

MINUTES - PLANNING BOARD

Meeting of July 19, 2023

A public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board was called to order by Mr. Nordelo on July 19, 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:

Mr. Nordelo
Mayor Andrews
Ms. Didzbalis
Commissioner Prunty
Ms. Sen

Members Absent:

Ms. Kellett
Ms. Pedde
Ms. Rappa
Mr. Taylor

Alternates Present:

Mr. Leber
Mr. Pistol

Alternates Absent:

None

Also present:

Jonathan Drill, Esq., Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator, Nicholas Dickerson, Board Planner, Jacqueline Dirmann, Board Engineer

2. Oath of Office taken by Commissioner Miller Prunty to fill an unexpired term on the Planning Board.

3. MINUTES

A motion to adopt the minutes of May 17, 2023 was made by Mr. Leber, seconded by Mr. Pistol and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mr. Nordelo, Mayor Andrews, Ms. Sen, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

A motion to adopt the minutes of June 7, 2023 was made by Mr. Pistol, seconded by Mr. Leber and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mayor Andrews, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

3. RESOLUTION:

Application: #PB 23-001
Applicant: 108 South Ave E. LLC, 112 South Ave East LLC,
Boffard Holdings LLC, VIBO Holdings LLC, 2 Chestnut St. LLC,
& Iron Ore Properties LLC
108-126 South Avenue East, 32 & 41 High Street & 2 Chestnut Street
Block: 478 Lots: 2-6 & Block: 483 Lots: 17.01 & 18, D-C, D-B & D-T Zones

After discussion, a motion to adopt the resolution was made by Mr. Pistol, seconded by Mr. Leber and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mayor Andrews, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

4. COMMUNICATIONS

None

5. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Master Plan Consistency Review of Township Ordinance No. 2023-08
An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the Township of Cranford, Chapter 255 Land Development, to Ban Short Term Rentals from Residential Districts

Mr. Dickerson reviewed his memo dated June 29, 2023 with regard to Master Plan consistency and Township Ordinance No. 2023-08. Stated that when the Master Plan was prepared in 2009, short-term rentals were not common and were not referenced in the Plan. He discussed the Land Use Element of the Master Plan which addresses preserving the existing residential character of the township, and that it should prohibit the intrusion of non-residential uses that do not support a quality residential environment. Mr. Dickerson opined that the ordinance advances Residential Goal #2, along with Non-Residential Goal #3, since it permits the use in the Downtown and other commercial zones. As such, it is his opinion, that the ordinance is consistent with the Master Plan.

Rita LaBrutto – 104 Arlington Road - Requested that STR not be allowed in the ORC zone since it borders residential neighborhoods. Also discussed other towns that allow STR and the “triggers” that they have in place. For example, excessive noise complaints and police departments responding to the calls at a STR.

Discussion ensued.

A straw poll was taken to see if the Board was in favor of adding “triggers” to the STR ordinance. The vote was 7 in favor and none against having “triggers” added to the ordinance.

A straw poll was taken to see if the Board was in favor of a ban on STR in the ORC zone, the vote was 4 in favor and 3 against to recommend a ban on STR in the ORC zone.

A motion to recommendation that Township Ordinance No. 2023-08 is not inconsistent with the Master Plan was made by Mr. Nordelo and seconded by Mr. Leber and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Mr. Nordelo, Mayor Andrews, Ms. Didzbalis, Commissioner Prunty, Ms. Sen, Mr. Leber, Mr. Pistol

Opposed: None

The Planning Board also made two non-binding recommendations for the Township Committee to consider. The first was to ban STR in the ORC zone. The second one was to add “triggers” to the STR ordinance, which if violated, would result in revocation of the permit to allow the STR.

PUBLIC MEETING – Immediately following the Workshop – Council Chambers

1. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mr. Nordelo called a public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board to order on July 19, 2023, at 8:25 p.m. Mr. Nordelo 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:

Mr. Nordelo
Mayor Andrews
Ms. Didzbalis
Commissioner Prunty
Ms. Sen

Members Absent:

Ms. Kellett
Ms. Pedde
Ms. Rappa
Mr. Taylor

Alternates Present:

Mr. Leber
Mr. Pistol

Alternates Absent:

None

Also present:

Jonathan Drill, Esq., Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator, Nicholas Dickerson, Board Planner, Jacqueline Dirmann, Board Engineer

3. Application: #PB 22-001 – Continued from May 17, 2023
Applicant: AVIDD Services of NJ Inc.
73-91 Myrtle Street
Block: 573 Lots: 9, 10, & 12.02, R-3 Zone

The applicant in this matter is seeking Minor Subdivision and Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan – Residential approval and c(2) variance relief to construct two group homes for low income developmentally disabled individuals. (See attached list of c(2) variances/exceptions).

Gary Goodman, Esq. appeared. Stated he would like to present the applicant's architect to testify.

Mary Johannesen appeared and was sworn in. Ms. Johannesen presented her qualifications and was accepted as an expert in architecture.

Questions from Mr. Goodman to Ms. Johannesen ascertained the following:

The project is two new four-bedroom homes with shared parking. Each building is one story and features 4 bedrooms serving ambulatory and non-ambulatory residents. The additional doors on the buildings are for the non-ambulatory residents to have direct access to the exterior. There is a shared living, dining, and kitchen area. The homes are designed to support wheel chair access. Each home has a covered porch and a patio in the back. There is a trash enclosure behind each building with fencing and gates. Trash will be moved to the curb on pickup day. Both buildings will be fully sprinklered. The exteriors of both buildings have similarities, but differences also. Presented Exhibit A-2 as a conceptual rendering showing Lots 9 & 10. The right side is a new group home on Lot 9, which will have grey siding, brown roof shingles, three panel exterior doors with three lights on top or $\frac{3}{4}$ glass and there are no shutters on this building. Presented Exhibit A-3 as a color sample of the Hardie Plank siding in Grey Slate. Presented Exhibit A-4 as a conceptual rendering of Lot 10, with the group home having blue siding. Presented Exhibit A-5 as Hardie Plank siding in Evening Blue. The roof is charcoal grey shingles, the exterior doors are two panels or $\frac{3}{4}$ glass and there will be black shutters. The covered front porches are to accommodate the additional doors that are required on the bedrooms and provide a front door, so they look like homes.

There were no questions from the Board for this witness.

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

Theresa Pires-Ramos – 615 Hory Street – Asked about the home having so many front doors facing the street and is that in compliance. Asked about having one main door and about garbage pickup. Asked about all of the bedrooms being at the back of the building.

Ms. Johannesen stated she does not know if there is a limitation of doors on the house. Stated A1.1 was in the original submission and is a black and white 1st floor plan of Lot 10. Described the submission with the main entrance in the front and two additional doors across the porch. Stated the applicant would need to answer about the garbage pickup. Bedrooms one and two have an emergency door in the back; bedrooms three and four have an emergency door in the front. The living room has a front door and there is a door to the back patio and a mud room with a door for entering from the parking area.

Mr. Goodman asked Ms. Johannesen about the reason for multiple doors.

Ms. Johannesen stated that the State regulations require there be a door to the exterior from the bedroom for egress.

Mr. Drill asked if Ms. Johannesen could find out if the two exterior emergency doors need hardware on the outside.

Ms. Johannesen stated she did not know about the hardware.

A Board member asked if this is a design element in other projects that she has worked on.

Ms. Johannesen stated the applicant might be best answering that question.

A Board member asked about a decorative railing and gate in that area.

Ms. Johannesen stated they could look into that.

Mr. McKeon, the applicant, appeared and was reminded he was still under oath. Stated the reason for the doors is emergency egress for hospital beds. They only have three minutes to evacuate in case of an emergency. A railing could interfere with turning the bed. Hardware is needed on outside of door, especially for emergency personnel going into the door.

Ryan Volpe – 598 Hory Street – Asked about parking and garages.

(inaudible response – Mr. Goodman was not on a mic).

Jason Sciuolo appeared and stated he was the applicant's Planner and was already sworn in.

Questions from Mr. Goodman to Mr. Sciuolo ascertained the following:

Stated the original application was going to create three building lots, the one furthest west would remain vacant. Revised the layout and now has Lot 12.02 incorporated into Lot 10. By doing that a couple of variances have been removed. Presented an update of Exhibit A-1, now marked Exhibit A-6 dated 7/19/23, titled Site Rendering colorized version C-29.01. Reviewed the changes made, which included the elimination of the sidewalk and incorporated various shade trees and shrubs based on the comments from the Environmental Commission.

Jacque Dirmann, Board Engineer appeared. Reviewed her letter dated July 19th. Discussed the following items: (indicated by(•)

- The applicant is asking for a waiver for the tree survey.

Mr. Sciuлло stated they are asking for the waiver due to it being cost generative, since this is an affordable housing project.

Mr. Dickerson stated that the Tree Replacement Plan does specify the required number of trees based on what is being removed. Quoted §255-26N subsection 2 & 3.

- The need for a cross access easement between parking areas. Will need a maintenance agreement between the two lots for the stormwater. For sanity sewer, there should be an easement for Lot 9 & Lot 10.

Mr. Sciuлло stated they will provide the easements and maintenance agreement as conditions of approval.

- The crosswalk on Myrtle. Requires a safe crossing along Myrtle Street.

Mr. Sciuлло stated they have provided the maximum number of parking spaces if houses were fully staffed. If visitors came, they could park on Myrtle Street, which has two-hour parking. The applicant would be willing to put a sidewalk along the project frontage.

Mr. Goodman stated the applicant made an attempt to contact the business across the street, but was not successful in getting any parking.

- Ambulance with turning template is tight.

Mr. Sciuлло stated it is tight but it fits and meets minimum standards.

Mr. Drill asked if it is tight without snow. Asked about bumping out two feet and still being under for impervious coverage.

Mr. Sciuлло stated any snow would be pushed onto the yard area and there would be no snow in the parking areas. Applicant would consider bumping out two feet, if it is a condition by the Board.

- Basin detail and concern about two-foot-wide weir.

Mr. Sciuлло stated everything drains from left to right. Roof drains and yard areas will be collected in a pipe system that discharges toward the stormwater feature into a shallow basin which will hold .7 feet of stored water. It will then spill toward the paper street, which mimics existing conditions.

Ms. Dirmann disagreed with Mr. Sciuлло's design and suggested tying into a system already on Myrtle Street. Stated they want the water under the ground, not on the road.

Mr. Sciuolo stated the applicant is willing to agree to tying into a system already on Myrtle Street.

- Need test pit logs done where the system will go, to see if system is feasible.

Mr. Sciuolo stated if they put in the pipe system as discussed, they will not rely on the soil.

Ms. Dirmann stated they will need to redesign the system and submit it for approval.

- Confirm that the existing system is not surcharging or has issues, before tying in the two homes.

Mr. Sciuolo will confirm with the Department of Public Works; also stated that according to affordable housing guidelines, it is the municipality's responsibility to provide adequate service for afford housing projects in their Fair Share Plan.

- Green infrastructure and make sure that it complies.

Mr. Sciuolo stated it does comply.

- Agreed to items 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36
- Garbage pickup

Mr. Sciuolo stated there is full-time maintenance staff and will comply with the ordinance for garbage pickup.

Ms. Dirmann stated all other comments are standard.

Mr. Dickerson, Board Planner appeared. Referenced his report of July 10, 2023 and stated some items are continuing comments. Discussed bicycle racks for residents and/or staff. Also discussed light spillage and requested shielding to reduce spillage onto neighboring properties.

Mr. Sciuolo stated the residents will not be riding bicycles and they will provide bike storage for any staff that ride a bike to work. They accommodated the request for more and smaller lights, which might have a small amount of spillover. They will work with the lighting consultant to get the spillage reduced.

Questions from the Board for this witness ascertained the following:
There is rear yard trash pickup in Cranford.

Mr. Nordelo stated due to the later hour, this meeting will be continued.

Mr. Drill stated the hearing will be continued on September 6, 2023 and that the applicant needs to redesign the stormwater and submit it for the engineer's review. At the next meeting, they will discuss the revised stormwater and then the Public will be able to cross examine all of Mr. Sciuolo's testimony.

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

Juan Carlos Nordelo, Vice-Chair