

**uCity of Northfield Planning Board
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October 10, 2024

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 of Atlantic City on September 26, 2024 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. Digital copies of the application documents, exhibits, and the Planning Board Engineer's report have been uploaded onto the city website as well if applicable.

The **REGULAR** meeting of the Northfield Planning Board was held on Thursday, October 10, 2024. ***In following with the decisions of Mayor Chau and City Council, the Planning Board will be eliminating the mandatory observation of Covid-19 related social distancing measures at their public meetings. In addition, the Planning Board will continue to air the regular meetings on Zoom video conferencing for convenience of those who do not wish to appear in public.*** Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

City of Northfield Planning Board is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

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The meeting was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:00 p.m. with the reading of the Sunshine Law and the roll call. The following were present or absent as noted.

Peter Brophy

Matthew Carney-absent

Council President Pro Tempore Greg Dewees-absent

Councilwoman Carolyn Bucci

Dr. Richard Levitt

Henry Notaro

Dan Reardon
Ron Roegiers-absent
Derek Rowe
Clem Scharff
Jim Shippen-absent
Paul Utts-absent
Joel M. Fleishman, Esq.-Planning Board Solicitor
Matthew Doran, PE, PP-Planning Board Engineer

Mr. Brophy led the flag salute.

The minutes for the September 5, 2024 meeting were approved by voice vote with a motion from Mr. Brophy and a second from Mr. Scharff.

There was one application on the agenda from ACCC Properties, LLC, commonly known as Atlantic City Country Club, involving Block 173 Lot 13, Block 175 Lots 1.01, 2, 48, 54, 17, 5, and 39, and Block 179.01 Lots 1.01, 16,17, and 18, at One Leo Fraser Drive in the C-C Zone for Major Preliminary and Final Site Plan and "c" variance relief in order to expand the ballroom including a new cupola and to obtain sign variance relief for the new signage at the entrance to the country club. The attorney for the applicant was Eric S. Goldstein of Nehmad Davis and Goldstein of Egg Harbor Township. The professional witnesses were all sworn in together and will re-state their names when testifying.

Jon Barnhart, a licensed planner and engineer spoke first. He described the site plan application and said the only variance required for the ballroom is for the length of the building. The ballroom length is permitted to be 240 ft. and they are proposing 385 ft. Mr. Barnhart's credentials were accepted by the Board as he has been before the Board many times. Mr. Barnhart said the site is one of the nicest country clubs in the country and they are very excited about the project. He described recent improvements as restoration of the existing clubhouse, aesthetic manicuring, and parking improvements and it is a wonderful experience as one enters the facility.

Mr. Barnhart said the current banquet space is older and broken up and needs an upgrade to allow it to flow better during functions. They are proposing a 7,000-sf enclosed ballroom addition with nearby outdoor seating, the reconstruction of a pre-existing patio, to construct a new patio and walkways, and landscaping improvements. The ballroom will have 300 seats and the improvements will not add intensity. The second level bridal suite will meet expectations of today's couples.

Mr. Barnhart said the structure only needs one variance for building length plus the cupola which will be 11.2 ft. above the height of the roof ridgeline. This is a very large parcel and the impact is very Di minimus. The banquet room improvement won't be visible if driving by. The other deviations are for signage. There are three bulk variances required. One is for the number of signs where one is permitted and two are proposed (one on each side of the entranceway), the size of the sign where 16 sf is maximum permitted and 45.5 sf for each sign is proposed, and sign setback where 25 ft. is required and 0 ft. is proposed for each sign. The new signage shows a bell on each sign which is historical for the club and the owner recently reconstructed them. They are a little larger than what was previously there and are more ornate and beautiful. The signs are more like a little wall with the bell logo. It is more of a

landscape wall. They have no intent to change the signs from what is existing and the only words on the sign are "1987". Mr. Brophy asked if a permit was required for the signs. Mr. Barnhart did not know the status of that. Mr. Goldstein said since the signs are bigger, a permit would have been required. They will need to get a permit after approved. He noted that they did this work during Covid. They are proposing no new changes and there will be no LED or additional lighting, but they want people to know where to turn onto the site.

Mr. Barnhart said they are proposing a new landscape package around the new structure with low shrubbery around the base. There will be no new site lighting, but there will be some new lighting on the new building. He discussed access and circulation. There will be no parking changes or changes to the driveway. Deliveries will be mostly the same and there will be a specific area for deliveries to the new building. Trash is back of the house and not visible. There will be no new trash enclosure. Trash is collected three times per week and if more is needed, they will increase it. They will screen all mechanicals. If a generator is needed, they will place it on the flat roof which has walls around it.

Mr. Barnhart discussed stormwater and said they are proposing gutters and downspouts which will be directed towards the bay. There is no stormwater study required since there is no new drainage or new parking surfaces. The water will feed the grass on the property. The site is 230 acres and the building is only 7,000 sf. Mr. Goldstein said the solar project helps to keep the site dry now that it is complete. Mr. Barnhart added that there is a drainage swale in the parking area.

Mr. Goldstein said the site plan meets the City Ordinance and there is no detriment to MLUL. Mr. Barnhart said there are no negative aspects and the flexible c(2) variances being sought are minor variances. The project will be a benefit to the community and will make the facility even more beautiful. The signage is more like garden walls than signs.

Councilwoman Bucci asked if there would be two ballrooms. Mr. Barnhart said the new structure will be the one ballroom. The existing ballroom would be a pre-function space. Ms. Bucci asked if there was adequate parking. Mr. Barnhart said they meet the Ordinance for parking and they do have additional stone areas that can be used and they use valet parking. Mr. Brophy asked if there was any wetlands conflict. Mr. Barnhart said they are many feet from the wetlands and the land contains manicured lawns. Mr. Brophy asked if there would be additional bathrooms. Mr. Barnhart said no. Mr. Brophy asked if they were hooked into city sewer. Mr. Barnhart said yes.

Mr. Fleishman labeled the site plan Exhibit A-1. The project's architects addressed the Board next. They were Jay Rockafellow and Morris Clark of DAS Architects in Philadelphia, PA. Mr. Rockafellow described the new architecture. They are keeping the similar design as the existing building and the building will be angled to see views of the golf course and there will be a balcony overlooking into the glass area of the ballroom and staircase. The room will have a lot of glass. Mr. Rockafellow said they will put as many mechanicals in the basement as possible. Mr. Fleishman labeled the sign diagram Exhibit A-2 which were three boards showing architectural renderings of the signs. Mr. Brophy asked about the capacity of the ballroom. Mr. Rockafellow said the capacity is 300 people. Mr. Brophy asked what type of events will be held there. Mr. Clark said mostly weddings and big parties. Nick Borro, General Manager of ACCC said

the room is meant for larger events. Mr. Brophy suggested graduations and prom could also be held there. Mr. Borro said it will be for banquets in general. Mr. Fleishman asked about room dividers. Mr. Borro said there are three or four smaller areas now and they don't intend to divide the room. Mr. Goldstein said the space will be a lot more open. Mr. Rowe asked if the lawn could be used for music events or concerts. Mr. Burro said no, not the lawn itself. The lawn is much too valuable as wedding space. Mr. Rowe said there should be no sound issues. Mr. Scharff asked about a fireplace. Mr. Rockafellow said there is a gas fireplace. Mr. Goldstein added that the property is a unique wedding destination facility and is a hidden gem. Mr. Brophy asked how many weddings they schedule in a year and Mr. Borro said they have 70 to 75 weddings. Mr. Brophy asked if the events conflict with the neighborhood at all. Mr. Borro said they may have an outdoor cocktail hour outside and the rest of the event is indoors. Councilwoman Bucci added that they not take away the beautiful sidewalk. Mr. Borro said they wouldn't do that. Mr. Scharff asked about tents. Mr. Burro said no to this. Mr. Roegiers asked about lighting pollution overlooking the bay. Mr. Rockafellow said the lighting focuses towards the rear of the building and Mr. Clark said the lighting is soft. Mr. Roegiers said it is important to have the lighting lit correctly. Dr. Levitt asked if they were considering any residential development or cottages. Mr. Goldstein said not at this time and that wouldn't interfere with the banquet area.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session. The following residents and public members were sworn in and addressed the Board.

James T. Connell, III (Jay) of 137 Bonnie Lee Drive said he didn't think there would be enough parking for a 200-person event. He asked when the project would start and how much noise would be generated from the construction. He wanted to know how far the building would extend in footage. Mr. Rockafellow said about 75 to 80 ft. Dr. Levitt asked where Mr. Connell lives. He said his property is in the middle of the driving range. Dr. Levitt said the construction is no closer to Shore Road, but slightly closer to his home. Mr. Burro said construction should commence one year from now and will be done seasonally. Dr. Levitt said there was testimony about 300 people being at events and he asked how many there were now. Mr. Burro said 250 to 275 and there are no parking issues. Mr. Goldstein said they exceed the parking requirement now and there would never be 300 cars for one event. Mr. Rowe said if there was a 300-guest wedding would there be concurring events. Mr. Burro said no.

Annamarie Long of 143 Bonnie Lee Drive spoke next. She said there are strobe lights at weddings. It would be helpful if they limit the type of lighting allowed. The events go on until 11:00 p.m. at night. She commented that it seems like the site is changing from a country club to an event site. She asked why they weren't improving the golf course and the clubhouse and asked if it was all about revenue. Mr. Goldstein commented that the beautiful and historic golf course is not being taken away. They are enhancing it. Ms. Long said she has seen the parking lot full and doesn't think they can add more guests. She said weddings are loud and asked if there was a way to soundproof the building. Mr. Goldstein said they will be building to code and there will be a lot of glass. Mr. Clark spoke about the glass area and said the area closer to her home will be more solidly built. Space is what helps with the sound. Glass is better technology and there will be drapes. Mr. Burro added that there be no more outdoor patios. The ceremony and cocktail hour will be outside and then everything else will take place inside. Ms. Long asked about the noticing and what "without further noticing" means. She thought it meant they could

make additional changes without noticing the residents. Mr. Goldstein clarified that this is standard with noticing and “any and all other variances deemed necessary” is for this hearing only in case something unforeseen came up in that it could be worked out at this hearing and they would not have to come back. That is not the case here.

Sara Janosik spoke next. She resides at 143 Bonnie Lee Drive. She stated that no one is thinking about the neighborhood. The events are loud and there are strobe lights. The new addition will be closer to her home. People from out of town will need hotels. This is a special neighborhood and she is afraid of the effects. They already have danger from golf balls and this will increase the danger and the value of the neighborhood. There is too much light and noise. Mr. Barnhart helped her to understand the site plan by pointing out areas of the plan. Mr. Brophy said they should take up issues with golf balls and light with the management. Ms. Long said the owners do respond to damage complaints and they do pay for them. There has been siding damage as well. She has lived there for 6 months and the neighborhood has been there a long time.

Ronald C. Gove, MD who resides at 1000 Argo Lane has been in the area since 1976 and built his house in 1983. There are two more homes being built nearby. He has had one window broken in all that time. He feels there is no intrusion and almost no damage. There have been no issues with his swimming pool and he has no issues with their sound system. He never hears any music and he has good hearing. The venue does not affect his lifestyle and he has no complaints. It is a quiet venue and the new management is great. He does recognize that Bonnie Lee Drive is closer to the banquet area, but he thinks the project will be a plus.

Joseph Hughes of 9 Casey Drive spoke next. He is a neighbor to the golf course and he loves it here. There is no noise issue and he supports it. He wants to see the club rise to a new level. He loves the wonderful golf course and they are doing a fantastic job. They are great neighbors and more than accommodating.

Dr. Levitt added that this is an area the Planning Board and City have always looked at closely. There have always been concerns that they would break up the land and build housing. It is desirable that there be a golf course there into the future. If they build cottages, it is conditional that there is an 18-hole golf course associated with it.

Jim Frasier spoke next. He has lived near the golf course and knows that golf balls are a risk you take. There have been parties on the site since 1899. The new owner and staff want to reserve what they have there. They have maintained it and made it better. They are very accommodating to the neighbors and he approves.

Jay Connell added that Dr. Gove will never hear the noise as he is too far away. The music is very loud and he wants to hear less noise.

Dr. Levitt said there is testimony that there will be insulation on the Bonnie Lee Drive side. Hopefully there will be a buffer and the Noise Ordinance in Northfield is 11:00 p.m.

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

Mr. Goldstein gave a few closing arguments. Mr. Brophy asked if there would be any trees removed. Mr. Goldstein said no. Mr. Doran said the Ordinance states that the address must be on the signs and must be lit. Mr. Burro said there is on light on each sign and they are proposing no changes. Dr. Levitt said he understands the Ordinance, but adding anything to the current signage will not be attractive. Mr. Doran said they will require a waiver. Mr. Doran added that this site is a blended use and they do comply. He agrees with the testimony and they have two extra parking spaces than required. He added that any new mechanicals will have to be screened if it is outside and he said it should be in the resolution. Mr. Goldstein agreed.

Mr. Scharff made the motion for the preliminary and final site plan for the length of the building of 385 ft. where 240 ft. is permitted and they do not need a variance for the height of the cupola. There are "c" bulk variances for the signs with a "0" ft. setback, for maximum allowable sign area of 45.5 sf where 16 ft. is permitted and a design waiver to omit the address on the signs. If Shore Road is widened, they would have to move the signs back. Mr. Goldstein said they would need county approval as well. Mr. Brophy added that they would have to come back before the Board for any necessary sign changes or variances. The lighting for the signs will be ground-lit lighting and not aimed at traffic. All outside mechanicals will be screened. Mr. Roegiers seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows with comments:

Mr. Brophy-yes; The improvements will be an enhancement to the country club

Councilwoman Buccia- yes; the expansion at the country club fits in well with our plans for economic growth because it brings more people to Northfield who will patronize our businesses

Mr. Notaro-yes; This is a productive addition to ACCC

Mr. Reardon-yes; This is a good project and a good enhancement. He agreed with Mr. Fraiser's testimony

Mr. Roegiers-yes; This is positive to both Northfield and ACCC

Mr. Rowe-yes; The proposed addition will fit with the present use and is important to the area and a feather in Northfield's cap

Mr. Scharff-yes; He is in favor of the project, and with most of the activities indoors, this will help with noise

Chairman Levitt-yes; The pros far outweigh the cons and he feels this will be a minimum impact to the neighbors, but he does understand their concerns

The motion passes.

There was one resolution on the agenda for Jenine Avellini for a "c" variance for an addition. This is for Block 144, Lot 18 at 18 Fairway Avenue. The voice vote was all in favor. Abstentions were: Mayor Chau, Mr. Scharff, Mr. Shippen, Mr. Notaro, Mr. Roegiers, Mr. Reardon.

Dr. Levitt opened a public session and there was no one who wished to speak.

Dr. Levitt said the Master Plan sub-committee did a great job and the Board will review at the next meeting on November 7, 2024. He commented that Mr. Doran did a lot of work and resource number tracking.

There was a motion to close the meeting by Mr. Scharff with a second from Mr. Roegiers. Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board