

**METUCHEN PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES**

**February 17, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by Mr. Robert Renaud, Attorney, who read the statement in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

<b>Present:</b>	Ellen Clarkson, Vice Chairperson	Lauren Cohn, Alt. II
	Alan Grossman	Robert Renaud, Attorney
	Councilmember Koskoski	Robert Mannix, Engineer
	William Love, Mayor’s Designee	Christopher Cosenza, Planner
	Lynn Nowak	Patricia Kaulfers, Zoning Official
	James Griffin	Denise Hamilton, Secretary
	Eric Erickson, Chairman	

<b>Absent:</b>	Jonathan Busch, Mayor	Jonathan Lifton
	Melissa Perilstein, Administrator	Michael Alvarez, Alt. I

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**21-13131 Metuchen III, LLC** – Applicant is seeking preliminary, final and major site plan approval with variances and waivers to construct a daycare facility of approximately 12,870 square feet.  
**215 Durham Avenue Block 71 Lots 37.02**

Mr. Steven Tripp, Applicant’s Attorney, explained that this was an application for the Oakite Site Redevelopment Area, governed by the existing Amended Redevelopment Plan, adopted Fall 2021. Under the Plan two lots are divided into five parcels, and Everbrook Academy will occupy Parcel E. Adequate parking will be available. Relief is being sought from the Ordinance for fence and signage.

Mr. David Wisotsky, Engineer, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. He has over 30 years’ experience as an Engineer and is licensed in multiple states, including New Jersey. He was accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Wisotsky shared his screen of Exhibit 1-A, dated January 24, 2022. He stated that the SportsPlex is currently the main structure on the premises, along with a vacant bank building, and graveled area. Sheet 301 was shared onscreen to display the future location of the daycare. Sheet C-302, dated January 5, 2022, labeled Exhibit 2-A was shared. Site access would be the same as the SportsPlex from Durham Avenue with the main entrance at the south east corner of the building. An 8ft sidewalk would be provided for pedestrians. There is also an existing sidewalk from Durham Avenue to be reconstructed. Appropriate ADA access and ramps are included. There will be secured recreational and play facility area towards the north and western edges and behind the building. Play areas will be secured by fencing. Parking for the SportsPlex requires 67 spaces and 51 for the daycare, for a combined total of 118 required spaces. With 23 spaces dedicated to the future memory care facility, there are 87 paved spaces readily available. Behind the SportsPlex is a gravel area, and once paved, will provide an additional 185 spaces, of which 31 spaces would be dedicated to meet daycare Ordinance requirements. The left side of the building will offer regular parking spaces. To the right side will be 14 6x8 compact spaces offered. Bicycle parking will be added to meet Ordinance requirements. Trash enclosure will be at the western edge adjacent to the SportsPlex with materials to match what currently exist. On the south western corner

will be a 4ft high gate and a 6ft high chain link fence. The 6ft fence would run along the property line adjacent to the park, parallel between the street side of the building and Durham Avenue, perpendicular to the access road, and continue to face the new connector road. Outside the play area, the chain link fence would change to a decorative aluminum 6ft fence. In front of the building will be a 4ft fence adjacent to a retaining wall. The Ordinance requires a decorative aluminum style fence, and not the proposed chain link with privacy siding.

Mr. Tripp stated that the relief needed is to allow a 6ft fence in the front yard, not opened 50%, chain link material, with a decorative portion on the connector road, where a 4ft fence is allowed.

Mr. Wisotsky stated that the Landscape Plan is in conformance with the Ordinance. An additional eight shade trees and 119 shrubs are included. Lighting will be pole mounted at 20ft in height as required. A series of 35 building mounted lights is proposed and in compliance. Lights will be 3000K. Storm water management will connect to the existing pipes that drain northeast offsite. No additional storm water quality measures are being proposed. Signage includes a 61 sq ft sign on the northern end, a 61 sq ft sign on the eastern side, and a 48 sq ft sign at the southern end by the main entrance. Signs do not conform with Ordinance requirements for area, number allowable, height and width.

Mr. Erickson opened the floor for questioning of the witness.

The Board inquired about how usage of space is determined.

Mr. Cosenza responded that the proposal was in compliance as the Redevelopment Ordinance allows for two principal uses on the lot.

Mr. Brian Birks, Sr. Director of Everbrook Academy, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. He stated that the hours of operation would be Monday through Friday, 6:30am – 6:30pm, staff of 23 members, staggering arrival times in the morning up to 10:00am, maximum of 152 children, and with part-time workers included, it would be infrequent that the building is ever full to capacity. Peak hours for drop off will be 6:30am-9:30am and for peak pick up 3:30pm-6:30pm. Parents must escort their child to the teacher after logging their arrival. The entire process should take approximately 7-10 minutes. Deliveries and trash pickup are generally two to three times per week. There is the option the schedule additional pick up if necessary.

Mr. Erikson opened the floor to the Board for questioning of the witness. There were no questions.

Mr. James Kassay, Architect, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. His New Jersey license is in good standing, and he has testified throughout the state. He was accepted by the Board as an expert witness.

Mr. Kassay displayed Exhibit A3, Architectural Plans. Plans were revised due to gable changes made. The building will be L-shaped with stucco material, fiber siding, thin brick base surrounding, and shingle roofing. Front elevation faces the parking lot. The smallest of the three signs would face the front of the building. The right elevation sign faces the train track, with rear elevation facing Durham Road. Sustainability efforts include occupancy sensors, digital programmable thermostat, energy star rated products, LED light fixtures and a smoke free building policy. Ceiling tiles and wall-to-wall carpeting in all classrooms will be recyclable. Carpeting will be installed 4ft about the finished floor. The building floor will be luxury vinyl tile, 4-score certified, with low emitting materials.

Mr. Tripp addressed Mr. Cosenza's memo and confirmed that relief is needed for the fence material, fence height in the front yard, and signage.

Ms. Dijia Chen, Planner, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. She holds a Master's in Planning and is licensed in New Jersey as a Professional Planner. She was accepted by the Board as an expert witness.

Ms. Chen stated that two groups of variances are needed. The Ordinance allows for one sign with a maximum of 24 sq ft. They are proposing three signs, and all deviate from the maximum square footage requirement. The first sign proposed is 4x10, 48 sq ft. The two remaining signs are 5x3, height of 13 ft 6 in, and 61 sq ft. Variance is needed for the height. The front yard fence is not 50% open deviating from the Ordinance requirement. Also, a variance is needed for chain link material proposed for the fence. They are seeking C2 variances on the grounds that the benefits outweigh the detriments. The daycare is considered an inherently beneficial use. Fence and signage contribute to the successful use of the area. There is no negative impact. Site is unique by being part of a greater redevelopment project. Location of each sign proposed is on a different façade to give clear identification from different areas. The signs are scaled to proportion of their respective façades. The fences are beneficial for the children's privacy.

Mr. Mannix requested testimony on how the contaminated area would be contained during construction.

Ms. Crystal Leavey, Engineer, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. She holds a Master's in Science from Rowan University. She has been licensed for 9 years in New Jersey and was accepted as an expert witness.

Ms. Leavey stated that the area is under environmental restriction for soil contamination. There are two different types of caps on the area: 1) A two-foot cap where clean fill material was brought in; 2) A cap for concrete sidewalk, asphalt paving and parking areas. There will probably be disturbances to the site once construction begins, however, complete removal of the caps is unlikely. Her role is to ensure work remains protected for human health and the environment. She will prepare a remedial workplace plan for the NJDEP. There will be ongoing long-term monitoring of the environment after construction.

Mr. Mannix requested clarification on the existing gravel parking area, ownership of easement, and appropriateness of the compact car spaces.

Mr. Stuart Schooler, Managing Partner of Metuchen III, was sworn in by Mr. Renaud. He responded that the gravel area was not in use but would research the matter further.

Mr. Tripp stated that the easement would be the responsibility of the Artis applicant, and the design for the compact cars would remain.

A discussion regarding ownership of the easement continued. Mr. Renaud clarified that the easement would become the property of the Metuchen Borough.

Mr. Cosenza inquired about the number of electrical parking and bicycle spaces to be installed, requested more variety of bollards, and stated that signage relief would be considered an exception and not a variance. He wanted additional information on sign illumination.

Mr. Wisotksy responded that there will be two charging stations installed with the option of another six, if required. Bicycle spaces will be included in the revised plan.

Mr. Schooler said that the public will be able to charge their vehicles for free up to four hours. Electricity will be generated from solar. Although the gravel area was used once, that was an exception, and is not being utilized.

Mr. Erickson opened the floor for questions. Hearing no questions, the floor was closed, and then opened to the public for comments. Hearing no comments, the floor was closed.

Mr. Renaud stated that a full review of the meeting would be required for all the Conditions, which would include; 1) 31 shared parking spaces to be reserved from the improved gravel lot and Borough Engineer's approval is required, and 2) lighting to be reduced.

Motion to approve with changes discussed was made by Ms. Koskoski and seconded by Ms. Clarkson; Ms. Clarkson, Mr. Grossman, Councilmember Koskoski, Mr. Love, Ms. Nowak, Mr. Griffin, Ms. Cohn and Mr. Erickson voted yes.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION:**

Mr. Erickson opened the floor to the public, hearing no response, the floor was closed.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE:**

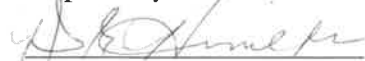
##### Minutes for January 20, 2022

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Griffin and was seconded by Mr. Grossman. Voice vote, with all in favor, the minutes were approved.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Nowak and was seconded by Ms. Clarkson. Voice vote, with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 9:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,



D. Hamilton, Secretary