

City of Northfield Planning Board
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Minutes: August 2, 2018

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, August 2, 2018 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:01 p.m. with the reading of the Sunshine Law and the following members present or absent as noted:

Mark Bruno-absent
Mayor Erland Chau
Jim Leeds-absent
Dr. Richard Levitt
Joe Massari-absent
Chief Paul Newman
Henry Notaro
Councilman Frank Perri
Daniel Reardon
Ron Roegiers
Derek Rowe
Clem Scharff-absent
Jim Shippen-absent

Matthew Doran, Professional Engineer
Norman Zlotnick, Solicitor

The meeting began with an Oath of Office. Tim Anderson, who served as Alternate #4 resigned his seat as his family has moved out of the city. Mayor Chau swore in Daniel Reardon to fill Mr. Anderson's vacant seat and to complete the unexpired term. Mr. Reardon has been a Mainland Regional High School history teacher for the past twenty years, he has lived in Northfield for 36 years, he is a member of the School Safety Committee, a Peer Mediation Advisor, Head Coach of the Golf Team, he serves on the Northfield Library Board, and is a member of the Nor-Lin Kiwanis Club. Mayor Chau said he is an asset to the community and will be an benefit to the Planning Board.

There was one application on the agenda from Robert Cornagie, Block 78, Lots 8, 9, 10 at 109 W. Revere Avenue in the R-3 zone. The application is for a "C" variance for a side setback in order to construct a detached garage. Mr. Cornagie and his friend Steve Soskin were sworn in by Dr. Levitt.

Mr. Cornagie testified that he intends to build a two-car garage on his property and needs a variance for a left side setback bordering Lot 7. Mr. Doran said Mr. Cornagie revised his original application which required three variances. The revisions which negate requiring a variance include a reduction in the size of the accessory building which will now be 22 x 22 (484 sf) which conforms, and building height which will be reduced to 12 ft. high from 13.5 ft. high as previously requested. The garage will be setback so the distance from the principal structure will be at least 5 ft. and there will be no parallel structures. This reduction in size will allow a person to walk between the house and the garage. Dr. Levitt noted that the area behind the property is a wooded area. Dr. Levitt asked if proper noticing had been completed. Mr. Cornagie said yes and added that none of his neighbors have posed any objections.

Dr. Levitt asked Mr. Cornagie to discuss positive and negative aspects as criteria for the variance. Mr. Cornagie said there is nothing negative about his project. The accessory garage will be decorative and will match the house siding and will be a benefit to house their vehicles. Mayor Chau asked about Lot 7. Mr. Doran said Lots 6 and 7 contain a house but it is not on the property line. There is a tree buffer in between the properties. Mayor Chau asked what he intended to store in the garage. Mr. Cornagie said cars and other items normally stored in a garage. Mayor Chau had concerns with ingress and egress for emergency vehicles but said the Fire Department had no objections in their letter. There was no one from the public present so the public session was opened and closed by Dr. Levitt.

Dr. Levitt asked for a motion for the "C" variance request for a side setback of 7.8 ft. where 10 ft. is required. The variance request is for two and one-half feet. Mayor Chau made the motion and Mr. Notaro seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Bruno-absent
Mayor Chau-yes
Mr. Leeds-absent
Mr. Massari-absent
Chief Newman-yes
Mr. Notaro-yes
Councilman Perri-yes
Mr. Reardon-yes
Mr. Roegiers-yes
Mr. Rowe-yes
Mr. Scharff-absent
Mr. Shippen-absent
Chairman Levitt-yes
The motion carries.

Dr. Levitt began a brief discussion concerning the sign ordinance. He stated that digital signs are inappropriate in certain areas. He felt that electronic signs in the O-PB zone would not be appropriate and hopes that City Council will take it out of the proposed Ordinance and will not allow them in that zone. Mayor Chau answered that in recent months, businesses have come to Council with concerns about the number of signs allowed, such as A-frame style signs or banner signs, and the leeway of such signage. He thinks Northfield is liberal with signage and the city has a unique situation with the number of restaurants and businesses. He wants them to have exposure and we need to coexist with them. He expressed concern with LED signage being lit all night and he has expressed that concern to Council. The sign committee was asked to move forward. Dr. Levitt asked the Mayor to please relay his thoughts to

Council. Mr. Perri said he has brought the issue up twice himself, and the issue is still in committee. Mr. Zlotnick said a vote would require a super majority.

Mr. Perri discussed the new mounted telephone wireless communications units. He has been getting opposition to these and said this needs to be addressed as they can pop up anywhere. Mr. Rowe stated that they have sizeable panels and Mr. Perri added they also have large service boxes. Dr. Levitt said there should be input that every effort is being made to conceal them and there may be variations available. Mayor Chau said they are big metal boxes on poles and Mr. Perri said they can be seen on existing poles or they can install their own poles. Dr. Levitt commented on the old House and Garden site and with the cell tower, what we saw in the plan is not what was eventually constructed. Mr. Doran said once a tower exists, they can add structures to it as allowed by Federal regulations. Mr. Zlotnick said the municipality must follow up on what was approved as a matter of enforcement. Mr. Perri commented on the Birch Grove Park cell tower. He felt they should have had to come before the Board with their additions and changes to the equipment housing structure but current regulations allowed them to proceed without further approvals. Mr. Perri said he has fought for years about renovating the tower at City Hall. It would generate revenue for the city. Dr. Levitt said the City Solicitor should research this for revenue purposes.

Mr. Zlotnick stated that the Planning Board will need to pass the Round 3 Fair Share Plan and then forward to City Council for approval at the Special meeting in two weeks. Dr. Levitt said this is the COAH plan previously approved in 2015. Mr. Zlotnick agreed and said the settlement is done and there are no new areas included. This is mandated by law and piece by piece, it is coming together. Mr. Perri said there will be a public session as well and Mr. Zlotnick said it requires both Planning Board and City Council approval.

Dr. Levitt commented on the Gurwicz-Cresson Hill project. Phase one is under construction and this includes three buildings and the Clubhouse. The population projection for the school could see an additional 75 children from this project. Mr. Perri said over recent years the school population has decreased by about 100 kids.

Dr. Levitt addressed the new Board member Dan Reardon and said there is a mandatory education class he will need to attend. He asked that he review the Land Use Ordinance and encouraged bringing the book to the meetings for reference as items come up. Dr. Levitt stressed that there are rules and regulations for granting variances which are not based on personal opinions. This will all be covered in the Planning Board member class.

Mr. Perri made the motion to close the meeting and Mr. Roegiers seconding. Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board