

City of Northfield Planning & Zoning Board
1600 Shore Road
Northfield, New Jersey 08225
Telephone (609) 641-2832, ext. 127
Fax (609) 646-7175

Minutes: September 4, 2008

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 had 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 4, 2008 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:28 p.m. and the following members were present:

Dr. Richard Levitt-Chairman
Clem Scharff-Vice Chairman-absent
Mayor Vincent Mazzeo
Jason O'Grady, Councilman
Chief Robert James
Lou Milone
John Clifford-absent
Ron Roegiers
Henry Notaro
Jim Shippen
Linda Dyrek

Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor
Matt Doran, PE-Engineer

There was one application on the agenda for this evening. The application was from LA Holdings Northfield, LLC, Block 42, Lot 19, the address being 1101 Tilton Road located in the C-B Zone. The building is currently vacant and was previously a transmission repair shop. The Attorney representing the application is Joel Fleishman, Esq. of Fleishman Daniels Law Offices in Northfield. The application is for a major site plan; both preliminary and final approval with "C" variances to demolish the existing building and to construct a bank with drive thru isles.

Mr. Fleishman introduced five Principals and Professionals. The Professionals are: Thomas C. Roesch, PE, PP of Duffy, Dolcy, McManus & Roesch Assoc. of Galloway, Diane E. Sirizzotti of The Bennet Group in Cherry Hill, Mary Clemente a representative with The Bank, and the two principals of LA Holding are Jeffrey T. Alper of Linwood and John P. Lobb of Marlton.

Mr. Fleishman began by stating that his office is five doors down from the site and it used to be used to repair transmissions. A bank is a permitted use in the zone. Dr. Levitt swore in the Professionals.

Thomas Roesch, a Licensed Professional Engineer and Planner, listed his credentials for the Board. He referred to Exhibits A-2 (Existing Conditions of the Site), A-3 (Rendering of New Bank Branch), and A-4 (Site Plan). Exhibit A-2 is a survey map and pictures of the site at the southeast corner of Tilton Road and Maple Avenue. There are two access points on Maple Avenue (a one way access at the rear of the property and a second which is two way) and one on Tilton Road. There is existing parking in front and existing sidewalks on Tilton Road and Maple Avenue. The applicants are proposing to remove the 5200 sf building (5246 sf) and replace it with a 2800 sf bank with drive thrus. The drive thru entrance will be at the rear on Maple Avenue and there will be two drive thru lanes and one ATM drive thru lane. Employees will park in the back. There will be another main access point on Maple Avenue, the same as presently exists. It is a two-way access to parking along the basin. The total number of parking will be 17 spaces for the entire facility. On Tilton Road there is a two way access near Bob's Seafood. Another business in the area is Friendly's Restaurant. The impervious coverage is exactly the same at 66%. They will be using existing storm water pipes and the basin. There will be nice landscaping at the perimeter of the property and around the building.

Mr. Roesch mentioned that there will be no outside trash facility or dumpster. All trash will be maintained internally and picked up by an outside facility. He referred to Exhibit A-4, a non-color drawing showing the Tilton Road access and said the plans have been submitted to Atlantic County for review. The County had concerns about the location of the driveway being too close to Bob's Seafood and they requested at least 25 ft. from Bob's to the beginning of the curb line. The driveway will be 24 ft. wide. They plan to also widen the landscaping island and install a handicapped parking space closer to the driveway. The changes have been submitted to the County.

Dr. Levitt questioned the circulation pattern for the drive thrus. Mr. Roesch said cars would come in using Maple Avenue which is a one way back entrance into the drive thru lanes. "Do Not Enter" signs will exist and cars will have to go right. Mr. Fleishman stated the circulation pattern is one way. Mr. Roesch added that repeat customers will get to know the site. Mr. Fleishman commented that the flow situation is similar to Commence Bank and that the County felt comfortable with it.

Mr. Shippen asked about the distance from the roadway to the island and Mr. Roesch said it is about 40 ft. Mr. Shippen commented that he feels there is enough room to proceed in the driveway. Ms. Dyrek asked about directional arrows on the pavement and Mr. Roesch said they can add them. Dr. Levitt expressed concerns about a second car entering behind another car from Tilton Road and said he feels the Maple Avenue access is safer. He added that people entering from Tilton Road would probably be parking and they could enter from Maple Avenue. He would like to see the Tilton Road access be an exit only. Mayor Mazzeo commented that having two options for access would help traffic flow. Mr. Fleishman said Mary Clemente will explain the circulation situation. The Bank is not a Commerce Bank transaction-style bank with lots of people using the bank at once (cashing checks, making deposits, etc.). The Bank is more like the Parke Bank which is a more low-key, relationship type of bank. Mr. Fleishman also agrees with proper signage and arrowing the pavement.

Mr. Roesch addressed the variances. According to the Zoning Schedule, a minimum of 50 ft. front yard setback is required. The property is an irregularly shaped lot consisting of two front yards and two side yards with no rear yard. The Bank will be set back 30 ft. (pre-existing) from Maple Avenue and 41.6 ft. from Tilton Road. The side yards require no variances. The 41.6 ft. setback from Tilton Road includes a 10 ft. future right-away (51.6 ft.).

The parking variance was addressed. Under the Ordinance, 30 spaces would be required for banks. One space is needed per 200 square feet for 14 spaces and 4 spaces are required for each teller station. The bank is proposing 17 parking spaces including 1 handicapped space and the applicant feels this is adequate in comparison to their other sites in Galloway Township and Egg Harbor Township. There will be a total of 4 teller stations and no more than 5 employees on

site. The Bank is not a high traffic bank. Mr. Roesch commented that Northfield's Ordinance may be a bit antiquated and that more banks today have higher drive-thru traffic than parking traffic.

Mr. Roesch addressed the sign variances. Two are needed. One is for sign area of the freestanding-sign and the other for minimum required setback. For sign area, 28 sf is allowed and they are proposing 32 sf. For the setback, 15 ft. is required, and they are proposing 0 ft. which is the existing right of way. The free standing sign will include a 2 ft. x 8 ft. LED reader board and this was discussed. Mr. O'Grady suggested they don't use a reverse type with colored lights in the background with the wording in black. He noted this is garish and distracting.

Mr. Fleishman called Mary Clemente to testify and clarify issues. She has been with The Bank since they opened for business 19 years ago and is responsible for branch operations and site acquisitions. The branches are colonial in nature with a cupola and brick façade. The name is generic and this branch is different from others in that the drive thru area is on the side which fits in with the site. The sign is a standard sign with the message board being all one color (amber). This has been used for about three years and has never been a reverse type of sign. There will be a maximum of one line of text or possibly two smaller lines, which with technology, will be able to display things like the CD rate, "Now Open", or other information for customers instead of the previous time and temperature.

Dr. Levitt asked about the number of employees. Ms. Clemente said there will no more than five at one time which includes three tellers, one manager, and one customer service representative. They will have more employees if needed to cover longer hours, but they will not be working at the same time. Trash removal will be maintained internally and all trash will be kept on-site until removed. They will not have an outside receptacle. Trash will be removed by a janitorial service and taken off site. Ms. Clemente feels that parking is sufficient. The success of the bank is not based on transactions. They sometimes meet with clients off-site and a lot of the business deals with on-line banking and the drive thrus. In relation to the other 7 branches, the parking is sufficient. There is usually not more that five cars on site at a time. Ms. Clemente addressed the two-way access on Tilton Road. She said they want to use this main entrance for most of the Bank's access. It is important for ease and accessibility and they will have ample signs and striping. They have had no problems by experience. Mr. Roesch noted that if they were to move the freestanding sign back further, it would be hidden by the Friendly's sign. Visibility of their sign will be good in either direction at the 0 setback point. The dimensions of the sign are necessary at a 24 ft. bank sign and 16 ft. reader board. Their other sites have shown these dimensions to be appropriate and will promote traffic safety. Dr. Levitt asked if the pedestal is in the site triangle. Mr. Doran commented that it is in the site triangle, but will be set back from the existing sign. He added that the County will take precedence over the sign placement. Mr. Roesch said the County has not objected. Dr. Levitt said he has concerns with drivers turning onto Tilton Road from Maple Avenue and that their view may be blocked by the pedestal. Mr. Zlotnick said the decision will be up to the County since it is their site triangle. Mr. Fleishman added that they will be going before the County in two week and they will be addressing a list of the County's concerns and comments. This site triangle has not shown to be an issue. Mr. Roesch assured the Board that they will meet all the County's requirements.

Dr. Levitt spoke about the existing drainage site and that this site is the reason it is now required to be underground storage. He noted that it is filled with weeds and rocks and is an eyesore. Mr. Roesch said they will clean up the site and make it more presentable. Dr. Levitt reminded that it must also work properly. Mr. Fleishman said they will be adding vegetation and landscaping. Dr. Levitt said well maintained river stone would be nice and asked if they have looked into underground drainage. Mr. Roesch said they have not investigated this. Mr. Doran added that the drainage is there and existing. Ms. Clemente said that other sites of theirs' have this same type of drainage and The Bank makes sure these areas are kept up beautifully and maintained. Dr. Levitt suggested, as a condition of approval, for the applicant to submit to Mr. Doran the standards of what they will do to clean up this area and that this can be handled administratively.

Mr. Doran's report was addressed and Mr. Roesch discussed the design waivers needed. All other points in Mr. Doran's letter they agree to. Regarding #5 in Mr. Doran's report, a design waiver is needed to keep the existing drive way and to improve it and keep it in the same location. They will not be making a present condition any worse. The Ordinance requires the drive way on Maple Avenue to be located 100 ft. from the intersection at Tilton Road. 55 ft. is existing and proposed. #7 in Mr. Doran's report refers to the Tilton Road access and they will satisfy the County on this issue. Mr. Fleishman did not receive a copy of the Fire Chief's report and it was noted that the Fire Department had no objections. Regarding #14 which refers to loading areas, Mr. Roesch said there are no loading zones at their other branch locations and he feels they are not appropriate as mostly cars use their facilities and only delivery trucks such as Fed Ex or UPS will briefly park in the drive aisle and then leave. Concerning parking design waivers, Maple Avenue is available for extra parking or deliveries as it is not a highly traveled street and has only one residential dwelling. #16 refers to the width of the drive aisle where 25 ft. is required and they are requesting 24 ft. Mr. Roesch said 24 ft. is the standard and Mr. Doran agreed that most are 24 ft. in width. This will also cut down on impervious coverage. #17 refers to parking that shall not be located closer than 20 ft. to a street. There are two waivers required. The first is at Tilton Road where they will be using the existing parking, but will improve it. They are proposing 0 ft. due to the newly dedicated right-of-way for Tilton Road. The setback proposed for Maple Avenue is 17.9 ft. with the addition of one parking space and they feel this will not impact Maple Avenue. It was noted that there are existing sidewalks on both Maple Avenue and Tilton Road. The last waiver is for lack of curbing to the storm water drainage. The existing parking has no curbing to allow for the storm water runoff pattern and they don't want to change this pattern. They will be installing nice parking bumpers.

Mr. Fleishman summarized the variances. The setback variances are C1 variances due to the irregular shape of the lot. The parking and sign variances are C2 variances (the sign could be C1 or C2) in that the sign will promote safety for the traveling public and will be beneficial to the community and the parking is suitable and will provide a desirable visual environment for the project. A sea of pavement with the required parking total is not needed. Light, air and open space will be preserved, benefits outweigh any detriments, and there is no detriment to the public good or the Zoning Plan.

Architect Diane Sirizzotti addressed the Board and described Exhibit A-3. Her firm designed the plans for The Bank and she was prepared to discuss the bank materials and colors. She said the brick (Glen Gary brick) will be on all four sides of the building. Mr. Fleishman commented that there will be one building mounted sign on Maple Avenue and the sign does conform to the Zoning Ordinance in all respects. He then asked Ms. Sirizzotti if the building will look like the design and she answered yes it will. Mr. Roegiers asked for more information about the sign and she said it will match the building. Mr. Fleishman said that was the end of the testimony he had to present.

Dr. Levitt asked Mr. Doran to address his Engineer's report. Mr. Doran noted in #3 of his report that there are existing curbs and sidewalks around the perimeter of the site and those located on Maple Avenue are located on the site. A right-of-way dedication or Public Easement should be considered for the improvements on Private Property. Mr. Fleishman said he will prepare an easement, but he must wait until his clients take title to the property. Mr. Doran suggested a handicap ramp at Tilton and Maple, which is not shown on the plan, but he noted it may be there. Any new site triangle or site easements in place of what exists should be filed with the County. The landscaping plan is thorough and three 25 ft. lights appear to cover the site and are not too bright. Mr. Doran clarified the number of parking spaces required as 34 since there is a 5th teller located in the drive thru, but this is only a technicality since they need the variance anyway and cars normally don't park for a drive thru teller. There is no additional drainage required, and all Performance Guarantees must be made and all approvals obtained. Dr. Levitt noted that any other use in the future would have to come before the Board for a use change due to not meeting the parking formula.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session and seeing that no one wished to speak, he closed the public session.

Mr. Zlotnick summarized the variances according to the Zoning Schedule and said everything appears complete and Mr. Doran's report rounds out the waivers needed.

Dr. Levitt said that he still has some concerns about the Tilton Road two-way drive aisle. He asked Mr. Fleishman and the applicant that if a hazard should exist and the Police Department determines there is a problem with repeat fender benders and frequent traffic mishaps, could design changes be made. Mr. Fleishman had a conference with his clients. He told the Board that his client should not be beholden to a subjective standard and noted that the County is the arbiter. After the County met with Mr. Roesch and Mr. Alper and saw the new design, they felt it was safe. The County is who controls this. Dr. Levitt asked that they use large "Do not enter" signs on the pavement and provide arrows to direct traffic. Mr. Doran noted that "Do not enter" standing signs should be added also. Dr. Levitt again expressed concerns that it appears that not more than two cars could be stacked at a time. Mr. Fleishman said that due to the low impact use of this bank, their experience show this will not be a problem. Comments from the Board were that this situation exists all along Tilton Road. Chief James stated that he defers to the County's decision and feels it will not present a particular hazard.

Mr. Zlotnick summarized the waivers and variances. The variances are for a front yard setback for 30 ft. on Maple Avenue and 41.6 ft. (includes 10 ft. dedicated right-of-way). The parking setback is 17.9 ft. off Maple Avenue. The number of parking spaces will be 17 where 34 is required. The variances for the freestanding sign is for area where 28sf is allowed and they are requesting 40 ft. and the setback for the sign is 15 ft. and they are requesting 0 ft. from the Tilton Road right-of-way. Mr. Doran added that the waiver for the loading zone is not needed since that requirement applies to 5000 sf or greater. He also noted that the location of the drive way on Maple is proposed at 55 ft. where 100 ft is required and that it is existing, but they will be reconstructing it.

There were separate votes for the "C" Variances and waivers and the Major Site Plan. The motion was made by Mayor Mazzeo and seconded by Mr. O'Grady. All nine members present voted in favor of the variances and waivers. The motion for the Major Site Plan vote was made by Mr. Milone and seconded by Mr. Shippen. All nine members present voted in favor.

Chairman Levitt set up an Ordinance Committee meeting for September 22, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. O'Grady brought a message to the Board from Councilwoman Cindy Kern concerning the amendment to the Historical Ordinance. The amendment would state that Historical Buildings would not be torn down without first advertising for the sale of \$1.00 that the structure be moved at the owner's expense within a three month period and that if a buyer and relocation are not possible, the Historical Society and Cultural Committee would be allowed to remove any historical materials or artifacts for the Museum before the building was demolished.

Mayor Mazzeo mentioned that he was at a house on Cove Avenue today with Joyce Pullan of the Historical Society. It may be savable in three sections and in his opinion, is on a non-buildable lot. Mr. Doran commented that a wall would have to be left or it would be considered a vacant lot. Mr. Shippen agreed the house can be salvaged and moved in three parts and re-assembled. He also noted that the foundation of the house cannot be used to rebuild. Dr. Levitt said the house has been on the property for close to 300 years. Mr. Shippen said the foundation is a pile of stones. Mr. O'Grady asked for the Board's recommendation. Dr. Levitt said a Planner's opinion may be needed. Mr. Doran said that there must be case law on the subject. Dr. Levitt said he agreed with the amendment, but is unsure how far the City can go with it. He asked for a voice vote as stated in the amendment to endorse Council's plan to amend the Historical Ordinance. All members

present voted in favor with Ms. Dyrek abstaining. She would like to have more information on the subject.

Chairman Levitt closed the meeting at 9:06 p.m. with a motion from Mr. O'Grady and a second from Mr. Roegiers.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board