

City of Northfield Planning Board
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Minutes: June 4, 2015

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, filed with the City Clerk, and posted on the City website, stating the date, time and place of the meeting and the agenda to the extent known.

This REGULAR meeting of the Northfield Planning Board, held on Thursday, June 4, 2015 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Councilman Frank Perri at 7:08 p.m. and the following members were present or absent as noted:

Timothy Anderson
Mark Bruno
Mayor Erland Chau
Jim Leeds
Dr. Richard Levitt-absent
Lou Milone
Chief Paul Newman
Henry Notaro
Councilman Frank Perri
Ron Roegiers
Derek Rowe
Clem Scharff-absent
Jim Shippen

Matthew Doran, Professional Engineer
Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor-Mark Stein, Esq. filled in for Mr. Zlotnick

There was one application on the agenda for Craig and Jennifer Blum, Block 40, Lot 18.23 at the address of 7 Jack Sloan Court for "C" Variances. Mark Stein swore in Matt Doran, Planning Board Engineer, Jon J. Barnhart, Engineer for the applicant, and Craig Blum, the applicant. The attorney for the applicant was Eric Goldstein, Esq. of Nehmad Perillo & Davis. Mr. Barnhart, who has appeared before the Board many times, gave testimony as to his credentials at the request of Mr. Stein.

Mr. Goldstein asked Mr. Barnhart to describe the property. Mr. Barnhart said the property is located four properties from the corner of Jack Sloan Court across from the ball fields and Birch Grove Park. It is a single-family two-story home. He displayed a cardboard exhibit of the plan submitted with the application. Mr. Barnhart stated that he lives in the neighborhood and the homes are close to maximum lot coverage and any modifications to properties have necessitated the homeowners to come before the Board for variances. Mr. Barnhart said the Blums want to take an existing deck and

enclose it. The deck is an open frame deck with no roof. They want to construct a three season room with glass enclosure walls and a roof. They won't use the room in the winter months as it is not a conditioned space. The room will include a landing and steps to the patio.

Mr. Barnhart discussed the variances necessary. He said two of the deviations from the Land Use Ordinance deal with lot coverage and the third deals with setbacks to the rear property line. The property is in the R-4 Zone and the rear yard setback requirement is 25 ft. and they are proposing 23.5 ft. Building coverage has a 25% requirement and 29% is proposed. Lot coverage has a 40% requirement and 42% is proposed. Mr. Barnhart said they added the deck shortly after moving in and the neighbors are accustomed to people being in that space. He noted that the deck is not, by Ordinance, included in the lot coverage calculation unless it is enclosed. The landing and stairs are what are causing the setback issue. They are requesting the variance even though it is a small 18-inch deviation. The project does meet the setback requirements for side and rear setbacks to the building itself if not for the stairs.

Mr. Barnhart discussed positives and negatives. He said in addition to the aesthetic enhancement, the room will be attractive as can be seen from the plan and the Blums will be able to enjoy the indoor/outdoor space for more time throughout the year. The deck is already there and this will enhance the living space. There is ample green space and lawns surrounding the area, the neighbors are accustomed to it, and there is no impact from runoff or erosion due to storm water. There is no negative impact other than the small deviation from the Land Use laws.

Mr. Perri asked if the Board had any questions. Mr. Roegiers asked if the steps would include a railing for safety and Mr. Barnhart said yes. Mr. Goldstein noted that Mr. Blum is present to answer any questions. Mr. Milone commented that the Engineer's letter referred to a pool in one of the sentences. Mr. Stein noted that it was just a cut and paste typographical error.

Mr. Perri opened the public session and seeing no one who wished to speak, he closed the public session.

Mr. Perri asked for a motion for the three variances required to construct the three season room addition. He added that Mr. Doran's entire Engineer's Report will be incorporated into the resolution. Mr. Leeds made the motion and Mr. Milone seconded.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Anderson-No vote as 4th alternate member; more than nine voting members present, Mr. Bruno-yes, Mayor Chau-no vote, arrived at meeting after bulk of testimony, Mr. Leeds-yes, Chief Newman-yes, Mr. Milone-yes, Mr. Notaro-yes, Councilman Perri-yes, Mr. Roegiers-yes, Mr. Rowe-yes, Mr. Scharff-absent, Mr. Shippen-yes, Chairman Levitt-absent. The motion to approve the variances carries.

Mr. Perri noted that there were no resolutions to memorialize this evening. Mr. Perri said City Council asked the Board to review outdoor seating and signage and suggested the Planning Board form a committee. The character of the town could change with

signage changes and outdoor seating allowances. He said City Council is interested in making changes. It is of the utmost importance that any changes keep in character with the City and this is crucial. Facade square footage and zoning are important factors to consider and in every zone, there is a different scenario. Mr. Perri will yield to Dr. Levitt on this and it will be addressed at the next meeting. Mr. Perri said there currently is a comprehensive sign ordinance and a vehicle for applicants to come before the Board.

Mayor Chau added that he has concerns with the current Sign Ordinance since it does not deal with LED signage. He has concerns with this and with banner signs as driver distraction is an issue. Banners placed in front of or next to driveways can also cause problems. The time limit that these types of signs remain displayed also need to be addressed. They can become unsightly and shredded over time and can become a nuisance as well. He added that the City also wants to work with businesses, but needs to keep safety up front an issue. Mr. Perri said he will ask the Chairman to choose a committee.

Mr. Bruno mentioned the situation at Mazzeo's Market and the parking of commercial vehicles on the vacant lot and asked about the City's responsibility. Mr. Perri said the Planning Board would be amenable to an application, but the correction and enforcement is through the Zoning Department. There are steps that need to be followed. They will need to file an application to correct the situation or to remediate what has been done. Mr. Doran noted that the Building and Zoning Departments are dealing with the issue through correspondence and they need to correct the situation or file an application, and there is a time limit.

Mr. Bruno made the motion to close the meeting and Mr. Shippen seconded. Mr. Perri closed the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board