

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD MEETING
Tuesday August 25, 2020

Present:

Chairman Larry Lonergan

Ms. Melissa Collins

Mayor Jack McEvoy

Ms. Jessica Pearson

Mr. Tim Camuti

Mr. David Freschi

Ashley Neale, Planning Board Secretary

Mr. Jim Kirby

Deputy Mayor Alex Roman

Mr. Jason Hyndman

Mr. Steven Neale

Mr. Al DeOld

Mr. Greg Mascera, Planning Board Attorney

Mr. Glen Beckmeyer, Township Engineer

Meeting called to order at 6:35 P.M. by Chairman Lonergan. This meeting was held via Zoom Video Conferencing due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman Lonergan reads Open Public Meetings Act Statement and explains how the public can raise their virtual hands to participate in the meeting.

Public Hearing

Chairman Lonergan asks if anyone from the public would like to address the board on topics not on this meeting's agenda. No public participation.

Continuation of Hearing Site Plan & Minor Subdivision Application 2020-02

Ms. Coffey, the applicants attorney, briefly catches the Board up on what was covered at the last meeting. She introduces the first witness, Ms. Jaquelin Camp of WRT Design, as the projects architect. Mr. Mascera swears her in as an expert witness.

Exhibit B7- Benecke Economics Signage Clarification Memo dated 8-25-2020, was marked into the record.

Ms. Camp briefly explains her qualifications and background to the Board. Ms. Camp begins by going through exhibit A-3, describing the positions of the buildings on the property. She continues by describing the ground floor of building A, pointing out the lobby, compacting room, and elevators. She notes, at each end of the building, there are emergency egress stairs that also exit to the parking lot side of the building. She adds, in the central portion of the building, there's a trash room at each floor that connects to trash chutes so that residents can drop their trash off on their floor. Ms. Camp testifies that there are 16 one-bedroom, 53 two-bedroom and two three-bedroom units in Building A. She continues by adding, they are four-story wood-framed buildings. They will be fully sprinklered to the NFPA 13R standard. They're designed to be certified under the Energy Star energy-efficiency standard and, also, under Enterprise Green Communities, which is another standard for environmental sustainability in buildings. Mechanical systems for the building are all located on the roof and screened by a parapet wall on the roof so that they really will not be visible to anyone from the ground. Ms. Camp notes that each unit has a balcony.

Ms. Camp describes buildings B and C by stating the following. They each have 12 units within them. They are entered from the parking lot into an open breezeway that, allows residents to either enter right at the ground floor or climb a stair within that breezeway to their entries, and again, in this building, each of the units has

either at patio or a balcony off their unit and mechanical equipment, similar to Building A, the mechanical equipment is located on the roof and screened by a parapet wall.

Ms. Coffey continues by addressing the comment the Township officials had relating to architecture. Ms. Coffey addresses exhibit B2 comment 8D, asking if residents would have access to the roof and how the roof door would be secured. Ms. Camp notes that the resident would not have access to the roof, the doors would be locked and only building maintenance would have access. Comment 8F asks if basements are proposed in the buildings. Ms. Camp states there are no proposed basements for any of the buildings. Comment 9B asks about mechanical equipment and what screening is necessary. Ms. Camp responds that all mechanical equipment is proposed to be on the roof with a 4foot parapet wall surrounding it.

Ms. Coffey moves to exhibit B6, comment number 5, asking if balconies are provided and if they are shared between residents. Ms. Camp states that each unit has its own private balcony and none are intended to be shared. Ms. Coffey moves to exhibit B1, comment number 11, asking if energy related components are proposed for the buildings. Ms. Camp mentions the buildings are designed to be certified under the Energy Star program and, also, under Enterprise Green Communities, and that the building will have high-performance envelopes with the required levels of insulation, high-efficiency mechanical systems and ventilation systems. Ms. Coffey notes that comment number 18, asks the applicant consult with the Verona Rescue Squad on elevator sizes, to make sure they can fit a stretcher, and the applicant will comply with this request. Ms. Coffey moves to exhibit B5, comment number 7, regarding HVAC equipment being screened. As Ms. Camp has testified all mechanics on the roof are screened by a parapet wall.

Chairman Lonergan asks if the Board has any questions for this expert. Mr. Hyndman asks if putting solar panels on the buildings was considered. Ms. Schwager responds that because the solar panel program in New Jersey is always changing, due to the cost, PHIRL typically considers this closer to the start of construction. Mr. Hyndman asks the thought behind not having an entrance to the building on the Bloomfield Avenue side. Ms. Camp notes that for security reasons having one central entrance that can be monitored, who was entering and exiting the building before they got to the elevators made more sense. Mr. Camuti asks what the difference in amenities would be for residents in building A versus buildings B and C. Ms. Camp notes that all amenities in the development would be offered to all residents. Mr. Camuti asks where the laundry is located for buildings B and C. Ms. Camp testifies that each unit has their own washer and dryer.

Deputy Mayor Roman asks about fire suppression in the buildings. Ms. Camp responds with, they'll be sure that they have the appropriate fire partitions between units, the fire stopping in any common spaces or attic spaces, they will have all of the appropriate fire stopping and code-required partitions and separation. The applicant does intend to provide standpipes in the stairs in the mid-rise building, which are not actually required in the NFPA 13R but are typical to the way that PHIRL does their sprinkler system. Ms. Pearson asks, since it was testified that all residents will have access to all amenities, is there a master key they will have. Ms. Schwager notes that there is a key fob system that would allow all resident to get into building A and the shared amenities, but not into any management offices or other units.

Mr. Neale asks any thought had been put into installing EV charging stations on the property. Ms. Schwager notes that because this is an affordable housing project, the extra funding it not there to install such charging stations, and it would be unlikely the residents would possess an electric vehicle. Mr. Neale asks if conduits could be installed for possible future installation. Ms. Schwager states she could explore it. Mr. Freschi asks about the exterior materials. Ms. Schwager responds that most of these choices are made closer to actual construction and dependent on the overall cost of the project and materials.

There is some discussion again on the placement of the trash enclosure for the residents of buildings B and C. Mr. DeOld asks for a breakdown of the number of 1, 2 and three bedroom units in each building. Ms. Camp responds by stating, building A is the largest building. It has 71 units. There are 16 one-bedroom, 53 two-

bedroom and 2 three-bedroom, and then, in buildings B and C, have actually the same unit count. There are 12 units in each building and they're all three-bedroom units. Deputy Mayor Roman notes that his concern for the overall appearance of the building is that everything is very hard edged, and how does it fit into the Township streetscape. Ms. Camp respond that they were really just looking to create community between these buildings and give them their own character. She adds that, she understands that there are as many opinions about architecture as there are buildings but in thier mind, this was a very contemporary, well designed, well-balanced, clean approach that we think fits right into the genre of multi-family buildings and architecture. Ms. Schawger notes that they would be happy to sit down with the Council again, to discuss the design elements that are not agreeable.

Chairman Lonergan asks if anyone from the public has questions for this witness. Christy DiBartolo from 34 Oakridge Road, asks is any thought had been given to engaging Bloomfield Avenue. Ms. Camp responds by stating, the site offered the opportunity to engage with Bloomfield Avenue and it was certainly one of the things that we explored when we were looking at opportunities to get the unit count that was the goal of the community onto the site and have that work with the logical places for access to and from the site and the logical places to park the site and, then, have access to the buildings from the parking areas and the combination of the site topography and the mature trees at the corner that they were hoping this be able to preserve as part of the site and that, primarily, they needed accessible routes from the places where people would be arriving and parking their cars on the site because it is a community where vehicular access is going to take priority. It just ended up being a better use of the site.

Chairman Lonergan calls for a recess at 8:17 PM. The Board reconvenes at 8:30 PM.

Ms. Coffey calls the next witness, Mr. Jason Tronco of Melillo and Bauer, as the landscape architect on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Mascera swears him in as an expert. Mr. Tronco briefly describes is qualifications and background.

Mr. Tronco begins his testimony by describing exhibit A2 to the Board. He testifies that the landscape plan has been prepared in accordance with the redevelopment plan. The site has been planted with species taken from the Verona recommended plant list, Ordinance 15011-7. Native plantings have been provided, most of them are pollinator plants and plants that provide habitat. The native plant material includes shade trees, evergreen trees, ornamental trees and major shade trees that are native to the area. The buffers have been planted with evergreen trees 8 to 10 foot in height and mostly concentrated along the eastern property line. The perimeter has also been planted with a seed mix of blue tall fescue. The tall fescue minimizes the need for fertilizers and it also helps to control nonindigenous species on the site.

He continues, the two bio-retention basin are planted with a variety of seed mixes and they're exclusive to their location within the basin. What I mean by that is a plant that tolerate more inundation or like wet feet are located in the low point of the basin. In addition, the roadways and parking areas throughout the development have been tree-lined with major shade trees. He notes multiple outdoor seating locations and a children's play area are also included in the plan.

He adds, the project identification sign is located at the entry of Linn Drive constructed of a masonry base with an attractive sign panel with raised aluminum letters and they are backlit. The two-sided sign is approximately 21 square foot in size, which is consistent with the redevelopment plan. Ms. Coffey notes that at the last meeting there was some discussion on the size of the sign, and exhibit B7 reads, "This office would like to clarify that the intention of the above-mentioned section was to allow for a 4-by-6 double-sided sign, which is, approximately, 24 square feet per side, and allow for trim for a total of up to 26 square feet in area per side. This is a standard sign size with the purpose of double-sided being for pedestrians and vehicles to easily identify the location," for the record.

Ms. Coffey addresses comment 11A from exhibit B2, regarding a red oak tree in the sight triangle. Mr. Testifies that it will be relocated. Mr. Beckmeyer questions the root structure on red oaks, noting he does not want any lifting or damage to municipal sidewalks. Mr. Tronco notes that this species has cap roots that contain a central root that primarily grows down. Ms. Coffey continues with comment C, asking for testimony of the roots of pin oaks and the nearby retaining walls. Mr. Tronco notes they have a less lateral root system, but they can look into shifting them for more separation. Comment E, testimony regarding red maples in bio-retention basins. Mr. Tronco states, these were selected specifically for these basins as they tolerate wet feet. Comment F regarding sawleaf zelkova is suitable for installation next to MH403. Mr. Tronco notes the zelkova will be switched for a more native species and shifted away from drainage structures.

Chairman Lonergan asks if any Board members have comments for the witness. Mr. Freschi asks about the landscape maintenance plan. Mr. Tronco responds, everything will be irrigated. They have specified draught tolerant species so they do control the amount of the water that they're going to be using on site. Our maintenance plan will be, incorporated the set to replace any trees that die and anything that struggles will be taken care of. Mr. Hyndman asks if there is identified bike storage on the plan. Ms. Schwager notes that the developer always finds places on the property for adequate bike storage, although it is not included on this plan. Mr. Hyndman asks about the fencing around the playground area. Mr. Tronco responds by stating, currently, the play area, they have some evergreen shrubs surrounding the play area and there isn't a fence proposed. PIRHL is open to the possibility of doing a small fence and we're also open to kind of bulking-up that landscaping.

Chairman Lonergan asks if anyone from the public had any questions for the witness. Seeing none he continues.

Ms. Coffey calls the applicants next witness, Mr. Maurice Rached, a traffic engineer from Maser Consulting. Mr. Mascera swears him in as an expert on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Rached briefly describes his qualifications and background for the Board.

Mr. Rached testifies they're providing 143 parking spaces, and that complies with the redevelopment plan. The plan says 1 and a half space per unit. They have 37 for the smaller buildings and 106 for the larger building and the right number for the accessible parking spaces. He adds, this development is for 95 units. What they do, in this case, they go to the Institute of Transportation Engineers and conduct a trip generation analysis. The analysis concluded for AM peak, an anticipation of about ten cars to be coming in and 35 cars to be leaving. In the PM peak, you have somewhat of a reversal where there would have 35 cars coming in and 21 leaving. He continues by stating, the impact would be less from this development than the preexisting and we did not account for the little structure with the two stories that will generate, potentially, more traffic than this whole development would, So in terms of trip generation, this is minor.

Mr. Rached addresses the Mayors previous concerns about the property becoming a cut through. He notes if drivers cut through and, then, make a left on Pine, they would end up at the five point, and at the five point, the traffic signal at Pine has more delay than the traffic signal has at Linn Drive so no one would be doing themselves any favor by doing the cut-through. However, they did take your comment very seriously, and are going to put signs and markings at the driveway on Pine Street.

Ms. Coffey begins address comment from exhibit B2, comment 10C regarding mass transportation being considered. Mr. Rached responds that, it has but not in the analysis to be conservative. In other words, had they considered mass transit, the numbers he gave would have been reduced by 20 or 30 percent. Comment D, asks what is the impact of the traffic on Linn Drive and what is the impact, ultimately, on Bloomfield Avenue? And the answer is: The impact Linn Drive and on Bloomfield Avenue is negligible and the reason is the low trip generation.

There is some discussion between the Board and Mr. Rached regarding traffic at the Linn Drive and Bloomfield Avenue light, specifically during games or other events at the Community Center. Mr. Rached notes that I an

existing condition that they cannot change, and that any events at the Community Center would most likely not coincide with peak trips in and out of the development.

Mayor McEvoy asks if there was a possibility to put a slightly raised island in the driveway to deter anyone from not following the signs and obeying traffic patterns. Mr. Rached responds that they did look into that has a possibility but ultimately determined there was not enough space there. Ms. Coffey notes that the applicant would be happy to consent to Title 39 to give the municipality police access to the site for purposes of enforcing any traffic requirements. Mayor McEvoy asks how parking is regulated for each unit. Ms. Schwager responds that, they start off with non-assigned spots but we have a requirement with each resident that they register their vehicle with us and if it becomes a problem they're assigned a space based on whether they're going to have one car or two cars. She also notes that there are lease restrictions that only allow vehicles used on a daily basis to park on the property. Mr. Hyndman asks Mr. Rached about walkability to the bus stop, Mr. Rached noted that he had conducted measurements from each building and they are more than walkable distances. Mr. Freschi asks about the pedestrian traffic on Pine Street. Mr. Rached notes he doesn't think that a lot of people would be crossing at that intersection.

There is discussion amongst the Board about the traffic data presented, and how it compares to past developments data, what is required and allowed under the redevelopment plans. There is discussion on the current traffic patterns in the area and concerns about it becoming worse, even though the traffic engineer is stating that it will not be effected.

Chairman Lonergan asks if anyone from the public has comments for the witness. John Verzella from 130 Personette Avenue, asks if there was a thought to eliminate the entrance on Pine Street. Mr. Rached responds by stating, No. I think, if we eliminate the entrance on Pine, that means the only entrance and exit would be on Linn and they want to give two opportunities for people to enter and leave this development rather than one. Mr. Verzella asks if the exit onto Linn Drive can be a no right turn. Mr. Rached notes there would be no reason to limit that there is no other exit off on Linn Drive.

George Manousos from 37 Forest Avenue, asks for clarification on the AM and PM trip numbers. He notes asks if Ube and Lyft pick ups and drop offs were considered, as well as deliveries and possible residents requiring healthcare throughout the day. Mr. Rached notes that all things were considered. Mr. Manounos recommends the Board get a 3rd party traffic study done.

Michael Duda, from 55 Depot Street, asks about making the exit on Pine Street an exit only. Mr. Rached notes that he doesn't think that would be necessary or see anyone accessing Depot Street to enter the property.

There is discussion about finishing with the last witness or adjourning and completing the application at the next meeting given the time. There is also discussion on having a resolution prepared so that the Board is able to vote on the application and resolution at the next meeting, due to the time constraints the applicant is under for tax credit purposes.

Mr. Camuti asks to make a motion to continue with the last witness tonight, Mr. Hyndman seconds all others voted in favor. A 5 minute break was taken.

Ms. Coffey calls the applicants final witness, Ms. Shawna Ebanks, a professional planner. Mr. Mascera swears her in as an expert witness. Ms. Ebanks briefly describes her qualification and background to the Board.

Ms. Coffey summarizes the deviation they are seeking regarding the setback for the shed on the property. The shed in the plans is 10 feet and the ordinance calls for 20 feet. She also notes, the redevelopment plan does not have any specific setback requirements with respect to an accessory structure like a shed in a front yard setback. Ms. Ebanks testifies it is in her professional opinion, that the shape of the lot is irregular and it contributes to the

reason why they need a deviation. Ms. Coffey notes, the shed is properly screened by the proposed landscaping and the proposed design of the shed is also aesthetically pleasing and it's compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. She also notes that there is over 40 feet from the shed and the curb line of Linn Drive.

Mr. Mascera asks for clarification on the C1hardship. Ms.Coffey notes, per Ms. Ebanks testimony, two different components of the property configuration that impact or create the hardship. One is the frontage on three streets creating, arguably, three front yards, and secondly, that because of the way the right of way the it cuts in such that, although, there's 40 feet from the shed to the curb line, it is, in fact, 10 feet from the edge of the property.

Chairman Lonergan asks if anyone from the public has questions for this witness. No public participation.

Chairman Lonergan asks for a motion to carry the application to a special meeting on Tuesday, September 1 at 6:30 PM. Mayor McEvoy makes the motion, Ms. Collins seconds. All present vote in favor.

Adjourn

After a motion made by Ms. Collins and seconded by Mr. Camuti, there was a unanimous vote to adjourn at 11:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Neale
Planning Board Secretary

PLEASE NOTE: Meeting minutes are a summation of the hearing. If you are interested in a verbatim transcript from this or any proceeding, please contact the Planning Board office at 973-857-4805.