new addition is for a new entry point at the backside of the convention center to attach to the new hotel. Ms. Murphy reminded CPC Commissioners of the 2024 related rezoning to permit an extension of Second Avenue to Civic Center Drive/Steve Yzerman Drive.

The developer team presented via PowerPoint a site plan, renderings, and the Skybridge Connector preliminary design review with photos and detailed diagrams. The developer team stated there existed a need for enhanced connectivity from the hotel (JW Marriott) to the front of the house convention center (Huntington Place). They wanted to make an apparent distinction between the back of house services and other entrances and create a welcoming comfortable guest experience. It is anticipated that potentially 1,500 to 3,000 people may lodge at the hotel and attend a convention or event at a time. The key aspect is to create a three-story atrium space, so the public can connect and traverse comfortably. The new plans propose sculptured concealing and screening of the back of house convention center, a bridge plaza, a grand terrace, an outdoor terrace, indoor escalators, a third-floor connection zone, and a crosswalk to the Riverfront. The additions will have the materiality influenced by the City’s Art Deco. Further, the development team described the façade, materiality, floor plans, and landscaping details.

Ms. Murphy explained that wherein this project may not have had the traditional general public outreach it was discussed heavily at public meetings in the Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO) process for the hotel and during the Second Avenue expansion project public meeting. Also, it was discussed at the convention center authority’s board meeting. Mr. Wilson confirmed it was discussed at the Greenway Initiative, Riverfront Conservancy and Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority (DRCFA) meetings. Director Todd advised that this is the proper way that community outreach has been conducted for this type of project. These statements were in response to Commissioner Lewis’ questions.

Ms. Rinaldi answered that the estimated timeline for pedestrian access from the hotel to the convention center is planned to be completed in January 2027 in response to Commissioner Harrison.

Public Testimony

Ms. Edwards asked what will happen with the parking lot on the roof of the building?

Mr. Guthrie responded, “Everything that is existing will remain the same.” There is an opportunity to use the rooftop deck and its elevator for access.

Ms. Murphy stated that CPC Staff recommends approval of the petitioners' requests. She mentioned that the Planning and Development Department (PDD) submitted written reports for the rezoning and the special district review in support based on meeting the zoning ordinance's criteria.

Commissioner Daniels moved to approval of this action item, seconded by Commissioner Udabe. Motion Approved.

- B. 6:00 PM PUBLIC HEARING** – to consider the request of Rock Economic Development Group to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-3, District Map No. 2 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, for a PD (Planned Development) modification to modify the terms and conditions of the PD zoning classification established by Ord. 42-95 at the property commonly known as 1326 St. Antoine, generally bounded by St. Antoine, Clinton Avenue, I-375 Freeway and Macomb Street.
(KJ) 45 min

Present: Sam Rouse, Max Adams, Michael Marks and Lillian Hilla
Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff

Kimani Jeffrey presented via PowerPoint and based on CPC Report dated April 15, 2025, a planned development (PD) modification by Ordinance 42-95. The property site 1326 St. Antoine Street is generally bounded by Clinton Avenue, Macomb Street, and Interstate 375 (I- 375) freeway. This PD modification request is to allow the construction of a multiple story building as the Gratiot Life Sciences Building. It is located on the former land of the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Center and demolition started in 2024. It was rezoned from a B4 to PD in 1995, and there has been a long history of proposals for the site. According the CPC Report description, "The project will serve as a multi-tenant Life Science Building for cancer research and outpatient treatment." Mr. Jeffrey shared photos and a brief video of the site.

The development team from Bedrock presented via PowerPoint the site plans, renderings, and designs of the Gratiot Life Sciences Building and Gratiot Innovation District briefly mentioning upcoming plans for their surrounding properties (Parcels A- L). The development team referred to Parcel H as the Gratiot Life Sciences Building, and Parcel F as a future publicly accessible park. The Gratiot Life Sciences Building (211,000 square feet) will have two main entrances one on Clinton Avenue and the other on St. Antoine Street (tenant entrance). The first-floor tenant is Bold Advanced Medical Future (BAMF Health) offering cancer and disease treatment to patients. The tenant occupying upper levels two-five is a company, My HQ, offering flexible office spaces, labs, etc. The upper-level floors will be glass for transparency to individuals in and out of the building. They reviewed details of the storm water management plan, elevations, materiality, and landscaping.

Mr. Jeffrey stated that the development had a preliminary plan review meeting, and it appears the project is on a good path. He advised that the ultimate goal is to present this project before City Council's recess, so construction may start in the fall. This matter will return before CPC at the next meeting.

Additionally, Mr. Rouse stated that BAMF Health wants to see their first patients in 2027. He discussed their efforts for community engagement, and they met with Downtown Detroit Partnership (DDP) and Greektown Neighborhood Partnership organizations

gaining their support. Also, they are still seeking to make contact with Lafayette West Apartments.

Mr. Rouse responded Turner Construction will be the pre-construction manager, and they plan to use qualified local people to work on the project in a response to Commissioner Daniels' question regarding their employing local Detroit businesses.

Public Testimony

There was no public testimony for the 6:00 p.m. Public Hearing.

IV. Public Comment – There was no Public Comment.

V. Unfinished Business – There was no Unfinished Business.

VI. New Business – There was no New Business.

VII. Committee Reports – Director Marcell Todd explained that due to scheduling conflicts with Housing and Revitalization Department (HRD) colleagues, the next committee meeting date may be postponed until the end of the month.

VIII. Staff Report – There was no Staff Report.

IX. Member Report – There were no Member Reports.

X. Communications – There were no Communications.

XI. Adjournment –

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.