

**METUCHEN PLANNING BOARD**

**MINUTES**

**APRIL 2, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by the Chairman, Eric Erickson, who read the statement in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Present: Ellen Clarkson, Vice Chr. Beatrice Moskowitz, Alt. II  
Eric Erickson, Chr. James Constantine, Planner  
Alan Grossman Robert Renaud, Attorney  
Jason Kirin Lisa DiFranza, Engineer  
Jennifer Maier Sharon Hollis, Secretary  
Thomas Vahalla, Mayor Chris Cosenza, Zoning Official  
Jane Leal, Alt. I

Absent: Karen Alexander  
Kathy Busch  
Reed Leibfried, Councilman

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Butter Construction & Engineers Inc. – Applicant is seeking minor subdivision approval with bulk variances.

231 Main Street

Block 151

Lots 15, 17

John DeNoia, Esq, attorney for the applicant, stated the applicant would like to subdivide the property into two building lots in order to construct two single family dwellings, one on each lot.

Baldev Butter, principal in Butter Construction & Engineers, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. Mr. Butter presented a colored rendering of the two proposed homes, which was marked as Exhibit A-1, and stated the exhibit is a rendering of what is proposed to be developed on the site.

Paul Fletcher, professional licensed engineer, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. Mr. Fletcher stated he prepared the subdivision plan. Currently there is an existing 2 ½ framed dwelling and shed on the property. The applicant would like to demolish the existing dwelling and shed, divide the 14,461.25 square foot lot in half, each lot will be approximately 50’ x 144’. Lot 15.01 will be 7,246 square feet. Lot 17.01 will be 7,215 square feet. The existing drainage pattern is from the

back of the property towards Main Street. The drainage pattern will not change with the subdivision.

The Board Engineer's report was discussed. Mr. Fletcher stated he agrees with the listed required variances but there is an issue with the driveway. The Metuchen Ordinance allows the driveway to be up to 12' wide when it crosses the driveway apron but then it can flare out to be as much as 20' wide.

There was a brief discussion between the Board and Mr. Fletcher on whether there would be separate driveways or one common/shared driveway. If there are separate driveways a 3' setback would be required for each driveway. After further Ordinance review by Mr. Constantine, Mr. Renaud stated if it is not a shared driveway, each individual driveway meets the width requirement and what is needed is a requested waiver for a driveway setback. Mr. Fletcher added the applicant proposes to construct a flush concrete curb along the driveways to delineate the property lines.

Mr. Fletcher stated the plans will be revised to show it will be easier for the owners to access the garages. To achieve that there will be an increase in the impervious coverage. Pavers will be used from the sidewalk area to the front line of the home then asphalt or concrete will be used. Pavers will also be used from the walkway to the steps. Mechanical equipment will be placed on the side of the dwellings and will be buffered.

Richard Lapinski, professional planner, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. Mr. Lapinski stated offices and apartments are a permitted conditional use along this section of Main Street. The property is located in the R-2 zone. The block is totally developed and the lot sizes are easy to characterize because there are only nine other lots in the block besides the subject property. Most of the lots are 50' wide. There are commercial uses to the north. The neighborhood is fully developed. Mr. Lapinski introduced an exhibit, a Neighborhood Lot Size Analysis, which was marked as A-2. There will be no conflict with lot sizes. The proposal as submitted is the best use of this property, consistent with homes in the area. The flexible C criteria could be justified and zoning would be furthered by this application. The property as it exists today is underutilized. The benefits outweigh any detriments and the proposal represents the best planning solution to this redevelopment effort.

There was further discussion on the driveways. Mr. Renaud stated if there is one common driveway for the two dwelling units then no variances or waivers are required. If they are going to be separate driveways then each driveway requires a 3' setback variance.

The Board Planner's report was discussed. Mr. DeNoia stated the architectural plan shows the porch to be 6' in width on the side of the property and the site plan shows it only 4'. The architectural plan will be amended to 4' so the porch will be 2' shorter.

There was a discussion with the Applicant and the Board regarding the size of the porches. Board members preferred a 6' wide porch on the side of each dwelling. A discussion ensued and the Applicant agreed to cut into the house by 1' and then project the porch by an additional 1' into the side yard. That would leave a 3' side yard setback on each property. A 1' side yard setback variance would be required. Mr. Cosenza added non-enclosed porches can project a maximum of 4' into a required side yard setback.

Discussion on the Planner's report continued. Mr. Butter described the materials that will be used. There will be hardie plank siding, asphalt roof shingles, vinyl trim around the windows and aluminum railings. There will be stone on the lower part on the front of the dwellings, first floor porch area only. After a brief discussion with the Board, Mr. Butter agreed to have different stone treatment for each house that will match the color of the dwelling. Sidelights will be installed by the front door on the northerly house which will be similar to the southerly home as shown on Exhibit A-1.

The Board requested and the Applicant agreed to work with the Planner & Engineer to change the back part of the driveway to improve access and turning. Mr. DeNoia stated given changes that may take place with regard to additional driveway area and walkways the impervious coverage may change. Mr. Fletcher stated after recalculating the impervious coverage it may be up to 55%. A variance is required.

The public portion was opened.

Since no one came forward the public portion was closed.

Mr. Constantine stated this was not Mr. Butter's original proposal for this site. Mr. Butter had tried to do some other things with this site, but as you could see tonight, Mr. Butter is willing to compromise to increase the quality. This has been the spirit which Mr. Butter has presented in working with us through this project.

Questions continued to be raised by Board members on the common driveway. The Applicant agreed to provide a cross easement for the first 40' of driveway going back from the front property line.

Conditions of approval:

- The dwellings shall be substantially similar to the plans shown except for the changes that were discussed.
- The Applicant agrees that the materials discussed shall be the materials used.
- The Applicant agrees there will be a cross easement in the first 40' going back from the front property line.

- The Applicant has agreed to comply with all the recommendations and requirements contained in both the Board Engineer's and Planner's memo.
- The Applicant agrees to work with the Planner and Engineer in designing the driveway walkways at the rear of the property and that the redesign shall be subject to the review and approval of the Planner and the Engineer.
- The Applicant also requested a variance for the impervious coverage up to 55% from 50%.
- The porch will remain 6' with 1foot going into the house and 1 foot encroaching into the side yard.
- The lower portion of the front of each dwelling will be stone.

A motion was made by Mayor Vahalla with the conditions noted, seconded by Mr. Kirin. Roll call vote taken. Yes – Clarkson, Erickson, Grossman, Kirin, Maier, Mayor Vahalla, Leal, Moskowitz. Motion carried unanimously.

The minutes from the February 5, 2015, Executive Session from February 5, 2015 and the Special Meeting from March 12, 2015 were approved as written. A motion was made by Mayor Vahalla, seconded by Mr. Kirin. Voice vote taken. Motion carried unanimously.

On a motion made by Mayor Vahalla, seconded by Mr. Kirin, with all in favor, the meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Hollis  
Planning Board Secretary