



Mayor & Council of Berlin

10 William Street, Berlin, Maryland 21811

Phone 410-641-2770 Fax 410-641-2316

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**Town of Berlin
Planning Commission
May 14th, 2025 - 5:30 PM
Berlin Town Hall – Council Chambers**

- 1. Call To Order**
- 2. Agenda Adoption**
- 3. Approval of Minutes** – November 13, 2024
- 4. Case # PC-5-14-25-01:** West Street/Washington Street Parking Lot (Tax Map 300, Parcel 1146) – Site Plan & Layout Concept Review
- 5. Comments from the Public**
- 6. Comments from the Staff**
- 7. Comments for the Chairman**
- 8. Comments from the Commission**
- 9. Adjournment**

Town of Berlin
Planning Commission
Wednesday, November 13, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Chairman Matt Stoehr called the November 13, 2024, Planning Commission meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Members present were Vice Chairman Austin Purnell and members Pete Cosby, Ron Cascio, and Erich Pfeffer. Members absent were Newt Chandler, Chris Denny and alternate Steven Scheiber. The staff present included Town Administrator Mary Bohlen, Permit Coordinator Carolyn Duffy, and Special Projects Administrator Kate Daub.

Chairman Stoehr called the meeting to order and requested a motion to approve the November 13, 2024, meeting agenda. Mr. Cascio made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Cosby, and the agenda was unanimously approved by the Commission. Following this, Chairman Stoehr called for a motion to approve the October 9, 2024, meeting minutes. Mr. Cascio noted a few minor corrections, including replacing the term "wood-grained windows" with "wood-grained side" and correcting a name in the minutes from "Stolkoff" to "Schoellaopf." Mr. Purnell motioned to approve the minutes with the suggested corrections, which Mr. Cascio seconded. All members unanimously approved the corrected minutes.

The meeting began with a discussion about proposed revisions to the approved site plan for Phase 2B of the Oceans East apartment complex. Mr. Brock Parker from Parker and Associates, the development team for the project, presented the updated plans. He noted that this was the third iteration of the development plan. Initially, he said Phase 2 was intended to include a mix of townhouses and three-story garden walk-up buildings. However, Mr. Parker explained that, due to changing economic conditions, the plan was revised to consist entirely of garden walk-ups to better align with current market demands. He explained that the updated configuration now features two buildings with 24 units each and one with 36 units, all designed to maintain the same architectural style as the existing structures within the development.

Mr. Parker outlined the evolution of the project plan, noting that the initial iteration proposed 132 apartments, the second iteration increased this number to 144, and the current revision had further raised it to 180 units. He explained that these adjustments were made possible due to the greater density achievable with garden walk-ups compared to townhouses. Additionally, he said the changes resulted in slightly modified parking configurations to accommodate the revised building layouts. Mr. Parker assured the commission that the revisions comply with density and open space zoning regulations. While the total density cap for the Oceans East project is significantly higher than what was proposed in the current phase, he clarified that the new configuration is designed to optimize the use of allocated space while maintaining architectural coherence with the existing phases.

The discussion shifted to the details of the new buildings. Mr. Parker highlighted that each building included leasable garages or storage spaces, with eight bays per garage. He noted strong demand for these units, as they offer a more affordable alternative to townhouses. Mr. Parker also mentioned that the development was nearing full occupancy, underscoring the high demand for this type of housing in the current economic climate. Concerns regarding future phases of the Oceans East development were also discussed, mainly focusing on infrastructure and the design of the main entrance. Mr. Cosby voiced concerns about whether the existing roadway could handle the anticipated increase in traffic and criticized the current entrance design as awkward and potentially problematic. Mr. Parker explained that

the entrance design had been a requirement imposed during the project's initial approval, describing it as a compromise that had to be accepted. While acknowledging its limitations, he emphasized that the project team did not assume responsibility for any future issues arising from the design.

The commission reviewed and unanimously approved the proposed revisions to the site plan, building mix, and dumpster configuration for Oceans East Phase 2B. Mr. Purnell made the motion to approve the changes, which was seconded by Mr. Cosby and carried without objection. Mr. Parker thanked the commission for their constructive feedback and collaboration throughout the process.

Next, the commission reviewed proposed updates to the concept plan for the Microtel Hotel development project. Mr. Thomas Zambetis and Mr. Athon Zambetis from A&M Properties were accompanied by Mr. Ernie Felici Jr., the project manager from Beacon Hospitality, and Mr. Brett Ewing from Lane Engineering. Mr. Felici explained that changes made to the building's design since their last presentation included extending brick to wrap around the entire storefront and color adjustments to better harmonize the building's facade. He also noted that awnings were added above the windows and at various entry points, including the rear lobby door, to enhance the design's aesthetics and functionality.

Further refinements to the hotel design also included the addition of planters beneath windows to incorporate greenery and offset the building's concrete walkway. Mr. Felici addressed how color changes and materials, such as a brown tint for the exterior ethos, aligned the rear of the building with its front-facing aesthetic, and double-hung windows were incorporated into the brick portion of the building to enhance visual appeal. The commission acknowledged the effort put into the revisions, with Mr. Stoehr expressing gratitude for the team's responsiveness to earlier feedback.

While the proposed improvements received general approval, some members suggested additional adjustments. Mr. Cascio recommended replacing the brick beneath the windows with paneling, aiming for a more traditional and cost-effective appearance. Mr. Cosby proposed extending the canopy roof to the building's north edge to create a more cohesive visual transition while also offering practical benefits like rain protection. However, concerns were raised about whether this extension would disrupt grassy areas or clash with the overall design. Mr. Felici noted that earlier designs had included canopies on all sides of the building but were scaled back to avoid overburdening the structure visually. After some discussion, Mr. Zambetis and Mr. Felici agreed to revisit the canopy design, seeking a solution that would balance aesthetics, functionality, and practicality.

Mr. Pfeffer suggested breaking the awning's continuity along the south side of the building to avoid an overly uniform appearance. However, Mr. Felici countered that the existing vegetation along the highway would naturally soften the visual impact of the awning from certain viewpoints, reducing the need for further structural alterations.

The group engaged in an in-depth discussion about selecting materials and colors for various sections of the building, focusing particularly on the rear facade. Mr. Pfeffer proposed using a distinct blue tone instead of trying to match the existing brick color, cautioning that attempting to replicate the brick might result in a mismatched and inauthentic appearance. He explained that the intention behind this suggestion was to ensure that the materials and colors harmonized with the building's overall design rather than creating an unconvincing imitation.

The group continued to deliberate whether to retain the current design or incorporate brick or alternative materials. Mr. Pfeffer reiterated his stance against matching brick in areas where it wasn't already

present, arguing that such an approach could undermine the visual impact of the front facade. He advocated for using a distinct color on the rear facade, noting that its distance from the front provided an opportunity for more design flexibility. Ultimately, the group concluded that the rear facade should remain simple, favoring streamlined material choices to avoid unnecessary complexity.

The group reflected on their collaborative efforts with the Microtel design team, recognizing that the commission's feedback and cooperation had significantly enhanced the final design. While Mr. Zambetis acknowledged some frustration with the lengthy process, he expressed gratitude for the constructive dialogue that he felt ultimately strengthened the project.

Mr. Felici emphasized the importance of achieving consensus and providing clear direction, noting that early meetings had been particularly challenging due to a lack of clarity. He suggested the need for more precise written guidelines to streamline future collaborations and avoid similar hurdles.

Anton Zambetis also addressed the complexities of balancing corporate requirements with local input, highlighting that, despite the challenges, working with the commission had been far smoother than navigating corporate constraints.

Mr. Stoehr concluded by commending the collaboration, stating that the final design successfully integrated the community's needs with the project's overarching goals.

Mr. Zambetis confirmed they were awaiting final approval before moving forward, adding that their contractor had already priced material changes, including differences between new and reclaimed brick. Although reclaimed brick was significantly more expensive, he said the team felt it was worth the cost for the added character it brought to the building. Mr. Zambetis revealed that Modus Architecture had taken over as the architect of record due to their familiarity with the prototype design. He said the change had allowed for smoother integration of updates and alignment with the building's overall concept.

There was a detailed discussion about the cost and availability of bricks, particularly reclaimed ones. Mr. Zambetis noted that reclaimed bricks could cost up to \$2 per piece compared to the standard \$0.80-\$0.90 for new bricks, but the team was committed to sourcing 37,000 reclaimed bricks to meet the design's aesthetic goals.

The discussion concluded with a motion from Mr. Cosby to approve the concept design plan and elevations proposed. This approval included the agreed-upon changes, such as modifications to the canopy design, awning placement, and paneling. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cascio and received unanimous approval from the Commission. The project team expressed their gratitude for the Commission's input and looked forward to moving ahead with the finalized plans.

Following the motion, Mr. Ewing sought clarification on whether the site plan could be approved. Town Administrator Mary Bohlen responded that it could not be formally approved because it had not been placed on the agenda in the required format. She explained that the conceptual plan was eligible for discussion, but final site plan approval would require additional steps.

While discussing the approval process, Mr. Ewing acknowledged the procedural uncertainties arising from challenges created by the ongoing moratorium, which had slowed the approval processes. Ms. Bohlen clarified that detailed plans, including updates on utilities and grading, could be addressed once the moratorium was lifted.

The meeting transitioned to a discussion about the proposed design guidelines and standards for the town. Mr. Stoehr shared updates from a recent meeting with the Historic District Commission, which expressed unanimous support for the guidelines. He emphasized that these guidelines are intended as a temporary measure until a planning director can be hired and a more thorough review can take place. He also explained that the proposed guidelines largely reflect Worcester County's code, with minor adjustments to make them suitable for Berlin.

The conversation shifted to the urgent need for a planning director, with several commission members emphasizing the importance of filling this position as soon as possible. Mr. Stoehr pointed out that a new planning director would likely require six to twelve months to become acquainted with ongoing projects and existing guidelines, highlighting the necessity for interim solutions.

Mr. Pfeffer proposed scheduling a joint meeting between the planning commission and the town council to align their objectives and provide guidance for the incoming director. Mr. Cascio agreed with the idea of a joint meeting but cautioned against moving forward without a clear agenda, as this could lead to unfocused discussions.

Furthermore, Mr. Pfeffer noted the importance of having the town attorney present during meetings involving large development projects, especially when applicants bring legal representation. He argued that this would help ensure the town's interests are adequately protected and reduce potential procedural issues.

Mr. Stoehr noted that, despite the absence of formal legal representation on behalf of the town and commission in recent discussions, the process regarding the Microtel project had proceeded smoothly, thanks to the collaborative nature of both the applicants and the commission. He emphasized how rare such collaboration is in development projects and praised the applicants for their willingness to listen to and incorporate the commission's suggestions, even though they were not required to do so. Mr. Cascio agreed, stressing the importance of their cooperative attitude as a positive precedent for future projects.

With no further questions or comments, Chairman Stoehr requested a motion to adjourn. On a motion made by Mr. Cosby and seconded by Mr. Purnell, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Daub

Kate Daub
Special Projects Administrator



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PLANNING COMMISSION APPLICATION

DATE: 4/2/2025

CASE NUMBER: PC-5-14-25-01

APPLICATION FOR (check one): SUBDIVISION X SITE PLAN REVIEW OTHER

PROJECT NAME/DESCRIPTION: West Street / Washington Street Parking Lot

LOCATION OF PROPERTY: Parcel 1146 of Worcester County Tax Map 300, located on the westerly side of West Street, and northerly side of Washington Street Extended

SIZE OF PROPERTY: 2.13 acres ZONING: R-2 TOTAL LOTS: 1 (Lot #3)

PROPERTY OWNER/AGENT: Mayor & Council, Town of Berlin PHONE # 410-641-4143

ADDRESS 10 William Street EMAIL rhardesty@berlinmd.gov

IMPORTANT:

- Applications must be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to a regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission.
- Nine (9) copies of the proposed subdivision or site plan must be provided with this application.
- Applicable review fees must be paid when application is submitted.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/EXPLANATION:

The Mayor and Council have leased the property for use as a public parking lot, in accordance with the permitted use outlined in the R-2 Zone under Town Code Section 108-325 (6). During the first year of operation, only minimal disturbance is expected. A proposed site plan and layout concept are submitted for review.

The applicant, or an authorized representative, has been advised to appear at the meeting of the Planning Commission scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, 2025 (date).

Applicant Signature Ryan Hardesty Date 5/9/25

APPROVED:

Planning Commission Chair (Date)

Planning Director (Date)

Real Property Data Search ()
Search Result for WORCESTER COUNTY

[View Map](#)

[View GroundRent Redemption](#)

[View GroundRent Registration](#)

Special Tax Recapture: None

Account Identifier: District - 03 Account Number - 769003

Owner Information

Owner Name: ESHAM WILLIAM E JR & ESHAM WILLIAM E JR & JOSEPH E MOORE TRUSTEES ETAL Use: RESIDENTIAL
Mailing Address: PO BOX 77 Principal Residence: NO
BERLIN MD 21811-0000 Deed Reference: /06657/ 00394

Location & Structure Information

Premises Address: Legal Description: LOT 3 2.13 ACS
W SIDE WEST ST
PL REV REASBLD LDS ESHAM
Map: Grid: Parcel: Neighborhood: Subdivision: Section: Block: Lot: Assessment Year: Plat No:
0300 0021 1148 3040044.24 0000 3 2022 Plat Ref: 245/ 14
Town: BERLIN

Primary Structure Built Above Grade Living Area Finished Basement Area Property Land Area County Use
2.1300 AC

Stories Basement Type Exterior Quality Full/Half Bath Garage Last Notice of Major Improvements
/

Value Information

	Base Value	Value As of 01/01/2022	Phase-In Assessments As of 07/01/2023	As of 07/01/2024
Land:	72,200	72,200		
Improvements	0	0		
Total:	72,200	72,200	72,200	72,200
Preferential Land:	0	0		

Transfer Information

Seller: ESHAM WILLIAM E SR & ANNA T	Date: 10/27/2015	Price: \$0
Type: NON-ARMS LENGTH OTHER	Deed1: /06657/ 00394	Deed2:
Seller:	Date:	Price:
Type:	Deed1:	Deed2:
Seller:	Date:	Price:
Type:	Deed1:	Deed2:

Exemption Information

Partial Exempt Assessments: Class	07/01/2023	07/01/2024
County: 000	0.00	
State: 000	0.00	
Municipal: 000	0.00 0.00	0.00 0.00

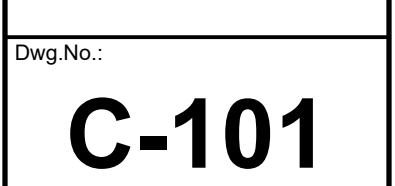
Special Tax Recapture: None

Homestead Application Information

Homestead Application Status: No Application

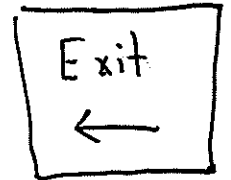
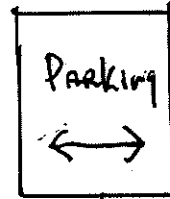
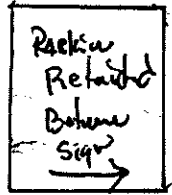
Homeowners' Tax Credit Application Information

Homeowners' Tax Credit Application Status: No Application Date:



Red: Do Not Enter
Green: Parking between Sign
Exit Left:
Exit Right:

















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BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS APPLICATION

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: West St. / Washington St. DATE: Feb. 25, 2025

APPLICATION FOR: ☐ VARIANCE ☐ CONDITIONAL USE ☒ APPEAL

LOT # 3 LOT SIZE: 2.13 ACS ZONING DESIGNATION: R-2 TAX MAP 0300 PARCEL 1146

APPELLANT NAME: Mayor and Council ADDRESS: 10 William St. Berlin, Md. 21811

APPELLANT PHONE#: (443) 373-3935 APPELLANT EMAIL: dgaskill@berlinmd.gov

PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUNDS FOR THE APPEAL. IF THE REQUEST IS FOR A VARIANCE, PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND USE HARDSHIP. IF THIS IS A CONDITIONAL USE REQUEST, PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED USE:

The Mayor and Council have leased the property to be used as a public parking lot which is a permitted use in the R-2 Zone pursuant to 108-325(b). The Mayor and Council request a waiver of the parking area requirements of Section 108-788(d) as allowed by Section 108-788(d)(4).

PROPERTY OWNER: Mayor and Council ADDRESS: 10 William St, Berlin, Md 21811

PHONE #: (443) 373-3935 EMAIL: dgaskill@berlinmd.gov

OWNER SIGNATURE: [Signature] DATE: 2/25/25

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

CASE # 42-25-04 DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED _____

HEARING DATE 4-2-25 PROPERTY POSTED DATE 3/14/25

FEES DUE 0 FEES PAID _____

DECISION: Approved 4/2/2025.