

BOROUGH OF NORWOOD
PLANNING BOARD
September 23, 2024
SPECIAL MEETING

The Public Meeting of the Planning Board of the Borough of Norwood was held in council chambers on the above date.

Mr. Harper stated that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, pointed out the exits and asked everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of the Board:

Mayor James Barsa	Absent
Councilman Joseph Ascolese	Absent
Mr. Christopher Jackson	Present
Mr. Walter Deptuch	Present
Mr. Allen Rapaport	Present
Mr. John Barry	Present
Mr. Travis Harper	Present
Ms. Kate Cerbasi	Present
Mr. Sal Nobile	Absent
Mr. Paul Haberman	Present
Mr. Dominick Congiusti	Present
Ms. Heather Garcia	Absent
Mr. Kevin Fischer	Present

Also, Present:

Mr. Robert Regan	Board Attorney
Mr. Scott Loverich	Borough Engineer

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to approve the September 4, 2024, minutes. Ms. Cerbasi seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Mr. Harper advised the meeting will end by 10pm. If needed there will be additional hearings at a later date.

Mr. Bruce Whitaker, attorney for the applicant, gave a brief recap of the application and the last meeting. He advised that the meeting concluded after the testimony of the

engineer. The applicant is proposing a three (3) story building, with forty (40) units. Six of those units will be affordable housing. The streetscape will continue two and half (2.5) blocks down Broadway. There will be a private trash contractor and one (1) loading zone with the required signage. As part of the landscape plan, new trees will be added. There will be no pole lights. The applicant took the comments from the last meeting and made revisions to the plans. The engineer, Johnathan Istranyi was recalled to give testimony on the modified plans.

Mr. Istranyi, who was previously sworn by Mr. Regan, presented A15, the updated plans dated September 23, 2024, which include an additional driveway onto Livingston Street. The applicant is waiting for the county comments on the revised plans.

Mr. Whitaker noted that the modified plans require a modification to the variance the applicant was previously seeking. The added driveway has changed the grade changing the building height to 39.87 feet at the parapet and 45.87 feet at the bulkhead. The height is now lower than the original proposal.

A design waiver is required for the additional driveway onto Livingston. There will be 2.4 feet separating the driveway from the neighbor's property. The requirements for the depressed curb width are a minimum of 46 ft and a maximum of 52 feet. The applicant is proposing a depressed curb width of 55.2 feet. The requirements for the curb radius is 25 feet minimum and 35 feet maximum, The applicant is proposing 15 feet of curb width.

Mr. Rapaport asked how many feet the current driveway is from the neighbor's property. Mr. Istranyi said the driveway will be in about the same place it is now.

Mr. Fischer asked if the driveway onto Livingston will be a right turn only. Mr. Istranyi said the plans are showing a right turn only. They will revise if needed based on the county feedback.

Mr. Rapaport said presently, a driver can make a left or right turn out of the bank. Mr. Istranyi said there is no formal signage that only allows one way turns out of the driveway. Mr. Whitaker said they will revisit this when they have county feedback.

Mr. Rapaport asked if the revisions to the water tables that were requested by Neglia Engineering have been made. Mr. Istranyi said they are coordinating with Neglia Engineering.

Mr. Neglia noted that he saw the revised plans today for the first time and asked for confirmation that there was no reduction in the number of units. Mr. Istranyi said no reductions were being proposed at this time.

Mr. Jackson asked why the community center was changed to a business center and was told the architect could speak to that change.

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to open the meeting to the public questions of the engineer's testimony. Ms. Cerbasi seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Joyce Katzman, a Foxhill resident, asked how many parking spots were proposed. Mr. Istranyi advised that there would be seventy two (72) parking spots which is required by code.

Barbara Vanderbeck, a Foxhill resident, asked if there would be parking under the building. Mr. Istranyi advised that there will be a parking garage under the lobby. Ms. Vanderbeck asked if all other parking will be outside. Mr. Istranyi explained that all parking will be outside, including the garage, because it is not a fully enclosed garage.

Suzanne Debiasa , 500 Summit Street, asked who determines that the application for a change in zone will go to the Board. Mr. Regan explained that all D1 variances have to go before the Board based on the municipal land use law. Ms. Debiasa asked if that means the application passes. Mr. Regan said the Board will hear the evidence and make a decision.

Jason Argenti, 380 Livingston Street, asked if the water system will seep into the ground. Mr. Istranyi said the system is encased in stone and wrapped in water tight liner.

Mr. Argenti asked if there will be a fire suppression system to control a fire from an electric vehicle charging station that will be located in the parking garage. Mr. Istranyi said the applicant has not made in depth decisions and that will happen after Board approval.

Ms. Debiasa Asked if the fire department ladders can reach the height of the parapet. Mr. Istranyi said he is unaware of the height of the ladders and that he has reviewed the comment letter from the fire department and there is no mention of the roof height.

Ms. Vanderbeck asked how the additional seventy two (72) cars will affect the busiest intersection in town. Mr. Istranyi said the traffic engineer is better suited to answer that question.

Mr. Argenti said the current curb cut is 30 feet from the property line and he is concerned of the safety of having it be 2.5 feet away. Mr. Istranyi said the traffic engineer will work with the county on that.

Ms. Katzman asked what the impact on the schools and services would be. Mr. Regan said the Board cannot consider that in deliberations.

Deirdre Kessler, 35 Windsor Road, asks who would enforce the amount of people in each residence and bedroom based on having a certain number of heartbeats allowed in a bedroom. Mr. Regan said he has not heard of that in the municipal land use law.

Rami Rinot, 158 Broadway, asked what impact the building would have on the town. Mr. Regan said that is irrelevant as the Board cannot consider that during their deliberations.

Mr. Argenti asked what relevance the Medici case had on the Borough of Norwood. Mr. Whitaker said many municipalities use that case as it pertains to interpreting the law. It set parameters and provides guidelines the applicant must show in order for the Board to grant the variance.

Michael Panella, 166 Somerset Road, asked when the planner will testify. Mr. Regan advised that planners always give testimony last.

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to close the meeting to the public questions of the engineer's testimony. Ms. Cerbasi seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Mr. Regan swore in Raymond Virgona, architect for the applicant, and stated he is deemed qualified as an architect.

Mr. Virgona presented exhibit A16, the architectural plans, and informed the Board that the application will feature forty (40) residential units. The lobby floor will have a fitness room, business center, bathroom, and mechanical space. The rendering showed the building with a view of the corner of Livingston and Broadway. The elevators will open from the front and the rear. The two residential floors will have the same layout. A stair bulkhead has been added to the plans for the fire department to access the roof.

Mr. Virgona referred to drawing SK3, which shows the floor plan and layouts of various units. Regarding the affordable housing units, there will be one (1) one (1) bedroom unit, two (2) three (3) bedroom units, and the remaining units will be two (2) bedrooms.

Mr. Rapaport asked if the HVAC units were for each unit and if they will be on the roof. Mr. Virgona said the units were small and gave off very little noise.

Mr. Rapaport asked what the height would be with the parapet walls. Mr. Virgona said the parapet adds nine (9) feet.

Mr. Virgona showed exhibit SK2, which shows the trash shoot. Mr. Rapaport asked what was going to be in the electrical room. Mr. Virgona said there will only be panels and meters in the electrical room.

Mr. Jackson asked how high the building will be when looked at it west from Broadway. Mr. Virgona said it would be between thirty seven (37) and thirty eight (38) feet high, plus the height of the parapet.

Mr. Fischer asked what the height would be adding it all together. Mr. Virgona responded it would be about forty five (45) feet. Mr. Fischer confirmed it will look about forty five (45) feet.

Mr. Jackson asked why the design did not look more residential. Mr. Virgona they went with a look more modern that goes along with the downtown area.

Mr. Fischer asked what the square footage of the majority of the one (1) bedroom units is. Mr. Virgona said the average is about eight hundred eighty (880) square feet.

Mr. Deptuch asked if the backside of the building would have a screen blocking the parking lot from the neighbors. Mr. Virgona said there will be landscaping there and the height of the landscaping can be increased.

Mr. Deptuch asked if the standpipe went all the way to the roof. Mr. Virgona said the fire department requested standpipes at the driveways and did not believe it went all the way to the roof. Mr. Virgona noted the building and garage was fully supplied with sprinklers.

Mr. Rapaport asked if EMS would be able to fit a stretcher in the ambulance. Mr. Virgona said it would fit horizontally.

Mr. Neglia asked what the lighting plan would be for the building. Mr. Virgona said the garage would be lit from ceiling lights directed down and there would be no spillage onto adjoining properties.

Mr. Congiusti noted that at the last meeting it was stated that the setup would be similar to 455 Livingston Street, which has the standpipe going to the roof. Mr. Virgona said he misspoke, and the applicant will do what the fire department recommends. Ms. Cerbasi asked why the loading zone was under the building when the package room was in the front. She is concerned that delivery drivers will stop on Livingston Street in front of the building to drop off packages and not use the loading zone. Mr. Whitaker said they would take it under advisement.

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to open the meeting to the public questions of the engineer's testimony. Mr. Congiusti seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

George Leocata, 181 Railroad Avenue, asked how many spaces would be provided per unit and how many visitor spaces there would be as he is concerned about people parking on Railroad Avenue. Mr. Whitaker said the traffic engineer will answer those questions.

Delly Yaker, 346 14th Street, asked if there will be green areas on the property. Mr. Virgona said there will be landscaping along the front of the both sides of the building

Ms. Vanderbeck asked how it will affect the residents getting to the post office. Mr. Whitaker said the traffic engineer could answer that question.

Mr. Argenti said the building, though beautiful, does not fit the look of the area. Mr. Virgona said it is not practical to design the building to look like a house.

Ms. Yaker asked what the square footage of the den would be. Mr. Virgona said the dens are 8ftx11ft but cannot be used as bedrooms because there are no windows, closet doors, or doors on the room. It is to be used as office space.

Mr. Panella asked how much lower the EMS building is then the proposed building. Mr. Neglia said the EMS building is significantly lower.

Philomena Machleder, 200 Tappan, asked if a UPS truck can fit in the loading zone in the garage. Mr. Virgona said yes, there will be clearance for delivery trucks.

Frank Fanelli, 254 Livingston Street, asked how many entrances and exits there will be. Mr. Virgona said there will be a pedestrian entrance off Livingston Street and two (2) driveway exits and entrances.

Shiela Fischer, 400 Piermont Road, asked what the bedroom sizes of the affordable housing units will be. Mr. Virgona said the master bedroom will be 10ftx13ft, the second bedroom will be 10ftx10ft and the smallest bedroom will be 9.5ftx11ft.

Anthony Foschino, 287 Summit Street, asked Mr. Regan to explain the difference between a D and C variance. Mr. Regan said there is a D1 variance for use and a D6 variance for height. D variances are more burdensome for the applicant. The applicant must provide special reasons that satisfy one (1) or more reasons given in the municipal land use law section two (2) grouping. Mr. Foschino asked if the D variance is approved does the C variance get approved as well. Mr. Regan said normally the C variance is also approved, though the applicant will still need to give testimony and provide evidence in support of the variance being requested. The planner will be able to answer questions about the use of the property. The planner is the last witness to be heard.

Mr. Argenti asked how many affordable units the Borough is behind. He believes it to be twenty four (24). Hw also asked why more affordable housing units are not added to the plan. Mr. Regan advised that only 15% of the total number of rental units need to be affordable housing and the Board cannot require the applicant to add more than that number.

Jill Malesardi, 800 Blanch Avenue, asked what the benefit to the people of Norwood would be if this is approved. Mr. Whitaker said that is a question for the planner.

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to close the meeting to the public questions of the engineer's testimony. Ms. Cerbasi seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Mr. Whitaker announced they have concluded with the witnesses for the evening. The Board will announce the new meeting date at the October 17th meeting.

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Cerbasi seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Mr. Harper thanked the Board and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lindsay Volpitta
Board Secretary