PRESENT: Anne Fadullon, Commission Chair  
Joseph Syrnick, Vice Chair  
Michael Johns  
Cheryl L. Gaston  
Peilin Chen  
Charlotte Castle  
Duane Bumb  
Ariel Vazquez  
Patrick Eiding  
Garlen Capita  
Eleanor Sharpe  

NOT PRESENT: Maria Gonzalez
Commission Chair, Anne Fadullon, called the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to order at 1:00 p.m.

Nicole Ozdemir, of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, (PCPC) – introduced the Zoom platform and remote City Planning Commission process. We are hosting this meeting on Zoom. We may also have some people join us by phone.

During today’s meeting, each agenda item will be presented by a member of the staff. Following each presentation, the Chair will ask the Commissioners for questions or comments. The Chair will then ask the audience for questions and comments. After that, the Commissioners will finish their discussion and vote.

Those of you who are joining us on Zoom will have two options to ask questions and comment. If you would like to speak, click or tap on the “RAISE HAND” button on the menu bar on the bottom of your screen at any time during the agenda item. You will be called on and have the opportunity to speak to the Commission and the audience.

If you prefer to type your question or comment, click or tap on the “Q&A” button on the menu bar at the bottom of your screen at any time during the agenda item. Once all attendees have had an opportunity to speak, I will read out loud any written questions and comments that have been posted to the Q&A.

For those joining by phone, we’re unable to take spoken testimony, however, you can email your questions and/or comments to the Commission at Planning@phila.gov.

This meeting will be recorded and posted to our website.

Ms. Ozdemir turned the meeting over to Chair Fadullon, the Commission Chair to begin the meeting.

1. Swear in Michael Johns, FAIA as a Commissioner.

Chair Fadullon recognized Charlotte Castle. Commissioner Castle replaced Christopher Rupe, of the Managing Director’s Office, who recently resigned. Chair Fadullon then acknowledged the Commission new member, Michael Johns, who replaced Nancy Rogo Trainer. Michael Johns is, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects Leed, of credited professionals, Native of Philadelphia, and a graduate of Temple University. He established his design, Mdesigns + MWJ Consulting LLC in 2007 and is licensed to practice architecture in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. Simultaneously, while running his practice, Mr. Johns has provided over 25-years of service to the Philadelphia Housing Authority, (PHA), the Zoning Code of Reform Commission, the Civic Design Review Committee, the Advisory Board of Philadelphia’s Local Initiative Support Corporation, and the Advocacy Council for the Community Design Collaborative, the Urban Land Institute, and the Land Bank Board. With this appointment to the Planning Commission, the Commission was pleased to welcome the swearing in of its new member, Michael Johns, FAIA.

Mr. Johns was sworn in at the minute mark in video (00:05:04).
2. **Action Item: Approval of the Meeting Minutes for November 17, 2020.**

Chair Fadullon asked the Commission if there was a motion to approve the November Minutes.

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Eiding and seconded by Commissioner Vazquez to approve the November Minutes (00:06:45). Motion carried unanimously (9-0).

*Public questions and comments from the Q & A at the minute mark (00:07:40) in video from Judith Robinson.*

Ms. Robinson inquired about the overlay of Strawberry Mansion 45-day for live agenda on the present day [from November 17, 2020 meeting] and planner’s responsibility, with regards to, community participation.

3. **Action Item: Approval of 2021 Commission meeting dates.**

The Planning Commission meetings will be moved from Tuesday’s to Thursday’s at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Chair Fadullon asked the Commission for a motion on the dates.

*Upon the motion made by Commissioner Eiding and seconded by Commissioner Bumb to accept the 2021 meeting dates noting the change, that the February meeting will be held February 25th (00:10:43). Motion carried unanimously (9-0).*

4. **Executive Director’s Update**

Commissioner Vazquez will be stepping down after the present meeting. While the Commission will be losing all that he has to offer, the city will be gaining him in a fulltime capacity, as he joins the Rebuild team. The Commission thanked Mr. Vazquez for his experience, passion and his time.

With regards to Philadelphia Trail Plan 2020, over 29 miles have been completed from 2011-2019. This year, an equity metric was added to the priority analysis. The document is available online on the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, (PCPC) website.

**Items in Accord with Previous Policy**

i. **Action Item: Bill No. 200656: An Ordinance authorizing the Commissioner of Public Property, on behalf of the City, to acquire fee simple title, or a lesser interest in real estate, by purchase, dedication, donation, condemnation, agreement in lieu of condemnation, or otherwise, in parcels of land along the Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek for public recreational purposes, under certain terms and conditions.** Introduced by Councilmember Jones on November 19, 2020.

ii. **Action Item: Bill No. 200661: An Ordinance authorizing encroachments in the nature of structural artwork consisting of metal manhole covers and traffic signs located in the vicinity of 6200 Osage Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19143, and authorizing the City of Philadelphia to accept ownership of such encroachments, all under certain terms and conditions.** Introduced by Councilmember Gauthier on November 19, 2020.
Ms. Sharpe acknowledged staff for not missing a beat as the department transitioned from in-person to remote meetings, then thanked the staff, of Planning and Zoning and the entire staff of the Department of Planning & Development, who also had to transition very quickly working remotely and recreating new processes and platforms for their work to continue. They’ve all stepped up and have continued the mission and the goals of the Commission, which has been challenging during the pandemic. Lastly, Ms. Sharpe shared kudos from City Council and the general public that staff don’t often hear directly, then thanked the staff publicly.

This concluded the Director’s report (00:15:48).

Chair Fadullon seconded the remarks and expressed gratitude to the staff as well. Additionally, recognized staff support to the Planning Commission, Art Commission, Historical Commission, Redevelopment Authority, Land Bank Board and across the entire department and with sister agency, Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, (PHDC). In addition to, helping other agencies within the city to be able to produce their meetings as well. Staff has done an amazing job and have gone way above and beyond. Their efforts could not be appreciated more.

5. **Action Item: Bill No. 200626:** Authorize the revision of lines and grades on a portion of City Plan No. 238 by relocating the southeasterly houseline and curbline of Christopher Columbus Boulevard, from Washington Avenue to Christian Street, thereby creating a more uniform right-of-way width and continuous footway area for said Christopher Columbus Boulevard from Washington Avenue to Christian Street, placing on the City Plan an irregularly-shaped area at the terminus of said Washington Avenue, east of Christopher Columbus Boulevard, reserving and placing on the City Plan a right-of-way for various utility purposes within the portion of Christopher Columbus Boulevard being stricken, and plotting upon the City Plan a right of way for drainage purposes extending from the said terminus of Washington Avenue to the Delaware River, all under certain terms and conditions. Introduced by Councilmember Squilla on November 12, 2020 (Presented by Sarah Chiu)

**Staff recommendation is for approval.**

Intent is, to strike and vacate a portion of the easterly side of Columbus Blvd, and to place certain areas on City Plan by relocating the houseline and curbline of Columbus Blvd in order to, conform to its existing condition; to plot an additional area at the terminus of Washington Ave on City Plan to allow the trail connection.

**Items for additional review**

1) Relocating a certain portion of the southeasterly houseline of Christopher Columbus Boulevard, thereby widening said Christopher Columbus Boulevard to conform the plan more closely to existing conditions and widen the southeasterly footway area of Columbus Boulevard.

2) Striking from the City Plan and vacating a triangularly-shaped area along the southeasterly side of Christopher Columbus Boulevard, from a point located approximately one hundred seventy-nine feet northeasterwardly of Washington Avenue to a point approximately three hundred fifty-three feet further northeasterwardly therefrom, thereby establishing a uniform right-of-way width conforming more closely with existing conditions.
3) Placing on the City Plan an irregularly-shaped area at the terminus of Washington Avenue, approximately one hundred forty-one feet east of Christopher Columbus Boulevard, said area being approximately twenty-nine feet by thirty-eight feet in dimension.

4) Reserving and placing on the City Plan a right of way for sewer and drainage purposes, water main purposes, and public utility purposes within the portion of Christopher Columbus Boulevard being stricken.

5) Plotting on the City Plan a fifty feet wide right of way for drainage purposes, beginning at the terminus of Washington Avenue, approximately one hundred forty-one feet east of Christopher Columbus Boulevard, and extending eastwardly therefrom to the Bulkhead Line of the Delaware River.

Commission questions and comments began at minute mark (00:20:54) in video.

Commissioner Johns asked about the timeframe for the work to be completed. Ms. Chiu stated that the current condition is already established. The next steps are, to allow the city to do the land swap deal with U.S. Coastguard, which could take a long time, as it’s been two-years in the works. This Bill would make a formal authorization to allow the city to enter into an agreement and to do the land transaction.

Seeing no questions or comments from the Commission or the public, Chair Fadullon asked for a motion from the Commission (00:21:58).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Eiding and seconded by Commissioner Gaston to accept staff recommendation for approval.

Chair Fadullon polled the Commission for the vote. Approved by Commissioner Gaston, Commissioner Chen, Commissioner Syrnick, Commissioner Bumb, Commissioner Vazquez, Commissioner Johns, Commissioner Castle, Commissioner Eiding and Commissioner Capita. Motion carried unanimously (9-0).

6. Action Item: Bill No. 200576: Amend Section 14-513 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “/NCO, Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District,” by revising and clarifying certain provisions, and making related changes, all under certain terms and conditions. Introduced by Councilmember Jones on October 22, 2020 (Presented by Mason Austin)

Staff recommendation is for approval.

In addition to making minor technical amendments, Bill No 200576 would introduce a formal discretionary review process for building permits within NCOs.

Technical Amendments

• Makes language in the Queen Village NCO subsection consistent with other language within 14-504 to clarify that the rear of a structure will only be reviewed if it is visible from the street

• Clarifies the calculation of the maximum area of impervious surfaces within front yards for lots in the Central Roxborough, Ridge Park Roxborough, and Wissahickon NCOs.

• The code currently excludes properties in historic districts from the provisions of NCOs; this bill would extend that exemption to individual historically designated properties.
Review Process

• An applicant who is denied approval for a building permit by staff may request a review by the appointed Planning Commission. The request must be made in writing and within 30 days of the denial.

• If the applicant claims the staff decision was made in error, the Commission shall review the application and determine whether it should have been approved under the design standards of the applicable /NCO district. If it rules an error was made, it shall approve the application.

• The Commission may also approve applications that deviate from these design standards, but only under the following circumstances:
  o Prior to the meeting of the Commission, the applicant provides written notice of the request to all affected RCOs; and
  o The Commission determines that
    ▪ Strict conformity with the design standards would result in unreasonable hardship;
    ▪ The deviation from the design standards would be reasonable due to special circumstances of the lot; and
    ▪ The approval of the application would not harm the purposes of the /NCO

• For design standards, the Commission may approve deviations that are lesser than requested than the applicant.

• The Commission may not approve deviations from zoning regulations listed within /NCOs.

Commission questions and comments began at minute mark (00:27:19) in video.

Commissioner Gaston referenced to discussion in the memo making sure that the regulations are in place, along with the Bill, because of the terms that are undefined such as, unreasonable hardship and design standards. Additionally, she is concerned about the legality of the particular process.

Seeing no questions or comments from the Commission or the public, Chair Fadullon asked for a motion from the Commission (00:29:15).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Chen and seconded by Commissioner Eiding to accept staff recommendation for approval.

Chair Fadullon polled the Commission for the vote. Approved by Commissioner Chen, Commissioner Syrnick, Commissioner Bumb, Commissioner Vazquez, Commissioner Johns, Commissioner Castle, Commissioner Eiding and Commissioner Capita. Motion carried (8-1).

Commissioner Gaston voted nay on this item.
7. Action Item: Bill No. 200613 Amended: Amend Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Zoning and Planning" by creating a new Strawberry Mansion /NCO bounded by Lehigh Avenue, 29th Street, Sedgley Avenue, Montgomery Avenue, Conrail Right-Of-Way, Oxford Street, and 33rd Street, under certain terms and conditions. Introduced by Councilmember Parker for Council President Clarke on November 12, 2020 (Presented by Dave Fecteau)

Staff recommendation is for approval with amendments.

The zoning overlay will ensure that new construction matches the size and scale of existing homes in the overlay. The overlay, or overlays, will be within the following boundaries: Lehigh Avenue, 29th Street, Sedgley Avenue, Montgomery Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, Oxford Street and 33rd Street.

It includes zoning regulations, which the Department of Licenses and Inspections will administer, and design regulations which PCPC will administer. The overlay will only apply to residential properties and properties zoned residential.

Amendments include the following:

• Previously, porches would have been required on all properties. This has been changed to require a porch only when adjacent to another home with a porch.

• Boundary changes from one large area into three smaller areas.

Land Conditions

Party at Interest: Strawberry Mansion neighborhood coalition

Present Use: Primarily residential.

Existing Zoning: RSA-5, RM-1 and CMX-2.

Site Area: multiple 25-block sections.

Planning Analysis

Meets Goals of Comprehensive/District Plan: The Lower North District Plan

Previous Work of the Planning Commission: n.a.

Impact to Area: The zoning and design regulations will fall most heavily on properties which are either vacant or which need major renovations.

How will this benefit the City: n.a.

Additional Information

Discussions with applicants: Staff had several discussions with the neighborhood coalition to determine their priorities for this overlay.
Concerns: The process for creating this overlay was rushed. Staff did not have enough time to properly analyze the existing conditions within the proposed boundaries to determine what impact the proposed regulations will have on properties which exist and on properties which are vacant and could be built on.

Public Outreach or Community Input: Staff has met with the neighborhood coalition three times. Staff also hosted a remote public meeting on December 7, 2020.

Items for additional review

Inserted below is a map of the larger section of Strawberry Mansion where the NCOs will be created. The map shows an area bounded by 33rd Street, Lehigh Avenue, 29th Street, Glenwood Avenue and Oxford Street. This will be divided into three smaller NCOs as shown below [see fact sheet in packet].

Criteria required for an NCO

- No overlap with a municipal historic district
- Maximum size of 25 blocks
- 70% of land is residentially zoned and contains a residential use
- No more than 20% of parcels are vacant lots
- Area has a consistent architectural character
- Background survey of the area (photos, maps, written descriptions)
- Public meeting with affected property owner

The link to December 7, 2020 meeting can be found here:


*Commission questions and comments began at minute mark (00:46:56) in video.*

Commissioner Capita needed clarification about Mr. Fecteau mentioning that the boundaries don’t match the historical district. The goals of the overlay are to protect the district. Mr. Fecteau stated that the requirement is that they can’t be coterminous with a local historic district. However, he believes that they do have three national historic districts in Strawberry Mansion. There are no local historic district boundaries. The Neighborhood Coalition is aware that some of the features that they love about the houses now, are going to have to be carried over to the new homes.

Discussion continued about the coalition working on the next part to preserve what’s already in the community at the minute mark (00:48:53) in video.

Commissioner Vazquez asked what the amendments were and when does the amendments have to come back to the Planning Commission for review. Mr. Fecteau said that the Bill should be as items in accord with previous policy. The Bills are new items and would prefer to return to the Commission, with a full presentation for review and a vote. Mr. Fecteau would like to get this done as early as January or February.
Commissioner Gaston asked how the provision about material's was used for construction going to be monitored or enforced. Mr. Fecteau will refer to Urban Design, who work with applicants to make sure building materials are used.

Discussion continued about the objection and safety concerns of roof decks at the minute mark (00:53:48) in video.

Commissioner Johns stated that he was currently working with the Strawberry Mansion CDC in the neighborhood assisting homeowners with grants to be able to retain the character of their homes through the SRP for basic systems repair inside, as well as the exterior existing architecture. Additionally, the community has been inundated with new construction that has not been sympathetic to the character of the neighborhood, so the community is really concerned, that they needed to put some parameters around new development and rehab that’s taking place in the neighborhood and sort of keep people that are there, in their homes. Also, have them be able to maintain them at the level that they should be in this sort of historic community.

Public questions and comments from the Q & A at the minute mark (00:57:10) in video.

Calvin Williams, a longtime resident of Strawberry Mansion urged the Commission to move this item forward to City Council.

Judith Robinson, of Strawberry Mansion Civic Association and 32nd Ward RCO, expressed concerns that not enough of the community were notified, including to attend the recent meeting. Ms. Robinson requested community participation and asked the Commission to do their due diligence.

Dana Fedeli, CPI Graduate and Community Advocate supports the Bill to protect fellow residence. Ms. Fedeli stated that with overlays, there is no open public design review, so it can give residence a false sense of security while shotty questionable and non-contextual construction can continue in perpetuity negatively effecting the health of our residence. A better alternative would be the utilization of the Mayor’s Historic Preservation Task Force recommendation of utilizing tiered historic districts, which automatically incorporates demolition protection (01:06:44).

Bonita Cummings, Director of Strawberry Mansion Community Concern expressed that the residence expect that the Commission wouldn’t take their voices, with personal bias, prejudice and racism but will do their duty as a recommended body (01:09:56).

Jihadali began by acknowledging Planning staff for their outstanding presentation and outstanding job speaking with all the participants on the call on December 7, 2020. Mr. Jihadali stated that he hopes the Commission would listen to the staff, who did an outstanding job of presenting to the community and hope that the Commission would vote out Bill No 200613 (01:13:50).

Tonnetta Graham, commended Planning staff for their excellent presentation on December 7, 2020 and added that she is still receiving rave reviews about the explanation of the community’s request for this overlay. Ms. Graham mentioned that the neighborhood is determined to participate in the planning of the revitalization, then asked the Commission to favorably present this Bill to City Council for presentation and passage (01:18:05).
Diane Davis, longtime resident of Strawberry Mansion asked the Planning Commission to listen to all that has been said and give the community a chance to help themselves with this overlay to continue to live and thrive in Strawberry Mansion (01:22:18).

Sharla Russell, of Council President addressed community participation, meeting and voting that was held on July 29, 2020. Hence, the office is very much in support of the community and their desire to move forward with this overlay (01:25:02).

Seeing no questions or comments from the Commission or the public, Chair Fadullon asked for a motion from the Commission (01:29:14).

*Upon the motion made by Commissioner Capita to accept staff recommendation with amendments, including some additional recommendations, which would support an opportunity for continual community participation and engagement, address the needed refinement, which includes some of the detail that David Fecteau brought up, and consider incorporating tiered historic districts that would also address the equity considerations and provide a way to add additional protections for historical properties within the neighborhood.*

Commissioner Johns raised concerns about the tiered historic districts and added that he thinks it needs to be reviewed more separately, than to put an end to this Bill.

*Motion made by Commissioner Capita and seconded by Commissioner Eiding to essentially, accept staff recommendation for approval with amendments, with additional amendments recommended for consideration by the Commission (01:31:32).*

*Chair Fadullon polled the Commission for the vote. Approved by Commissioner Gaston, Commissioner Syrnick, Commissioner Johns, Commissioner Bumb, Commissioner Castle, Commissioner Capita, Commissioner Chen and Commissioner Eiding. Unanimous consent with no nays. Motion carried unanimously (9-0)*

**Executive Director’s Additional Update**

Eleanor Sharpe shared that Zoning and Planning have launched Reimagine Philadelphia, which is a 12-18-month effort to create a more inclusive planning process. This process will inform the development of Philadelphia’s next comprehensive plan.

*Closing remarks from the Commission.*

Vice Chair Syrnick thanked the staff for their good work and told the staff that the Commission appreciates the work that they do.

Commissioner Vazquez thanked the Commission for the three-years that he has served on the Planning Commission and thanked everyone for their best wishes. Though it’s better sweet, Commissioner Vazquez is happy that he can join these murals.

Chair Fadullon added that the Commission is excited that they still get to work with Commissioner Vazquez through the Rebuild program – soft landing for the Commission.

Commissioner Johns expressed that he’s glad to be a part of the Commission and glad to further serve the city that he loves. The Commission responded, welcome!
Chair Fadullon thanked everyone and wished them a safe, healthy holiday season before asking for a motion to adjourn at the minute mark (01:40:31). Upon the motion made by Commissioner Syrnick to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Gaston. Commission unanimously approved.

 Ended at 2:40 p.m.

The next City Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 21, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom platform.
SUMMARY

1. Swear in Michael Johns, FAIA as a Commissioner.  


3. Action Item: Approval of 2021 Commission meeting dates.  

4. Executive Director’s Update. Items in Accord with Previous Policy
   
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL WITH AMENDMENTS, APPROVED WITH ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMISSION