

City of Northfield Planning Board
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Minutes: February 4, 2016

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, February 4, 2016 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:00 p.m. and the following members were present or absent as noted:

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

Matthew Doran, Professional Engineer
Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor

Dr. Levitt asked for a moment of silence for Marie McCarthy in remembrance of her service as the Planning Board secretary for many years. She recently passed away at the age of 90.

Dr. Levitt publically announced the continuance of the Gurwicz-Cresson Hill application to the next regular Planning Board meeting, March 3, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. They have already provided proper noticing and it will not be necessary to re-notice due to tonight's public announcement.

There was one application on the agenda for Atlantic City Country Club, One Leo Fraser Drive and the following properties: Block 175, Lot 48, Block 173, lot 13, Block 175, Lots 1.01, 2, 54, 17, 7, 5, 39, and Block 179.01, Lots 1.01, 16, 17, 18. They are requesting a "C" variance for an electronic sign. The attorney for the applicant was Rocco Tedesco of Tedesco Gruccio and Reuss of Vineland, NJ.

Mr. Tedesco addressed the Board and explained that electronic message boards are not permitted in the Country Club (CC) zone and they are seeking a flexible (c)(2) variance for the sign as an accessory use. He described the sign as an electronic, non-flashing structure, it is changeable, of a monument style, and it will not be a scrolling sign with moving text, graphics, or animation. Mr. Tedesco passed out Exhibit A-1 which was a slightly different rendition than what is on the original plan. The sign will be 21 sf of message area and 25 sf including the frame. The entire structure is 75 sf. The Ordinance permits 16 sf signs and they will need a variance for both type and size. The third variance is for the setback to the right-of-way for 1 ft. where 25 ft. is required. This is being proposed due to the vegetation along the roadway. If the sign was setback, it would not be visible. Mr. Tedesco asked that the reading of the Engineer's Letter be incorporated into testimony as well as the Fire Department's letter.

Mr. Tedesco gave a brief history of Atlantic City Country Club. It was built in 1897 and is rich in history. It has been in use since the late 1800's and is the location where the term "birdie" was fashioned. For the first 100 years, it operated as a private Country Club with dues and fees paid by the club members. In 1998 it was sold to the casino industry and was not a revenue source or profit center, but was used as a casino amenity and was available as a fringe benefit to casino patrons. In 2008, the economy fell and the golf industry suffered. The casino no longer wanted to hold onto the club and marketed it. In 2008 Northfield re-examined its Master Plan. The Country Club was addressed as part of the analysis and the need to include other non-golfing activities such as encouraging banquets, restaurants, and catering opportunities was recognized for economic viability. By Land Use standards, reserving the Country Club as a recreational facility is a priority. In 2012, the residential zones in the Country Club zone were down zoned from 15,000 sf to 1 acre. This was challenged by the casino owner. When it was sold, the new owner promptly settled without challenging the land use changes. Mr. Ottinger wants to keep it as a golf course in agreement with the Master Plan.

Mr. Tedesco continued by saying that upgrades were needed. The owners have been renovating according to the Master Plan language, but they cannot get by on golf alone. They are dependent on banquets and restaurant use. The proposed sign will be instrumental and critical to alert the public of all the goings on and events the Country Club is offering.

Mr. Tedesco explained that Mr. Ottinger also owns Scotland Run Golf Course in Williamstown, NJ. Their electronic sign has been instrumental in alerting the public of specials and non-golfing activities. He described the upcoming traffic and planner testimony. At this time, Dr. Levitt swore in the witnesses. Present were John Igoe, the Country Club General Manager, William Smillie of Effective Signworks, Burlington, NJ, the potential construction contractor of the sign, David Schropshire, Licensed Professional Engineer and Planner, and William Crane, Licensed Professional Planner in NJ.

Mr. Igoe spoke first and stated he has been an Ottinger employee since 2014. His duties involve responsibility for all programming including golf, Food & Beverage, banquets, personnel, and revenue. He has been a golf club manager for 25 years and

has been at ACCC for 22 months. He previously managed Blue Heron Pines and Scotland Run and his official title is General Operation Facilities Manager. He has also working in Bermuda in Food & Beverage. He testified that ACCC was private until 1998 until it was sold to the casino and then became 'ultra' private. The casino was not committed to the site, and in 2000, golf became open to the public. Food & Beverage was inconsistent and not well-managed and operations were not consistent. The country club wasn't important to the casino and they focused on golf for their casino patrons. The challenge faced today is conveying to the public that they are indeed open to the public. To be successful, they must be embraced by the general public.

The physical plant and golf course needed some work. The clubhouse had not been maintained for 15 to 20 years. After the purchase by Mr. Ottinger, and during the first banquet they had, the roof leaked on the tables, the air conditioning didn't work, there were electrical problems, floor drains were backed up, and the clubhouse was significantly deteriorated. This has since been repaired.

Mr. Tedesco read through the references in the Master Plan concerning the Country Club C-C district highlighting the section referring to the encouragement of the club "to host conventions, conferences, and meetings while also permitting rent of spacious banquet accommodations to the general public" and "long range retention of the overall golf course and club facility".

Mr. Igoe continued reviewing the improvements and re-development. They installed a significantly-sized new roof of 40,000 to 50,000 sf which is the extent of the building, a sizeable banquet facility is completely renovated, new bathrooms, a new lobby and entryway, the John McDermott, Leo Fraser, and Sonny Fraser Rooms have all been rehabbed, they are currently modernizing the restaurant and the kitchen as well as the Bay and Green Room, which is a private dining area, and they will have the new rear deck completed by early spring. Mr. Igoe presented a drawing of the impressive new deck overlooking the marshes and skyline of Atlantic City. Mr. Igoe said the improvements have been noticed by their customers and patrons. They have replaced all the windows and re-bricked the façade in front. They have hung all new curtains which were dry rotted, and constructed a new porte-cochere, a new hard wood structure, repaired the circular roadway area which contains the bell that has been there since the 1940's or 1950's. The circle had been previously overgrown. It has now been completely renovated and is available for backdrop photography. They would like to install a replica bell that will hang under the new proposed sign. Mr. Tedesco commented that this will be architecturally consistent. He said the renovations made are consistent with the language of the Master Plan and the new sign will also reflect renovations.

Mr. Igoe described the activity level of weddings and banquets when they first purchased the property. He said they were minimal; there were about ten the first year, but it has since doubled. They expect to accommodate thirty weddings this year due to banquet facility improvements and would like to have sixty per year in the future. This is all due to the renovations. The facility was not self-sustaining during the casino era. Other activities besides golf are important and necessary. In the winter there is rain, snow, and cold weather and people don't play golf, but Food & Beverage activities can be in any weather. Their hopes are that someday the facility will do more Food &

Beverage than golf. This is apparent at Scotland Run. They need to improve on this and not rely on golf alone as it will be difficult to survive.

Mr. Igoe summarized what his testimony has to do with the proposed sign. The biggest challenge they face is to convey to the general public and the community what they have to offer. The sign will help accomplish this. The Country Club is a large facility with a lot of overhead. They want to be inviting to the public to use their services. The neighbors do not regularly come in for lunch or to utilize the services. The club is isolated from the general public. They want to embrace them and for them to embrace the club's services.

Mr. Igoe gave an example from Scotland Run. When they had banquets, the restaurant wasn't busy due to the parking lot being full. After the installation of a programmable sign, they were able to let people know of immediate restaurant seating and this solved their problem and the restaurant was busier.

There are other types of messages they wish to convey and there are many which will attract the public. Holidays, specials, membership fees, gift certificates, weddings, retirement parties, and other theme parties will invite the community to utilize their services.

Mr. Tedesco commented on the message changes and said they will not change more frequently than once every three minutes by Ordinance. Mr. Igoe said most days they will change after a longer period of time and some messages will remain the same all day.

Mayor Chau said the accuracy of the testimony about the Country Club holds true. He lives across the street and he appreciates all they have done to bring back the glory to the club and acknowledged all they have done. Mr. Igoe commented that he appreciates the City of Northfield. Mr. Tedesco referred back to the drawing of the new two-story sky deck overlooking Atlantic City. It will be a beautiful steel super structure they will be proud of. Mr. Zlotnick labeled this Exhibit A-2.

Mr. Tedesco called William Smillie to testify. Chief Newman asked Mr. Tedesco where Scotland Run was located and he said Williamstown, NJ. Mr. Smillie said he has been in sales and development with Watchfire Sign Company for 16 years. He is familiar with LED changeable message signs and said the light intensity compared to other light source signage like the City Hall Police sign in Northfield is less obtrusive because it is controlled by ambient light in the sign area and not fluorescent light like the Police box sign. The proposed sign will automatically dim down and only the text will be lit in the square messaging section. Dr. Levitt asked about the illumination percentage at night. Mr. Smillie said it would be about 5% depending on cloudy or sunny weather. The sign will have an automatic dimming feature with a photo cell that adjusts accordingly by monitoring ambient light in the area. Mr. Scharff asked about the nits or candelas per square meter which is the unit measurement of luminance. Mr. Smillie said the daytime measurement is 7,000 and nighttime is about 300 and he said the nit is measured at the source, not at the point of view. Dr. Levitt commented that other signs compete with each other which can lower the illumination, but Shore Road doesn't have other signs like this. Mr. Smillie said there is a street light in the area of the proposed sign and they will modify the sign accordingly. Mr. Scharff asked if the sign can be modified

and if it constantly changes. Mr. Smillie said it can and changes will not be noticed by the human eye. He added that the sign will have two systems in case one of them should break. Mr. Shippen asked if any lighting was intended to illuminate the upper part of the sign in the location of the logo and the bell. Mr. Smillie said no.

Mr. Tedesco asked Mr. Smillie to compare the brightness of the proposed sign with the Northfield Police sign. He said it would be considerably less bright. Mr. Tedesco asked him to compare it to a sign illuminated by flood lights. Mr. Smillie said a flood-lit sign would light more than the sign and would light the entire structure and behind the sign, which involves lighting the background and would be more obtrusive. A discussion of the effect of street lights ensued and Dr. Levitt thought it would make the sign brighter since it senses the street light. Mr. Smillie said they do a lot of businesses with schools and churches and these types of properties would not want signs to be too bright. He noted that the system is also installed with a software backup system. Dr. Levitt said there are concerns with brightness of these signs and gave the example of the Capaldi-Reynolds sign on Tilton Road that is almost blinding. Mr. Smillie said there are many different manufacturers and some are not governmentally regulated. Dr. Levitt asked about control. Mr. Tedesco asked if there was a standard in the Ordinance Dr. Levitt said it is currently being worked on, but standards can be subjective. Mr. Smillie said the golf course owners will override if there were brightness complaints. Mr. Smillie added that is unaware of the manufacturers of the Capaldi-Reynolds sign.

Mayor Chau asked if the sign was double-faced. Mr. Smillie said yes. Mayor Chau asked for clarification as to why this sign would be less obtrusive than the Police sign. Mr. Smillie said that with the Police sign, the background is lit and his sign will not be. Only the text or copy area will be lit, not the background. Mayor Chau asked for a definition of the purpose of the signage. Mr. Smillie said they have over 55,000 signs in the United States and the purpose is to notify the public as to what is going on. Most businesses do sandwich board signs, flags, and banners and it creates eye pollution. The purpose is to communicate with the public to let them know what is going on and this is prevalent around the country. Mayor Chau said this does not guarantee the success of the business. Mr. Smillie said his experience show that it does and it also helps to generate revenue.

Mayor Chau asked Mr. Smillie to describe any detriments or cons against this type of signage and the effect on residential neighborhoods. Mr. Smillie said he lives in southern New Hampshire and does extensive work in South Jersey and Upstate New York, and he said some companies do not have the controls his company has. They program and lock the sign criteria into the software. Dr. Levitt noted that sign movement, flashing, or scrolling is prohibited. Mr. Roegiers asked if their signs were directional LEDs which mean that if you are at a stop, you can read the sign, but if you move a little, the sign cannot be read. Mr. Smillie said they are not those types of signs.

Mr. Perri asked if the sign was wireless and how it is controlled. Mr. Smillie said it is controlled by the Country Club. Mr. Perri asked about the dollar value. Mr. Smillie said the sign has about a \$50,000 value. Mr. Perri asked about advertising criteria. Dr. Levitt said the signage has to relate to the business at the site of the property, anything outside of that would be a billboard. Even public service announcements are considered a billboard. Mr. Tedesco said it is actually a matter of Municipal Land Use

Law in that the sign has to relate to the principal use on site, if not, we would be involved with a "D" variance. Mr. Tedesco asked about the form of the Board and how the voting would occur and Dr. Levitt said that the City of Northfield has a combined Planning and Zoning Board and all members are eligible to vote for this application.

The next professional was David Shropshire, a Professional Engineer and Planner. His principal consulting is in Traffic Engineering and Transportation Planning. He stated he has testified hundreds of times as a professional in this field. He evaluated the area as a minor urban arterial two-way roadway with a speed limit of 35 mph. It is tree-lined with areas of vegetation surrounding the Country Club and having a two-way driveway. Shore Road travels north and south. He addressed visibility in his study and if the sign was set back off the road, it would not be seen behind the tree line. It is justified for traffic safety to have the sign close to the right-of-way. A 1 ft. setback is really a 15 ft. setback off the cart way. He said the general public needs information to make decisions while traveling. This is important for public safety. The proposed sign is within the 10% cone of vision in order to be seen from the roadway while traveling at 35 mph from 300 ft. from either direction. The signs will be visible and travelers can move in and out of the property safely. The sign is proposed to be 100 ft. from the driveway entrance and the LED sign will be seen first and then the entrance sign. Dr. Levitt asked Chief Newman if this area has had any frequent accidents. The Chief said he can't recall any. Mr. Shropshire said he himself missed the driveway and had to use the City streets to turn around and double back. Mr. Tedesco noted that activities such as weddings attract people not familiar with the area. Mr. Shropshire said the sign will help to promote safety. He added that these types of signs are generally safe and are used on most interstates to convey messages. They all have changeable traffic signs and the standard measure of duration between message changes is 8 seconds. Dr. Levitt asked why there is a standard of frequency. Mr. Shropshire said research is concerned with glance timing at different speeds. Dr. Levitt said he has concerns with a changing new message diverting the sight of the driver. Mr. Shropshire said the driver will have the same glance if the sign was in a different location. The Ordinance says these signs are safe and Mr. Tedesco said these signs would not be allowed on the highways if they created a hazard.

Mr. Tedesco discussed the zones which allow these types of signs and also have similar speed limits. The commercial zones N-B, C-B, and R-C allow them. The two-lane section of Tilton Road is a similar roadway with the same speed limit, and is classified under the same county jurisdiction. Changeable message signs in this area are not a danger to the public. Tilton Road may have a higher volume of vehicles and trucks, but the roads are comparable. Mayor Chau disagreed and said Tilton Road is a wider road and he felt Shore Road is a narrower street. He felt that the addition of the new sign would create a second distraction; the entrance to the Country Club and the LED sign. He said that as soon as you pass Jackson Avenue, the road narrows and this is the area where the new sign is to be located. This area has been prone to accidents and the telephone pole has been struck several times at this narrowing. Adding the distraction of the sign may cause accidents to increase. Mr. Shropshire said that sign clutter has more of an impact on safety and they are only talking about one additional sign that would be no different than a permitted sign in this zone and this type of sign would be more effective. Dr. Levitt asked how far up and down Shore Road would this sign be visible. There was testimony that it would be visible from 300 ft. both north and south. Mr. Shropshire said a permitted sign would be more visible in terms of brightness.

He then addressed Mayor Chau's questions from previously. He said the driveway signs are angled at a 45 degree angle and have ground lights shooting up onto the sign. Mr. Smillie said they would be brighter than the LED sign. He didn't think the LED sign would have any impact on the road safety due to the narrowing of the road. He stated from a traffic perspective, he sees no detriment and thinks the sign will be a benefit to the public good, and will allow no impairment to the Zoning Ordinance or the Master Plan. A permitted sign would have the same effects as this with regard to safety, but would not allow the benefit that is crucial to this development and to the general public in terms of information.

Mr. Scharff commented that a vehicle traveling southbound past the driveway entrance would encounter the proposed sign 120 ft. from the entrance. The car would still need to turn around. Mr. Shropshire said the driver will see the LED sign from 300 ft. away initially and then the driveway will be the identifier. Mr. Scharff asked about tree removal. Dr. Levitt said the plan says tree clearing, but the trees are not identified. Mr. Tedesco said there are a few Sycamore trees which Mr. Igoe can identify. Dr. Levitt said it is required that they be identified on the plan. County right-of-ways must be shown on plans. Dr. Levitt said if the county ever did widen Shore Road, they would have to move their sign. Mr. Tedesco said they would make a condition of approval that they would pay to remove the sign if the county right-of-way was needed.

William Crane, a licensed Professional Planner with 30 years of experience in public planning and consulted testified next. Dr. Levitt accepted his credentials as he has been before the Board many times. Mr. Crane reviewed the site plan, information developed by other professionals, Northfield Master Plan, the Land Use Ordinance and the CC zone. To allow the sign on Shore Road is a variance plan, not a site plan. A changeable sign is not permitted in the CC zone, but is permitted in other zones such as the N-B, R-C, and C-B zones. It is permissible to have on-site stationary signs that are not illuminated internally or externally, but they are permitted in other zones. There is a similarity of the CC zone to these zones with the N-B zone being the most restrictive. Both the CC-zone and the N-B zone have residential zones across the street and are considered soft commercial zones.

Mr. Crane continued by stating that the relief is three-fold and involves the setback, sign area, and the changeable LED sign. Mr. Crane discussed the statute and justifications and meeting it through testimony. They looked at the MLUL and the Master Plan and said they are promoting the conservation of historic sites. The sign will advance the historic nature of the Country Club by designing a sign consistent with the club and to meet the economic needs. On-site information will contribute to the economic viability and generate business and convey to the population that the Country Club is open to the public.

Mr. Leeds asked about the calculations and size of the sign. Mr. Crane referred to Matt Doran's report. He said 16 sf of non-electronic sign is permitted and 21 sf (7 ft. x 3 ft.) of electronic sign is proposed. The sign is 75 sf of gross area (7.9 ft. x 9.5 ft.). Mr. Crane stated that Mr. Doran calculated using the peak on the roof. He said that part of the sign is more of an architectural feature and not part of the LED sign. Discussion developed over sign size specifics, and Mr. Doran said that the Ordinance says that irregularly shaped signs are squared off for measurement. Stanchions that draw

attention such as the bell are considered signs and are included in calculations. That is why the sign is measured at 75 sf.

Dr. Levitt considered that this is a digital sign and the effect on a desirable visual environment. He noted the bell relates to the historical nature of the Country Club, but the digital sign does not. He could not imagine a digital sign in Cape May and doesn't think they are permitted. Dr. Levitt asked Mr. Tedesco if he agree that New Road is mostly a commercial road and Shore Road is generally residential. He agreed. Dr. Levitt said the objective of the Master Plan is to maintain the residential character of the Shore Road corridor. Dr. Levitt asked Mr. Tedesco how an electronic sign would fit in with this objective. Mr. Tedesco said the sign would be an accessory to the Country Club and will allow it to stay as such with open space and with the amenities it provides. The sign will allow it to continue to be an historic building and will add to the economic viability of the club. The owner is very passionate about keeping it as it is and it is very compatible with shore Road. It is one of the nicest Country Clubs around. He asked about Ventura's Offshore sign. Dr. Levitt said their sign is not a changeable message board and on most nights, it is difficult to get into the restaurant. It is a very busy establishment without the need for a changeable sign. Dr. Levitt felt that if you deliver a quality product, people will come. There is the web and many have GPS and they will find you. There are also smart phones for emails, and social media is the way to go. He felt that digital signage in highly residential areas is not appropriate. He stated that the hardest job of the Board is to balance residential and commercial. The Country Club is not like a McDonald's that needs to attract people off the street. If it is not a destination and if you are from Atlantic County, you are familiar with the Country Club. Dr. Levitt didn't feel the Country Club needed a digital sign to make the business sustainable. He felt that the Master Plan should take precedence.

Dr. Levitt, Mr. Crane, and Mr. Tedesco continued the discussion. Dr. Levitt said the sign is oversized and too close to the road and it is not a permitted type of sign. Mr. Tedesco asked Mr. Crane if the downsizing of lot development size from 1/3 acre lots to 1 acre lot promotes residential development. Mr. Crane said it would appear to discourage a certain density. Mr. Tedesco asked if this can viewed as an effort to dissuade residential development of the golf course. Dr. Levitt interjected by stating the idea of this change was to maintain the residential character of the area.

Mr. Igoe made a clarification of the plan in regard to the trees. He said that four or five Sycamore trees, of which at least one or two are highly diseased, need to be removed. They have already taken down several that were safety hazards. He also added, in comparison to Ventura's, the scope of servicing cannot be compared. The Country Club has events such as cooking classes and banquets. He thinks that people are unaware of the scope of what they are doing there. The effectiveness of and LED sign cannot be overstated. It is the key to success of the programs they have to offer. Messages get responses, and then it is up to the management to keep people coming back.

Mayor Chau asked that Mr. Igoe compare the entrance and the placement of the sign with that of Scotland Run. Mr. Igoe said Scotland Run sits on a country road and the area is mainly residential. The building sits back about 25 yards from the road. ACCC sits 100 yards off the road. The Scotland Yard sign is a few feet off the right-of-way. Mr. Leeds asked if it is a permitted use in that town. Mr. Igoe said they did get Planning

Board approval in Williamstown. Mr. Scharff commented that Williamstown is more rural. Mr. Igoe reiterated that the LED sign is the most effective way to communicate services. Mr. Roegiers asked if they would consider freezing the sign at night. Mr. Igoe said they would turn it off. Mr. Tedesco said when the club is closed, it will be turned off. Mr. Igoe said they would be delighted to have time restrictions and they could be programmed into the sign.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session. Fred Klein of 1015 Shore Road was sworn in first. He said he resides across the street and was a member of the Country Club for years. He thinks the problems with the business in the dining room deal with the stigma left from the casino ownership. When he was a member he frequented the club often and it was usually packed. He said it is not a matter of not knowing about the property; perception is the problem. He discussed the maintenance area constructed on Shore Road and the compromising that was done to appease the nearby property owners. They constructed the units to resemble residential units. There are no signs of this proposed size on Shore Road. He said he has never seen a country club with a sign of this size and nature. He felt that electronic signs are an intrusion to the peace and tranquility of this neighborhood. He does not want to see a change to the nature of Shore Road.

Patrick McGowan of 2005 Shore Road spoke next. He is president of the neighborhood group "Community for a City of Homes" which opposes commercial development in residential neighborhoods. He stated that Mr. Klein covered a lot that he was going to talk about, but he congratulated the Country Club for their improvements and said they he is glad to be a neighbor of theirs and they are good neighbors. He felt that thirty banquets without the LED sign proves they don't need it to generate business. He lives next door to Ventura's and he experiences a lot of turnaround in his driveway. Dr. Levitt thought the testimony was the opposite and being close to the road will help recognize the entrance. Mr. McGowan didn't think the sign would help with that. He thinks the current signs at the entranceway fit the site and he said he agreed with Dr. Levitt that the proposed sign is too close to the street and too bright.

Mike Geiger of 905 Shore Road was a former member of the club who also lives across the street. He was horrified by how the casinos operated the club and offered compliments to the new owners. He loves his house and feels he lives in the nicest area in Northfield. He read a letter of opposition to the sign. He felt that the sign is appropriate for drug stores and liquor stores in commercial areas, but is not appropriate in a residential neighborhood. He felt it does not reflect the character of the area or the prestige of the club. These signs are very bright and by nature are very commercial. He described Shore Road and the corridor and said the sign is not appropriate. He encouraged the Planning Board to work with the Ottinger family to come up with a more subdued plan that fits both the neighborhood and the reputation of the club.

Diane Kummings of 122 Hemsley Place thinks the Country Club is the crown jewel of the County. She loves the recent improvements the new owners have made and she approves of what is going on and how the club is evolving. What confuses her is that they want a sign that is cold and crude, artistically speaking. In terms of history, it is not compelling, and she wants to see something more artistically lit and something that exudes charm and warmth. She felt that service to the public and bringing in

business is very important and she is happy that the club has come a long way. She is opposed to the LED sign, but not to a more artistic type of sign. The proposed sign did not warm her heart, but she was not opposed to the use of signage to increase business.

Michele Thomas of 2 Golf View Drive addressed the Board next. He lives at 1007 Shore Road. He has seen the current signs and the advertising. He does not want a billboard on Shore Road. She had family visit her from North Jersey and they did use a GPS to locate her and they had no problems finding her.

Jeff Lischin of 217 Mr. Vernon Avenue, who also serves as a Northfield City Councilman, spoke next. He said he is in favor of the sign and supports all commercial business in town. He felt the City has a bad taste for LED signs due to past signs in the City and this sign comes equipped with the ability to dim the brightness. There will not be flashing bright light and he felt it is a great design. The only opposition he would have would be the size of the signage as 16 sf is allowed and this sign is proposed to be 21 sf. The sign is very consistent with the Country Club itself and he felt we should support businesses in Northfield.

Dr. Levitt closed the public session and asked for comments from the Board. Mr. Zlotnick stated that Matt Doran needs to be sworn in as Planning Board Engineer, and Dr. Levitt swore him in. He testified that he agreed with the variances being sought for size, setback, and the type of sign being an electronic message board sign. He asked for more testimony as to the existing signs by the entrance. Mr. Tedesco said they would remain the same. Mr. Doran asked if they will be changing the face of the signs. Mr. Scharff said there is a hanging sign on the bottom of these signs. Mr. Doran said he wants a clear record as to what will be done with them. It was understood that they will change occasionally. Mr. Doran said they testified to everything else and Dr. Levitt addressed the Master Plan statement regarding Shore Road.

Mr. Tedesco gave a summary of the application. He stated that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. There is nothing in the Ordinance to prohibit LED or illuminated signs in the zone. The issue is whether the text on the sign can change. The problem is with the LED electronic signs. Mr. Tedesco said the Master Plan has been addressed and this document encourages the golf course and they are consistent with the Master Plan. The City of Northfield Police sign would be more obtrusive, but would be allowed by Ordinance. There is no point to have a sign that you see once you are on top of it. If they moved it back 25 ft. they would have to remove trees. The applicant would agree to a condition of approval to move the sign if the County needs more space on the roadway. He felt the sign is only a few square feet larger than the Ordinance allows and said that some people will think the sign is beautiful. He added that they have provided good testimony to support their case.

Mr. Tedesco and Mr. Scharff disagreed on the Ordinance in reference to illuminated and non-illuminated signs. Mr. Scharff referenced Ordinance No. 215113-A(1) which states "Any signs not specifically permitted are hereby prohibited". Mr. Tedesco disagreed and said it is not indicated that the Ordinance states that illuminated signs are permitted in any zone. He continued by saying that the Ordinance states that non-illuminated signs are permitted, but not illuminated signs. In addressing the N-B zone and moving signs, Mr. Scharff said that they are located on Tilton Road, but when

Tilton Road becomes a two-lane road, the zone is no longer N-B. Mr. Scharff said it is in the Ordinance and that he wrote this section of the Ordinance along with Dr. Levitt. Mr. Scharff added that the Northfield Police sign was never approved by the Board and was constructed in the 1970's before the current Land Use Laws were in place. Mr. Scharff said he started with the Planning Board in 1997 and at that time, the Board allowed the Country Club to expand an 8 inch by 16 in sign to a 16 sf sign so there has been some relief granted historically.

Mr. Shippen spoke about the Ventura's site which has been a public house for over 50 years. ACCC was a private facility during those times. There was public knowledge that the site, then called Rugby Inn, was a public site and ACCC was private. He felt the Country Club has done a fantastic job with their changes so far and he said a lit sign across from your house can be understandably arguable, but the illumination of this sign is proposed to be less than what it could otherwise be. He discussed a similar case that came down to the fact that it would affect the neighborhood, but it will make it better than it was. He is sympathetic to what they are trying to do. He recollected that when they were re-doing the Zoning Ordinance for the Country Club zone, they included options to include things like week-long residents, a retail shop, and a small hotel. Mr. Ottinger and his family have not shown any interest in expanding with these uses. It would seem that these types of uses would affect the residential nature of the neighborhood more than an illuminated LED sign. He suggested reducing the sign by 5 sf to conform to the Ordinance. He encouraged the owner to continue to improve and eliminate any possibility of ceasing to operate as a golf course. He agreed this will be a difficult decision.

Mr. Tedesco said his client would consent to modify the message area to 16 sf from 21 sf. Mr. Zlotnick said there appears to be three conditions. The first is that the sign would be turned off. He asked when that would occur. Mr. Tedesco said at the close of business which would be 10:00 p.m. during the week and midnight on the weekends. Mr. Shippen suggested 1:00 p.m. all nights of the week since people are already there by 10:00 p.m. and they would not necessarily need to attract patrons after that time. The second condition involved the modification of the sign area from 21 sf to 16sf. The third condition involved the County right-of-way issue and if eminent domain occurred, the Country Club would pay to move the sign. Dr. Levitt suggested turning the sign off at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Roegiers agreed with 10:00 p.m. Mr. Tedesco said he client agrees with 10:00 p.m.

Mr. Zlotnick noted for the Board's edification that the motion will be made in the affirmative. Mr. Zlotnick clarified the motion as being to grant the applicant, including the items in Matt Doran's report, the conditions agreed upon in that the message area would be decreased to 16 sf, the setback would be 1 ft., the sign would be turned off at 10:00 p.m. every day, any changes to the right-of-way by Atlantic County causing the sign to need to be moved would be paid for by the Country Club, and no more than 50 nits or 4% of daytime illumination at night. Mr. Tedesco said the testimony was 300 nits. Mr. Scharff said the Board is saying 50 nits as this is the number that will be proposed to be written into the Ordinance changes and which is currently being worked on. Dr. Levitt thought the sign shut off time should be discussed further. He thought 8:00 p.m. was sufficient and that there is no purpose to have the sign lit after that time. Mayor Chau wanted to ask the public. Dr. Levitt said the public session has been closed, but he will re-open the public session to consider the sign shut off time

only. Dr. Levitt felt after 8:00 p.m. there is not much traffic. Mr. Lischin stated that it isn't dark until 8:00 p.m. much of the time. Mr. Geiger felt there is very little traffic after 8:00 p.m. Mayor Chau said it appears the public does not oppose the sign if the number hours was limited. Dr. Levitt felt they still oppose the sign, but want to see it turned off at a specific time. Mr. Zlotnick asked if 9:00 p.m. is acceptable to all. Mr. Tedesco set it straight for the record that the testimony was not a 9:00 p.m. shut off time and the illumination was not 50 nits but was the customary 300 nits. These changes from testimony are conditions. Mr. Zlotnick noted this. Mr. Shippen asked for more clarification about nits. Mr. Scharff explained it is like computer screen illumination. Anything over 50 nits at night can affect night vision. The new Ordinance night illumination will be at 50 nits.

Mr. Perri made the motion. Mr. Roegiers seconded the motion. A roll call vote with comments noted was as follows. The following comments were made before the roll call vote:

Mayor Chau stated that the presentation was very good and he understands the importance of the sign to the Country Club, but he felt that after hearing testimony from the applicant and the public comments, the reputation, programs offered, and the facilities are more important. He was not fully convinced of the safety aspect. There was a similar application recently involving a sign which was non-conforming in the zone and he voted no on that application and felt he needs to be consistent and he cannot support this application at this time due to the City Ordinance and Master Plan.

Dr. Levitt agreed with Mayor Chau. He said just because the motion was improved by the Board's suggestions, this doesn't make it right. He felt there would be an increase in this type of signage along Shore Road. Other business would request the same type of signage. Every business along Shore Road could ask for them with the same argument and we could not deny them. We have set guidelines as to where these types of signs can exist in the City and this was after a lot of work and thought. If we allow variances to permit them, this overturns everything the Board has worked for. He wished the Country Club every success and hopes they could come back before the Board with another proposal; possibly another kind of sign with changeable messages, but not of the electronic type. These are the signs that create the controversy. He said he is opposed to this application.

Councilman Perri commented that in these hard, economically distressed times, and at any other time, he would have agreed with the Chairman, but he felt this project must go forward and has to work. The Country Club is the largest taxpaying, economic entity in Northfield. He stated he is a businessman and understands this might open up Shore Road. The City needs help. Since 2010, the City has lost millions of dollars in revenue; the base is down and we are looking at a tax increase. He understands they want the lights for attraction purposes; the business needs a label and needs to work. There are a lot of people in bad ways and we need to produce and encourage economic development. This sign will attract and bring in business and the City needs it.

Chief Newman said he passes by the Country Club a dozen times a day and lives in the nearby neighborhood. He applauded the improvements and efforts ACCC have made. The current signs at the Country Club entrance are woefully inadequate for what their plans are. It is difficult to read the signs. Something needs to be done. As he looked at

both sides, both the economic elements and sentiments of the residents, he echoed Mr. Perri's sentiments.

Mr. Roegiers said it is his assessment, after hearing all of the testimony and comments, that the sign is ancillary to the business and grows with the business. It is important to ingress and egress of the property. The sign becomes an engine for economic stimulation and he supports it.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Anderson-absent, Mr. Bruno-absent, Mayor Chau-no, Mr. Leeds-no-with comments, He commended the Ottinger family and said the Country Club looks great with the improvements made; ; the changes are a step up. He said he is a visual person and wants to see the plans with the proposed condition changes. He also wanted more information on tree removal and did not agree with some of the testimony about economics. There are many places and restaurants without LED signs that have thriving businesses., Chief Newman-yes, Mr. Milone-absent, Mr. Notaro-no, Councilman Perri-yes, Mr. Roegiers-yes, Mr. Rowe-no vote as 9 voting members were present, Mr. Scharff-no, Mr. Shippen-yes, Chairman Levitt-no. The motion to approve the "C" variance for the Electronic LED sign was denied by a vote of 4 yeas to 5 nays.

The next item on the agenda was the memorialization of Bunting Health Center, LLC who were approved at the January 7, 2016 meeting for a major site plan, "C" variances, "D" variance, landscape buffer, and Floor Area Ratio. The property location is 1337 New Road and 517 Banning Avenue, Block 42, Lots 8 & 9. Abstentions were Tim Anderson, Jim Leeds, and Lou Milone. The voice vote was all in favor of memorialization.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion of the Northfield Bicycle and Pedestrian plan. A final review of the plan, initially presented to the Board on May 7, 2015, was discussed for approval of the plan and a vote for adoption in order to forward to City Council for their adoption at their next meeting February 9, 2016. Mayor Chau said City Council wants to move forward with this with the Board's blessing. Mr. Scharff said he had a problem with angled parking on Tilton Road and parallel parking on Shore Road with bump outs as they have done in Pleasantville. Mr. Roegiers commented that this occurred in Absecon and was a fiasco. Mr. Perri commented that this is an Atlantic County study for redevelopment. Its purpose is to increase and promote new business in Atlantic County and it is very comprehensive. The intention for Northfield is to redevelop pre-existing commercial properties on Shore Road.

Mayor Chau said City Council wants the Board's input. Dr. Levitt said it conflicts with the Master Plan. Mr. Perri said this is moving forward as is the Sign Ordinance issue. There has been a Council committee formed to look at the Sign Ordinance and to change it in favor of businesses. Dr. Levitt commented that there are only a few existing businesses on Shore Road, and he noted three, a medical center, Ventura's, and Perri's station. Mr. Perri said putting this in place will allow for grants to be awarded and he added that there are at least 15 businesses on Shore Road including doctor's offices and others. He concluded that either for or against it, the study and project is still moving forward. Dr. Levitt the Board could approve it with modifications. The parallel parking on Shore Road and angled parking on Tilton Road

are issues. Mayor Chau suggested drafting a letter to Council that they do agree with the project, but with some reservations about parking. Mr. Perri added that parking on Shore Road is a County issue, not a Northfield issue. Any County right-of-way matters would have to go before the County Planning Board. County approval is needed for even an apron. There was not a roll call or voice vote by motion and second.

A few moments of discussion was devoted to the LED Sign Ordinance. Mr. Scharff said he would email out the final revision of the LED changes and additions. Dr. Levitt and Mr. Scharff commented about the LED window lights seen in Pleasantville, the brightness of the LED signs at Primo Pizza in Somers Point, the Capaldi-Reynolds sign on Tilton Road, and Golf and Tennis World on the Black Horse Pike, among others. Mayor Chau said he has appealed to Council many times about how the brightness of these signs is being measured. Dr. Levitt agreed the Ordinance can be changed somewhat to incorporate the newer types of signage, but it in no way should be changed in its entirety.

Councilman Jeff Lischin addressed the Board and commented that it appears most of those who attend the hearings within 200 ft. of the subject properties are dissenters who want to complain. Mr. Scharff and Dr. Levitt, who has been a member of the Board since 1981, commented that over the years they have heard from many who come out to support the applicants with their projects. Getting back to the LED discussion, Dr. Levitt said that LED lighting goes straight in your face where other types of light go off to the side. Mr. Lischin said internally lit signs come straight at you as well. Mr. Scharff said the Ordinance will limit those signs to 50 nits. Mr. Lischin said he has trouble seeing the clock face on the bike path sign and felt it was not bright enough. Dr. Levitt said the implication seems to be that if you add more signs you will collect more taxes. Mr. Lischin commented that he would rather see a sign helping a business than a vacant Country Club.

An LED sign committee meeting was set for the following Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. with City Council.

Mr. Rowe made a motion for adjournment and Mr. Scharff seconded. Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board