

**METUCHEN PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES**

December 15, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:33pm by Eric Erickson, Chairman, who read the statement in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Present:

Alan Grossman	James Griffin
Councilmember Koskoski	Lauren Cohn
Melissa Perilstein, Administrator	Robert Renaud, Attorney
Lynn Nowak	Robert Mannix, Engineer
Jonathan Lifton	Christopher Cosenza, Planner
Eric Erickson, Chairman	Denise Hamilton, Secretary

Late: 8:23pm Jonathan Busch

Absent: Ellen Clarkson, Vice Chairperson
William Love, Mayor's Designee

NEW BUSINESS:

22-13341 212 Durham Urban Renewal LLC – Applicant seeks preliminary and final major site plan approval with exceptions and waivers to demolish the existing buildings and construct a single 5-story structure building containing 272 residential units, 364 parking spaces, site improvements, and public access drive on Parcel B, with landscaping and parking on Parcel A. The proposal is in accordance with the Gulton Tract Redevelopment Plan.

212 Durham Avenue Bl: 37 Lots: 5.12, 5.22, 6, 7.01, 7.02, 13, 14, 15.01, 16.02, 16.03, 17.02
Bl: 42 Lots: 1 – 7

Diane Hickey, Applicant's Attorney, stated that the Application is part of the Gulton's Amended Redevelopment Agreement. They are proposing a 5-story multi-unit apartment building on Parcel B. (Remainder of her opening statement was inaudible).

Nora Ahmed, Engineer, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. She holds a BS in Civil Engineering and was accepted as an expert witness.

Ms. Ahmed stated that the Board agreed to subdivide the property in July 2022. It is a vacant industrial facility comprised of three buildings, totaling 118,000sf. Exhibit A2, Parcel B, was displayed. There is a 5-story residential building being proposed with 272 residential units consisting of studios, one bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom apartments. On the ground floor will be 44 understory parking spaces at the northwestern corner of the building. The main entrance will be at the southeastern corner and so will visitor parking. To the west will be sidewalks leading up to six (6) units with work type spaces. Visitor parking will be at the southeastern corner. At the main entrance will be a pathway to Durham Avenue, to the west a secondary access point to the understory parking, and behind the site an additional access into the building. Further east will be the trash pick-up zone with access to an internal trash room at the northeastern corner. Amenities include a garden, courtyard, and dog park. Parcel A will be a public open space. All are permitted

uses. The site will offer three driveways; Gulton Street, Hampton Street, and Durham Avenue (across from the Metuchen Sportsplex). Parcel A's improvements include a public access drive, along with on street parking spaces for residents and the public, as stipulated by a shared parking agreement. The proposal also includes 55 parking spaces in a graveled area to be coordinated with Middlesex County for public use. Two access points between Parcel B and Parcel A along the eastern boundary will be shared. The intent of Parcel A is to create an entrance to the Peter J. Barnes Wildlife Preserve. It has wetlands and a stream running through the site, and as part of the Agreement, will be contributed by Middlesex County to the Metuchen Borough. All building requirements comply with the Redevelopment Plan. The impervious coverage has been reduced by 2.3 acres adding new green space to Parcel A. In addition to the primary building, there are also three structures located on the southwestern corner of the property, containing 16 garages, for use by the residents. The intent is to offer 364 spaces, this includes 304 surface spaces, 44 understory spaces, and 16 garage spaces. A new parking agreement is required. In addition, by striping out additional parking on Durham Avenue, there is the potential for 20 on-street spaces, increasing the number to 384. Size of the onsite spaces are 9x18 and 8x23 at the public access drive. Along the eastern border of the property of lot 13.01 is a stream. This is designated as a flood hazard area by the NJDEP. The space primarily encumbers the northwestern portion of the parking lot. That area encompasses parking spaces, the dog park, and community area. In total, 252 parking spaces would be outside and above the flood elevation zone. The building, emergency access around the building, and access to the understory parking, are all outside the flood area. Based on the New Jersey ordinance for EV parking spaces for residential development, 15% of the required parking should be EV spaces. This will be phased out over the span of six (6) years. The first one-third of those spaces must be built at the time of the CO, second after three years, and last third by six years. Borough professionals' approvals will be required to determine future locations. The number of accessible spaces will not be reduced. A variance is required for the 24sf public access driveway width proposed. 272 spaces have been allotted for bicycle parking mostly interior to the building, at the northeast corner by the courtyard. Bike racks will be provided outside the main entry doors. Additionally, 55 future parking spaces are proposed at the rear of the property, to be built following the initial construction, along with the public access drive. This was included in the stormwater design. Pedestrian connectivity will be provided via a 5ft wide sidewalk and will be increased to 6ft by the parking areas. A full sidewalk is provided along the entire length of the public access drive connecting Durham Avenue to the gravel lot at the rear of the site. There is also a sidewalk circling the building to provide access all around, leading to the dog park and the community garden. Crosswalks are proposed along Durham Avenue, to connect the various ramps along the development to the Sportsplex, Hampton Street and Smith Street. A full trail network at the rear of the property will connect the Wildlife Preserve area on Parcel A. Signage requires variances. Two monument signs are proposed for Parcel B access points by Gulton Street and Hampton Street. Under the Ordinance, one is permitted. The main entrance sign is the larger of the two signs at 50sf, and the secondary sign measures 16sf. Ordinance permits 2sf. Three wall signs are proposed for the three entry points. Two are permitted. At the main entry the first sign proposed is 33sf, second sign by the rear 16sf, and a number sign measuring 5sf would be at the western access of the building with the number 212. Both main entry and rear building signs will be canopy mounted with the name of the development. Signs for each of the six (6) live/work units measures 3.75sf, which is in compliance with requirements. Stormwater management design includes more than 1000sf (2.3 acres) of additional green space. No basin is required for water quantity or quality control. There will be drainage improvements to the current system. The landscaping proposed is compliant with the addition of 595 new plantings, including 300 street and shade trees. Stream remediation and soil contamination efforts have been ongoing at the rear along the northern portion. As part of that effort, 2000-3000 new saplings were already planted in that area. 165 trees are proposed for removal and requires professionals' approvals. Payment in lieu will be provided if necessary. 12-foot-high decorative lights are proposed along Durham Avenue and down the public access drive, to the public space parking lot. Decorative lights are consistent with the area. Proposal includes 24ft

high LED downlit lights and dark sky compliant lighting. All lights along the perimeter property line will be equipped with outside shields to prevent light spillage to the neighboring residents.

Mr. Cosenza stated that he had no comments for lights because the application is compliant with the Redevelopment Plan Agreement.

Ms. Hickey commented that a lighting plan will be submitted to the Planner for final approval.

Ms. Ahmed stated that trash will be collected three times per week, of which twice will be for recycling. Residents will have trash pick-up from their units. Every floor will have a trash room leading to a shoot. The internal trash room will be located at the northeast corner of the building. Timing of the pick-up will be after 8:00am. Applicant is required to secure a flood hazard area permit from the NJDEP. The existing site contains an isolated wetland behind Houston Street that will be filled under a general permit granted by the NJDEP. The Borough will be given a copy of the permit. They are also securing approval from Freehold Soil, Middlesex County, and Middlesex County Water. Construction access will be provided along the southeastern corner of the property. Staging areas will be reviewed by the Freehold Soil Conservation District. To the back of Parcel B, will be a dashed striped hatch along the public access drive, representing a cross access utility and stormwater management easement. Most of the utilities will run down that public access drive. There is a stormwater easement proposed to the northwest area.

Mr. Mannix requested the loading area be designated to discourage parking. Applicant was agreeable to that request.

Ms. Hickey stated applicant is in agreement with suggestions stated in the Engineer's memo.

Mr. Cosenza mentioned that the possibility of parking on Durham Avenue could be explored at a later time.

The Board was not all in favor of parking on Durham Avenue. Areas with street parking results in challenges, such as snow removal.

8:23pm Mayor Jonathan Busch arrived.

The Board asked about the number of parking spaces that could be impacted if flooding should occur.

Ms. Ahmed responded that it would be 112 parking spaces. The additional striped spaces on Durham Avenue would be an alternative. The rear flood area will have an appropriate sign. Chances of the flood happening is 1% per year.

The Board expressed concern and continued a brief discussion regarding the flood area, including definition of "flood area," and limited parking options available for emergency use.

Mr. Cosenza questioned the pavement treatment proposed for the parking area in front of the building.

Ms. Ahmed responded that the area would have a different treatment that has not yet been decided but designed to reinforce curb appeal.

Mr. Erickson invited additional questions from the Board for the witness. No one responded.

Mr. David Fahim, Traffic Manager & Engineer, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. He is a graduate of Rutgers University with a Degree in Civil Engineering and has over eight years of experience. He is licensed in New Jersey and has testified before other Boards. He was accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Fahim stated that traffic data was collected in October 2022 to determine traffic peak hours. They compared their data with NJDOT data. The proposed development did show significant negative impact. All driveways had full movement with no restrictions.

The Board requested to have consideration taken to people coming out of the Wildlife Preserve by having the area designated for left turns only or a traffic light.

Mr. Fahim responded that this small traffic volume would not warrant a signal. Traffic discussion continued with the Board and Mr. Fahim regarding public safety.

Mr. Erickson invited additional questions for the witness. No one responded.

Mr. Brad Rupert, Architect, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. He is a Graduate of Philadelphia University and has been practicing since 2001. His New Jersey license is pending.

Mr. Rupert stated that of the total 272 units, 41 are for Affordable Housing, 5% are studio, 45% one-bedroom, 43% two-bedroom, and 7% three-bedroom. The main amenity space is approximately 10,000sf, which includes leasing space. Bike storage will offer 272 spaces, including location within the garage to utilize wall mounted racks. There are 44 internal parking spaces with two designated ADA. Live/work units are equipped with an internal door each. Building elevation will be 5-story with a modern industrial look. Dark gray brick is proposed, with fiber cement siding, and a variety of colors. The site will provide Greenway access. Residential canopy will cover the entry point. The Green Energy efforts include; Solar, operable windows, energy star appliances, low flow plumbing fixtures, smoke free environment, etc. HVAC units are split system with the condenser location proposed for the roof. The front of the building meets the setback requirements as stipulated in the Redevelopment Agreement.

(Comments made by Ms. Hickey were inaudible).

Mr. Erickson invited questions for the witness. No one responded.

Susan Favate, Planner, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. She has sixteen years of experience in Planning, with a Masters in Urban Planning from New York University. She is licensed in New Jersey and was accepted as an expert witness.

Ms. Favate stated that the proposal will meet all the goals in the Redevelopment Plan and is consistent with the Master Plan. Uses proposed, as well as bulk standards, are consistent with the Redevelopment Plan. They are requesting design exceptions in three areas; signage, parking and public access driveway. Signage relief is requested for the amount and size of signs proposed. Parking is for relief from the Redevelopment Development. Exception is being sought for the width of the driveway. The Ordinance stipulates 22sf and the application proposes 24sf. They will comply with the Board's decision regarding the width.

Mr. Cosenza requested 24sf to remain and Applicant was agreeable.

Ms. Favate confirmed they are requesting relief from the parking standard designed in the RDP, to offer 1.4 spaces instead of 1.25, for a total of 364 spaces on the site. Closer to meeting the RSIS requirements. There is the potential for striped additional spaces on Durham Avenue.

The Board discussed the size of the 50ft monument sign at the driveway possibly being too large.

Matthew Allen, Klein Enterprises (inaudible) was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. He explained that sign measuring 33sf would have letters approximately 12 feet tall. A 50ft sign would be 5x10 and possibly sit on a 2ft pedestal, scaled for the front of the 5-story building. Using the monument style will designate the main entrance. The second sign provides recognition. Lighting has not yet been determined, although the monument sign would be illuminated with lights projecting from the back.

The Board discussed students as residents and inquired about assigned parking spots.

Mr. Allen stated rentals for reserved parking spaces will be offered, as well as permit parking. Flexibility will minimize residents parking on the street.

Mr. Ericson invited additional questions for the Board. No one responded.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Mr. Renaud opened the floor to the public.

Residents inquired about height of the building for fire safety, parking, and increased traffic. Concern was expressed for resident property resale and value.

Mr. Rupert explained that there are buildings with varying heights along Durham Avenue consisting of three, four and five stories. For the proposed building, the 3rd-story proportions are approximately 35ft., 4th-story is 45ft, and the 5th-story totals 55ft.

Board responded that the 30-acre Wildlife Preserve could be a positive influence for property value.

Several residents were in support of the application; reasonable solution for the property, park will beautify the area, and increased population will help to support local businesses. Inquiry was made about the number of parking spaces allotted for the Reserve.

Ms. Ahmed stated that 55 parking spaces will be shared for the public, as well as provide an access area to the Reserve.

Mr. Erickson invited additional questions. No one responded. The public portion was closed.

Mr. Renaud summarized the Conditions: 1) Applicant has agreed to comply with requirements in the Engineer's and Planner's memos; 2) Shared parking agreement and cross easements will require Board Engineer's and Attorney's approvals; 3) Emergency parking plan to be developed (encompasses the on-street parking on Durham Avenue); 4) Request to grant signage exceptions; 5) 24sf Driveway is acceptable; 6) Lighting and Landscape Plans to be submitted to Board Engineer and Planner for approvals; 7) Plan will be submitted for tree replacement and payment will be made in lieu of trees (if required); 8) Sign package to be submitted; and 9) Applicant requested a partial waiver.

Mr. Cosenza was in support of the signs proposed. Concern was expressed for the height of the 50sf sign, maybe it should be slightly lower in height. Planner's approval should be required.

Mr. Renaud continued with the Conditions: 10) Parking at 384 spaces.

(Inaudible/Mr. Allen's comments)

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Griffin and seconded by Ms. Cohn. Mr. Grossman, Councilmember Koskoski, Ms. Perilstein, Ms. Nowak, Mr. Lifton, Mr. Griffin, Ms. Cohn, and Mr. Erickson voted yes. Mayor Busch abstained. Motion was approved.

CORRESPONDENCE:

22-1323 William Thompson/Lawsuit – Robert Renaud
22 Ethel Place Bl: 205 Lot: 40

Mr. Renaud will provide a defense against the appeal made by Mr. Thompson for the denial of the subdivision.

Motion to adopt correspondence for the William Thompson lawsuit was made by Councilmember Koskoski and seconded by Ms. Nowak. Voice vote, with all in favor, motion was approved.

Minutes:

September 1, 2022

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Lifton and seconded by Mr. Griffin. Voice vote, with one abstention by Mayor Busch, the minutes were approved.

Minutes:

October 20, 2022

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Griffin and seconded by Mr. Grossman. Voice vote, with one abstention by Mayor Busch, the minutes were approved.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lifton and seconded by Mr. Griffin. Voice vote, with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,


D. E. Hamilton, Secretary