

WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP LAND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

REGULAR MEETING

NOVEMBER 7, 2018 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Westampton Township Land Development Board was held at the Municipal Building on Rancocas Road on November 7, 2018 at 7:01 P.M. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Borger and the opening statement required by Sunshine Law was read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times on January 5, 2018 and posted in the Municipal Building. All guests were welcomed.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Mr. Barger, Mr. Blair, Mr. Borger, Mr. Guerrero, Ms. Haas, Mr. Myers, Mr. Wisniewski, Engineers Greg Valesi and Jim Winckowski, Planner Barbara Fegley, Solicitor Robert Swartz, Secretary Marion Karp

Absent: Mr. Applegate, Mr. Freeman, Mr. Henley, Mr. Mumbower

The minutes of the October 3, 2018 meeting were approved as written.

Resolutions:

21-2018 Mark & Lorin Arnold, Block 909, Lot 9 (221 Tulip Tree Drive) – variance (oversized garage, setback variances) – was memorialized.

New Business:

Fountain Square Shopping Center, Highview Homes, LLC, Block 807, Lot 1 (2035 Burlington-Mt. Holly Road). William Hyland, applicant's attorney was present on behalf of an application for preliminary subdivision, site plan approval and variances for a shopping center and hotel. The property is about 25 acres in size and is currently under an agreement of sale. The proposed subdivision of 7 lots that is currently before the Board was done because of a misunderstanding that they weren't allowed to have more than one principal use so they decided to subdivide. The application has now been amended to seek the subdivision of only 2 lots and is now to be considered a minor subdivision. Mr. Hyland also explained that many of the dimensional variances now are not required, however they are asking for waivers of portions of the buffering requirements. One lot will hold the shopping center and the other lot will hold a gasoline fueling and service station, which is a conditional use. He explained that they need a preliminary approval in order to finalize negotiations with tenants.

James Botti, principal; Andrew Dorin, architect; Cecilia Byrne Schmidt, planner and landscape architect; Gary Vecchio, engineer; Nathan Mosley, project manager with Shropshire Associates were all sworn in by the Board solicitor. Mr. Botti gave the Board his background and showed the Board some of the projects he had developed which were upscale retail shopping centers in surrounding states. They are building a Fountain Square in Connecticut at this time which is also a multiple pad site. Numerous fountains are proposed for the project to give it an upscale look which they believe attracts tenants. They are in negotiations with grocery stores, banks, retail stores, hotels at this time for this site but they need preliminary approval to sign a lease and disclose names. The entire project will take about 18 months to build out. This is their first project in NJ.

Gary Vecchio, applicant's engineer, gave testimony regarding the site. It is currently a farm; and is west of the NJ turnpike, east of Irick road and south of Route 541. The project involves a realignment of Irick Road which will divide the site in two. The hotel is located at the rear of the site near the turnpike; it is zoned Commercial and both lots conform regarding size which is a one acre minimum, as well as setbacks, lot frontage and impervious coverage. There are 6 buildings proposed. The gas station will be on one lot and the other buildings on the other lot. Parking spaces will be 10 feet by 20 feet in size, drive aisles are 25 feet in width. Water will come from Burlington Township and sewer service from Mt. Holly MUA; both connections are on Western Drive. An infiltration system will be located at the rear of the site and will conform to DEP standards. The site will be totally landscaped and lighted.

Cecilia Byrne Schmidt testified regarding landscaping at the site. A large landscaped buffer is provided along Irick Road. There will be a mix of plantings along Route 541, 20 feet in width, along with decorative fountains. Evergreen shrubs and canopy trees will be located along Irick Road. An entrance boulevard flanked with trees is planned. The parking lot will be partitioned and planted with canopy trees and shrubs to break it up into nodes and bring more green into the center of the site.

Portions of the parking lot are only 10 feet from the ROW along Irick Road; however, the applicants agree to slide the site over 10 feet, thus eliminating the variance and providing 20 feet of setback.

Hotels are a conditional use and one of the conditions is that it be buffered. The Board can waive the requirement or reduce it if they determine that the buffer doesn't serve a purpose as explained by Mr. Hyland. The hotel is on the western side of the property along the Turnpike; there are mature trees along the ROW. Due to the placement of the hotel on the site the applicants think that they don't need to comply with all ordinance requirements for buffering. Fountains will be located along Route 541 near the gas convenience store; there will be trees as well to eliminate glare. It will be a lush and green environment, according to Ms. Schmidt. Gene Blair thinks the front of the gas station needs to be supplemented with more landscaping; she explained they would supplement but the fountains are planned for that area and they want to keep the greenery low. They explained that the tenants want their buildings to be seen. They

are trying for a happy medium. They agree to add more to bring it in balance with the rest of the site as it is depicted along Route 541.

Andrew Dorin, architect gave testimony regarding the layout of the site. He distributed a booklet of various depictions of the site and what it would look like, almost identical to an as-built. The fountain design is a unique approach and brings an ambiance of sound as well as sight; they help create an environment that is pedestrian friendly and even reduces traffic noise. The different renderings gave a different perspective of the site. It is designed to reduce conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. There is a lot of space around the perimeter of the pad site buildings; outdoor seating is provided in several areas so people can enjoy the space. The experiential space is very important; they want people to spend time here and they are trying to create a special space. They can change the light colors in the fountains as Mr. Botti explained. Music is also able to be added.

Dave Barger commended the applicants on the level of detail; he is intrigued by the frontage along Route 541; he asked about putting the utility lines underground. They agree to do it if they can; however, Board engineer Greg Valesi stated they would be unlikely to be able to do so. Dave asked about monument signs along the front of the site; the applicants explained they wanted pylon and monument signs but the signage plan would be presented at final site plan approval. He likes the fountain elements.

Gene Blair explained that pylon signage is prohibited. He explained that they wanted the words "Westampton" as an identifier on one of the monument signs; the applicants agree to do this.

Board planner Barbara Fegley asked if the fountains are variable; Andrew Dorin answered that they are capable of being changed and are flexible. They will run for as long as they can during the year even possibly during the winter. The temporary planters that are shown on the drawings would be changed with the seasons.

Mr. Botti had concerns about coming in to the Board for additional signage and asking for variances for each tenant as they come in. Greg Valesi explained that they have to have a preliminary sign package that would show locations and identify whether or not each sign complies with the ordinance. He could use a generic detail but the Board needs to see these. Greg has concerns regarding the year-round operation of the fountains; he wants to make sure that it is possible to operate them year-round and wants to make sure the Board is aware of what they will be getting. The applicants agree to return with more information. Mr. Botti explained they are building a Fountain Square shopping center in Connecticut and they are planning to run the fountains through the entire winter although he has never done this before. The fountains could be turned off in very cold weather and Greg wants to make sure the Board knows this. Mr. Durin finally admitted that this is possible. Mr. Hyland stated that they would know more by the time they would come back for final approval. If not running, the fountains would be emptied of water, there is landscaping around them for added visual interest.

Jim Winckowski asked if these renderings show the buildings that are coming; Mr. Durin explained that measures will be kept in place to assure that aesthetics are upscale but of course, not knowing tenants at this point, some could change. Solicitor Swartz explained that the applicants may return with an amended preliminary site plan approval. All pad sites will have the same architectural look and Jim wants to make sure that as each tenant comes in they maintain the same look. He had concerns regarding who would be taking care of that aspect of the project.

Nathan Mosley, traffic engineer testified regarding the shopping center. Traffic counts were done during the weekdays from 7 to 9 AM, and from 4 to 6 PM and also on weekends on Route 541/Irick Road, Route 541/Western Drive and Route 541/Academy Drive. He distributed a conceptual roadway layout; they had met with the County in July of 2018. The existing signal will be relocated south; Irick Road will be realigned with Western Drive. Left hand turns lanes will be provided in both directions onto Western Drive from Route 541, as well as onto Irick Road. The capacity of the intersection will be greatly increased as it will operate more efficiently. The County was in favor of this plan. Trip generation was looked at; and divided into three categories. Total trips generated was looked at; some trips however will be internal amongst the site. They also calculated pass by trips. They overlaid this traffic over existing volumes and completed a level of service analysis from this data. Currently there are some delays at 541 and Irick Road; level of service is C. Coming from the jug handle on Western Drive at some times there is level of service F. Overall the new intersection will operate at a level of service C, some movements at a level of service D. He explained that the DOT considered levels A, B, C or D adequate. They feel this conceptual layout will be acceptable to the County. They looked at the site driveways, levels of service were good for the most part.

Jim Winckowski asked if Irick Road was studied; they hadn't done this yet but would provide the information. Jim asked if they had anything from the County as far as an endorsement; any minutes or letters. It is his experience that the County can sound encouraging initially but that can change.

Jim asked about pedestrian movement around the site as the plan doesn't show any; he also wants to see an internal circulation plan for vehicular traffic. Jim said that a lot of information needs to be provided at this point.

Dave Barger stated that how the site looks along Route 541 is very important to him; he hopes they get a handle on exactly what it is going to look like. Mr. Hyland would like the Board to grant preliminary approval with conditions that they return to the Board with a compliance plan; he understands the Board's concerns but doesn't know at this point how he can answer some of the Board's concerns. They did have a technical review meeting with the Board professionals the other day. Greg Valesi stated that a shopping center use would utilize shared parking and is something that needs to be considered by the applicant so they don't end up with a sea of asphalt.

Gene Blair has concerns with the kinds of tenants that may want to come in here; while

he doesn't want to hold anyone out; he doesn't want something like a McDonalds or a Taco Bell coming in; he would like stores with a similar theme and look. Mr. Botti explained that this is an upscale center and they are very fussy.

The meeting was opened to the public for comment. There being no comment, the meeting was closed.

Mr. Hyland stated that they have both the planner's and the engineer's reports. They met with the Mayor and the administrator several months ago; they brought books with photos of other projects Mr. Botti had completed. They are in a sort of conundrum and need to be able to tell prospective tenants that they have secured a preliminary approval, with conditions. Mr. Swartz has seen the review letters which contain a number of potential variances and at this point he isn't even sure which ones would be applicable at this point and isn't sure what conditions would be placed in a resolution at this point. He doesn't know if it is possible to go through the reports and determine what is still applicable.

Mr. Borger agrees; he likes the project, it is well thought out; he thinks it is good for the Township. It seems to him that it would make sense for the professionals to meet again before they come back. Dave Guerrero agrees, they need to submit a revised set of plans. Gene Blair concurs. The solicitor isn't sure what variances are still out there and what needs to go into the approval resolution. Jim Winckowski suggested that the Board do a straw poll to see how they felt about waiving the need for the 40-foot buffer for the hotel. The Board asked if they would consider supplementing the existing deciduous trees at the rear of the hotel with evergreens; they agreed to do so. Mr. Hyland also had a concern about the landscaping at the front of the site; they don't want to hide the shopping center from the road. The Board agrees to this.

At this point, the Board took a five-minute recess and went back into session at 10:01 PM.

Mr. Hyland explained that they would like to have their application continued to the Board's December meeting. They would revise their plans and meet again with the Board professionals to clean things up. They believe that canopy trees along Route 541 will affect façade signs and will most likely come back for monument signage that would be incorporated into the plan. He thanked the Board for their consideration of the buffer waiver.

The Board voted to continue the application until their December 5 meeting. Motion made to continue by Mr. Blair, seconded by Mr. Barger. All Board members voted yes. No further notice would be required unless it was discovered that they needed to supplement the notice and re-advertise.

Open Meeting for public comment

No comment was made.

Comments from Board members

No comments were made.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Karp, Secretary
Westampton Township Land Development Board