

Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

A meeting of the Pocomoke City Planning and Zoning Commission was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM.

Present: Commissioners: Steven Mills, Ryan Hurley,
Rebecca Skorobatsch, Chris Vieira and Nola Tullar
Director of Planning: Dan Brandewie
City Attorney: Erica Witz
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh

Commissioner Ryan Hurley opened the meeting.

Site Plan Review: Application to make improvements to the site and to construct nine apartments in a vacant structure within the B-1 Shopping District per § 230-63 Conditional Uses; filed by Davis Strategic Development, Kirk Davis (applicant) for the following property: 5 Fifth Street, also identified as 401 Fifth Street, Map 401, Grid 17, Parcel 1251; Tax Account: 01-022245 (formerly Pocomoke City Fire Department building) consisting of approx. 1.21 acres and further described in a deed recorded among the land records of Worcester County at Liber 8418, folio 356. Note: The Board of Zoning Appeals acted to approve both the variance and conditional use application on February 1, 2023 for VAR#88-2023.

An application filed by Kirk Davis, by Davis Strategic Development for 5th Street which is the old firehouse location. We are here to make sure that the standards for multi-family dwellings are being followed. They have submitted a site plan. In the site plan, there is a parking lot and another lot reserved for city use. A small mini park to be used primarily by the residents but open to the public. There is a 6-foot privacy fence proposed for the side and rear perimeter. There is an access provided along the fence. That access will be maintained. There is some existing fence in some surrounding yards. Mr. Davis has said that instead of double fencing. He will provide fencing so that it appears aesthetically instead of being mix-matched. The shopping center to the east has parking that has to back up onto the Davis property. He will design so that is still allowed. The parking lot will be recovered, striped and handicapped spots included.

In the lower floor of the building, will be a data center. A room for the residents. The apartments will be on the second floor and loft area.

Mr. Davis spoke and said there are a total of nine apartments. The layout will be retrofit and keep historical characteristics. The old stairs and railing will be preserved. There was a time capsule that is now in the fire department. They are willing to give it back to be replaced into the original space. When it comes to the fence, they are going to clear the perimeter area of brush. When you double fence, trees can grow and are inaccessible. Some of the existing fencing is old, they will replace it with new. In the picnic area, he doesn't like to see "keep out" signs. The storage facility, is used by the city for maintenance items. That will remain available to the city. The parking onsite is ample for residents.

They are partnering with Worcester County to install high-speed internet to bring a service to Snow Hill and Pocomoke City. That will be done by their sister company, Simple Fiber. It will take a couple years to complete the project. Simple Fiber is an alternative to Comcast and Verizon. All of the

conduit for the fiber network will be underground. It all connects to Maryland broadband just as Verizon and Comcast do. There is a network that stretches down each major route that companies connect to.

Commissioner Vieira asked if the other space on the first floor would be available as retail or to the tenants. Mr. Davis said while they are finishing projects, they would be utilizing it but later it could be retail space. Commissioner Vieira also wanted to know if the antenna was still planned for the roof of the building. Mr. Davis said no, there are currently no plans for the roof antenna, those plans changed with the Simple Fiber. Commissioner Vieira asked if there will be some type of security for the area. Mr. Davis said yes, there will be security cameras and lighting. There might need to be more lighting for the back. There are already two small lights. They can be replaced with larger lights.

Planning Director, Dan Brandewie, asked if there was any other activities planned for the spot such as a basketball court or bocci ball courts. Mr. Davis said the more you put, the more it will draw the public. Keeping it simple is better at least until they get a feel for the area.

Commissioner Vieira said frankly, he doesn't see how a 400 sq ft apartment will be upper-middle class or luxury. Mr. Davis said 480 or 490 sq. ft. is typical size. These will be close. It more about the features such as the 20 ft ceilings with 15 ft windows, spiral staircases and retaining the historical aspects will lend to that.

Mr. Brandewie asked if there would be a property manager or someone to contact if there were any problems onsite. Mr. Davis said yes, they have both property managers and landlords. The tenants would be set up with a contact.

Mr. Brandewie said he isn't sure about the "open to the public" aspect. If the city decided, for security reasons, that it was private property, he can see that value also and isn't opposed to that restriction. Mr. Brandewie said there is also a 25% open-space requirement to set aside space for recreation. Right now there is only a plan for a gazebo. There might be more required.

Commissioner Vieira asked about trash pickup. Mr. Davis said there will be a dumpster onsite and it will be monitored. They will have cameras but they are not opposed to upgrading the size of the dumpster if needed. They plan on keeping the area clean.

Motion to approve site plan and Conditional Uses application to construct nine apartments in a vacant structure within the B-1 Shopping District contingent on looking at the area to observe security lighting needs, open space requirements and public or private property requirements (Tullar, Mills)

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Hurley-aye, Skorobatsch-aye, Vieira-aye, Tullar-aye; 0 against, motion passed

Discussion on Rules of Procedures

Tabled and will be emailed out.

Approval of Minutes

Tabled and will be emailed out.

Meeting adjourned.

Approved: K.M. Beckett-El Soloh
City Clerk