

MINUTES - PLANNING BOARD

Meeting of February 15, 2023

A public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board was called to order by Ms. Kellett on February 15, 2023 at 7:35 p.m. Ms. Kellett announced in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Open Public Meetings Act, the Westfield Leader and the Star Ledger have been notified and the agenda posted in the municipal building as required.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Ms. Kellett
Mr. Nordelo
Mayor Andrews
Ms. Didzbalis
Ms. Pedde
Ms. Rappa
Mr. Taylor

Members Absent:

Deputy Mayor Gareis
Ms. Sen

Alternates Present:

Mr. Leber
Mr. Pistol

Alternates Absent:

None

Also present:

Jonathan Drill Esq., Board Attorney, Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator

2. MINUTES

A motion to adopt the minutes of the Closed session of December 7, 2022 was made by Ms. Rappa, seconded by Mr. Leber and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Pedde, Ms. Rappa, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

A motion to adopt the minutes of the official meeting of December 7, 2022 was made by Mr. Pistol, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Pedde, Ms. Rappa, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

A motion to adopt the minutes of the meeting of December 14, 2022 was made by Ms. Didzbalis, seconded by Mr. Pistol and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Didzbalis, Ms. Pedde, Ms. Rappa, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

3. RESOLUTIONS

A motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-04 for the 2023 Board Attorney, was made by Mr. Nordelo seconded by Mr. Pistol and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Kellett, Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Didzbalis, Ms. Pedde, Ms. Rappa, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

A motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-05 for the Board Engineer, was made by Ms. Didzbalis, seconded by Mr. Leber and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Kellett, Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Didzbalis, Ms. Pedde, Ms. Rappa, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

A motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-06 for the Board Planner, was made by Ms. Pedde, seconded by Ms. Didzbalis and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Kellett, Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Didzbalis, Ms. Pedde, Ms. Rappa, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

A motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-07 for the 2023 Rules & Regulations dated February 1, 2023 was made by Mr. Nordelo, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Kellett, Mr. Nordelo, Ms. Didzbalis, Ms. Pedde, Mr. Taylor

Opposed: None

4. COMMUNICATIONS

None

5. OLD/NEW BUSINESS
None

PUBLIC MEETING – Immediately following the Workshop – Council Chambers

1. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Ms. Kellett called a public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board to order on February 15, 2023, at 7:51 p.m. Ms. Kellett announced this meeting is in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act” as adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to 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. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Ms. Kellett
Mr. Nordelo
Mayor Andrews
Ms. Didzbalis
Ms. Pedde
Ms. Rappa
Mr. Taylor

Members Absent:

Deputy Mayor Gareis
Ms. Sen

Alternates Present:

Mr. Leber
Mr. Pistol

Alternates Absent:

None

Also present:

Jonathan Drill Esq., Board Attorney, Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator, Nicholas Dickerson, Board Planner, Kevin Boyer, Board Engineer, and John Ruschke Board Stormwater Engineer

3. Application #PB 22-003 – Continued from February 1, 2023
Applicant: 201 Walnut Ave LLC
201 Walnut Avenue
Block: 484 Lot: 19.01 D-T Zone

Applicant is seeking Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan Approval to construct a three (3) story multi-family apartment building, consisting of thirty-four (34) market-rate units, two (2) affordable housing units, and three (3) special needs housing units, for a total of thirty-nine (39) units.

Jason Tuvel, Esq. appeared and reviewed his professionals for the evening.

Avelino Martinez appeared and was reminded he was still under oath.

Questions from Mr. Tuvel to Mr. Martinez ascertained the following:

Presented Exhibit A-9 as a colorized version of the Architectural Plans. Reviewed the overall project. Reviewed the first-floor plan which showed parking at rear of site. Along the front is a series of apartments. Elevated the building above flood elevation. The main lobby is located at street level and in the lobby is the elevators. There is also a four-bedroom group home on the ground level. Reviewed the second and third floor plans which are similar, but on the third floor there is a community room which opens to a roof terrace. The roof terrace is just for seating and passive recreation. Stated the building has a flat roof with internal roof drains and mechanical equipment. All equipment will be screened from view. There will be a parapet that wraps around the roof. Discussed exterior elevations of the building. Reviewed Exhibit A-2, which shows the façade of building. Materials are two different brick colors and cast stone. There will be landscaping against the base of the building. Reviewed Exhibit A-3 as a color rendering with the view from High Street. The building facing the residential area will have more residential looking materials, such as fiber cement siding. Colors will be slightly different. There will be brick along the base of the building, with Juliet balconies, which do not have an outdoor space, just a railing outside of the French doors. Building is a podium building. All parts of building including covered parking garage, will be fully sprinklered. All portions of the building will be handicapped accessible. Believes it is consistent with the design standards in the Redevelopment Plan.

Questions from the Board for this witness ascertained the following:

The white fence is located at the property line. The lobby elevation is 61.4, but the corridor and all the other units on that floor are 63.5. Podium parking will be concrete. The front of the building will be steel columns and would be in between the culverts. Primary materials for the front of the building are two brick colors and cast stone. Side and rear will have fiber cement siding. The stucco will be on the garage wall facing the garage. Will comply with the building and energy codes. The community room on the third floor is ADA accessible. The roof terrace is about 1000 square feet, as well as the community room. The roof terrace is outdoor seating and will have two light fixtures, wall mounted. Terrace is restricted to residents only and will close at 10 pm. There is no on-site manager, but there is a property manager. Exterior lighting will be turned off. Railings will be on the Juliet balconies and on the rooftop terrace. They will also be along the ramp on the Hight & Chestnut intersection.

Mr. Drill asked for clarification on the independent living units.

Mr. Martinez stated they are designated as "C2" on Exhibit A-9 Sheet A-1 & A-2.

Questions from Mr. Dickerson to this witness ascertained the following:

There will be two trash chutes in each of the rooms, one will be for trash and one will be for recycling. The building will meet all accessibility requirements.

Ms. Kellett asked if any members of the Public had questions for this witness, no one appeared.

John McDonough appeared and was sworn in. He presented his qualifications and was accepted as an expert in professional planning.

Questions from Mr. Tuvel to this witness ascertained the following:

Visited the site and reviewed the ordinances, the plans, and the reports on behalf of the applicant. Presented Exhibit A-10, described as four drone photographs showing the subject property. Reviewed the site as being designated an Area of Rehabilitation. Described the area surrounding the subject property. The new project will bring 39 new dwelling units and include inclusionary housing. The set aside will exceed the requirement. The project will conform with the Redevelopment Plan and will meet the goals and objectives in the regulations. Requesting a *de minimis* exception from RSIS parking (parking complies with the Redevelopment Plan), an exception for the white vinyl fence instead of a wood fence, for the benefit of the adjacent property owner, and an exception for the amount of trash receptacles. Believes the open space as designed, is appropriate.

Questions from the Board for this witness ascertained the following:

The group home and independent living do not require parking. The trash receptacles are for the sidewalk/street, not the internal trash. If the Board requests two more trash receptacles it is not an issue. Small scale spaces can be passive in nature. It is good planning to optimize flexibility of space. He has written redevelopment plans before. The purpose of using only three types of building materials is for unity.

Ms. Kellett asked if anyone from the Public had questions for this witness, the following appeared:

Anthony DiGiovanni – 26 Forest Avenue – Asked about traffic issues and the crosswalks on both Chestnut and High and Walnut and Chestnut. Asked about creating more open space by filling in the last parking space to expand the parking area and the streetscape. Asked if the application was creating curb cuts on both public streets and about additional public spaces.

Mr. McDonough stated one of the goals of Redevelopment Plan is to reduce the negative impact of car circulation and traffic issues. The Project conforms with the Redevelopment Plan. They are creating curb cuts. The public health, safety and welfare are in within the Redevelopment Plan.

Mr. Drill stated the Board can imposed reasonable conditions on the applicant.

Board member had a question about the garage and podium parking.

Mr. Dickerson stated that the entire building is not on stilts and would not be considered podium parking.

Bahram Farzaneh was recalled and reminded he was still under oath.

Questions from the Board for this witness ascertained the following:

Submitted a letter dated 2-10-23 with Exhibit A and Exhibit B. This project is in a flood zone and must provide flood storage. Total volume of 3,133 cubic feet is the volume of displacement. There is 3,320 cubic feet of flood storage space with the culverts. Talked to construction professionals, who said they cannot build the slab with the clearance closer to the flood hazard area; so they cannot build a crawl space for access. It is too short of a space to be able to pour the slab and do everything for the building.

Mr. Boyer, Board Engineer, stated they could verify the applicant's engineering calculations, if they send over the file. There will be the culverts, a section of soil or stone, and a concrete finished floor. Culverts will be taking on load, so they will need to submit for building and structural plans to show they can accept the load.

Discussion ensued on the design and use of the culverts.

A straw poll was taken to see if after the calculation is done on the culverts, if it shows an unreasonable amount of excess storage capacity, should some of the culverts be eliminated. The poll was 5 to 4 in favor of removing the excess culverts.

Based on the results of the Board engineer's calculations, the Board will defer to their experts to make recommendations for the culverts storage.

Ms. Kellett asked if anyone from the Public wanted to make a comment on the application, the following appeared:

Elizabeth Mazza – 205 Walnut Avenue appeared and was sworn in. Requested that the Board not place the trash receptacles on the SE and SW corners.

Anthony DiGiovanni – 26 Forest Avenue appeared and was sworn in. Stated he is not against the application, but when an applicant's traffic engineer states they will provide traffic testimony and does not, is an issue. Has valid concerns with the traffic. Does not believe the Board should vote until the traffic engineer who wrote a report, talks about it. Does think there should be extra capacity. The applicant received its approval from DEP when standards were lower. Feels traffic should be discussed before this application is closed. Stated that several times the applicant's engineer, on the public record, stated there would be traffic testimony to answer questions.

Mr. Drill stated when there is a permitted use before a Planning Board, that the Board cannot consider offsite traffic. However, the Redevelopment Plan for this application states the

applicant shall conduct a traffic impact study and submit it to the Township Committee, which it did. In his opinion, the applicant has complied with the Redevelopment Plan.

Mr. Drill asked if the Board wanted the applicant to bring their traffic expert in to answer any questions about traffic for this application.

Board commented that subject to the condition discussed for modifications of the curbs, there was no need for the applicant to produce the traffic engineer to testify.

The hearing was closed and no new evidence was to be entered in the record.

Mr. Drill stated the Board will deliberate and vote on March 1st and if the Board votes to approve the application, it will be retroactive to February 15th based on the record being closed. The hearing is continued till March 1st, without the need for further notice.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was regularly made seconded and passed. The meeting concluded at 10:52 p.m.

Molly Hurley Kellett, Chair