

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

Minutes: March 16, 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, March 16, 2006 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:30 p.m. with the following members present:

Dr. Richard Levitt
Mayor Frank Perri
Guy Schlachter, Councilman
Jerry Nuzzolo, Construction Official & Inspector
Art Barrera
Lou Milone
Ron Roegiers
Nick Droboniku-present for personnel meeting only
Pete DaPrato
Henry Notaro

Clem Scharff-ABSENT

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

Scott Zauber, Esq. is substituting for Tom Subranni who is away on vacation.

The first application of the evening is Susan & George Morton who reside at 414 Shore Road, Block 178, Lot 31 in the R-1 Zone. The applicants are seeking approval for a Minor Subdivision to establish a new flag lot behind their existing home. Two "C" variances will be needed for lot frontage on both lots. Paul H. Koelling is the Planner/Surveyor and is present tonight. The Mortons and Mr. Koelling were sworn in by Chairman Levitt.

Mr. Morton stated that they have lived at this residence for 7 to 8 years. They want to subdivide their property into 2 lots consisting of one new building lot and the other lot will contain the existing dwelling. This will give them 3 options. They can sell the new lot and improve their present house, build a new home on the new lot and sell their present home or sell the new lot and their present home and move. The Morton's lot will remain Lot 30 and the new lot will be 31.01. A blanket utility easement will be needed for the new lot and the lots will share a common driveway utilizing the existing driveway. This driveway will be the access for the rear lot and no curb cuts should be necessary. If the curb cuts need to be widened, Mr. Koelling stated that the County would take care of this. The driveway is 20 feet wide and 85 feet deep. Dr. Levitt clarified that the easement would be owned by the new lot 31.01 and the owners of that lot would also be required to plow and maintain the driveway.

Mr. Koelling discussed the general plans. Lot 31, the existing lot, has a frontage of 88.86 ft. and they will need a variance for 11.14 ft. The flag lot will have a frontage of 20 ft. and will also need a variance for lot width. All other setbacks conform. He does not feel the project will infringe on any neighbors or be a detriment to the community.

Dr. Levitt addressed the Fire Department letter and the issues the Department has with flag lots and the problems they can create for emergency vehicles. The Fire Department does not object to this application if the applicants are willing to design a hard paved access road 20 ft. in width with a compact gravel mixture at least 2 ft. on both sides of the paved surface for a total of 24 ft. The proposed structure must be within 1000 ft. of a fire hydrant. Mr. Morton commented that there is an existing fire hydrant across the street. The Morton's agree to make the necessary changes to achieve an approval from the Fire Department. They will move the lot line 4 ft. to the east (Mr. Koelling did not identify which lot, but he stated that the new ingress and egress would now be 24 ft.) and the flag lot will drop a few hundred square feet, but would still be well within the setback requirements to existing buildings.

Mr. Nuzzollo questioned the porch roof and how the 4 ft. reduction will affect the setbacks. They will still be in the setback range.

Matt Doran read his Engineer's report. Mr. Doran noted that the plans do not show any sidewalks as required by ordinance. County approval will be needed. Dr. Levitt commented that at least 2 shade trees are necessary from the County approved list on the Shore Road side, but must be out of the site triangle for the driveway. They also must show 2 parking stalls. The Chairman stated that the easement will have to be drawn up and reviewed by the Board's Solicitor and must state that the driveways would be kept clear of obstructions and also delegate who will be responsible for repairs and maintenance. Mr. Doran said that they should contact the Sewer Department for a sewer lateral. Mr. Morton commented that he wants to save the large tree in the back and will therefore build the driveway around the tree. Mr. Doran stated that they must submit plans to the County for approval and will be subject to the City's \$2,500.00 recreational fee prior to the signing of the final plans. Mr. Barrera asked for more positive and negative criteria and asked that the applicants explain the hardship. Dr. Levitt commented that there is none. The applicants are seeking a C-2 variance and the Board must decide that the plan will not be a detriment to the master plan. Mr. Koelling commented that the applicants are trying to get the best use out of the property and that open air space is being maintained. They are within the setbacks, and safety is not an issue. They will insure that the driveway is acceptable for emergency vehicle use. Dr. Levitt asked Mr. Morton if they have a garage. He answered no, but stated that they do have a shed. Dr. Levitt asked if there was any way to avoid the easement and Mr. Koelling answered that they would then need two accesses and the County would not give its approval.

Chairman Levitt opened the hearing to the public. No one wished to speak and the public session was closed.

Mayor Perri made the motion to vote on the C-2 variances. Mr. Roegiers seconded. The variances are for Lot 31.01 for a 24 ft. frontage and 84.6 ft. frontage for Lot 31. Mayor Perri, Mr. Schlachter, Mr. Nuzzolo, Mr. Milone, Mr. Roegiers, Mr. Drobonick, Mr. DaPrato and Chairman Levitt all voted yes and Mr. Barrera voted no because he does not see the benefit of the creation of a flag lot and thinks the space will be too crowded.

Mayor Perri made the motion to vote on the minor subdivision. Pete Daprato seconded. The motion was made subject to Fire Department approval, 2 shade trees on Lot 31, sidewalks on Shore Road, approval of all Matt Doran's conditions, and a review of the easement by the Solicitor. The voting was the same as the above with all voting in favor and Mr. Barrera voting no.

Mayor Perri noted that he had been in touch with Mr. Scharff and that he is unable to attend tonight's meeting due to a conflict with work.

The second application of the evening is for a "C" variance for the property located at 144 Rosedale Avenue, Block 160, Lot 21 & 22 owned by Paul V. & Helen Utts since 1985. They are seeking front and side setbacks. Paul Utts was sworn in.

The house is a three bedroom home and they want to add an addition. The additions include a master bedroom on the 2nd floor (20x20), a family room, a 20x20 kitchen, Stairway, 2-car garage, and they want to extend the 1st floor bedroom for exchange students and company as well as a full bath. They have a stone driveway currently and no garage. They want to use the existing road cut and will get a permit if they need a new one. The property contains one Sycamore shade tree at the street and they are required by ordinance to have 2. It was decided to waive the 2nd tree since the street has many shade trees and it was thought that a new, young tree might not survive with the lack of sunlight. The lot area is 13,000 sq. feet which is well in excess of R-2 Zone requirements. The side yard setback is currently at 8 ft. and they do not intend to encroach any further. They only want to extend the existing setback line. The front yard setback requirement is 25 ft. and they are proposing 20 ft.

Matt Doran read his Engineer's report asking for positive and negative criteria. Mr. Utts said the aesthetics and appearance of the home will be an improvement over the existing dwelling. Mr. Nuzzolo asked if Mr. Utts has considered demolishing the present home and starting fresh. If he did that, he could then be within setback requirements. Mr. Utts stated that his wife wants to keep the original structure intact. Their home is of the 1920's style with wide baseboards, etc. and Mr. Utts personally likes the variety of homes that exist in Northfield. Mr. Doran also noted that the applicant will be required to add 2 parking stalls.

Dr. Levitt opened the session to the public. Mr. Albert Clark, the owner 134 E. Rosedale Avenue, next door to the west, was sworn in. He sees no detriment and has no objections. He thinks the addition will be an enhancement. Mr. Jerry Engle, the east side neighbor was sworn in next. He is looking forward to the project. Dr. Levitt closed the public session seeing that no one else wished to speak.

A motion was made by Art Barrera and seconded by Mayor Perri to vote on the variances. The Utt's need a variance for the existing 8 ft. side yard that is non-conforming and a 20 ft. variance for the front yard where 25 ft. is required. Mayor Perri, Mr. Schlachter, Mr. Barrera, Mr. Milone, Mr. Roegiers, Mr. Drobonick, Mr. DaPrato, Mr. Notaro and Chairman Levitt all voted yes and Mr. Nuzzolo abstained.

The third and final application of the evening is from Jean T. Leonetti for the location of 38 Cove Avenue, Block 158, Lot 33 in the R-1 Zone. The Plans were prepared by Thomas H. Darcy. Mrs. Leonetti as well as Mike Portnoy, the former owner and sub-divider of the land and the possible future builder were sworn in. The Lot area and width do not conform, but variances were previously granted when the land was subdivided. She needs a "C" variance for a front setback. 25 ft. is required. She wants to build 15 ft. from the easement of 10 ft. which the City holds should the street need to be widened in the future. Mrs. Leonetti wants to build a ranch style home and intends to use only 6 or 7ft. of the 10 ft. requested. The house will back up to the rear setback line. She does not want a second story since she has a bad knee and has trouble with stairs. Mr. Portnoy explained that the new lots are existing lots and have already been approved for subdivision.

Mr. Doran discussed his Engineer's report. He noted that the Board waived curbs and sidewalks during the original subdivision application. He also noted that 2 parking stalls will be needed. The applicant stated that they love trees and intend to keep as many as possible. Dr. Levitt is satisfied that there will be at least 2 shade trees. The applicant said the property is heavily wooded now. The applicant will also be required to obtain any road opening permits for any new road cuts. Mrs. Leonetti stated that two nearby homes have 25 ft. setbacks and she is asking for the same. Aside from commercial properties, the front setback is at 25 ft. throughout the City. Also she said that the new home will be beautiful and will enhance the neighborhood. Dr. Levitt noted that Cove Avenue is a dead end street ending at the bird sanctuary.

Dr. Levitt opened the meeting to the public. Cindy Mason of 16 E. Ridgewood Court was sworn in. She read a self-prepared letter that basically said that she wants to see Planning Boards stick to Master Plans and she is against postage-sized lots. She believes that if you want to live on a small lot, you should live on the shore islands. She thinks Cove Avenue should be widened. She doesn't want homes to be 15 ft. from

the street (if the road was widened). She compared the lot to the lots at Shore-Mill and said that Ridgewood Court has 35 ft. frontage. It was noted that Ridgewood Court developers chose this frontage. Mrs. Leonetti is requesting a 10 ft. "C" variance that would setback her new home at 25 ft. and meet the requirement as long as the street isn't widened. Dr. Levitt commented that no variances were necessary at Shore-Mill and that all of the lots conform to the ordinance.

The Mayor expressed his concerns that the easement remain intact and that there is no request to vacate. Mrs. Leonetti added more positive criteria in explaining that there used to be an old house at the site and it has been demolished. The home she wants to build will be beautiful. The original home was actually closer to the road than her proposed home will be. If the old home still existed and the City claimed the right of way for street widening, the old home would have only had a 5 ft. setback.

Albert Clark, still sworn in, requested the lot size. Mr. Portnoy stated that the lot size is large and is 9,400 square feet. Mr. Clark stated the setback should remain at 35 ft. for this property and objects to the variance. He wants the bird sanctuary protected and objects to a rancher being built for fear of it becoming a large 2 story home. He wants the area to stay as open as possible.

Mr. Portnoy described the lot as unusual and the street as not being traditional in the sense that the houses are not lined up next to each other. The house next door was granted the same variance Mrs. Leonetti is seeking. Mr. Clark wants to know why they are building so close to the street when there appears to be so much land. Mr. Portnoy and Mrs. Leonetti stated that the lot is one lot not 2 lots. The lot could not be subdivided into 2 buildable lots. An area of the lot is dedicated as a retention basin and cannot be built upon. Mrs. Mason questioned the lots sizes of the subdivided lots. She believes Mrs. Leonetti's lot to be undersized. Mr. Drobonick explained the subdivision since he was a Board member at the time. One lot is 10,000 sq. feet. This is the lot on the Ridgewood Court side and it matches the R-2 Zone requirements. Mrs. Leonetti's lot was approved at 9,400 sq. feet because other lots on Cove Avenue are 7,500 sq. feet. Her lot matched the R-2 Zone on Cove Avenue.

Dr. Levitt asked for a motion for a 10 ft. variance which would result in a 25 ft. setback including a 10 ft. easement should the City choose to widen Cove Avenue. The Mayor stated that he is satisfied with the easement staying in place. Mrs. Leonetti commented that she is only planning to use 6 ft. but is asking for 10 ft. Mayor Perri made the motion and Mr. Notaro seconded. The vote passed unanimously with Mr. Nuzzolo abstaining.

There were no resolutions to memorialize.

Mayor Perri gave a courtesy overview of a new Library sign that will attract people to visit the new library. He has County approval and will be presenting the sign design to City Council at the next meeting. Dr. Levitt said he has the Board's blessing and advised the Mayor to consult with the Building Department.

A subcommittee was formed to discuss senior housing zones. The Arthur Henry site and the Gurwicz property behind Ace Hardware are being considered as possible sites. The committee will look into setting zone criteria or waiting for Developers to come forward. The committee consists of the following Board members: Clem Schaarf, Ron Roegiers, Dr. Levitt, Matt Doran & Mayor Perri.

Mr. Barrera stated that he will not be able to attend the Aptil 6th meeting but stated for the record that he has heard that Sea Village Marina and Hackney's are interested as possible sites for a cell tower. Jerry Nuzzolo noted that the Reserve at Dolphin Avenue has not been looked into as a possible location.

Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 9:02 p.m. The motion was made by Mayor Perri and seconded by Ron Roegiers.

Respectfully submitted, Robin Atlas-Clinton, Board Secretary

