

**City of Northfield Planning Board
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Minutes: December 1, 2011

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, December 1, 2011 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Dr. Richard Levitt at 6:58 p.m. and the following members were present or absent as noted:

Linda Dyrek
Chief Robert James-absent
Denise Kintish
Dr. Richard Levitt
Mayor Vincent Mazzeo
Lou Milone
Henry Notaro
Ron Roegiers
Clem Scharff
Jim Shippen-absent
Councilman Steven Vain

Matthew Doran, Professional Engineer
Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor-absent-Jacqueline Hawkins Stiles substituted

There was one application on the agenda for this last meeting of 2011. The application was submitted by Christopher and Monica Keenan of 2534 Cedarbridge Road, Block 30, Lot 7 located in the R-1 Zone. The proposed project involves the construction of a 270 sf screened-in porch onto the back of their home. It would join an existing deck and the back wall of the house. They are asking for a "C" variance because the dimensions of the porch would decrease the setback from the rear lot line which is technically a front setback to Shepherd Circle but is used as the rear line. Mr. Christopher Keenan was present as well as Richard Newton, Engineer, who completed the drawing for the project. They were both sworn in by Chairman Levitt.

Mr. Keenan testified that they want to extend the deck 6 ft. out, closer to Shepherd Circle and this is the reason for the variance for a setback of 3 ft. Dr. Levitt noted that the property is located between two streets, fronting on Cedarbridge and Shepherd Circle in the back. Mr. Keenan said there is a fence in the back of the property. Dr. Levitt expressed concern with the Shepherd Circle setback. Mr. Doran said that the range is 10 ft. to 13 ft. from the cart way and that the property is located where the street makes a 90 degree turn. Dr. Levitt said he is trying to determine if there would be any sight obstructions and to get an idea of the visual impact of the porch. Mr. Doran noted that the fence is an encroachment. Mr. Keenan said the 4 ft. fence was there when he purchased the property.

Mr. Keenan described the project. There is an existing deck and they want to extend the deck out an additional 6 ft. The deck will be even all the way across. They plan to fill in the rectangular corner and this area is 78 sf. The room will be an open screened area which will not be an enclosed or heated room. They plan to install new decking and the one-story room will have a peaked roof. The decking will not support the structure and will not be enclosed as living space in the future. Mr. Keenan stated that they conform to lot coverage and no other variances are required other than the setback.

Dr. Levitt said testimony is required to justify the variances and also any negative impact on the land use ordinance. Mr. Keenan said that on a personal level, the screened-in porch will help to keep away bugs and his family will be able to enjoy the outside air. The project will be a valuable addition to the house and neighborhood and will be a visual improvement. The only negative would be the coverage in that they are using a little more open space, but a variance is not needed for this.

Dr. Levitt asked what will be underneath the deck and Mr. Keenan answered said it would consist of dirt. Mr. Doran's report noted that unroofed decks and porches do not count toward Lot or Building coverage. He asked Mr. Keenan if any of the deck areas have a roof. Mr. Keenan said they do not.

Dr. Levitt asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to speak on the application. Seeing no one, he closed the public session.

Mr. Roegiers noted that the applicant has testified that the porch will not be enclosed as living space, but if the house is sold, they should have to come before the Board if any changes were to be made. Dr. Levitt agreed and said it will be a condition and the resolution will be made clear that

the addition will be a sun porch. Mr. Scharff asked if any trees will be affected. Mr. Keenan said probably not. There are a lot of trees on the property and one may have to be considered for removal, but he was unsure at the time. Dr. Levitt asked about curbs and sidewalks. Mr. Keenan said there are none on Cedarbridge Road and his project does not impact Cedarbridge. Shepherd Circle does have sidewalks on one side. He would love to see sidewalks on Cedarbridge, but there are none. Dr. Levitt commented that there was a compromise when part of Cedarbridge was made a one-way street and it was preferred that the trees would not be disturbed to accommodate sidewalks and said that the charm of Cedarbridge Road is the trees.

Mr. Newton, who worked the figures for the project's application, noted that he made an error when transferring information. His coverage figure is off by 3% and he also considered the deck to be impervious. Mr. Doran said he came up with 39% and agreed building coverage is less than 40%.

Mr. Scharff made the motion for the variance as needed for the Shepherd Circle setback and Councilman Vain seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Ms. Dyrek-yes, Chief James-absent, Mrs. Kintish-yes, Mayor Mazzeo-yes, Mr. Milone-yes, Mr. Notaro-yes, Mr. Roegiers-yes, Mr. Scharff-yes, Mr. Shippen-absent, Councilman Vain-yes, Chairman Levitt-yes. The motion for the setback variance carries.

There were two resolutions to memorialize which were granted at the September 1, 2011 meeting. The first was for William and Sydell Driscoll, Block 104, Lots 21 & 22 located at 102 Fifield Avenue for a minor subdivision with "C" variance relief. Abstentions were Ms. Dyrek, Chief James, Ron Roegiers, and Mr. Shippen. A voice vote was all in favor. The second resolution was for Nikmehr Properties, LLC, Block 27, Lot 22.01 at 2323 New Road, the site of the former Owl Tree. The approval was for preliminary and final major site plan with "C" bulk variances. Abstentions were from Ms. Dyrek, Chief James and Mr. Shippen. A voice vote was all in favor.

Mr. Doran explained to the Board the differences between C1 and C2 variances. He noted that Northfield is predominantly a C2 type of town in that the lots are square and things fit. C1 hardship variances are granted for lots that are odd shaped or steep-sloped or when the variance is needed due to the type of property in question. The uniqueness of the lot is why the variance is necessary. We deal with mostly C2 variances where the benefits are proven to outweigh the detriments. The application tonight could have gone either way due to the unique situation of the

double-frontage lot. This application is a good one to see why there is a difference. Dr. Levitt thanked Mr. Doran for his informative explanation.

Dr. Levitt said he was informed that the revised ordinance would be available from the City Solicitor by the end of the year. He asked Mayor Mazzeo if he could ask Mr. Bonchi to have it available for the Board, and especially the Ordinance committee, to review it to make sure the changes are the intent of the Board before presenting to Council. The committee worked hard on the changes over a long period of time and would like to final review.

It was announced that Mrs. Kintish completed her mandatory Planning Board training in Atlantic City in November.

The re-organization meeting will be held January 5, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was closed by Chairman Levitt at 7:26 p.m. with a motion from Mr. Milone and a second from Ms. Dyrek.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board