

MINUTES - PLANNING BOARD

Workshop meeting of March 6, 2019

WORKSHOP PORTION. Ms. Murray called the workshop portion of the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

1. COMMUNICATIONS

None

2. RESOLUTIONS OF MEMORIALIZATION

1. Application # PBA-18-00009
Union County College
1033 Springfield Avenue, Block: 121 Lot: 2.01, Zone: E-1
Applicant in this matter is requesting capital improvements and preliminary and final site plan review to build a condenser unit and a cooling tower on the roof of the library building.

After discussion, a motion to adopt the Resolution of Memorialization for PBA-18-00009 was made by Ms. Feder, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. Application # PBA-18-00006
National Christmas Tree Products Inc. d/b/a National Tree Company
70 Jackson Drive, Block 637 Lot 6.01, C-1 Zone
Applicant in this matter is seeking amended preliminary and final site plan approval.

After discussion a motion to adopt the Resolution of Memorialization for 70 Jackson Drive was made by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed on unanimous voice vote

3. MINUTES

Motion to adopt minutes of the January 30, 2019, Executive Session & Official Meeting was made by Ms. Feder, seconded by Ms. Anderson and passed on unanimous voice vote. Deputy Mayor Dooley abstained.

Motion to adopt minutes of the February 6, 2019, Executive Session & Official Meeting, as amended, was made by Mr. Cossa, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed on unanimous voice vote.

4. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

5. Motion for the Board to move into executive session was made Mr. Cossa, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed on unanimous voice vote.

Motion for Board to return to open session was made by Dr. Chapman, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed on unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING - ROOM 107

1. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Ms. Murray called a public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board to order on March 6, 2019 at 8:12 p.m. in Room 107 of the Municipal Building, 8 Springfield Avenue, Cranford, New Jersey. Ms. Lenahan announced this meeting is in compliance with the "Open Public Meetings Act" as adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by publishing of the Board's annual schedule of meetings in the Westfield Leader and the Star Ledger with the agenda specifying the time, place and matters to be heard having been posted on a bulletin Board in the Town Hall reserved for such announcements and the filing of said agenda with the Township Clerk of Cranford. Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

2. FLAG SALUTE

3. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Ms. Murray
Ms. Anderson
Dr. Chapman
Mr. Cossa
Deputy Mayor Dooley
Ms. Feder
Mayor Giblin
Ms. Pedde
Mr. Taylor

Members Absent:

None

Alternates Present:

Mr. Aschenbach
Ms. Didzbalis

Alternates Absent:

None

Also present:

Mark Rothman, Esquire, Kathy Lenahan, Administrator/Scribe

4. Application # PBA-17-00004- Continued from January 30, 2019

**Hartz Mountain Industries
750 Walnut Avenue
Block: 541, Lot: 2, C-3 Zone**

Applicant is seeking to rezone the subject property to eliminate the office and warehousing uses in favor of multi-family residential use (§136-13).

James Brunette appeared and was sworn in. His credentials were presented to the Board and he was accepted as an expert witness in the field of Real Estate Consulting in Commercial Real Estate. He is testifying for the Township.

He testified to the following through questions posed by Mr. Rothman:

He is familiar with the 750 Walnut application. He has a relative who is an independent contractor working as a Facilities Manager with LabCorp. He has been in LabCorp and the industrial area of the site. He has been at all the meetings except the first one which he watched on TV35. He heard the testimony of the Hartz witnesses about the difficulty in leasing space at the site. LabCorp is a tenant that occupies 85,000 sq. ft. in one of the buildings. They will be moving when their lease expires in July. He has been involved with commercial real estate in this area for 50 years. Stated the commercial office market is improving, vacancy rate in 2006-2008 was around 25%, now it is around 15-16%. The industrial market is on fire. There is a need for warehouse/distribution space. Vacancy rate for industrial space is below 5%. Site has some shortcomings, but it is not rendering it into inutility. Presented a series of slides marked Exhibit Brunette 1, which showed a flyer from the Hartz website, of current office space at 750 Walnut. Also had information from Costar and LoopNet. Discussed Saddleback Realty who buys obsolete buildings and retrofits them to sell or lease in smaller square footages. Market trends are between 5000 – 40,000 sq. ft. of warehouse/distribution space is in demand. There is not a lot of space on the market right now. There is a 4 to 5% vacancy rate for warehouse/distribution space in the Union County market. Discussed a building at 65 Industrial Way in Clifton where the ceiling height was raised to 27 feet. Today's buildings are being built with ceiling heights of 32 foot clearance.

Discussed a building at Jackson Drive in Cranford. He has a client interested in looking at it to buy or lease. The price per square foot will be substantially higher than previously yielded because there is no competition.

Stated that the ceiling height at 750 Walnut could be raised in the office space to become distribution space. Discussed permitted uses at the site. There has been no signs on the property and there might be a fear that tenants would need to relocate.

Mr. Rhatican objected to that statement.

Described a company that invested \$10 million in 202,000 sq. It is up to Hartz to determine if they would want to do that. Stated a sign is important because some brokers don't rely on the websites.

Discussed a flyer from Sitar Market Watch (1st quarter 2018) that stated there is a 4.6% vacancy rate in the industrial market.

Stated the published rate for space at 750 Walnut is \$20-25 per sq. ft. per a document that he took off the LoopNet website. Document marked as Brunette 2 dated 3/6/19. He checks the website frequently and this is the first time he has seen this document.

Stated one of the slides showed Hartz indicated their industrial space is \$19-24 per square foot. Applicant has access to the information on the site. Market rate for this

type of space is significantly less. Discussed what Class B space is and that it is a matter of opinion.

Stated the office market is the toughest market out there. Difficult to find big block users. But market is changing. Discussed open space which gives the ability to put more people in smaller spaces.

Discussed Market Beat which stated the vacancy rate was 4.5%, and second quarter is 3.7% for industrial space for Northern/Central New Jersey. Stated landlords are willing to negotiate with vacant office space, but is different right now for the industrial space. Discussed Sloan Kettering coming to Montvale New Jersey. Bought an obsolete building and is developing a new cancer center. Also another hospital bought the Fort Monmouth site.

Discussed having amenities on site at buildings. Stated there is a cafeteria at LabCorp but not aware of anything else since he did not tour the office space.

Stated the existing zoning code offers advantages for 750 Walnut. There is not a lot of vacant space to be found. LabCorp wanted to reduce its footprint and stay, but could not come to an agreement. It is common for a landlord to offer a fit out for a prospective tenant. Stated in his professional opinion, this property is far from being zoned into inutility.

Questions from the Board ascertain the following:

Some of the warehouse users are using vans and sprinters not big box trucks to deliver products, and easier to get to the sites. If someone was looking at this site, a broker should be disclosing that this site has an application for rezoning, but there may not be a law that says he has to disclose that. Did contact Charlie Reese for 100,000 sq. ft. for All State Legal. Mr. Reese stated there was no availability. Also worked with National Tree looking for temporary space. Did not know at that time that 750 Walnut was looking to rezone the property. When an ad is placed on a website, it is the responsibility of the broker to make sure that all information is correct on the listing. Mr. Reese did not know the client that Mr. Brunette was representing. A tenant looking for 100,000 sq. ft. would be considered a significant tenant.

Questions from Mr. Rhatican to Mr. Brunette ascertain the following:

He was retained by the Planning Board in October of 2018. He is being paid by the Planning Board. He was contacted by Mr. Rothman. He has developed and built properties in Cranford. He built a building in 1995 in Cranford and appeared before the Planning Board at that time. He has not been before the Zoning Board. All State Legal was looking for space to lease or purchase. They were looking to put in a print shop at the location. He does not know if a print shop is allowed at the site. He went through the LabCorp site twice in the last 6 months. He knows the facilities manager at LabCorp. Did not go through the former Bank of America space. Does not know the square footage of that site. Ceiling heights are probably 8 or 9 feet looking through the window. Brunette 1 shows a floor plan area, the thick blue outline is the former Bank of America space, does not know the dimensions. Roof height is about 12 feet. New distribution

facilities are being built with 32 foot high ceilings. You can find a tenant for buildings with ceiling heights of 14, 16, or 18 foot clear ceiling height. Height of roof would have to be 20 feet. Does not know the floor loads for the Tulfra building. As ceiling heights get higher, floor loads need to be heavier. Does not know if there is a basement at 750 Walnut. To convert the BOA space, the ceiling would have to be raised. He identified that he was looking for industrial space when he spoke to Mr. Reese.

Ms. Murray asked the Public if there were any questions for this witness. The following appeared:

Joe Colangelo – 310 Prospect Avenue – Asked about ceiling heights being adjusted for new tenants and if a client would help pay for that renovation.

Mr. Brunette said that sometimes a client would help pay for that type of renovation.

Maurice Rached appeared and was sworn in. His credentials were presented to the Board and he was accepted as an expert witness in the field of Traffic Engineering. He is testifying for the Township.

He testified to the following through questions posed by Mr. Rothman:

He is familiar with the site and has heard testimony regarding traffic at the site. He has concerns over the site design and the site circulation. Concerned about large vehicles and the maneuvering of vehicles on the site. The site is triangular in shape with two driveways now, but the proposed plan will have three driveways. Within the site there are roadways and aisles that must accommodate a variety of vehicles. The site is not suitable for large moving trucks. By using a template over the plan, he saw that a tractor trailer would have trouble accessing the site. Stated applicant provided the Board with the circulation of a fire truck. He reviewed the plan and it looks like a fire truck can maneuver the site, but the edges of the truck will be just at the curb. If driver makes a mistake, they could be driving over areas they should not. A school bus is larger than a fire truck, does not think a school bus could maneuver through the site.

Looked at snow operations and stated none of roadways at the site have shoulders, so there would be no place to put the snow. Site does not offer fire lanes and could not see where the refuse areas would be. A refuse truck will take a different path, and he cannot assess the movability of the refuse truck till he sees that path. Certain amenities as bike racks and bike lanes are not shown on the plans. If these were to be added, the buildings would have to move or shrink. Stated parking complies with RSIS and in Phase One there are 37 extra spaces; Phase Two has 6 extra spaces. There is a clubhouse at the southerly end of the site with 7 parking spaces. That clubhouse has 8076 sq. ft., the central clubhouse with the pool, has 5576 sq. ft. and there are no spaces dedicated to that clubhouse. Cranford does not have an ordinance for clubhouse parking. Roselle's ordinance has one space per 40 sq. ft. of floor area for patron use. That would mean 113 spaces for the two clubhouses at this site. Given size of facility, it would be reasonable to have 30-50 spaces dedicated to that use.

Site is very dense and not properly designed for large vehicles Site as presented may not function in a safe and efficient manner. The intersections and turning areas is where there

would be problems with space. Based on review of the site, it is his opinion that the site does not provide sufficient circulation as currently proposed.

Questions posed by the Board ascertained the following:

He was not sure where the loading zones were so not sure of the path of a moving truck. Driving lanes could be impacted. Testimony is based on the complete build out. Looking at Phase One, testimony would remain the same. Footprint of roadways is tight in Phase One and Phase Two. Circulation of warehouse space was not studied. Not aware of any developments that do not have parking in front of a clubhouse. The standard he used was local information from neighboring towns; used Roselle and found standards to be reasonable. To have bikes paths or lanes, the footprint of the project would need to change. A path is a separate structure from the roadway. A lane is into the roadway. For a shared roadway, the acceptable width is 15 feet. A better design is a 12 foot lane for cars, a 4 foot lane for bicycles and a 3 foot shoulder for safety. If a school bus enters the site, it would have to ride a portion of sidewalk. Fire truck plan will fit, but will be very tight. A larger site may have more calls. There is little room for error with a fire truck. The density of site increases his concern. Not sure if fire lanes are required in Cranford. There are no shoulders on the roadways. Will be more difficult for a fire truck to pass another vehicle or a vehicle to pass another vehicle in case of a breakdown. The traffic the site cannot accommodate is: buses and large deliver trucks and fire trucks are extremely tight. Refuse trucks may have difficulty navigating the site.

Questions from Mr. Rhatican to Mr. Rached ascertained the following:

He prepared a report date May 15, 2018 stating that he meet with a member of the Police Department. He looked at traffic and safety issues, He is aware that Hartz submitted revised plans and changes in circulation. The significant changes were to the circulation of the back buildings. The roadways comply with RSIS standards, but is not sufficient. Applicant has to prove that vehicles can safety negotiate the site. Parking complies with RSIS. Not aware of a requirement for parking for a clubhouse. In a large development like this, you will find parking is needed for clubhouses. Many people will choose to drive instead of walk. Not aware of standards in RSIS that require bike lanes. There are no bike lanes on Walnut Avenue. Is aware that that applicant will be providing a shuttle to the train station.

Ms. Murray asked the Public if there were any questions for this witness. The following appeared:

Tom Roettker – 347 South Union Avenue - Asked if this witness is prepared to provide testimony on the traffic on Walnut Avenue. Asked about the road bordering the golf course for fire access and if the fire trucks would need to travel through the parking lot to get to that road and is there enough turning radius.

Mr. Rothman stated the witness has not provided testimony about traffic to the site.

Mr. Rached stated they could use the peripheral roadway to access the buildings. Stated there is enough room, but it is very tight and he is uncomfortable with the proposal.

Mark Zucker – 19 Pershing Avenue – Asked about the access road behind the building and a fire if an additional fire truck is needed, how difficult would that be.

Mr. Rached stated he did not study that case. They probably would be able to pass each other.

Joe Colangelo – 310 Prospect Avenue – Asked if he was advising the developer, would he advise them to put a light on egress. Asked if he knew that Cranford is famous for its bike trails and is part of the culture.

Mr. Rhatican objected to the question about the egress and the light.

Mr. Rached stated he did not know about the bikes, but is not surprised.

Christine Esposito – 11 Behnert Place – Asked about compliant parking at the clubhouse for disabilities.

Mr. Rached stated anytime you do parking, it has to be ADA compliant

No one else appeared and this portion of the hearing was closed with the matter referred back to the Board.

Mr. Rhatican asked about next meeting on March 20th and what additional witness there will be. Also confirming April 3rd as a hearing date.

Mr. Rothman stated the 20th will be the Board of Education including the superintendent, business administrator and demographer. There will be a meeting on April 3rd, and there is still a Planner to testify.

8. PUBLIC PORTION

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting and return to the workshop was regularly made, seconded and passed. This part of the meeting concluded at 10:26 p.m.

Donna Pedde