

METUCHEN PLANNING BOARD

MINUTES

MARCH 19, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 8:04 p.m. by the Vice Chairperson, Ellen Clarkson, who read the statement in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Present:	William Boerth	Thomas Vahalla, Mayor
	Ellen Clarkson, Vice Chr.	James Constantine, Planner
	Ted Grabowski	Katherine Elliott, Engineer
	Alan Grossman	Robert Renaud, Attorney
	Martin Jessen	Sharon Hollis, Secretary
	John Leazer	

Absent:	Eric Erickson, Chr.	Roseann Misrahi, Alt. I
	Richard Weber, Councilmember	Kathy Busch, Alt. II

OLD BUSINESS:

A thru Z Equities, LLC – Applicant is seeking an amendment for bulk variance approval for minimum open space coverage to construct a new single family dwelling.

43 Barnstable Street Block 166 Lot 8.02

John Wiley, attorney for the applicant, stated this is a continuation of the hearing from February. There was a conflict between the architect’s plan and engineer’s version of the site plan. That has been resolved.

William Salmon, engineer, previously sworn, explained the changes. Mr. Salmon stated revisions were made to the drawings over coordination between his office and the architect’s office. (A rendering of the site plan was marked for identification as A-1). The plan now shows a 32 foot wide house with a 9’ wide driveway. The zoning reference in the architectural plans has been removed. The new variance is for open space, 60% required, 50% proposed. There is also a design waiver for the driveway setback to the side line, 3’ required, 1’ is proposed. This design as proposed is similar to the rest of the neighborhood. Almost 50% of the lots in the neighborhood have a rear garage. Quite a few of the lots are undersized. (A colored rendering of a 2007 aerial photo of the neighborhood was marked for identification as A-2). The photo shows the lot sizes from Laureldale Avenue to Jonesdale Avenue.

Mr. Wiley stated the plan submitted is better because it removes the garage door from the streetscape, which appears to be an objective in the Master Plan and the Land Development Ordinance. By putting the detached garage in the rear it is an alternate remedy of trying to create a streetscape in which garage doors are not a dominate factor, C-2. There will be no adverse impact to the neighborhood based on the fact that it is a common development pattern of the neighborhood. It preserves and enhances the neighborhood.

Mr. Salmon stated this application advances both the Master Plan and the MLUL by providing a variety of housing types and preserves the character of the neighborhood. There will be no negative impact with the driveway as proposed. The driveway will be setback 1 foot.

There was a brief Board discussion regarding switching the driveway to the opposite side of the property and the number of trees to be replaced. Concerns were raised with having a 1' setback for the driveway verses the required 3', drainage issues, and if a deck was to be built a variance would be required.

Landscaping was discussed. The applicant agreed to plant four trees in the yard. A total of twenty-four replacement trees are required.

The public portion was opened.

Darrell Hall, 53 Barnstable Street, stated he had no objection to the application and that he would like to see grass planted between the driveways. No flowers please.

The public portion was closed.

Mr. Wiley requested a brief recess at 8:30 p.m. to confer with his client due to Board concerns on the width of the house and the driveway.

The Board reconvened at 8:35 p.m.

Mr. Wiley stated the way the house is proposed 32' works and 30' doesn't. If my client shaves 3' off of the rear of the house from 50' deep to 47' deep the house will still be functional.

Board members continued to raise concerns on the setback for the driveway. Ms. Clarkson stated there is no advantage by removing 3' off of the rear of the house. It wouldn't have a visual impact. Mr. Leazer stated he was disappointed that the issue brought up at the last meeting wasn't seriously considered, the issue being the width of the house. Ms. Clarkson added I don't believe the 1' setback as opposed to the 0' setback of the driveway make a sufficient difference. Mr. Boerth stated he liked the idea of not having the garage door in the front of the building but the driveway should be offset more from the property line and 1' just isn't enough.

Mr. Leazer asked if the first floor could be 2' narrower. The second floor could be cantilevered.

Mr. Wiley requested a brief recess at 8:45 p.m. to confer with his client.

The Board reconvened at 8:49 p.m.

Mr. Wiley stated cantilevering the second floor just won't look right. His client will shave 2' off to make the house 30' wide to allow a 3' setback for the driveway. The only variance required is for open space and no waiver will be required for the driveway.

A motion was made by Mr. Jessen to approve the application with 3' setback for the driveway and 30' wide house, seconded by Mayor Vahalla. Roll call vote taken. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Constantine updated the Board regarding information on the Circulation Plan. The PB meeting will be cancelled on April 2nd. There will be a Reconnecting your Community workshop at the Senior Citizens building on March 31, April 1 and April 2. Mr. Constantine briefly discussed the comments received from the December 2, 2008 workshop along with what will be addressed at the new workshop.

Mr. Leazer commented that he didn't feel that the last PB meeting was not a very effective use of the Boards time. There should be a more completeness review before the application is heard by the Board. Maybe a new application fee should be charged or something else. There was a brief Board discussion on what changes could be made before an application is heard by the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sharon Hollis
Planning Board Secretary