

City of Northfield

Planning & Zoning Board

1600 Shore Road

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Minutes: March 15, 2007

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, March 15, 2007 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:31 p.m. and the following members were present:

Dr. Richard Levitt-Chairman
Clem Scharff-Vice Chairman-absent
Mayor Frank Perri
Jimmy Martinez, Councilman
Jeffrey Bruckler, City Administrator-absent
Ron Roegiers
Nick Droboniku-absent
Pete DaPrato
Henry Notaro
Guy Schlachter
Lou Milone
Jason O'Grady

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

There was a reading of the Sunshine Law and roll call and absent Board members are listed above. Mayor Perri had another commitment and had to leave early. Before leaving he gave a report to the Board on the status of hiring a planner to consolidate the Master Plan. The Mayor said it was introduced to the budget on Tuesday night. Funds are available as well as emergency appropriation if necessary, but funds cannot be spent until the budget is passed. Council has a few possible proposals before them. Mr. Doran will contact Mr. Landgraf for a formal estimate. Dr. Levitt said that he wants this initial phase to move forward since the entire ordinance still needs to be re-written.

The first application of the evening is from B.F. Mazzeo Fruit and Produce, LLC for a minor site plan for the construction of an accessory storage building at 509 Chestnut Avenue and New Road, Block 50, Lots 11 & 12 in the O-PB Zone. The following professionals were sworn in:

Michael J. Blee, Esquire, of West Atlantic City (Applicant's Attorney)
Harry S. Harper, RA, of Absecon (Applicant's Architect)
Robert L. Reid, AICP, PP, of Absecon (Applicant's Planner)

Benjamin Mazzeo, Sr., owner of the property, was also sworn in to give testimony.

Mr. Reid began by describing the current conditions. The property is approximately 14,725 sq. ft. This area includes a 22-space parking lot and an existing single family two-story dwelling which is currently vacant and used for storage. This structure is 1000 sq. ft. at the ground level and the applicant's want to replace it with a 1000 sq. ft. storage facility including a basement. The proposed building conforms to front yard and side yard setbacks and buffer requirements and there will be a reduction in site coverage. The proposed building will be set back further to conform to setback requirements and to provide more landscaping. They intend to save the two large evergreen trees and the sidewalk will be behind the trees and will dead end at the property line. The building façade will be designed to match the main store and will be compatible with surrounding residential structures. The purpose of the project is to reduce truck trips to the site. They will be able to access the storage building using small delivery trucks (18ft. to 25 ft. in length) rather than tractor trailers. They have leased a site off Tilton Road which will be used for loading and unloading large delivery trucks to accommodate their wholesale business. Transporting of goods to the Chestnut Avenue site for the retail store will only involve small trucks. Items in the proposed storage building will be moved as needed to the main building across the street using small vans or pick up trucks.

Mr. Blee asked Mr. Reid to discuss the impact on the residential neighborhood. He stated that the accessory structure is in the O-PB zone and the existing structure is an old antiquated home. It will be replaced with an architecturally compatible structure and that no variances are necessary.

Mr. Harper commented that current plans have eliminated a side garage door entrance facing Chestnut Street. All traffic will remain on the site. The new storage facility will be a carriage style house with a circle top window and a sliding door. The colors will match the store building. The building will be 2016 sq. ft. The doors will be closed and no loading docks will be visible. No tractor trailers will be kept on site or used as temporary on site storage. Dr. Levitt asked about bathrooms and was told by Mr. Mazzeo that there will not be one. They may have a small office for one person to do paperwork. Dr. Levitt commented that no other uses would be allowed. Mr. Mazzeo stated that they have a large office across the street in the store building.

Mr. Mazzeo described the delivery process. Tractor trailers will come to main site (store site) and forklifts will remove goods to small trucks which will deliver inside of accessory building onto pallets. The forklift in the accessory building will not leave the building and there will be no forklifts crossing the street. Dr. Levitt asked why the garage door is being eliminated. Mr. Reid said it was the applicant's desire to save the two large trees and install the sidewalk. They did not feel it was necessary to create another driveway. Mr. Reid stated that a 25 ft. driveway exists at the parking lot entrance for ingress and egress. Mr. Mazzeo commented that most of the truck traffic will be delivering in the early morning hours and possible a few times during the day.

Mr. Schlachter asked about heating and air conditioning. Mr. Mazzeo stated that only refrigeration would be used. Mr. Harper explained that compressors will be located at the rear of the building. The refrigeration is really a fancy heat pump which will reverse if the temperature becomes too hot or cold. Mechanicals will be screened. Mr. O'Grady asked about the purpose of the basement. Mr. Reid answered that it will be used for additional storage of empty pallets. The access will be by way of a staircase. There will be no food or fruit storage and delivery to the basement will be limited by whatever an individual can carry.

Dr. Levitt asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard. Seeing no one, he closed the public session.

Mr. Doran referred to his Engineer's report. He commented that with regard to use, the applicant is becoming more compliant at the site by eliminating the single family home in this zone. They are doing away with an existing non-conformity. Mr. Doran addressed the waivers that will be needed. The applicant has the required 15 ft. buffer at the westerly side and agrees to the double row of evergreens as the buffer. A neighbor's fence already exists. Curbs and sidewalks are required and they will be putting in a sidewalk at the front, but they will need a waiver for a small section of tapered area of curbing due to the shape of the street along Chestnut Avenue. An 8.5 ft. easement will be necessary for road widening. The applicant should file this before commencing work. The 2nd required shade tree should be waived since the area has a lot of trees and the applicant is saving the two large existing trees. There will be no additional parking, new signs or lighting. They agree to screen any mechanicals and there will be no exterior trash or recycling, and if any is generated, it will be moved to the main building. No new drainage will be required since the applicant is actually reducing the amount of impervious coverage.

Dr. Levitt questioned whether a permitted use variance is needed. Mr. Doran commented that storage and parking are allowed accessory uses in this zone. Mr. Reid stated that the existing accessory parking was previously approved 10 years ago and that the site operates as one facility. Dr. Levitt said that he understands a pre-existing use exists as the old house has been used for storage. He wants it made clear that any other use would require a variance and that the use is restricted to storage use only. Mr. Doran and Mr. Reid agreed that a prior use variance was granted for additional parking on a separate lot. Any sale of Mazzeo's would have to take the parking with it. Mr. Subranni commented that the accessory building is not a free standing storage unit. The two sites form a unit and cannot sell or operate separately. Dr. Levitt added that the accessory unit is considered an auxiliary use even though it is across the street.

The Board discussed the waivers. There will be a waiver for the curbing requirement between the two trees on Chestnut Avenue from the apron to the property line to preserve the trees. There is no curbing now and they will be adding some curbing. This involves a 30 ft. area. Since Chestnut Avenue is wider at the New Road entrance and narrows as the street progresses, paved tapers are necessary in some sections. There will be a waiver for one shade tree, mechanicals will be screened, the use is restricted to a storage use only and there will be no bathrooms. Electricity and water will be needed.

Mr. Milone made the motion and Mr. Schlachter seconded. The present members voted unanimously for approval of the minor site plan by roll call vote.

The second application is a second hearing for Dr. Ali Daneshavar who has approval to construct a medical office at 1015 & 1021 New Road (approved July 20, 2006). This hearing is a Building Permit Appeal and Modified Site Plan to include a bathroom in the basement. The original resolution stated that the basement would be windowless and used only for storage and installation of mechanicals. The Block is 46 and the Lots are 14, 15 & 16. The applicant's Attorney is Christopher Baylinson, Esq. of Perskie, Nehmad & Perillo in Somers Point.

Mr. Baylinson stated that the Northfield Construction Official, Jerry Nuzzolo, is concerned about the foundation plan which includes a sink and toilet. Dr. Daneshavar intends to use the basement for storage only. The basement will contain plumbing, mechanicals, sump pumps, and an eye wash station since sensitive chemicals will also be stored here. His desire for a bathroom has to do with the location of his office and other offices in the building.

Dr. Ali Daneshavar was sworn in by Chairman Levitt. He described the background of the practice. Chemicals that he uses require an eye wash station within 100 ft. of storage. Glass slides are very heavy and cannot be stored upstairs. Slides are not just stored away, they are used for reference and work and employees will be going back and forth to retrieve slides for use. As the building plan is now, employees would have to go back to the 2nd floor to use the bathroom. The Doctor wants a bathroom in the basement for the convenience of employees who are in the basement filing, retrieving slides, etc. Access to the storage area by employees will occur all day long.

Dr. Levitt asked that the building be described for Board members who were not on the Board when approval occurred. The basement will be 4000 sq. ft. which is the same as the 1st floor. The 2nd floor will be 2500 sq. ft. and will include a Laboratory and small office. Mr. Baylinson commented that the parking ratio does not include the basement. Dr. Levitt commented that the basement was restricted to storage use for that reason. He feels a storage area should resemble one big open area not a partitioned basement. The plans of the basement (P-03) show 7-8 dedicated suites with doors, a bathroom and elevator and the layout resembles lab, office and work areas. The Board needs assurance that this is not the case. Dr. Daneshavar stated that originally the plans were drawn by an Architect showing wooden beams. The project contractor later advised that steel beams are needed. The architect copied the layout plans showing the beams from the 2nd floor to the basement. The Doctor wants segregated storage since some stored items may need air conditioning while others will need ventilation. Also, if spills were to occur, other partitioned areas have a better chance of not being affected. He has no intention to rent space and wants to use all areas of the building to the best advantage. There will be no desks, labs or microscopes in the basement. There will be storage of books and journals, and there will be a lot of employee traffic up and down, but no work is being done in the basement. Dr. Levitt asked about the different mechanical rooms. Dr. Daneshavar testified there will be electricity, heaters, water heaters and they will need the eye wash area and sink due to the storage of toxic matter. Mr. Roegiers clarified that individual rooms will be necessary to maintain the integrity of the items stored and compartmentalization is necessary for different types of storage. Mr. Baylinson stressed that there would be no windows in the basement. He also stated that since Dr. Levitt said the basement appears to be laid out for use, the applicant could possibly open up some of the walls. Separate rooms with doors may create the temptation to use the areas as offices and could create parking problems in the future. Dr. Daneshavar stated that he could open up areas not designated for lab storage use. Mr. Baylinson added that rooms that need to be separated should still be departmentalized. He offered to come back before the Board with a revised floor plan for the basement, but asked that the applicant be allowed to obtain permits to run plumbing lines. Dr. Daneshavar offered to open up the right side of the basement (suites B, C, E & A) and keep the left side segregated. Dr. Levitt said to submit the new plan to Mr. Doran for approval clearly delineating what areas will be open, a revised resolution will be written by Mr. Subranni, and the resolution will be attached to the deed in the form of a deed restriction. Mr. Doran suggested that the Board allow Dr. Daneshavar to enclose mechanicals. Dr. Levitt agreed and added that the resolution should include language referring to the basement use in that it will not be for regular occupation and is only for accessing storage. There was no public who wished to be heard.

Mr. Baylinson commented that they may need to come back before the Board for a height variance. They are currently at 25 ft. to the midline and may need an additional 9 inches. There was no time to notice before this meeting and they will need to submit an application and provide proper notice and advertising.

Dr. Levitt summarized by stating this is a revised site plan for approximately one half of the basement to be an open design, to be approved by the Board's Engineer, Matt Doran, and a copy of the deed restrictions will be sent to the Board's Solicitor, Tom Subranni.

Dr. Levitt asked for a motion for a revised site plan. Mr. Schlachter made the motion and Mr. Roegiers seconded. A roll call vote was unanimously in favor.

There was one resolution to memorialize for Kensington Square. A voice vote was all in favor.

The meeting closed at 8:40 p.m. with a motion from Mr. O'Grady and a second from Mr. Schlachter.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board