

Borough of Watchung
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
7:30 p.m. May 16th, 2017

Chairwoman Schaefer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Salute to the flag. The Chair called for a roll call. Present at the call of the roll were:

Schaefer (present) Boyd (present) Desnoyers (present) Ellis (absent) Haveson (present) Sopko (present) Pennett (present) Pote (present) Speeney (present) Spingler (present) D'Annunzio (present)

Also present were attorney Frank Linnus and Engineer Tom Herits.

Chairwoman Schaefer indicated that there was a quorum to conduct business and stated that this meeting was being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 of the Open Public Meetings Act and proper notification of this meeting had been made.

The secretary called for the continuation of application PB16-02 Seritage Properties (Sears Retail). Mr. McNamara attorney for the applicant called traffic engineer, John Harter, to provide testimony regarding the meeting he had with the board professionals where they addressed the concerns from the prior meeting related to traffic calming and pedestrians in the area. He entered Exhibit A-6 overall site plan, revision 4, May 1st 2017 into the record. On the loop road we added additional stamped pavement and crosswalks that are colorized. We modified the location of the stop lines and continued to allow the inbound movement from Route 22 and Terrill Rd. to have the right of way. The state doesn't want to see hesitation on a state highway and we are compliant with that. Feedback from Somerset County was a request for a revision for our traffic study because it was originally planned for retail, but we are changing it to reflect the cinema. They also mentioned upgrading the signalized intersection at Terrill Rd. to current standards as it is decades old and is not ADA compliant, which we agreed to do. Mr. Ellis arrive at 7:38 p.m. While the county advocates the idea of a park n ride, it is not involved as it's an agreement between the property owner and NJDOT. With our project we will need the 100 parking spaces that are part of the park n ride agreement and once our project starts the DOT will have to find another site for the park n ride. The estimated time to complete the project is 2 years.

Traffic Engineer for the Planning Board, John Jahr provided testimony from his meeting with the applicant's professionals, and stated all of the board's request have been complied with in regard to circulation, traffic calming and some additional safety features within the site. The traffic light is going to be handled between the applicant and the county. From a DOT perspective they're fine. I think it's going to operate very, very well and I'm very pleased with the revisions they have made. It's going to be successful from a safety standpoint, which was my primary concern. From a traffic perspective, this site is less intensive than was previously approved. Mayor Pote arrived at 7:43 p.m. If they are going to change the application, as mentioned before, for the record I am particularly concerned with Saturday. And lastly, I would like the Board to require the applicant to copy the board's engineer on all correspondence and submissions to both NJDOT and to Somerset County. For the record Mr. Jahr confirmed with the applicant that the park and ride is no longer part of this application and everything concerning the end of the lease has been done in proper accordance with DOT and the applicant. If the park and ride were to come back to us, the borough would have some input. Mr. McNamara said yes that would require a variance relief for the parking.

Mark Healey planner for the board provided testimony with respect to traffic calming. All of the items I raised in previous reports were revised to my satisfaction for all the reasons Mr. Jahr stated.

Mr. Speeney asked what is going to deter motorist from using the site for just parking. Mr.

McNamara said when bulldozers and backhoes are on the site and the access is cut off from Route 22, that will deter most motorists. Mr. Herits added, once demolition starts the park and ride most likely is going to be discontinued.

Mr. D'Annunzio asked Mr. Harter if there was a left turn signal on Terrill Rd. going north into the lot as he is concerned that traffic will back up on Terrill and bottleneck down to one lane. Mr. Harter replied no it's a single phase. Will this be part of the traffic signal upgrades? Right now there's no plan to change the phasing. There ARE left turn signal lanes on Terrill Rd. Exhibit A-1 aerial view shows two through lanes and one dedicated left turn lane. Mr. Jahr said in our correspondence with the county we will see if the left turn signal is warranted if appropriate.

Mr. Desnoyers asked if there were any proposals to change the Route 22 entrance lane. No, we received a letter of no interest, so we are not making any changes. Madame Chair Schaefer stated for the record, Google maps shows it as two lanes going into three. Mr. Desnoyers concern was going from 50 mph into the complex. Mr. Jahr replied the issue is with the shopping center on 22 before this one. We need road widening to get the deceleration lane. Mr. Desnoyers asked Mr. Jahr if he expects most of the entrance from this lane and will there be an entrance sign. Mr. Harter replied there is a pylon on the northwest corner, even though we don't have a deceleration lane we have 2 large receiving lanes. Mr. Jahr said that although he agrees with Mr. Desnoyers, this is a state issue and when he talked to the DOT, he was told that the letter of no interest position on this application stands. Mr. Linnus asked Mr. Jahr if he raised this specific issue. Mr. Jahr said he asked if they were looking to get any improvements along Route 22 for this application and based on the access code, they had no interest. Is the exit lane the same, 3 lanes coming out heading east on Route 22? Yes. Madame Chair called for further questions from the board, hearing none, she opened it up to the public. Hearing none, the public portion was closed.

Mr. McNamara called Grayson Murray, Engineer for the applicant to provide testimony. He was duly sworn in and accepted. Mr. Murray summarized the improvements made with respect to removing parking spaces to enhance the green areas and also the relocation of trash enclosures to improve site line visibility. We are maintaining the trash enclosure off the northeast corner of Building B. Although we are seeking variance relief for location within the front yard, it is the best location to facilitate access and screening. In regard to trash receptacles and benches requested by the board, we have added those on each of the 4 pad areas. In regard to traffic calming, we sharpened the radius near building 5 so the exiting vehicles would have to turn slower. For the record we have an increase in green space of 74386 feet relative to the existing condition. We received correspondence from Police Chief Cina and he is satisfied with the addition of a 6 foot security fence along the southern boundary adjacent to the green brook. For lighting our proposal is for a 4000 Kelvin fixture that translates to natural white. The benefit is that it differentiates colors more significantly, therefore license plates, clothing, facial features will have more contrast and promotes safety. It does vary from your ordinance, but your ordinance pre-dates this technology and we propose this technology and color scale throughout modern applications because of its safety benefits and energy efficiency.

Madame Chair called for questions from the board planner. Mr. Healey stated he was satisfied with the parking layout presented. He asked for a description of the landscaping near the trash enclosures and what material the enclosures are made of. The enclosure is masonry and harmonious with the architecture of the building. With regard to the vegetation, it is evergreen vegetation at the height to screen the wall of the enclosure at each pad. Chairwoman Schaefer asked who's responsibility it is to empty the trash receptacles and the frequency. Mr. McNamara said it would be the maintenance company, on a daily basis if necessary.

Mr. Speeney asked questions regarding the color of the LED lighting and brightness to the environment. After discussion, Mr. Murray's feedback summarized their lighting choice was based on safety and security. Chairwoman Schaefer asked Mr. Murray if he went over this

choice with the Police Chief and yes, he did. Mr. Haveson asked which trash enclosure will serve building 5. Building 5 shares the enclosure with another building. Depending on the volume of trash, that would increase the frequency of service instead of another enclosure. Mr. Haveson asked if they had to put another one in, would the loading area accommodate a compactor. Yes it could. He also wanted to know how material would be loaded into buildings 4 and 3. The striped area can accommodate loading areas without a dock and there's an internal service corridor to move product between the loading dock internal spaces of the building. Are there areas for recyclables, asked Madame Chair? Recycling would be joined with the trash enclosure areas. The board would be comfortable knowing the trash would be picked up at least once a day and not left out overnight. Absolutely, it's in the best interest of the tenant and the developer. And the frequency would increase as necessary so that those enclosures are not overburdened. Hearing no more questions from the board, it was opened up to the public, hearing none that portion was closed.

Mr. McNamara called architect for the applicant, Ken Park, who was duly sworn in and accepted. He showed a preliminary rendering to the board and stated that it is somewhat consistent with the existing Sears building. Mr. Park presented, described and elaborated on the architectural design of the anchor and individual buildings proposed for the site. He also presented a retail floor plan for a 3 tenant anchor building and rear elevations of the buildings. On the rear of the building there is no other signage other than on the door to identify loading point or entrance area. Madame Chair commented, so it's just going to be a blank wall? Yes, but there will be score lines and reveals to articulate the blank façade like the other buildings. Floor plans for the four individual pad buildings were entered into the record and described by Mr. Park. We don't have a rendering for the four buildings because the design of this is going to be somewhat varying depending on the tenant. Single tenant occupancy will have some input in what the design is going to be depending on the use. These are a bit different on the façade and store fronts so that it can be distinguished and identified separately as a restaurant or food service building. On buildings B and C we are proposing signs on all four sides of the building in compliance with the ordinance, but ultimately it will be decided by the individual tenant. Madame Chair asked, so the elevations could potentially change depending on the tenant? Yes if necessary, we would submit and come back for final site plan approval for your review and consideration. With respect to Mr. Healey's comments on signage on all four sides of the building, at this point in time, we don't know. We are proposing two and let the tenant decide. We would advise the tenant of the borough's ordinance requirements so they could make a decision on signage. Regarding the pylon sign, we have a preliminary rendering of where it's going, the height and width, but depending on the tenants and their branding that may change.

Chairwoman Schaefer called for questions from the board. Mr. Healey stated this is preliminary so the overall structure of the sign needs to compliment the site. This didn't have any detail, so at final you can work that out. When do you anticipate getting some of the tenants? Is the board going to be getting all of the buildings at once or one at a time? Mr. McNamara said we are hopeful that once we get the preliminary approval, we will be able to wrap up lease negotiations. Mr. Healey stressed the importance of making sure there's a cohesiveness for all the pads. Mr. Park said the intent is to have consistency with the buildings. Madame Chair asked the board of the opinion on the consistency of the design as presented. After discussion, between board members and Mr. Park concerning consistency on the site and also the back of the building facing Raymour and Flannigan and the individual pad sites facing Terrill Rd. and Route 22, Mr. McNamara said they will consider revising the architectural treatment of the backs of the buildings visible to the public. It's the side facing 22 that would be visible. Mr. Park said they could match that to the front of the building. Mr. Herits said the bottom line is that you understand the board's concerns about blank walls facing the roadway.

Mr. Sopko asked Mr. Park if the designs of buildings 1-5 were consistent with "big box" architecture? We don't have tenants at this time, but he didn't think any of the big box tenants would be interested based on the square footage of these buildings. Mr. Sopko asked what other locations they did which are similar to what's being proposed here with pad sites and rear

of buildings facing the highway that we could look at. Mr. Park said he would supply additional information to the board. Mr. Healey said it's a very similar design to Monmouth Mall. Mayor Pote asked if there was access to the pad sites in the back. No it's just in the interior.

Have you made provisions for a drive-thru? Mr. Herits said our discussions in the professionals meetings, and with Bohler said drive-thru's wouldn't work on this site. Mr. Speeney commented on how nice the architectural's looked for buildings 1 and 2 in contrast to buildings 3, 4, and 5. Is it because of the color, asked Madame Chair. Mr. Speeney asked if they were set on this look. Mr. Park replied, "this is our preliminary submittal." After discussion among the board members on the architectural's for the anchor stores it was suggested that the applicant look at continuity with the color scheme. Mr. Herits asked the architect to bring a visual looking at it from the corner of Terrill and 22 all in one rendering. Mr. Park agreed. Chairwoman Schaefer stated the board's appreciation for having the applicant's professionals meet with the board's professionals. Madame Chair called for further questions from the board, hearing none, she called for public questions, hearing none that portion was closed.

Mr. McNamara called Christine Cafone, planner to provide testimony. At this point the Chair called for a 10 minute recess. When the meeting reconvened all board members were present.

Christine Nazzaro-Cafone, 125 Half-mile Rd., Red Bank, N.J. was duly sworn in and accepted. She testified that the proposed development application is going to reduce the current square footage currently on the site. All the uses proposed are permitted in the zone and they are seeking variance relief for set-backs on several buildings, a buffer variance, and set back variance for a trash enclosure. With respect to the C2 variance, Ms. Cafone provided testimony to support the applicant's development of this property with respect to a number of purposes of the act in the MLUL (Municipal Land Use Law 40:55D-2 a., g., h., i. and m.) advanced by this application although the statutory burden requires them to advance just one. She stated that with the proposal to use landscaping and architectural improvements the board can be confident in granting the variance for the side yard set-back, with no substantial detriment.

Placing building C in the non-conforming location 77.6 feet, is a superior zoning alternative and will result in a better site for aesthetic purposes and circulation isles. Set-back variances for buildings A&B to Terrill Rd. are minimal and this would be an improvement over today's existing conditions. With the non-conforming parking lots, everything is going to have a filtered view (landscaping). Ms. Cafone, then referenced the borough's last Master Plan re-exam of 2011, where the borough's goal was to promote new development of non-residential uses in appropriate locations with appropriate regulation.

Madame Chair called for questions from the board's planner and board members. Mr. Speeney asked if the plan with the pads presented was at maximum. No, if the applicant changes the size of the buildings, bigger or smaller, they would have to come back with an amended site plan. Mayor Pote asked for clarification on the set-back on building D. It is 100 feet and the side set-back for building 5 is 42.9 feet. He asked what the set-backs are for buildings 3 & 4? It's 90 and 94.6, very de minimis but the need for variances are there. Hearing no further questions, Madame Chair called for questions from the public, hearing none that portion was closed.

Madame Chair asked about preserving the mural inside the Sears store. The applicant said they had communication with the Historical Committee and will work with them in getting the mural preserved and donated to the borough.

Mr. Linnus confirmed with Mr. McNamara that this application was only for preliminary approval and variance relief. They would come back for final and carried to such further date and provide notice.

Mr. Speeney made a motion for the attorney draft a resolution for preliminary approval for the next meeting. The Chair then opened it up to the public for comments, hearing none, it was closed. Mrs. Pennett, was pleased with all the plantings the applicant is providing and asked that they adhere to the borough's tree ordinance.

For clarification purposes Mr. Linnus said the hearing is still open, therefore the public is invited to participate on the continuation of the hearing because it has not been closed. We cannot preclude any member of the public showing up at the next meeting. Mr. McNamara asked if the motion could be amended to close off this portion of the hearing and leave it to a discussion with the text of the resolution at the next meeting. Mr. Linnus said as long as the public can participate, yes. Seconded by Mrs. Pennett, and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Schaefer, Speeney, Desnoyers, Haveson, Boyd, Ellis, Pote, Pennett, Sopko, Spingler "aye". Chris D'Annunzio did not vote.

Next hearing is June 20, 2017. The Chair made motion in the affirmative to carry applications PB16-02, and PB16-03 until June 30th with an extension until July 31st 2017, it was moved by Mr. Ellis and seconded by Mr. Haveson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Schaefer, Speeney, Desnoyers, Haveson, Boyd, Ellis, Pote, Pennett, Sopko "aye." The applicant consented to the extension.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryann Amiano
Planning Board Clerk