

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING
May 11, 2020**

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Monaco at 7:00 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

CHAIR MONACO ANNOUNCED THAT IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH THE EXECUTIVE ORDERS SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR AND IN AN EFFORT TO FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES RECOMMENDED BY THE CDC, THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY FOR ALL BOARD MEMBERS, BOARD PROFESSIONALS, APPLICANT AND APPLICANT'S TEAM, ANY INTERESTED PARTIES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

ROLL CALL

Board Members in Attendance:

Albanese, J.

Cook, J.

Duffy, E.

Filler, C.

Heller, J.

John, C

Mueller, A.

Monaco, R.

Rohrbach, T

Board Members Absent

Allen, J.

Others Present

Board Attorney Jonathan Drill, Esq., Board Planners Michael Sullivan and Andrea Malcolm Board Conflict Engineer Larry Plevier, Board Environmental Consultant Jack Szczepanski, Board Traffic Engineer Jay Troutman and Board Secretary Ann Marie Lehberger

MINUTES

Ms. Duffy noted one correction to be made.

Mr. Heller, Mr. Albanese, and Mr. Monaco abstained

Ms. Duffy moved, and Ms. Filler seconded a motion to approve the April 16, 2020 minutes as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

Ryland Inn Property LLC

Appl#PB18-011, Block 14, Lot 29-111 Old Highway 28

Amended Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan

Chair Monaco noted that there were some deficiencies that were pointed out on the Board Planner's report and questioned if the applicant wanted to proceed with the hearing this evening or revise the plans and come back at another date.

Attorney Jay Bohn was present on behalf of the applicant and confirmed that the applicant wished to proceed with the application this evening. Mr. Bohn explained that the applicant was seeking Amended Preliminary and Final approval for Phase 1B and 2 as well as the recommencement of the preliminary protection period for Phase 3.

The following individuals were present and sworn in for the applicant:
Brian Murphy, PE, PP, the applicant's engineer and planner
Jose Carballo, RA, the applicant's architect

Board Planners Michael Sullivan and Andrea Malcolm, Board Conflict Engineer Larry Plevier, Board Traffic Engineer Jay Troutman and Board Environmental Consultant Jack Szczepanski were also sworn.

The following exhibits were presented that were previously provided to the Board:

- A-1 Aerial Photo
- A-2 Photo of Hot Box with Landscaping

Brian Murphy, PE & PP, the applicant's engineer and planner was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. Mr. Murphy described the existing conditions on the property and explained the phasing plan for the project. He provided testimony as follows: Phase 1A is fully constructed and consists of the existing Ryland Inn hall and restaurant with associated parking lot in the front. Phase 1B is also constructed and includes the barn area and guest houses. Phase 2 is not constructed and includes a 40-room hotel that was previously approved. Phase 3 includes the stone house and a proposed 250 seat banquet hall.

Mr. Murphy explained the proposed changes to the site from the original approval as follows:

- There will be 13 guest rooms in Guest House#2, located in Phase 1B, instead of 11.
- 4 additional parking spaces will be provided.
- The hydroponics garden that was originally proposed in Phase 2 will be eliminated.
- There will be some changes to the originally approved walkways in Phase 1B and 2.
- The rear patio that was proposed in Phase 3 will be removed.
- There are minor changes to the roofline of the hotel to allow for the HVAC equipment to be installed on the roof.
- A hot box will be installed as required by NJ American Water.
- There are several landscape changes. Some trees had to be removed that will be replaced.
- The 90 space Parking Lot 3 is proposed to be banked

The Board questioned if the additional two rooms in Guest House #2 would be in the same footprint or if the building would be expanding. Mr. Murphy stated that it would be in the same footprint.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Murphy further explained that the 90 parking spots in Parking Lot 3 are proposed to be banked and will not be constructed unless needed. He noted there is not currently a parking issue at the site and additional parking will be provided by the hotel. He further noted that this will preserve the paddock area and view from Route 22. Mr. Murphy confirmed that the drainage was designed as if the parking was going to be built with the impervious coverage included.

Mr. Murphy explained that the applicant is requesting a waiver for low shrub plantings required around porous pavement.

The Board questioned if the waiver is also for the porous pavement in the parking lot by the hotel. Mr. Murphy confirmed that it was.

Mr. Murphy noted there were two variances being requested as part of the application. The first one is for maximum height in stories for Guest House #2 to convert the third-floor attic space to a guest room making it three stories. He explained that that the height of the building or the exterior look of the building would not change.

The Board questioned if a bathroom would be included in the attic space as well. Mr. Murphy confirmed that there would be a bathroom.

Mr. Murphy explained that the second variance is for the installation of a hot box in the front yard setback, 200 feet is required in the zone for an accessory structure and it would be located 24 feet from the edge of pavement. He noted that the water company determines the location. He also noted that it would be heavily landscaped.

The Board questioned if Guest House #2 was a principal or accessory structure. Board Planner Michael Sullivan confirmed that it was a principle structure,

The Board questioned if they spoke to NJ American Water about moving the hot box to a different location or indoors. Mr. Murphy noted that the water company wants it located as close to the roadway as possible.

Attorney Bohn requested a five-minute break.

Jose Carballo, the applicant's architect was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. Mr. Carballo clarified that the attic would have 2 guest rooms and a bathroom and noted that the same windows would be used as previously proposed. Mr. Carballo further explained that they did speak with the prior construction official to discuss the plan to use the attic space for the two additional rooms.

The Board questioned why they applicant did work prior to receiving Board approval.

Frank Cretella, the managing member of the applicant was present and explained they did not complete the construction. He noted that they installed the stairs and ran the rough plumbing but confirmed that the rooms are not completed. He further explained that a door was also installed at the top of the stairs to restrict access.

The Board reviewed the Township Ordinance and discussed at length whether the Board could approve the variance for the third story or if it would be considered a “D” variance, and therefore requiring approval from the Board of Adjustment. After the discussion, it was determined that the Board Planners would need to research it further.

Mr. Murphy explained that it would not impact the look or height of the building. He also noted that they meet the floor area requirement. He stated that it will provide additional rooms within the existing footprint making it more attractive to the patrons that would be having their events onsite by providing a walking trip rather than a vehicular trip to their final destination after the event.

The Board questioned if the additional bathroom would affect the sewer capacity needed. Mr. Murphy noted that it would not.

The Board asked if the guest house has a sprinkler system. Mr. Cretella confirmed that it did.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions. There were no questions.

The Board questioned why the trees that were supposed be preserved as a condition of the original approval were taken down and not preserved.

Mr. Cretella explained that they wanted to maintain as many trees as possible. He noted that the only trees that were taken were down were ones that had damaged the building, were growing out of the foundation, or died on their own.

Neil Hendrickson, chairman of the Environmental Commission was sworn. He noted that he participated in a visit to the site and noted that it appeared that some of the large trees that currently exist on the site had some decay at the base.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan noted that there was never an evaluation of the trees at the time of the original approval to determine what the condition of the trees to be saved were in.

Mr. Carballo also explained that the original architectural plans had an error on the noted height of the hotel building and he explained that the plans were since revised to show the actual height as 45 feet which confirms that a variance was not required.

Mr. Murphy noted that as indicated in the Board Planner’s report, they would agree to clearly depict the plantings in Phase 1B that have been planted already along with the new ones that are proposed. Mr. Murphy also noted that they agree to revise the Phase 1B lighting plan to depict the modified walkway design and revised pedestrian lighting be relocated and/or adjusted as needed to provide adequate illumination levels for pedestrians.

Mr. Hendrickson also noted that the type of trees used would determine the length of time they would remain and would have to be replaced when aesthetically appropriate.

Chair Monaco noted that the Board will need to determine if all the items that need to be completed can be handled by the Board Professionals or if the Board will want the applicant to make the revisions to the plans and come back to the Board for their review.

In response to a question from the Board, Larry Plevier, the Board's conflict engineer confirmed that the drainage had been designed to accommodate the banked parking.

Jack Szczepanski, the Board's environmental consultant noted that different permeability testing would need to be done if the banked parking were built.

Regarding the impervious coverage, Mr. Murphy explained that there is a proposed patio in the back of the building in Phase 3 that will be removed. Board Planner Andrea Malcolm noted that condition #45 of the 2015 resolution may need to be looked at regarding the trees located behind that building.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan noted that it would be helpful if there was a plan sheet that shows what the site would look like before the bank parking is built to clearly show exactly what accompanies the bank parking should it be installed.

Mr. Murphy noted that the applicant would agree to comply with the comments in the Board engineer's report and the Board traffic engineer's report.

Mr. Murphy noted that at the time of construction, the plantings when installed will not be on or interfere with any inlets as noted in the report of the Board environmental consultant.

Mr. Murphy noted that they would also comply with the two reports provided by the Township Fire Official.

Angela DeVoe, Readington Township Construction Official was sworn and noted that the water pressure along Route 22 has been drastically dropping. She explained that a fire booster pump would have to be installed before any work is done on the site. She also noted that the proposed generator must be shown on the plans.

Mr. Cretella confirmed that that this would be done.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions.

Andy Roth of 615 Route 523 South was present and asked for clarification on what construction had been done already in the attic space in Guest House #2.

Daniel Stoops of 2 Lamington Road was present and asked where he could view the documents for the application being discussed.

Gracie Q. of 107 and 109 Old Highway 28 was present and questioned what the barrier would be between the hotel and her property noting that she had children. Mr. Cretella stated that they would put a chain link fence up during construction and they also plan to install a landscape buffer. Gracie also expressed concern about security and any additional noise that may occur as a result of the proposed hotel.

Jose Gonzalez of 109 Old Highway 28 was present and expressed concern about the property value on his home decreasing with the addition of the hotel.

Todd Terricone of 6 Lamington Road was present and expressed concern about any additional noise on his property that may occur as a result of the proposed hotel. Mr. Cretella noted that there is no after party space at the hotel and explained that the hotel building will be a buffer from the event space. Mr. Terricone asked if smoking would be prohibited in the parking lot of the hotel. Mr. Cretella stated that it would. Mr. Terricone also expressed concern about the viability of the proposal with the current pandemic.

Daniel Stoops returned and asked for clarification of the location of the parking for the hotel and questioned why the additional parking was not being built out in front of the Ryland Inn rather than near the residential properties. He also questioned if a fence was proposed between the hotel and the residential properties. Mr. Murphy stated there was not a fence proposed.

It was announced that the application would be carried to the meeting on June 22, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. It was noted that the agenda on the Township website would indicate if the meeting would be virtual or in person. If the meeting is virtual, the log in information to join the meeting will be provided on the agenda. No additional notice will be provided.

The applicant's attorney agreed to grant an extension of time for the Board to render a decision until July 31, 2020. It was noted that the applicant would submit revised plans by June 5, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Cook moved, and Mr. Mueller seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marie Lehberger
Planning Board Secretary