

Landmark Commission

April 23, 2008

Members Present: Councilman B. Gleisser, chair; S. Beimer, J. Devereaux; N. Kennedy; K. Dreyfuss-Wells, M. Hays

Also Present: S. Hoffman, J. Braverman, Planning Dept., P. Campbell, Economic Development

The meeting began at 7:30p.m. in Council Chambers to accommodate students from Shaker High. The minutes from the March 26 joint meeting were approved after modifications and clarifications.

A Certificate of Appropriateness (CA) application was submitted for demolition of the BP gas station and car wash at the corner of Larchmere Boulevard and Kemper Road. Representatives from BP, a contracting company and an attorney accompanied the applicant. The application to demolish the building was made because BP is selling underperforming properties and restructuring its gas sales in the U.S. BP will change to a franchise model and all stations will look the same. The BP representative described this site is an underperformer.

The city of Shaker Heights cited the gas station/car wash with multiple violations that would cost approximately \$50,000 to \$60,000 to complete. Ms. Braverman noted that current code allows commercial properties to transfer deeds WITH cited violations to the new owner and that repairs would eventually need to be completed. Demolition would cost BP approximately \$100,000, mainly to meet EPA standards for removal of the underground gas storage tanks, located under the garage bays of the structure.

Ms. Hoffman reviewed the historical site, construction of the car wash in the 1980s and the site's relevance in the Shaker Square District, calling it a "Gateway to the City." She also reviewed the zoning for the site. The site is zoned C-2. BP has a conditional use permit for dispensing gas. If the property were sold as it is today, a gas station could continue with the permit. If the dispensing pumps are removed, the gas tanks removed and the property sold, new owners would be required to apply for another conditional use permit if they want to sell gas.

BP presented a demolition plan with the site being seeded over with landscaping after demolition. They also responded that they received a letter from the city one week before this meeting saying that according to city code, plans for reuse are required before demolition. BP does not have a potential buyer and could not present any future plans for building on the site other than the proposed landscaping after demolition. They had hoped to demolish and sell the vacant site by this fall.

Ms. Beimers asked the applicant to explore reuse or adaptation of the buildings, such as a restaurant. She also asked for line-item costs for fixing the citations from the city as well as line-item demolition costs. Other members of the commission were not in favor of demolishing the corner building, but would consider demolition of the car wash. Mr.

Dreyfuss-Wells made a motion to deny the application, which was never seconded. Discussion continued about how to preserve the original building and make the site more marketable for potential buyers.

Ms. Hays asked why Mr. Campbell was mentioned in a letter from BP to staff saying the city of Shaker Heights would be interested in purchasing the property. Mr. Campbell responded that this statement was misunderstood; the city would help facilitate the sale of the property.

Mr. Gleisser said that as a Councilman he would work with a buyer or owner to determine a timeframe for fixing the building and help market the remaining building if the car wash is demolished.

A motion was passed to allow the removal of the exterior gas dispensing pumps when BP closes. The owner must remove the interior underground gas storage tanks within 60 days of closing the station and do so according to EPA and state standards (BUSTER). The LC has no authority over any interior projects. The applicant was told they could return to the LC if they would like to revise their plan or demolish the car wash.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.
Helen Sheehan, 752-6831