

City of Northfield Planning Board
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Minutes: July 7, 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, July 7, 2016 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:04 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-absent

Matthew Doran, Professional Engineer
Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor

There was one application on the agenda. Louis Alfred Pepper and his wife Jessica were sworn in by Dr. Levitt. The application is for Block 165, Lot 17 & 18 located at 116 Surrey Avenue. The application is for a residential addition in the R-2 Zone. The variance is for "C" Variance relief for a front yard setback where 20 ft. is proposed and 25 ft. is the requirement.

Mrs. Pepper explained the project. She said she grew up a block away and wants to live in Northfield. She moved away for a while and now is back to raise a family in this home, but they need more room to do so. Dr. Levitt said he lives nearby and the home is currently a small rancher. Mrs. Pepper said they want to build an addition to extend the home out and up. The lot is two feet short of a double lot. They would rather have one big lot than to subdivide.

Mr. Doran said the home is an older style rancher on one side of the lot in the R-2 Zone. They need one variance for the front setback of 20 ft. where 25 ft. is required. There are two existing non-conformities. One is the side yard setback to the house of 8.1 ft. where 10 ft. is required. The other involves the garage on the alley required to be 5 ft. off the rear alley and this one is 2.9 ft. They show curbs and sidewalks on the property and there is always a discussion about the trees. Two parking spots are required and they do not show any. Mr. Roegiers commented that if they had onsite parking they would have to come onto the property from the alley in the back. Dr. Levitt said or they could build off Surrey Avenue, but they would have to use the back entry. Dr. Levitt asked how many cars they have. Mrs. Pepper said they have two vehicles and the neighborhood mostly uses street parking. Dr. Levitt noted that it is a very large lot. Dr. Levitt asked the applicants to address positive and negative criteria as this is a requirement for a variance.

Mrs. Pepper said the home is the oldest on the street and was owned by one family since about 1922. They took care of the lots, but there are not many upgrades to the house. Dr. Levitt agreed it is the tiniest house in the neighborhood and it is dated. Dr. Levitt asked for any negatives. Mrs. Pepper said there are none. They are very conscious of the front of the house looking cohesive with the neighborhood and they are working with an architect. She said she had elevation drawings and passed them to the Board for review. Dr. Levitt said he agrees the project will enhance the neighborhood with upgrades.

Mayor Chau asked about the addition. Mrs. Pepper said the home exists as two bedrooms and one bath and they plan to increase the home to four bedrooms and three and one half bathrooms by adding a second story. The existing house would be converted into a large kitchen, sitting area, and home office. The current full bathroom would be converted into a half bathroom. Mr. Roegiers asked if there was any way that any of the improvements could be converted into a rental unit. Mrs. Pepper answered no. Dr. Levitt asked if the home office would be used for an intense commercial use. Mrs. Pepper said no; it would be used for paperwork and to store office materials that cause clutter around the home. Mr. Pepper said he works for UPS and his wife is a school teacher. Dr. Levitt asked where she was employed and she said Atlantic County Institute of Technology (ACIT) in Mays Landing.

Dr. Levitt said the plans show how the architecture will blend with the existing house. Mrs. Pepper said the main reason for the variance is because of the way they will be moving the front door to what would be off the porch area and involves only six inches. . Mr. Pepper said this is necessitated by a brick bearing wall which is where they would be putting the front door. It just wouldn't work out. Dr. Levitt asked if they would consider installing a driveway. Mrs. Pepper said they really do not want a driveway. Mr. Pepper said that the neighbors do not park in the back either. Mr. Roegiers said he used to live in that neighborhood and it is very narrow in the alley.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session. There was no one who wished to speak on the application and the public session was closed.

Mr. Roegiers made the motion for a waiver for the two required parking spots on site and the “C” (2) variance for the front yard setback off Surrey Avenue. Mr. Scharff seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Anderson-absent, Mr. Bruno-absent, Mayor Chau-yes, Mr. Leeds-yes, Mr. Milone-absent, Chief Newman-yes, Mr. Notaro-yes, Councilman Perri-yes, Mr. Roegiers-yes, Mr. Rowe-yes, Mr. Scharff-yes, Mr. Shippen-absent, Chairman Levitt-yes. The motion to approve the “C” (2) variance and waiver carries.

There were two resolutions to memorialize. The first was for 1203 Tilton Road, LLC, Block 41, Lot 3, 1203 Tilton Road, for a minor site plan amendment with “C” Variances to allow for a trash enclosure. The second was for Phil Barber, Block 59, Lot 3, 1935 New Road, for “C” Variance for parking and a site plan waiver. They were voted on separately by voice vote with Tim Anderson, Mark Bruno, Henry Notaro, and Derek Rowe abstaining. The resolutions were first approved at the June 2, 2016 regular meeting. Mayor Chau commented on the sidewalk project on New Road that the State is working on and said it appears that they are installing a sidewalk in front of Phil Barber’s building.

At 7:18 p.m. the Board entered into Executive Session to discuss the Atlantic City Country Club appeal. The motion to go into Executive Session was made by Jim Leeds and seconded by Derek Rowe. The minutes of the Executive session will be made public at a later date should this be appropriate. No action shall be taken without proper notice.

At 7:34 p.m. the regular public meeting reconvened by motion from Mr. Scharff and a second from Mr. Roegiers. There was a voice vote to give Mr. Zlotnick the authority to discuss with the Judge the items discussed in the Executive session regarding the Atlantic City Country Club appeal litigation. All members present voted in favor with Mayor Chau abstaining from the vote. Dr. Levitt noted that Mayor Chau will abstain from any future Executive Sessions regarding ACCC.

Mr. Scharff addressed the status of the sign ordinance and said he spoke with Kris Facenda, the City Solicitor, at the last City Council meeting, and the sign ordinance changes are still up in the air and there is nothing new to report. Mr. Scharff stated that the Margate Jewish Community Center has a sign that is displayed at 50 nits. He said it is a good example of a 50 nit LED sign for reference. Mr. Perri questioned Bootleggers and whether or not they were approved for two LED signs. He added that the Christian book store next to One Stop on New Road has a new free standing sign. Dr. Levitt said as long as they meet the setbacks, they only need to obtain a permit. Dr. Levitt added that he has observed the Bootleggers sign spinning and flipping and feels it does not conform and is very distracting.

Mayor Chau reported that City Council is still in discussion about the fee waivers for the disabled. Only two council members have responded that they felt that the fees should be waived for the disabled. Mr. Scharff noted that there are grants available for this. Councilman Perri said is opposed to waiving any fees and feels it should be status quo. Dr. Levitt agreed with Mr. Perri. You can't ask the professionals to work for free and the City needs the money. Mr. Perri said in this case they are trying to waive fees for an individual who does not meet the criteria of the statute.

Mr. Roegiers made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Rowe seconded. Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board