

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

Minutes: November 4, 2010

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 Board, held on Thursday, November 4, 2010 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Dr. Richard Levitt at 7:01 p.m. and the following members were present or absent as noted:

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

Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor
Matt Doran, PE-Engineer-absent; Deborah Wahl filled in for Mr. Doran

There was one application on the agenda for Sun National Bank, N.A. for the site located at 376 Tilton Road, Block 16.01, Lot 53.01 for a minor site plan and "C" Variances. The zone is RC-Regional Commercial. Vicki Fannon, Esq. of Parker McCay, Marlton, NJ was present to represent the applicants. The following professionals were sworn in by Chairman Levitt as a group: Dave Wisotsky, a Civil Engineer with Bohler Engineering, Warren, NJ, Hans Erdenverger, an Architect with Environetics Group Architects, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Jeffrey Fiore, Traffic Consultant, and Mike Mazzagatti, a representative of Sun Bank.

Ms. Fannon addressed the Board and state that the application is for a site plan for a Sun Bank branch in Northfield. The site consists of an existing building which is vacant and a parking lot. The purpose is to reduce the footprint and convert the front 3,281 sf of the building to the bank and the rear of the building will be reserved for future retail use. The building at 11,117 sf will be reduced to 10,311 sf and will include three drive-thru lanes. Ms. Fannon said all the variances are triggered by the existing site and existing non-conformities and they have filed their plan with Atlantic County and have received approval from them.

Dave Wisotsky, Engineer, testified first and referred to the site plan. Mr. Zlotnick noted that there is only one variance referred to in the Engineer's report for a planted buffer along common property lines and the rest are all pre-existing non-conforming conditions. Dr. Levitt commented that many may be design waivers. Ms. Wahl said that some are waivers, but most are existing conditions. Ms. Fannon said that she sees at least 4 variances for both buffering and signage. Mr.

Zlotnick said that these will be narrowed down for purposes of the resolution. Ms. Fannon said the applicant wanted to advertise for them all separately and testimony will show that variance conditions will be improved. Dr. Levitt asked how many parking spaces exist and was told that 56 spaces exist and this will be reduced to 52 spaces.

Mr. Wisotsky gave his credentials and stated he has 19 years in the engineering field and has testified before over 100 land use boards. He was accepted by the Board as a professional. He referred to the existing site plan and survey and it was labeled Exhibit A-1. This survey shows existing conditions and encompasses 1.25 acres off Tilton Road or County Road 563. Previously the site was occupied by two retail uses and is now abandoned. There are 56 parking spaces and the site has 86.2% of impervious coverage. There are only a few trees on the site. The drainage goes in the direction of the back of the site and the front portion of the site drains onto the county right of way and they intend to show that they will be reducing impervious coverage with the new plan. He distributed two photos. Exhibit A-2 is a photo of the front of the site and Exhibit A-3 is a photo of Tilton Road looking parallel and showing the existing sign.

He continued by describing the proposal referring to Exhibit A-4 which is the proposed site plan. The site plan shows the new landscaping plan and he said they will be adding more to the building towards the front of the site. They will alter the present building and the bank branch will be 3,281 sf and the total of the building area will be 10,311 sf which is a reduction of what is presently there. The remaining 7,030 sf will remain vacant. They will seek a tenant for the vacant section. Vehicle circulation will be improved and will be counter clockwise around the building. They plan to add three drive-thru lanes on the south end of the site. The first lane will be for an ATM and the next two are for drive through patrons. There will be one window drive-thru. There will be 13 parking spaces in the front and 16 more parking bays on the side. There will be roughly 8 queuing spaces from the drive-thru area to the rear and up to 12 cars can be in line before any affect on circulation occurs. There are 56 spaces presently and they are proposing 53 spaces. He stated that by ordinance, 69 spaces are needed due to the code requirement for bank branches, but this particular bank will only need 16 spaces to run properly. This includes 6 spaces for employees and 10 spaces for patrons going in and out of the building. That would leave 37 spaces for the retail use. They are not sure of the use for the proposed retail section, but it wouldn't be typical retail due to the lack of frontage. Ms. Fannon stated that they anticipate more of a supply retail or specialty use. The Mayor and Dr. Levitt discussed this retail use with the Engineer and there was concern about they type of use. Dr. Levitt said they won't have primary frontage for retail and he would like to see a medical use restriction. He had concerns with pedestrian circulation at the back of the building which is currently suited for a loading zone. For safety reasons, he asked that pedestrian egress and ingress be addressed.

Mr. Wisotsky discussed access to the building. The bank access would be at the southeast corner facing the front. There is a door on the north side which is an access to mechanicals. The other access door is at the back of the building. They plan to limit the type of retail use and the bank will be the primary use. They plan a sidewalk along the front and will provide the required handicapped spaces. They plan crosswalks at the back of the building. Dr. Levitt noted that the back does not have an attractive entrance. Mr. Wisotsky said that they don't have a tenant in mind presently or know the configuration to propose any changes now. If the new tenant wants to move things around, they may need to come back to the Board for approval. Dr. Levitt could see a behind the scenes type of business or office of a company working at the site. Ms. Fannon said that there is a myriad of uses which are permitted by ordinance. She suggested a repair shop or a business or personal type of service which only has availability by appointments. Sun Bank through its subsidiary will own the building and will be guided accordingly by what the market conditions are for the type of uses proposed.

Dr. Levitt asked that they address the pedestrian circulation around the building. He sees no safe way to get from the front to the back of the property. Mr. Wisotsky said there would be no reason for pedestrians to do that. Employees will park in the side parking section. Dr. Levitt suggested that employees park nearer to the back in case the bank needed parking for additional customers. He would encourage that. Mr. Wisotsky added that parking in the back of the building would be used by the new tenant. He also said that the bank will only have 6 employees at a time and that the request seems reasonable. He noted that the site will be graded as it is now and with added enhancements, they will be improving impervious coverage from the existing 86.2% to 82.4%. The zone allows 85%. A shed currently located on site will be removed and the space will be used for a new trash receptacle. Most bank waste is paper waste which has been shredded due to confidentiality and a special van will pick up this type of trash. The dumpster won't be used typically. Dr. Levitt asked how trash trucks will enter the site. Mr. Wisotsky said the same as customers. He added that the trash receptacle will be located in the back right corner on the north side.

Regarding traffic flow, Mr. Wisotsky said cars will proceed in a single lane through the back of the property and when they turn left, vehicles will form two lanes side by side, and then three lanes. It will be 24 ft. from curb to curb. Dr. Levitt suggested a sign denoting lane usage. There will be an overhead cover over the three lanes. This is a good area for signage. Utilities will be the same as what exists now. Electric will be underground and one pole on the site will be removed. Dr. Levitt asked about the concrete walkway on the southern end. This is for funneling traffic only and so that cars don't cut too closely to the building and the added curb line will allow cars to move into two lanes easier.

Mike Mazzagatti works for Sun Bank and spoke on the operations. He described the current bank across the street and said they have 12 parking spaces and 2 handicapped spaces for customers and it is a rare day when they have more than 12 cars parked on that site.

Dr. Levitt, Deborah Wahl and Mr. Wisotsky discussed crosswalks. There is not crosswalk striping at the end of the drive-thru and the purpose of the stop sign is to control access. Those coming into the site have the right of way. Those parked in front can leave by going left instead of going all the way around the building. This is also stop controlled. A discussion ensued regarding the striping near the entranceway. Mr. Roegiers felt that 24 ft. from the curb of the building to the edge of the parking is wide enough for two cars. Dr. Levitt had concerns about the first parking spot. Mr. Wisotsky said they would be willing to work with the engineer to delineate striping, but they need 24 ft. to allow cars to re-circulate if needed.

Jeffrey Fiore is the traffic consultant present. Dr. Levitt said he has concerns about cars going in and out from and onto Tilton Road. They will be providing stop bars coming out of the drive-thru lanes and from the back of the building. This gives entering traffic the right of way. There will not be high traffic use here and all cars come to a stop except cars entering the site. He feels that stop signs and stop bars are adequate and does not believe that yield signs are needed.

Mr. Wisotsky spoke about lighting and said they are proposing new lighting and that they want to light the parking lot effectively and comply with state and city regulations. ATM rules require a 2 ft. canopy for a 50 ft. radius. The landscaping includes three trees and no other landscaping. They intend to keep two of the existing trees and add three more. They also intend to add 99 shrubs, 77 ground cover plants and also a headlight screening shrub for Tilton Road. Dr. Levitt asked about the 15 ft. angled parking. Ms. Wahl said that 20 ft. is required. Mr. Wisotsky said 15 ft. is the excepted standard and is safe and Mr. Fiore said that 14 ft. is adequate for a back-out parking maneuver.

Exhibit A-5 is a photo of the existing freestanding sign at a 30 ft. height, 12 ft. width with a missing sign plate and is setback two ft. from the right of way. They will eliminate this sign and build one Sun Bank monument sign with two empty sections for new tenants. The new setback will be over 6 ft. where 15 ft. is required. The sign area will be 48 ft. where 50 ft. is allowed. Dr. Levitt asked if the County asked for any dedication. Mr. Wisotsky said there is now a 15 ft. easement and they did not ask for any more. He noted that the sign is within the easement and the County was okay with this. Dr. Levitt asked if they exercise the easement, how this will affect the site. Mr. Wisotsky said they may need to reconfigure some of the closest parking if this occurs, but they still will be able to maintain a 24 ft. aisle throughout the front. Ms. Fannon said that any easements on recorded pages will be vacated.

The project's Architect, Hans Erdenverger, testified next and gave his qualifications which were excepted by the Board. Exhibit A-6 was submitted as the floor plan and exterior monument sign. The sign is a ground sign at 48 sf and includes two future tenant signs each at 8 sf. The sign for Sun Bank is 4 ft. x 8 ft. or 32 sf and is internally illuminated. The two blank sections will also be internally illuminated when assigned. It is a two-sided sign with the same sign on both sides. The height off the ground is 1.5 ft. to the first sign and 4 ft. to the Sun Bank sign. Exhibit A-7 is the northern facing elevation facing the roadway and Exhibit A-8 is a different view from the back and side. The building will be of stone veneer and the higher areas will be high performance glass with a metal roof. The eastern elevation is where the entry vestibule is located. There will be three building mounted signs. Two will be on the bank at 5 ft. x 8 ft. and the third northeast sign will be at the drive-thru lanes. It is a one story building. The raised section is 23 ft. x 6 in. The glass will bring light into the building. Natural, north light is the most desirable. They plan to cut into the existing building and raise the roof. The raised element is only over the Sun Bank portion. The public area is also within the raised area. Dr. Levitt commented that it would look dramatic from the inside. They also plan to clean up the rear area of the building with paint.

Mike Mazzagatti, the Operations, Facility, and Construction manager with Sun Bank testified that he is familiar with operations and usage of the Northfield branch. Sun Bank is a standard bank in the State and is not a new bank. The bank uses modern banking trends. He stated that many ordinances referring to bank parking are now outdated. Not nearly as many customers actually come into the bank as in the past. Many people use online banking and direct deposit. They will have an area in the new branch which will educate customers how to do their banking by use of their home computers. There is a 50/50 mix of drive thru and walk in customers. They have a wide scope of customer types ranging from personal bankers to commercial bankers. Length of stay in the lobby is quick and mostly short-term. Employees on site will be six at a time or less and this includes tellers and managers. Friday afternoon is the peak hours time. He testified they will have three drive thru lanes with one dedicated to ATM and feel available parking is satisfactory for the current operations.

Dr. Levitt noted that mechanicals are required to be screened. Mr. Erdenverger said the mechanicals will be located behind the raised roof section and will not be viewed from the road. Dr. Levitt said that most items have been covered and gave the floor to Deborah Wahl for the Engineer's report and asked that she concentrate on design waivers and what still needs to be discussed. Ms. Wahl read through the planning and review comments and the entire Engineer's letter is incorporated into the minutes. During the reading of the report, Mr. Wisotsky reported that they will be keeping two of the trees in the front and will be adding more for a total of five trees. Ms. Fannon added that at the request of the Mr. Doran, the Board's Engineer, they agree to add a Do Not Enter sign at the rear of the site and the street address number on the proposed free standing sign. Dr. Levitt agreed this will assist motorists in finding addresses on Tilton Road.

Dr. Levitt and Ms. Fannon clarified the medical use issue. Health and other medical professional offices are permitted uses in the zone, but parking does not conform. Any possible medical

tenants would have to come back before the Board to show that their type of medical use would not be too great a use for the site. Dr. Levitt noted that any medical use at the site would need to come back before the Board. He also noted that the site seems ideal for an operations center, but Mr. Mazzagatti said they are not in need of a use of that sort at this time.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session, but seeing that no one wished to speak on the application, he closed the public session. Mr. Scharff clarified with the professionals that the free standing monument sign will be internally lit and will have no moving lights or words on the sign. They agreed to this.

Jeffrey Fiore, the traffic consultant, reviewed the adequacy of the parking as well as ingress and egress and feels in his traffic analysis, the site meets the intent of granting the variance for parking. He also participated in extensive dialog with the County Engineer and the County agreed with his site analysis.

Dr. Levitt asked for a motion for preliminary and final site plan approval with regard to all of the design waivers and variances stated and indicated in Mr. Doran's letter, as well as no medical, additional signage as required, the addition of the street address on the free-standing sign, and the additional sign at the rear of the site. Mr. Scharff made the motion and added that the signage will keep with the scale and aesthetics of the building. Mayor Mazzeo seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Clifford-absent, Mrs. Dyrek-absent, Chief James-absent, Councilman Martinez-absent, Mayor Mazzeo-yes, Mr. Milone-yes, Mr. Notaro-yes, Mr. Roegiers-yes, Mr. Scharff-yes, Mr. Shippen-absent, Chairman Levitt-yes. The motion for Preliminary and Final Site plan with design waivers and variances carries.

Chairman Levitt wished the applicants good luck and said the Board is happy to see one less vacant building.

There was one resolution to memorialize for Roger B. Hansen, Block 175, Lot 38, 1300 Argo Lane for Preliminary Major Subdivision approval with "C" variances for lot frontage and for lots not fronting on a public street which was approved October 7, 2010. Mr. Scharff, Mr. Clifford and Ms. Dyrek were the abstentions for this resolution. A voice vote was all in favor.

It was announced that the next Ordinance subcommittee meeting will be held Wednesday, November 10, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall.

At 8:28 p.m. the Board went into Executive Session to discuss the need to advertise for professionals for 2011 appointments. Mr. Zlotnick and Ms. Wahl left the meeting.

At 8:33 p.m. the Board came out of Executive session, the minutes of which will remain closed unless it becomes necessary that they be released to the public.

Dr. Levitt noted to include within minutes that the Board had been informed that there is no legal requirement to advertise for professional appointments for the upcoming year and it was the sentiment of the Board to elect not to advertise.

The meeting was closed by Chairman Levitt at 8:33 p.m. with a motion by Mr. Scharff and a second by Mr. Milone.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board

