

**City of Northfield Planning Board**  
**1600 Shore Road**  
**Northfield, New Jersey 08225**  
**Telephone (609) 641-2832, ext. 127**  
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August 1, 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 July 23, 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, August 1, 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.

Topic: City of Northfield Planning Board

Time: Aug 1, 2024 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

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The meeting was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:04 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  
Mayor Erland Chau-absent  
Councilwoman Carolyn Bucci-absent  
Dr. Richard Levitt  
Henry Notaro-absent  
Dan Reardon  
Ron Roegiers  
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.

Mr. Scharff made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 11, 2024 meeting. Mr. Brophy seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor of approval.

There was one application on the agenda from Vida Homes, LLC, Block 106 Lot 8, 207 Northfield Avenue for a minor subdivision and conditional use variance. Leo T. Manos of Northfield was the attorney for the applicant. Mr. Manos addressed the Board and said the existing lot consists of the Good Shepherd Methodist Church and is currently 89,412 sf and this lot will be reduced to 61,890 sf after the subdivision. Aside from the church building, there exists a masonry garage shed and a two-story house. Dr. Levitt asked who lives there. Mr. Manos said Lennea Swenson, who is the caretaker of the church, lives in the home. The witnesses, Vince Orlando, PE, PP, Plamen Petkov, the developer, and Pastor Nicole Troast were sworn in.

Mr. Manos said the property is in the R-2 zone. There was an application in March of 2022 for the expansion of the Retinal eye medical facility (Webster application). There were a few hearings and it eventually was withdrawn in July 2022 after opposition from the neighbors. Mr. Manos said they are now proposing Lots 8.01 (the church and existing structures), and two new lots 8.02 and 8.03. He said nothing will change on Lot 8.01 except for the reduction in the size of the lot. Next to it to the left would be the new lots. The zone permits single-family development and the minimum required Lot Area is 7,500 sf and they are proposing lot 8.02 to be 13,521 sf and Lot 8.03 to be 14,000 sf. There is no variance relief required and they are fully conforming.

Mr. Orlando has been an engineer and landscape architect for 40 years and his credentials were accepted by the Board. He discussed a flag piece of land, which is 6.84 ft. behind proposed Lot 8.02, that is remaining as part of 8.01 which is the church lot. Dr. Levitt said that this could create a problem in the future and he wants the lot to be clean and squared off. The land should be reassigned to Lot 8.02. It

only involves 478 sf. Mr. Orlando agreed and said 45% is permitted and Lot Coverage will now be 45.35%. Mr. Fleishman clarified and said they will need a Lot Coverage variance for Lot 8.01 for .35%. Lot 8.02 will increase and Pastor Troast said she agreed and said she doesn't want to maintain it.

Mr. Manos discussed the conditional use variance prongs for a place of worship. They meet all the conditions (A through G) except for one. Places of worship require 5 acres and it is currently non-conforming. They are proposing 1.42 acres. Mr. Manos said nothing is changing on the proposed church lot. The current grass area will become two lots where two single family homes will be built. This will require a d(3) variance.

Dr. Levitt asked Pastor Troast what day of the year yields the biggest parking demand. She said Easter but there is only one service. Mr. Orlando said there are 25 pews for a total of 2,712 inches which translates to 20 inches per seat and 135 seats total. He asked what the maximum service would be and she said 125 seats. She added that last Easter there were 74 people in attendance and 30 to 40 people is average for most services.

Parking and the parking lot were discussed. Mr. Fleishman labeled the plan Exhibit A-1 and the 3 photos Exhibit A-2. Mr. Brophy asked about the eye center parking. The pastor said they are still utilizing the parking lot and will continue to do so. The proceeds from the land sale can only be used for capital improvements so they will improve the parking area. Mr. Orlando said there are 55 parking spaces on site. Mr. Orlando said his calculation says they need 54 spaces. Mr. Brophy asked if the triangular area could be used to address the parking situation. Pastor Troast said they hadn't thought about improving that area. The area has many trees.

Mr. Manos discussed the two-story home. Lennea Swenson lives there and she takes care of church maintenance and it has always been used as part of the church. They will not rent to a third party. If it is rented, it becomes a taxable entity and they can't sell it because it is part of the church. The pastor said she allows AA groups to have meetings there as well as the Cub Scouts. They have a special room for this.

Dr. Levitt asked about drainage. Mr. Orlando said there has not been a problem during a storm event. Dr. Levitt said if the parking lot is paved it will affect drainage. Mr. Orlando said they don't want resurfacing to have an impact on drainage. He would recommend gravel and bumper stops. He didn't think they should pave the grass/dirt area. Dr. Levitt said if there is any expansion of seating in the church, they will need to come back to the Board to show adequate parking availability. Pastor Troast said she doesn't have an inch to put in more seating. She added that there is a driveway and parking available where the house is as well.

Mr. Manos asked Mr. Manos to discuss conditional uses, special reasons, and to give positive and negative feedback. He said the property is well suited for single-family homes, will provide adequate light, air and open space and the property will not be over-developed. He spoke about four purposes of zoning that will be advanced. Item "A" addresses the promotion of general welfare and that exists here with oversized lots, and they will be providing two new homes in a nice neighborhood. Item "G" deals with providing a variety of uses with both the church and residential homes. This is a good residential

balance and both uses will be improved. Item "N" deals with private and public uses of the land that will be more efficient and cost effective. Mr. Orlando spoke of negative impacts and said there is no detriment to the zone plan. This is a conditional permitted use with no negatives, and the bulk standards are being met. The lots are not over developed and there is no detriment to the neighborhood. The neighborhood will not be affected and the church will proceed as normal. The homes will conform and will be modestly built. He said the testimony is the same for the "c" variance for a slight increase in lot coverage. Mr. Manos said only the church needs the d(3) variance and under MLUL the church is an inherently beneficial use and lot 8.01 is well suited for this use.

Mr. Petkov said the new homes will be stick built 2,000 sf houses with double garages with a driveway. They will be two story and architecturally will blend with the neighborhood. The homes will meet all the setbacks on site. He plans to have the homes close to the street and provide 120 ft. backyards. The driveways will be straight to the garages. The homes will be 40 ft. wide and will include the garages which will have bedrooms above them. They will also comply with curbs, sidewalks, and shade trees. They asked the Board to waive sidewalks on Fuae Avenue. There are sidewalks in front of the church and they will continue the sidewalk from the church driveway for about 25 ft. to keep it continuous on Northfield Avenue and in front of the new homes. Mr. Roegiers asked if there could be a fence where the cars are parked on the church lot. Mr. Orlando said Lot 8.02 could put up a fence and not impact the church parking. Mr. Rowe clarified the acreage of the church to be 2.053 acres currently and 1.42 acres proposed.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session. No one wished to speak and there was no one on Zoom. Dr. Levitt closed the public session.

Mr. Scharff questioned whether there should be a parking setback variance since the church parking is next to a residential lot and there should be a distance of 50 ft. Dr. Levitt said the lot is unlined and not definable. Mr. Fleishman asked if they were leaving it as dirt or stone. Mr. Orlando said it will be a mixture of dirt and stone and they plan to re-stone the area. Mr. Fleishman suggested bumper stops especially if they will be installing a fence. There are roughly 17 parking spaces there.

Dr. Levitt asked the pastor about security lighting. She said there is none, but she has applied for a Homeland Security grant and if it is approved, she will provide security lighting.

Dr. Levitt re-opened the public session since he became aware that some members of the public did not realize the public session had been opened and closed.

Donald Edwards of 208 Infield Avenue was sworn in and had concerns that they are seeking a second variance. The problem with the church site is the parking. They allow the Retinal eye doctor's office employees to park there and there are 14 to 28 cars parked there during the week. He felt they are not nice people and they have to listen to door lock openers all day long. They park 15 ft. to 25 ft. from his fence. He felt that the Retinal eye center had outgrown their business long ago and they are using the church parking lot for commercial purposes. He commented that they have been fighting this parking issue for a long time. He commented that the AA meetings take place at 6 a.m. on Sunday mornings and they play loud music. Mr. Brophy asked if he had discussed this with the pastor. He said he has and they

are friends. His point is that the parking should be for church use only. Dr. Levitt said the office building would have been much more of an impact. Mr. Edwards said he doesn't want parking in his backyard.

Miriam Boudreau was sworn in and said she lives at 210 Infield Avenue. She didn't understand where 55 parking spots came from. Dr. Levitt said it is theoretical since it is not lined. She said people park on the grass and gravel. She felt that headlights and parking are too close to the residential homes. They have AA meetings two to three times a week, Zumba, and Boy Scout meetings. She realizes these things are vital to the community but the parking is a mess. They have Chicos to deal with and Jersey Cow who both have parking issues and now this. She asked the Board to take this opportunity to rectify the situation. She had concerns with what could happen if the church is sold. Dr. Levitt said it is zoned residential so it could not become something more intense. Mrs. Boudreau discussed Ordinance 215-18 that states that no conforming lot can be reduced in size. Mr. Fleishman said they are asking for a d(3) deviation from that and the new lots will be residential. Mrs. Boudreau added that multiple use parking lots are not allowed. That is why Tilton Market put up chains.

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

Mr. Manos gave a brief summary of the application. He said denying the application doesn't alleviate any of the parking concerns. Dr. Levitt encouraged Pastor Troast to keep as little impact to the neighbors as she can. Mr. Orlando said there are trees at the back of the property and there is no undergrowth. They can add some evergreens 6 ft. and under and they would be willing to make that a condition. Dr. Levitt suggested Mr. Doran review conditions of buffering and a landscape plan from Mr. Orlando and they should consider adding evergreens that require very little maintenance. Mr. Doran said they covered everything in his report.

Mr. Scharff made the motion for the d(3) variance for two primary uses on one lot (the church use and the single-family dwelling) and a conditional use variance for the acreage where 5 acres is required for a place of worship and 1.42 acres is proposed. Mr. Roegiers seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Brophy-yes; it was a good move

Mr. Reardon-yes; the testimony full addressed the issues and the testimony was fully addressed both positive and negative criteria

Mr. Roegiers-yes; they addressed the positive and negative criteria and the use is justified

Mr. Rowe-yes; the applicant demonstrated that the benefits outweigh any negatives and it will be good fit for the neighborhood

Mr. Scharff-yes; the application meets the necessary bulk variances and the church operates as a viable community center

Chairman Levitt-yes; the reduction in the size of the lot does not affect the use of the property. There is no need for that large of a lot for the way the church operates with the current seating.

The motion carries.

The second vote was for the Minor Subdivision, a "c" variance for Lot Area for Lot 8.01 for .35% over the allowed percentage of 45% and for the following conditions:

Buffering Evergreens at the rear of the two new properties with Mr. Doran to review the landscape plan  
Extended sidewalks between the new lots and the church existing sidewalk but not to include the area  
along Fuae Avenue

Required shade trees on the new lots

Increase the stones on the dirt and stone parking areas and install car bumpers

If the church seating increases, they must come back to the Board due to a different parking ratio

Mr. Scharff made the motion and Mr. Roegiers seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Brophy-yes

Mr. Reardon-yes

Mr. Roegiers-yes

Mr. Rowe-yes

Mr. Scharff-yes

Chairman Levitt-yes

The motion carries.

There were two resolutions to memorialize. The first was for Julie & Michael Pepper, Block 85, Lot 4 at 114 Mt. Vernon Avenue for "c" variance relief a setback variance for an existing pool filter. Abstentions were Mr. Carney, Mr. Roegiers, and Mr. Reardon. The voice vote was all in favor. The second was for Jessica Joseph, Block 85, Lot 4 at 55 W. Yorkshire Avenue for "c" variance relief for a second-story addition. Abstentions were Mr. Carney, Mr. Roegiers, and Mr. Reardon. The voice vote was all in favor.

Mr. Roegiers made the motion to close the meeting and Mr. Brophy seconded the motion. Chairman Levitt closed the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board