

MINUTES - PLANNING BOARD

Workshop meeting of August 5, 2020

A public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board was called to order by Ms. Murray on August 5, 2020 at 7:38 p.m. via **Google Meet**. Ms. Lenahan 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. Formal action may be taken.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present Via Google Meet:

Ms. Murray
Ms. Pedde
Dr. Chapman
Mayor Giblin
Deputy Mayor Prunty
Mr. Taylor

Members Absent:

Mr. Cossa
Ms. Didzbalis
Ms. Feder

Alternates Present via Google Meets:

Mr. Walton

Alternates Absent:

Ms. Kellett – recused herself

Also present via Google Meets:

Jonathan Drill Esq., Jason Bottcher, Zoning Officer, Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator, Henry Kent-Smith, Esq., Kimberly Bennett, Esq., James Rhatican, Esq., Vincent Antonacci, Jr., Zachary Chaplin, Matthew Seckler, Jacqueline Dirmann, Board Engineer, Maurice Rached, Traffic Engineer, Nick Dickerson, Board Planner.

2. MINUTES

Motion to adopt the minutes of the June 3, 2020 was made by Ms. Pedde, seconded by Mr. Taylor and passed by roll call vote.

Affirmative: Ms. Murray, Ms. Pedde, Deputy Mayor Prunty, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Walton

Opposed: None

Motion to adopt the minutes of the executive session of June 3, 2020 was made by Deputy Mayor Prunty, seconded by Mr. Walton and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Murray, Ms. Pedde, Dr. Chapman (joined for closed session), Deputy Mayor Prunty, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Walton

Opposed: None

Motion to adopt the minutes of the minutes of the June 17, 2020 meeting was made by Mr. Walton, seconded by Mr. Taylor and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Murray, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Walton

Opposed: None

4. COMMUNICATIONS

None

5. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Murray stated that the Township Committee has assembled a Cranford Economic Recovery & Business Development Task Force. Deputy Mayor Prunty stated various members of different board and committees will be on the Task Force. The purpose of the Task Force is to look at the current situation and establish a long-range outlook. It is about business recruitment and retention. Stated this is not just about the Downtown, it is for businesses throughout the Town and is not limited to retail. Looking to have a business climate that is welcoming.

PUBLIC HEARING –

1. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Ms. Murray called a public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board to order on August 5, 2020 at 8:00 p.m. via **Google Meet**. Ms. Lenahan 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. FLAG SALUTE

3. ROLL CALL:

Members Present Via Google Meet:

Ms. Murray
Ms. Pedde
Dr. Chapman
Mayor Giblin
Deputy Mayor Prunty
Mr. Taylor

Members Absent:

Mr. Cossa
Ms. Didzbalis
Ms. Feder

Alternates Present via Google Meet:

Mr. Walton

Alternates Absent:

Ms. Kellett – recused herself

Also present via Google Meet:

Jonathan Drill Esq., Jason Bottcher, Zoning Officer, Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator, Henry Kent-Smith, Esq., Kimberly Bennett, Esq., James Rhatican, Esq., Vincent Antonacci, Jr., Zachary Chaplin, Matthew Seckler, Jacqueline Dirmann, Board Engineer, Maurice Rached, Traffic Engineer, Nick Dickerson, Board Planner.

Members of Public

Angela Leary
Christine Esposito
Mark Zucker
Ryan Wilks
Rita LaBrutto
Phyllis Kivett-Howard

**4. Hartz Mountain Inc.
750 Walnut Avenue
Block: 541 Lot: 2 Zone: C-3**

Applicant in this matter is seeking Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval to complete interior and exterior site improvements.

Mr. Drill stated that any issues regarding litigation pending with Hartz Mountain is irrelevant to this application and questions on that topic will not be permitted.

Mr. Kent-Smith appeared and explained the application. Stated Hartz had a prospective tenant for the facility prior to the pandemic. That tenant is no longer on board, but they would still like to proceed with the application. The applicant does not need any variances, any use would be a permitted use in the C-3 zone.

Mr. Drill sworn in all witnesses at the same time.

For the Applicant

Vince Antonacci, Architect
Matt Seckler, Traffic Engineer
Zachary Chaplin, Site Engineer

For the Board:

Maurice Rached, Traffic Engineer
Nick Dickerson, Planner
Jacque Dirmann, Board Engineer
Jason Bottcher, Zoning Officer & Planner

Vincent Antonacci appeared. Described his qualifications and his position at Hartz. He was accepted as an expert by the Board.

Questions from Mr. Kent-Smith to Mr. Antonacci ascertained the following:

The building was built in 1967. Presented Exhibit A-1 titled Overall Floor Plan dated 1/31/20. The property is vacant. It was used for laboratory and storage. Within the property there was also office use. Exhibit A-1 is a conceptual drawing for possible tenant spaces. It is a marketing concept, a potential plan. Basement area would be used for storage. Each unit has access to a loading area. Spaces could be combined for bigger tenants. Will meet the needs of a prospective tenant regarding fire and safety codes. Presented Exhibit A-2 Proposed Elevations dated 1/31/20 which shows the façade of building. The applicant would modify the facade to cut in the new doors. Described the various ceiling heights depending on the location in the building. New warehouse facilities have much taller ceiling heights than are in this building. Building would generate truck traffic for a small business. Water and sewer demand would not increase from the prior use and electrical could be adjusted.

Question from the Board for this witness ascertained the following:

Exhibit A-2 shows 10 existing and 26 new loading docks. There is a building on the site that will be demolished. Tenant spaces could be combined based on what the tenant requires. Basement could be used as rental units for warehousing. The basement is only in a portion of building. Access to basement is from internal stairs. Elevator is not shown on the plan. Drainage would be modified if needed. There is one basement shown on the plans.

Mr. Kent-Smith stated they will use the basement for storage only. If a tenant wanted an elevator, they would come back to the Board for approval.

Mr. Dickerson asked the difference between units and spaces.

Mr. Antonacci stated they are the same thing.

Mr. Bottcher asked about low bays.

Mr. Antonacci said they are for traditional trailers.

Ms. Murray asked if the Public had any questions for this witness, the following appeared:

Mark Zucker – 19 Pershing Avenue – Asked about any occupants that have requested a change in zoning.

Mr. Kent-Smith stated any tenants would be permitted under the C-3 zone.

Zachary Chaplin appeared. His qualifications were presented to the Board and he was accepted as an expert witness in Engineering.

Questions to Mr. Chaplin by Mr. Kent-Smith ascertained the following:

Presented Exhibit A-5 as an Aerial dated 8-3-20 sheet C1. Reviewed the aerial specifics of the property. Stated there is a substantial buffer along the frontage of Walnut Avenue which will remain as part of the application. A two-story office building with parking underneath will be demolished and replaced with parking and landscaping. There will be no new curb cuts proposed. Presented Exhibit A-6 dated 3-30-20 as a colorized site plan with landscaping. Building footprint has not changed. There are an additional 26 loading docks and impervious coverage will be reduced by 75,394 sq. ft. of paved area. It will now conform with the impervious coverage in the C-3 zone. Trucks and loading docks will be separate from parking area. Both driveways will be utilized. Use will not require the amount of parking spaces on the site today. Looking to have 670 parking spaces vs. 1158 there today. Adding 84 new trees to site plan. Drainage for loading dock area will have catch basins as well as reducing the impervious coverage on site. Lighting modification will be LED efficiency lighting. Presented Exhibit A-3 Truck Turning Plan dated 8-3-20. Stated truck traffic will be isolated to the loading dock area and they are eliminating 58 spaces.

Stated one trash enclosure will be where the 11 spaces are being removed and another trash enclosure will be where the 8 spaces are being removed.

Reviewed the design waivers they are requesting. Adding new trees around the property. Design waivers will be eliminated for loading signage and bicycle spaces.

Discussed the Maser Engineering Report date 7-28-20 and will address the request for additional information for grading and drainage on final plan set.

Questions from Board ascertained the following:

Light poles will be 16 feet high pointed toward the property and within the landscape buffer. Only light spillage will be at driveways. The two new green spaces will have NJ native species. Striped area of pavement by Unit 3 Space G changed to landscaping to provide a buffer. The radii of the driveways will be modified and driveways may be widened.

Mr. Chaplin reviewed the Grading Plan identified as C-5 dated 2-25-20. Stated the basin will stay the same; there will be modifications of the grade pitch for new inlets by the loading area by Walnut Avenue.

Ms. Murray asked if any of the Town professionals had questions for this witness.

Ms. Dirmann reviewed the parking spaces that were being removed. Asked about the refuse location. Stated she understood the refuse areas to be adjacent to Unit 4 and adjacent to Unit 1 Space B. Asked about the storm water and the 100-year storm. Asked about negative effect on existing basins.

Mr. Chaplin stated they are agreeable to a trash enclosure. Stated the building was built in 1967 and does not meet today's storm water criteria. Proposal has two acres of reduction in impervious coverage. Feels there is no negative on the existing basins and is agreeable to any repairs.

Nick Dickerson asked about the gap in the vegetation buffer on Exhibit A-6 near Unit 5.

Mr. Kent-Smith stated they could add a couple of trees in that area unless the area has an easement.

Ms. Murray asked if anyone from the Public had a question for this witness, the following appeared:

Christine Esposito – 11 Behnert Place – Asked if the buffer toward Raritan Road will remain.

Mr. Chaplin stated the buffer along the front will not be removed and the buffer directly north of curb cut on Walnut Avenue will remain.

Mathew Seckler appeared. His qualifications were presented to the Board and he was accepted as an expert witness in Traffic Engineering.

Questions to Mr. Seckler by Mr. Kent-Smith ascertained the following:

He prepared an Assessment Report dated 7-17-20. Looked at site conditions. Site currently has two driveways along Walnut Avenue. There was a traffic report done for this site back in October 2016. The site was not fully utilized at that time. Those counts showed 134 AM and 126 PM trips. Expect to double that if site was fully utilized. For this application, he is using an industrial/warehouse trip generation which showed 10 more trips in AM and 20 more trips in the PM than the 2016 counts. One change would be the truck traffic. Studies for truck traffic for an industrial park showed that 12% traffic in the morning and 10% traffic in the evening would be trucks. For this site, that would be 17 trucks in the AM peak and 14 trucks in the PM peak. The truck traffic would be limited by the amount of loading bays. Union County likes to use apron style driveways. Applicant will be applying to the Union County Site Plan Review Board for site plan/driveway modifications in the County right-of-way for both curb openings.

Questions from Board ascertained the following:

There will be no trailers stored on site other than in the loading docks. There are no truck spaces on site. Depending upon what use is on the site, normally loading docks are used about twice a day. There are no restrictions on hours for a tenant at the site.

Ms. Murray asked if any of the Town professionals had questions for this witness:

Maurice Rached, Board Traffic Engineer made the following comments: there is a reduction in trips from the proposed use to the preexisting use; the parking has been reduced and reduces intensity on-site; changes do satisfy the Maser comments for truck movement; not concerned with any off-site traffic mitigation.

Ms. Murray asked if anyone from the Public had a question for this witness, the following appeared:

Christine Esposito – 11 Behnert Place – Asked about a weekend traffic report.

Mr. Seckler stated sites usually generate about 5% to 10% of the normal traffic on a weekend.

Angela Leary – 4 Behnert Place – Asked about truck backups onto Walnut Avenue, truck idling and about overnight truck parking.

Mr. Seckler stated the site has an improved truck circulation plan. Also truck bays face internal and not toward the residents on Walnut Avenue.

Mr. Kent-Smith stated there will be no idling, unless it was a refrigeration truck and there will be signage for no idling. Stated there will be no overnight parking unless it is in the loading bays.

Mr. Kent-Smith summarized the application. Stated he feels they have covered all items in the professional reports. Addressed questions from the Board and the Public. Requests the Board approve the Preliminary and Final Site Plan, subject to the conditions the Board has placed on the application.

Ms. Murray asked if anyone in the Public would like to speak for or against the application.

No one appeared.

**5. DELIBERATIONS OF Application # PB 20-004
Application # PB 20-004
Hartz Mountain Inc.
750 Walnut Avenue
Block: 541 Lot: 2 Zone: C-3**

Applicant in this matter is seeking Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval to complete interior and exterior site improvements.

Ms. Murray reviewed the testimony.

Board comments consisted of the following:

Pleased with the application. Reducing impervious coverage and adding spaces which will be good for storm water.

A motion to approve Application # PB 20-004 subject to all the conditions discussed, was made by Ms. Murray, seconded by Dr. Chapman and passed on roll call vote:
Ms. Murray, Ms. Pedde, Dr. Chapman, Mayor Giblin, Deputy Mayor Prunty, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Walton

**6. PUBLIC PORTION
None**

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was regularly made, seconded and passed. The meeting concluded at 10:35 p.m.

Kathleen Murray, Chair