



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

May 10, 2006/Calendar No. 20

C 060196 PCR

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for site selection and acquisition of property located at Oceanside Avenue between Wentworth Avenue and Orlando Street (Block 3491, Lot 125), and the site selection of property located in the bed of Oceanside Avenue between McLaughlin and Vulcan streets (Block 3500, Lot 200), Community District 2, Borough of Staten Island for the storage and conveyance of storm water.

The application for site selection and acquisition of one privately owned lot and one city-owned lot, totaling 0.6 acres, was filed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) on October 21, 2005, for the conveyance and storage of stormwater.

BACKGROUND

In 1961 the City of New York commissioned an Official Map and Drainage Plan for Staten Island that has never been fully implemented. The 1961 Official Map contains a conventional grid system engineered to provide gravity drainage to collector sewers. The Plan indicated that sewers would be located in streets mapped in the beds of streams which constitute the low points in the drainage basins. After more than 40 years, the Plan is obsolete.

Much of South Richmond, as well as parts of Mid-Staten Island, continue to lack sanitary and/or storm sewers. As a solution for

the need for infrastructure in this part of Staten Island, the Department of City Planning's (DCP) 1989 report entitled South Richmond's Open Space Network, An Agenda for Action: Stormwater and Open Space Management recommends that wetlands be used for stormwater management and open space.

The key stream corridors and wetlands found in South Richmond and other areas of Staten Island to be used for stormwater management are collectively called "the Bluebelt." DEP began to implement the recommendations of the 1989 report in 1993. In response, the City has proceeded to acquire property containing wetlands and streams while also developing management plans for selected drainage basins. The proposed action, site selection and acquisition of property in the South Beach area, is part of this process and is within the South Beach drainage system. This application is the second phase of the initial action involving South Beach which was approved by the City Planning Commission on April 27, 2005 (C 050154PCR) and did not include in it the subject parcels of this application.

The South Beach parcels, the subject of this application, are associated with the South Beach watershed and covered by the South Beach Drainage Plan. Both parcels are vacant. Block 3491,

Lot 125 is zoned R3-2/C1-1 and Block 3500, Lot 200 is zoned R3X. The watershed includes the neighborhoods of South Beach, Linden Park, Grasmere and Arrochar. The parcels are part of the South Beach Wetland System NA-7. This application will ensure the preservation of the existing storm water conveyance capacity for these wetlands and allow for restoration to increase this function as well as others.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 060196 PCR) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and the SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 et seq. and the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 05DEP0108R. The lead agency is the Department of Environmental Protection.

This application was determined to be a Type II action which requires no further environmental review.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 060196 PCR) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on January 9, 2006 and was duly

referred to Community Board 2 and the Borough President, in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 2 held a public hearing on this application on February 7, 2006, and on February 21, 2006 by a vote of 21 to 1 with no abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending approval of the application.

Borough President Recommendation

This application was considered by the Borough President, who issued a recommendation approving the application on March 27, 2006.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On March 22, 2006 (Calendar No. 7), the City Planning Commission scheduled April 5, 2006, for a public hearing on this application (C 060196 PCR). On April 5, 2006 (Calendar No. 18), the hearing was continued to April 26, 2006 (Calendar No. 19).

On April 26, 2006, there were two speakers in favor and one in opposition.

The first speaker in favor was a representative of DEP who gave a brief description of the Bluebelt program. The second speaker was

also a representative of the DEP, the director of the Bluebelt program, who spoke in more detail about this application. The speaker in opposition, who represented the owner of Block 3491, Lots 19, 20, 41 and 81, which were proposed for acquisition in the original or phase 1 South Beach application. He said that the Bluebelt was a breeding ground for mosquitoes and that the cost of conventional sewer construction in this area was less than the cost of a Bluebelt approach to storm water control. There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the application for site selection and acquisition of privately-owned and city-owned property in South Beach is appropriate.

The DCP's 1989 report entitled An Agenda for Action: Stormwater and Open Space Management identified the need for an alternative approach to traditional stormwater management methods. In 1993, DEP began the preparation of comprehensive sanitary and stormwater plans. The objective of the South Beach stormwater management plan is to collect and convey runoff in the watershed from storms up to the 5-year design storm without adversely affecting the hydrology and water quality of the watershed and its associated wetlands. The construction of storm sewers will collect street runoff and direct it to the Best Management Practices (BMP) sites prior to discharge into wetlands and

streams of the watershed. This protects and preserves natural open space corridors while providing a cost effective stormwater management system.

DEP, the agency charged with implementing the stormwater management program, has received approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to proceed with the redesign of the Official Drainage Plan for one of the last unsewered sections of New York City, the eastern and southern parts of Staten Island.

In the Bluebelt applications approved to date by the City Planning Commission, the first of a three-phase plan of action has proceeded - preserving the major watersheds. Preserving these watersheds required immediate action due to development pressures while overall master planning for the Bluebelt proceeds. This application continues acquisition in the South Beach watershed.

In the next two phases, a comprehensive stormwater management/drainage plan will be redesigned to replace the previous plan for stormwater sewers with the current/new plan for a bluebelt system. It has already been completed for several individual drainage basins. Long term management and maintenance methods for the consolidated properties will be devised as part of the drainage plan revisions and carried out in the third phase.

The Commission believes that the use of this proposed acquisition site for stormwater management is consistent with the goals of DCP's 1989 report on the South Richmond Open Space Network, An Agenda for Action: Stormwater and Open Space Management.

In response to testimony at the Commission's Hearing, in a letter dated May 4, 2006, DEP stated:

that the 2004 study concluded that the 2004 study concluded that the South Beach Bluebelt was more cost-effective than a conventional storm water system, saving the City of New York tens of millions of dollars in wetland mitigation and sewer construction costs.

The letter also states that:

" Bluebelt systems are not a significant breeding habitat for mosquitoes. Stagnant, not flowing water, is the chief breeding habitat for mosquitoes. As long as rainfall is regular, the water in Bluebelt systems does not stagnate, but continues to be flushed through the system."

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Sections 197-c of the New York City Charter, that based on the environmental determination, and the consideration described in

this report, the application, C 060196PCR submitted by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for site selection and acquisition of property located at Oceanside Avenue between Wentworth Avenue and Orlando Street (Block 3491, Lot 125), and the site selection of property located in the bed of Oceanside Avenue between McLaughlin and Vulcan streets (Block 3500, Lot 200), Community District 2, Borough of Staten Island for the storage and conveyance of storm water, is approved.

The above resolution (C 060196 PCR), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on May 10, 2006 (Calendar No.20), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, AICP., Chair
IRWIN G. CANTOR P.E., ANGELA CAVALUZZI, R.A.,
ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, RICHARD W. EADDY, JANE D. GOL,
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Commissioners