

PLANNING BOARD OF THE BOROUGH OF FANWOOD

Special Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2019

A Special Meeting of the Planning Board, scheduled by the time, place and date of the meeting, prominently posted on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, mailed to the Times and the Courier, filed with the Borough Clerk, and mailed to any person requesting same in accordance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act is called to order at 7:34 PM.

Present: Matthew Juckes, Michael Lysicatos, Teresa Seefeldt, Dennis Sherry, John Steigerwald, Adam Matty, Michele Moore, Jack Molenaar, Diane Dabulas, Antonios Panagopoulos, Jeffrey Cucinotta

Absent: Mayor Mahr, Kevin Boris, David Blechinger, Amy Lumpkin, William Lee, Ray Sullivan

Late: 7:50 PM: Anthony Carter
Departure: 9 PM: Michele Moore

Block 55, Lot 14, 137 South Avenue, Fanwood Animal Hospital (bulk)

Russ Finestein, Esq appeared on behalf of the application and outlined the general plan to relocate to the above address and adapt the existing structure to meet their needs.

Owner Dr. David Franz was sworn and gave testimony that after reviewing the demands of adding a second floor to his current building, he determined it would be prudent to find a different location so he can continue operations at his existing office until renovations are complete on the new setting. Dr. Frantz indicated that selected parcel, which is across the street from his current office, meets all his criteria.

Dr. Frantz indicated that he is not expanding his practice, just expanding the square footage of his operation. Employees on site at any given time are 9-10. Hours of operation for the practice are:

Monday – Thursday, 8 AM to 7 PM
Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM
Saturday, 9 – Noon
Closed Sunday

Each day there may be 5-7 patients in for surgery. Barring an emergency, all visits are scheduled. Retail sales are limited to prescription pet food and medications, no pet paraphernalia is sold.

Deliveries to the practice include Thursday food deliveries and various UPS deliveries per week. He added that this is NOT a boarding facility; that even surgical patients do not overnight at the office. In his tenure in Fanwood there has never been an occasion where a pet was left overnight. In the case of late pick-up by an owner, the staff waits for the owner. Dr. Frantz, in response to a suggestion prior to the hearing, rejected the idea of adding a bike rack, pointing out that despite the “Wizard of Oz”, no patients actually arrive with their pet in a bike basket.

Dr. Frantz described the revamped building as having:

- one bereavement room, which has an exit door to allow bereaved owners to exist the building privately.
- Area at the front of the building where pets can relieve themselves before entering.
- Trash in the rear of the building, to be picked up via the narrow side drive. Hauler must use a small truck to back up to the trash area for pickup.
- No other vehicular movement is anticipated for the rear of the building.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions of Dr. Frantz. There were no questions and the meeting was closed to the public.

Architect Michael Byrne of Byrne Design Associates from Chester NJ, was sworn and accepted as an expert in architecture after he described his 39-year career in the trade. Mr. Byrne gave a detailed description of Architectural Sheets A-1 showing the interior layout and all elevations. He described that 3 elevations would remain brick veneer with siding material applied to the front along with a redesign of the building entrance and the addition of decorative columns. Beyond what is just described, there will be no change to the building footprint.

Mr. Byrne pointed out that the roof has been designed to allow for the introduction of solar panels on the southwest facing roof, should they want to pursue this in the future. All existing windows are in good shape and will remain. A natural gas generator is anticipated, and it is agreed that the applicant must ensure that the gas pressure will be sufficient for this task. Access to natural gas will be from South Avenue, which is a State highway.

Sample building materials (shingle & siding) were offered as exhibits

The meeting was opened to the public for questions of Mr. Byrne. There were no questions and the meeting was closed to the public.

Engineer Tom Quinn from EKA Associates was accepted as an expert and described Sheet 1 of 1 dated 2/7/19. The site shows a 6,400-sf. building towards the rear of the lot with a 21-foot rear lot setback. Parking will be in front of the building. The property is currently 75% impervious coverage with one lamp and little landscaping. Applicant will retain parking up front but plans to improve up the lot significantly.

The grading included the creation of a green area at the street and on parking islands. With 300 feet increased impervious, to counter, they have designed a collection area at the curb to slow the sheet flow to the street.

Plans include the creation of a 5-foot sidewalk and 4-foot paver strip along the frontage of the property. Applicant agreed to work with the engineer on design of the driveway apron.

18 parking stalls are planned. 14 will be close to the street, with an additional four, including one handicapped spot, planned for directly in front of the building.

There is only one light on the lot currently, and no landscaping. Applicant plans to include 7 total lamps, all with downward-throw LED lights. Applicant will add a variety of shade trees as screening.

Mr. Quinn discussed the possibility of a 2.5-foot decorative wall to enable planting that would shield headlamps. Mr. Lysicatos and Ms. Seefeldt pushed back on a wall.

Applicant was advised that due to the timing of the special meeting, it is likely that the Environmental Commission will have comments on tree selection. Applicant agreed to work with the commission on planting selections.

Extensive discussion of the handicapped access concluded that the site meets requirements.

Mr. Lysicatos offered a question regarding the fencing of the rear Conrail property, but it was agreed that it was the responsibility of Conrail to do so.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions of Mr. Quinn. There were no questions and the meeting was closed to the public.

Planner James Watson from EKA Associates was accepted as an expert in the field and discussed the proposed 18 spots, versus the 31 spots required. He explained that the only way to increase parking is to remove the building or lose green space and went on to enumerate the proofs required to approve the reduced parking under the C2 & C1 variance considerations. He indicates that there is no detriment to the Master Plan to proceed in this case with 18 spots. Dr. Frantz added testimony that the business currently operates with 10 parking spots and has no parking problem. Mr. Watson reiterates that the building operation will not be expanding, so that creating 18 parking spots may well exceed the needs of the business.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions of Mr. Watson. There were no questions and the meeting was closed to the public.

Engineering Review letter suggests drainage should be collected & tied into the sewer. Applicant resisted this suggestion and suggests a bubbler inside the sidewalk or to the tree pit. Mr. Panagopoulos countered that his preference would be to see the bubbler on the street side of the sidewalk to avoid icing on the sidewalk when water flowed over the tree pit. Applicant agreed and will work with Mr. Panagopoulos for an agreed design.

Mr. Steigerwald argued against the reduced parking and Ms. Dabulas pointed out that it is up to each Board member to make that choice with their vote.

Mr. Juckes commented that he likes the idea of a successful local business staying in Fanwood and improving another property.

Mr. Lysicatos declared his agreement with Mr. Juckes and added that the professional comments were all on target and comprehensive.

Conditions of an approved resolution to include:

Solar panels will comply with all regulations and will be subject to engineering approval.

Drainage plans are subject to engineering approval

Driveway paving are subject to engineering approval

Waiver for concrete curbing on interior parking lot is approved

Proposed street trees will be moved onto the site to avoid unsightly PSEG pruning.

Mr. Lysicatos moved to approve with the described conditions, Ms. Seefeldt seconded.

Ayes: Lysicatos, Seefeldt, Juckes, Steigerwald, Matt, Molenaar.

Motion carries.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted

Pat Hoynes, Planning Board Secretary