

# City of Northfield

## Planning & Zoning Board

1600 Shore Road

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Minutes: September 7, 2006

Notice of this meeting had been given in accordance with Chapter 231 Public Law 1975, otherwise known as the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting has been given to The Press, posted on the bulletin board in City Hall, and filed with the City Clerk, stating the date, time and place of the meeting and the agenda to the extent known.

The regular meeting of the Northfield Planning & Zoning Board, held on Thursday, September 7, 2006 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:26 p.m. with the following members present:

Dr. Richard Levitt-Chairman  
Clem Scharff-Vice Chairman-absent  
Mayor Frank Perri  
Guy Schlachter, Councilman  
Jerry Nuzzolo, Construction Official & Inspector  
Lou Milone  
Ron Roegiers  
Nick Droboniku-absent  
Pete DaPrato  
Henry Notaro

Thomas Subranni, Esq.- Solicitor  
Matt Doran, PE-Engineer

The meeting opened with a reading of the Sunshine Law and roll call was taken with absent members noted above.

It was announced by Dr. Levitt that the second application on the agenda had to be rescheduled. 801 New Road, LLC (Dr. Naim Nazha) was to seek approval for a Site Plan with "C" and "D" Variances. The application had to be rescheduled due to an illness of one of their professionals. It was announced that the meeting will be reschedule for October 5, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. and will be the first application that evening. No other notification or advertising will be necessary as the announcement at this meeting will serve as proper notification.

There was one other application on the agenda from Stephen and Nancy Jansen who reside at 257 W. Mill Road in Northfield, Block 92, Lot 19 in the R-1 Zone. Mr. Peter P. Kariabashian, a Professional Licensed Planner from Atlantic City and managing partner, has been previously qualified by the Board as an expert witness. Mr. Kariabashian and Mr. Jansen were sworn in by Chairman Levitt. There is a letter on file dated July 25, 2006 from the Northfield Fire Department stating no objections to the project and Proof of Service and ad placement have been received and are also on file.

Mr. Jansen proceeded to describe the project. The applicants want to convert solar energy for their own personal use by installing 40 solar panels on a garden gazebo style of structure. They will be installed on a roof platform in the backyard to make the Jansen's home energy efficient. There is an existing shed and garage at the rear of the house. Their home currently has 4 roof dormers which will not allow them to use the house roof for the solar panels which is the reason for the accessory building. It would be possible for them to build a ground mount for the panels on an industrial steel structure which would eliminate the need for variances. Mr. Kariabashian thinks they should seek approval for the variances in order to build a wooden structure that would be aesthetically pleasing and an asset to the community. They also want to build an outdoor barbeque under the structure which would be completely open. It would have no bathroom, but they are considering the addition of running water for an intended greenhouse which would be 10 ft. x 16 ft. There will be no heat and they are also considering an outdoor fireplace. They are seeking a "C" variance for an oversized accessory building.

The structure proposed will be 1,132 sq. feet, 36 ft. long and 27 feet wide. The structure is proposed to be located 210 ft. into the existing back yard. The yard is over 400 ft. deep. Dr. Levitt stated that the plan is commendable but may not be economically sound. Mr. Jansen described the payoff he hopes for. The State of New Jersey is currently rebating 50% for solar equipment. Mr. Jansen expects the project to cost approximately \$65,000. He expects \$33,000 from the state rebate and the return on the solar panels to begin after 6 years. Energy costs are consistently increasing and they would be producing their own energy. Any extra energy produced that was left over would be a credit sold back to the Electric Company to be put into the overall energy supply. The Jansens would have a new type of meter that would run backwards to show credits. They currently have gas for heat and cooking. Mr. Jansen doesn't expect to compile much credit in the winter, but they would generate heat and would only have to pay \$2.50 for the cost of the meter reader each month.

Mr. Jansen went further to describe a totally open pavilion and noted that the height is necessary to achieve at least 6 hours of sunlight per day. The floor will be concrete, the roof will be shingled and the sides will be cedar shake. They plan for the structure to be attractive. There will be a chimney element for an outdoor fireplace which would not be used in cold weather, but this is an optional addition.

Mr. Kariabashian described the site as completely wooded on the western side. The property is 31,000 sq. feet with a 6 ft. fence all around the property. They have decided that they can lower the height from 13 ft. to the midpoint of the roof to 12 ft. to meet Ordinance requirements and eliminate the need for a height variance. They also will add landscaping and intend to plant White Pine on the west side. Impervious coverage is being maintained at under 10% of the total site at 9.8%. Dr. Levitt commented that the Jansens have a well maintained home. Mr. Jansen added that the home is approximately 80 years old and has an unfinished dirt basement. Mr. Kariabashian said that under current land use law alternative sources of energy generation is encouraged. Other special reasons include the aesthetic design of the structure.

Mr. Nuzzolo asked about the weight of the panels. Mr. Kariabashian stated that they are approximately 34 lbs. per panel and that the panels are thin. Mr. Nuzzolo asked about what they were filled with and was told that a wire runs through them and that there is no liquid. Panels are plugged into each other and secured. Dr. Levitt commented that they are made of glass with an aluminum frame. Mr. Kariabashian commented that they won't shatter if seagulls were to drop things on them and Mr. Jansen said they will even work with snow on them. At night, the Jansen's would use the Electric Company grid for energy. The Jansens would convert to electric heat from gas and would use gas for cooking only. Mr. Roegiers stated that the Jansens can put the panels in their backyard without seeking any variances, but they want the structure to be

more appealing to themselves and the neighbors. He asked if they plan to construct the panels either way and Mr. Jansen stated "Yes, they would".

Mr. Doran read his Engineer's report. He said the plans do not show required two on-site parking spaces, curbs and sidewalks, and shade trees at the street. Mr. Jansen commented that a curb has been put in, but there are no sidewalks on the entire side of the street. Sidewalks are along the other side of the street to encourage school children to walk on that side to avoid crossing the street. They also have two large shade trees close to 100 years old that measure 11.5 ft. around. Their driveway is very long and measures about 1/3 of the length of the property.

Chairman Levitt opened the public session. Mr. Daniel Price of 251 W. Mill Road, Block 92, Lot 20 spoke first. His property is on the east side of the Jansen's property. He has concerns with the height of the proposed building and the possibility of glare since the panels will face his property. Dr. Levitt commented that the reflection will be upward. Mr. Jansen stated that the angle of the panels will be 33% and that the newer style panels have anti-reflection panes and is not shiny glass and is more similar to frosted glass. Mr. Kariabashian commented that the highest point will be 16 or 17 ft. and the applicants will add supplemental landscaping and White Pine if any glare should occur. Mr. Price commented that his home is directly next store to the Jansen's property. Dr. Levitt commented that the structure will be 210 ft. behind his house and doesn't believe that Mr. Price will be affected by the angle of the panes. Mr. Nuzzolo and Mr. Notaro agreed that a lower angle could produce more glare.

Donna Roesch spoke next. She owns 247 W. Mill Road, Block 92, Lot 21. Her property is one house over from Mr. Price. She also has concerns with the size of the structure and asked why the applicants can't use the garage for the panels. She believes the structure should be smaller and is afraid they will enclose it in the future. Dr. Levitt stressed that testimony forbids them to do so. They would have to come before the Board with a new application. Ms. Roesch asked how the energy will get from the structure to their home. Mr. Jansen stated that a trench would be dug to transmit the energy produced and it would be covered and seeded. Mr. Jansen said that the garage is way too small to accommodate panels. Ms. Roesch would like the applicants to compromise on the energy they want to produce by making the structure smaller and producing less energy.

Margaret Keen spoke next. She resides on the opposite side of the Jansens at 259 W. Mill Road at Block 92 Lot 18. Her home sits back 100 ft. from the road and she thinks she will be able to see the structure when she walks out of her house. She feels that the structure is not a gazebo but more resembles a duplex. Many of the homes in the area are only 800 sq. ft. and this structure is double the size. She has concerns about fire and whether or not the Fire Department would be able to reach a fire. She has fears that a fire could be started in dry weather and due to the fact that there are so many trees in the area. Her house is also made of wood. She feels misled by the notification letter since the word "gazebo" was used to describe a structure she feels is comparable to a 4 bedroom, 3 bath ranch.

It was questioned whether the greenhouse was considered in the total square footage of 1132 sq. ft. Mr. Doran stated that it is. Mr. Milone asked Ms. Keen if she would object to a steel structure and she stated probably not. She commented that she may get 'bounce off heat' from the panels and feel one-story houses will be affected. Dr. Levitt reminded that the lots are large lots in this zone with a minimum of 10,000 sq. ft.

The next member of the public who wished to speak was Andrea Dickinson of 250 W. Mill Road, Block 89, Lot 13. She commented she commends energy saving projects and then stated that her home is 800 sq. ft. and she thinks the structure will resemble a house due to the size. She has viewed the plans in City Hall and would like the structure to be shorter. Mr. Jansen commented

that the size is mandated by the sq. footage of the solar panels and panel requirements on an annual basis. They need this size for the amount of solar panels. Mr. Kariabashian mentioned that Mr. Jansen is a disabled vet and has limited income. He wants to continue to live in Northfield and hopes to balance out his electric bill to save money. He knows this will not be a substantial money making project. Ms. Dickinson asked about the tree situation. Mr. Kariabashian said the installer has said that they won't have to cut down any trees. Mr. Jansen said they will need to keep the trees trimmed, but they won't have to cut down any trees. The trees are going nowhere according to Mr. Jansen. Ms. Dickinson stated she believes these residents bought deep properties because they didn't want to view other structures. She has concerns that the Board is setting a precedent and believes neighbors on Clark Place will be able to see the panels, but none of them are present tonight. Dr. Levitt reminded that all cases are individual and will be heard on their own merits.

At this point, the Chairman closed the public session seeing that no one else wished to speak. Dr. Levitt asked the Board for discussion. Mr. Schlachter clarified that if the variance is turned down, the Jansens will still install their panels on steel. Mr. Jansen agreed with the statement. The Councilman asked if heat and sun glare concerns would change in that situation. Mr. Kariabashian said they are black solar panels and they do not reflect, instead they absorb. As a Professional, he does not think there is a problem. Mr. Milone agreed with Mr. Kariabashian that he doesn't believe reflection will be a problem. Mayor Perri commented that the Master Plan suggests and encourages this type of activity. He thinks a metal type structure is unappealing. He stated that this is part of our future as are windmills and he feels the Jansen's plan is a good attempt at constructing something aesthetically appealing rather than a steel structure. Dr. Levitt agreed with the Mayor and would like to see solar structures added to our Ordinance. He believes this to be the wave of the future and from a planning point of view, said it is hard to imagine this lot not being suited for this type of project. Dr. Levitt asked if batteries of any kind were involved with the project and he was told no.

Ms. Donna Roesch was recognized and asked if the Jansens looked into geothermal energy as an alternative. Mr. Jansen stated that type of electric power production is not perfected yet and is being used commercially. Solar energy is refined and the return is far greater with the use of the sun. They also considered wind production, but did not think it would gain approval.

Ms. Winnie Hasson was recognized to speak and lives directly across the street. She loves the idea of solar power and thinks the plan is a great idea. She understands the residents concerns with the size. She has viewed the plans and wishes she could do something like this.

Mayor Perri asked about the warranty. Mr. Kariabashian stated there is a 30 year warranty.

Mr. Doran and Dr. Levitt summarized the variance. The proposed variance is for the size of the accessory structure in excess of 500 sq. ft. at 1,132 sq. ft. They did away with the height variance by conforming. The 79 ft. lot width is existing as is the 1 ft. setback for the existing shed. The structure is for the accommodation of solar panels and is to remain open with no bathrooms or living facilities. Mayor Perri added that the height was lowered 1 ft. to conform to our height ordinance and there will be a waiver for sidewalks. Also, glare will be considered if it becomes a problem and Mr. Doran's Engineer's report will be included in its entirety. Curbs and street trees are existing. Mayor Perri made the motion. Mr. Milone seconded. The following members voted yes for approval: Mayor Perri, Mr. Schlachter, Mr. Nuzzolo, Mr. Milone, Mr. Roegiers, Mr. Notaro, and Chairman Levitt. Mr. DaPrato voted no.

There was one resolution for PTA Holding, LLC to memorialize. Mr. Nuzzolo and Mr. Roegiers abstained. All other members present voted by voice vote for approval.

The Board members discussed several matters of concern. One involves the Master Plan and the fees that will be required for Professional Planners to assist the Board with the finalization of the project. Dr. Levitt has been in contact with Enid Hyberg, a local attorney who is certified by Rutgers University to teach required seminars for Planning Board Members. Education is now mandatory. They are looking into sharing the cost of the seminars with Linwood and Somers Point. Mr. Subranni gave an update on the Palombo's remanded hearing by informing the Board that the hearing date will be November 2, 2006.

The meeting closed at 9:00 p.m. with a motion from Councilman Schlachter and a second from Mr. Milone.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas-Clinton,  
Secretary to the Board