Planning Commission
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 17, 2022 - 1:00 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

Call to Order

Members Present:
Mr. Paul Weber-Chaiman, Ms. Jennifer Dindinger-Vice Chairperson, Mr. Talbot Bone, Mr. William Ryal, and Mr.Philip Toussaint

Members Present (via zoom):
Ms. Vistoria McAndrews

Staff Present:
Mr. Lynn Thomas-Town Planner, Ms. Katie Reedy-Director of Site Development, Ms. Sharon Van Emburgh-Town Attorney, Mr. Rick Van Emburgh-Town Engineer, Mr. Joseph Mayer-Plan Reviewer.

Approval of Minutes.

Approval of Minutes of previous meeting: 2022-01-20 Meeting Minutes.

Upon motion by Mr. Bone and seconded by Mr. Ryall, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the January 20, 2022 minutes with corrections.

New Business

Applicant:	Rauch, Inc. c/o Brian Fitzgerald
Owner:	Naima Ventures, LLC
Location:	35 & 43 Clay Street
Nature of Request:	Proposed redevelopment of both parcels. The redevelopment includes the demolition of existing residential structures, proposed infrastructure improvements along Tile Lane and the construction of new residential structures.

Mr. Paul Rogers and Mr. Brian Fitzgerald from Raugh Inc., Mr. Derick Daley from Polaris Ministries, Mr. Kendrick Daley, President of Naima Ventures, Mr. Chris Daley, Project Manager of Jack Construction, and Mr. Romont Fletcher, Construction Assistant from Naima Ventures were present to represent Naima LLC. Mr. Rogers discussed the redevelopment of both parcels. This is phase one of the redevelopment along Clay Street and includes proposed infrastructure improvements along Tile Lane and construction of new residential structures and has been submitted as a Planned Redevelopment Overlay project.

The applicants provided an overview of the project. Mr. Ryall inquired about SWM maintenance, dumpster locations, the condition of the existing trees and color selection for the exterior buildings. Mr. Rogers stated that the Management Company will maintain the property for the rental units and there will be additional dumpster locations for each phase. The existing trees will be removed for construction, and new landscaping will be installed. Mr. Rogers also stated that the color selections are approximate and the material would be a fiber cement product consistent with surrounding projects. He would like to have flexibility of color, to have a variety of color.

Ms. Dindinger inquired about Forest Conservation requirements, planter boxes used for SWM design and building setback requirements. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that further discussions about Forest Conservation needed to occur as new phases are proposed. Mr. Rogers added that there's no de-foresting of the site and agreed with the use of incorporating native plant species within the planter boxes. He also noted that they will have to determine the exact setback dimensions for the primary structures.

Mr. Weber wanted clarification of the proposed phasing of the entire site. Mr. Derick Daley stated that they would like to operate the phases simultaneously. However, due to the availability of contractors and supplies, phasing schedules may vary. Mr. Rogers emphasized that Phase One bears 26 rental units and would replicate the capacity of all the existing duplexes. There was a concern about displacing the existing tenants, so the management team have done a lot to relocate the existing tenants and offer incentives to streamline the opportunity for the existing 28 tenants to return. Mr. Kendrick Daley informed the Commission that increasing the density allowed for the continuation of renting the Phase One units below market rate for the existing 28 tenants for a very long time. The remaining units/phases would be available at a market rate lease. Mr. Derick Daley added that there's a program offered by Polaris Ministries to provide subsidies for the units.

Mr. Bone inquired about the dumpster location and its maintenance. Mr. Rogers stated that the use of centralized dumpsters reduces unnecessary mess associated with individual dumpster cans. There are approximately four dumpsters proposed and they're also looking into trash compacters. Mr. Kendrick Daley added that the dumpsters would help make the alley a lot cleaner.

Ms. McAndrews commented on the quality of materials in regards to durability over time. She also inquired if the rental units would be sold at a future time. Mr. Rogers replied that the product would be wood fiber cement panels and there would also be a painting component to the process. Mr. Daley stated that the units would remain rentals. Mr. Toussaint inquired about the type of windows and hand railings being proposed. Mr. Rodgers replied that they would be using a Pella Architectural Window that has a wood interior, with a vinyl-clad exterior and they would be utilizing exterior vinyl products for durability. Mr. Weber had concerns about the proposed parking. Mr. Rogers believes there will be on-street parking to an adequate level to augment what they are doing on Tile Lane. Mr. Thomas added that there's no parking requirement for Planned Redevelopment Overlay projects; however, the adequacy of parking still needs to be considered. Mr. Derick Daley pointed out the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood and noted that fewer vehicles are utilized. In addition, he stated that more bicycles are used and suggested proposing bicycle racks.

The Chair then opened the floor for Public Comment.

Ms. Marty Doty, from GM Rentals, LLC, rental units located at 56 Jowite Street, wanted to know if Tile Lane would be shut down during construction. Mr. Derick Daley confirmed that Tile Lane would not be closed during construction.

Upon motion by Ms. Dindinger and seconded by Mr. Bone, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the request with the specifics of allowing the rear setbacks to be 15', allowing the Stormwater Management Planter Boxes within the side setbacks, establishing 8' side setbacks, and approval of the architectural renderings. If there are modifications to the architecture, such as color, material or window placings, the applicant has to return to the Planning Commission for approval.

Discussion Item

Workshop discussion concerning Subdivision Regulations.

The Commission discussed the revisions to the Subdivision Regulations. Mr. Thomas opened with a review of three outstanding items; road widths and street classifications, impacts on the Subdivision Regulations as a result of the revised road widths and street classifications, and affordable housing. He also noted that the President of the Town Council is in the process of scheduling a workshop on affordable housing issues. Initially, the workshop will be set up between the Town Council and the Affordable Housing Board. The Planning commission is welcome to attend the March 21st Workshop. There's also a meeting with the State Highway Administration about improvements along Matthewstown Road on March 7th..

The Commission discussed residential and commercial street classifications for subdivisions with Mr. VanEmburgh. He elaborated on defining the pavement widths between residential and commercial travel lanes, parallel parking widths and the use of alleys. Mr. Weber commented on the use of a narrower road in a subdivision to encourage slower driving and sidewalk use. Mr. VanEmburgh pointed out that the narrower road makes it difficult to navigate if there's parking on both sides of the road. To prevent that obstacle, there should be no on-street parking which should be duly noted on the Record Plat for all subdivisions, unless it is waived by the other provisions of the subdivision. Mr. VanEmburgh reviewed Residential Streets - 28' & 36' pavement width, Collector Streets - 30' pavement width, Alleys - 16' pavement width and Commercial Streets (Urban & Suburban) - 30' width. The proposed road widths would be consistent with National Standards and Guidelines in regards to width. He noted that bike lanes had not been reviewed for the presentation. The Commission reviewed the recommendations of the town's staff for road widths and endorsed the proposal by the Town Engineer.

The Commission then discussed Affordable Housing. Ms. Dindinger would like to see a clear definition of affordable housing and workforce housing for the town. Ms. Van Embough stated that when the Town created the Affordable Housing Board and the concept of what's currently in the code, the town was the smallest jurisdiction around to have an affordable housing program. Since this is a small board, they have only been able to focus on the work force and affordable housing. Both are at the same moderate income levels. She also pointed out that there are no town staff or resources available to address the low income level, other than the renovation program. The Town Attorney noted the Affordable Housing Board specified that a work force housing unit would cost less than $300,000 dollars and an affordable housing unit would cost less than $250,000 dollars.

The Commission continued the meeting with the discussion of the market rate value of lots by proposing a fee-in-lieu for affordable housing. Mr. Weber noted that if a developer decides to exceed 3.5 dwelling units per acre, 25% of those lots at market value would have a fee-in-lieu for building affordable housing on those lots. The developer can donate the value of the improved lot to the town. Ms. Dindinger reiterated the necessity for establishing parameters for affordable and workforce housing and having a more homogenous neighborhood. Mr. Ryall is concerned that the fee-in-lieu could potentially create parts of the town built with affordable houses and other parts of the town not built with affordable houses and so you get segregation. That needs to be avoided. He feels that the fee-in-lieu needs to be more substantial to promote the building of affordable houses within the proposed subdivision.

Mr. Weber summarized the three options; sticking with the language that we now have with the fee-in-lieu being at a reasonable market price, consider the new Article 16 - Inclusionary Zoning, or a requirement that a certain percentage of any development be devoted to more dense housing. Mr. Weber suggested deferring this discussion until after the Affordable Housing Workshops.

Adjournment.

The meeting ended at 3:14 pm.