

BOROUGH OF NORWOOD
PLANNING BOARD
March 5, 2025
REGULAR 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	Present
Councilman Joseph Ascolese	Present
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	Present
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. Regan swore in Travis Harper for a four year term.

Councilman Ascolese made a motion to approve the January 29, 2025 minutes. Mr. Rapaport seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Application PB 25-02
263 Rockland Avenue
Block 122, Lot 34

Mr. Matthew Capazzi, attorney for the applicant, gave background on the property located at 263 Rockland. The lot is in the R 7.5 zone. There is an existing single family home, pool, and shed on the property. The applicant would like to remove the current house, pool, and shed and divide the lot into two (2) buildable lots. The variances being requested are:

1) There is a variance being requested for lot area and lot frontage for both proposed lots

2) There is a variance being requested for front yard setback and rear yard setback for proposed lot 34.01

3) There is also a variance being requested for proposed lot 34.02 for lot depth

Mr. Regan swore in Mr. Loverich and Mr. Hubschman, engineer for the applicant.

Exhibits – A1 site plan revised 2/14/25, 4 sheets
A2 key map exhibit

Mr. Hubschman informed the Board of the existing home, pool, and two (2) sheds on the property as well as the area and frontage of the property. The existing lot area is 1.3 acres. There are no drainage improvements on the property.

Mr. Hubschman advised that the applicant would like to build two (2) smaller homes, rather than one (1) large home. The proposed lots would have wide driveways to fit two (2) cars. The applicant is proposing to add two (2) seepage pits on each lot. There is very minimal grading. Everything will be regraded towards the front of the lots. There will be two (2) trees removed, an maple and a pear tree.

B1 – Neglia Review Letter, 3/4/25

Mr. Nobile asked Mr. Hubschman to review the lot depth for lot 34.01. Mr. Hubschman confirmed that a variance is needed for lot depth on lot 34.01.

Mr. Congiusti said the houses surrounding this lot will be affected by the two (2) smaller lots. It's not good for the neighbors. Mr. Congiusti asked if there was a hardship. Mr. Capazzi said this is not a hardship case.

Councilman Ascolese said he was confused with the document that was dated 2/19/25. Mr. Capazzi said that document was amended based on the testimony Mr. Hubschman gave this evening and that there are a total of seven (7) variances being requested.

Councilman Ascolese said he feels this is a very aggressive subdivision and he does not see the practicality of this application for the neighborhood.

Mr. Loverich stated he recommends that rear lot of 34.02 will need a variance due to the jog. Should the project be approved the applicant will need soil moving permits for both lots. This will bring the variance total to eight (8).

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to open the meeting to the public for questions to the engineer. Councilman Ascolese seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Anthony Foschino, 287 Summit Street, asked how many variances the corner lot will need. Mr. Hubschman said each lot will need four (4) variances.

Mr. Regan said 34.02 will now need a variance for the rear yard bring the total to eight (8) variances for the application.

Tara Huelster, 277 Rockland Avenue, said that with this many variances it is not a good idea to split the property. Ms. Huelster asked at what point is the bare minimum for lot size, if someone else wants to go smaller. Mr. Regan said each case is different based on the evidence provided.

Dean Pastras, 418 Summit Street, said the houses in that area do get water and the homes have sump pumps. He asked if the two (2) new houses will affect the surrounding house and the ground water. Mr. Hubschman said the other homes would not be affected.

Suzanne Fusco , 345 Rockland Avenue, stated that she already has water problem in her basement. She said she feels uncomfortable with the application and asked if having small seepage pits will result in the water spilling out and going to her property. She also said if the applicant does not want a big house on the property he can put a smaller house there. Ms. Fusco asked for a guarantee that her house will not be affected by the water. Mr. Hubschman said this will not affect her house as it is across the street.

Lawrence Dercole, 419 Summit Street, asked how this will affect house. Mr. Hubschman said his house will not be affected. Mr. Capazzi said there will be less impervious coverage.

Kevin Hawkins, 427 Summit Street, said he has a lake on his property after a heavy storm and does not think the seepage pits will solve the problem of runoff.

Mr. Loverich asked how deep the seepage pits will be. Mr. Hubschman said the seepage pits will be three (3) feet deep. Mr. Loverich said there should be overflow relief into the town system should they overflow. Mr. Hubschman said these pits were sized for a twenty-five (25) storm.

Gene Huelster, 277 Rockland Avenue, asked if the impervious coverage amount is based on one (1) lot of two (2) lots. There will be double impervious coverage for two lots. Mr. Hubschman said the impervious coverage has been reduced by 293 square feet.

Dean Pastras, 418 Summit Street, asked what is the distance between the two house. Mr. Hubschman advised that it is 36.7 feet.

Mayor Barsa made a motion to close the meeting to the public. Mr. Rapaport seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Mr. Regan swore in Mr. Hojon Chung, architect for the applicant. Mr. Chung gave background on his professional career.

A3 – architect plans revised 12/14/24

Mr. Chung said lot 34.01 will have an entrance on Summit Street. There will be four (4) bedrooms and three full bathrooms. The square footage of the home will be 2516 square feet. The house would have cement, stucco, and wood panels. The overall height is less than thirty feet.

A4 side by side elevation view. This was not submitted to the Board.

Mr. Chung said lot 34.02 will also have four (4) bedrooms and be 2326 square feet. The entrance to the home and driveway will be on Rockland Avenue.

Mr. Rapaport asked Mr. Chung if he included the finished basements in his calculations of square footage. With the basement lot 34.01 would be 3400 square feet. Also including the basement for lot 34.02 would increase the square footage to 3126. Mr. Rapaport said we need transparency. A finished basement must be included in square footage calculations.

Mr. Deptuch asked how many bedrooms the current home has and how many bedrooms the proposed homes will have. Mr. Chung said there are three bedrooms in the current house and there will be four bedrooms in each new house.

Mr. Barry asked if a bedroom and bathroom will be in the basement. Mr. Chung said there will only be a powder room in the basement.

Councilman Ascolese asked if there is an egress from the basement. Mr. Chung said there was not. Councilman Ascolese advised that the basement cannot be used as a bedroom because there is no egress.

Councilman Ascolese made a motion to open the meeting to the public. Mr. Rapaport seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Mr. Chung showed the audience the floor plan of each home.

There was no one in the audience who wished to speak.

Councilman Ascolese made a motion to close the meeting to the public. Mr. Rapaport seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Mr. Regan swore in Michael Pessolano, Planner for the applicant. Mr. Pessolano gave a background on his professional career.

Mr. Pessolano said he familiarized himself with the setting, visiting the property. He reviewed all the regulation for the Borough.

A5 – Planning Exhibit

Mr. Pessolano went through each sheet of the exhibit. Sheet one (1) is a portion from the Borough's tax map. Sheet two (2) is the zoning map showing the R 7.5 residential district. Sheet three (3) is an aerial image from Google maps. The lot lines on this are slightly skewed. Sheet four (4) is an aerial image without the lot lines. Mr. Pessolano drew in his own lot line. Sheet five (5) is a series of ground photos. Sheet six (6) is also a series of ground photos.

Mr. Pessolano said relief is requested on both proposed lots. The new arrangement proposed will upgrade the surrounding area with the new construction. It will be a stimulant for upgrades in the entire area. It will provide seepage pits, which are not there today. The capacity of the pits can be expanded if deemed necessary by the Board. There will be a benefit of reduced impervious coverage. There is no basis for hardship in any scenario.

The positive criteria requires a specific piece of property, to which there is one. It is a corner lot, where one dwelling exists. The positive criteria also require the project to promote general welfare of the community. This application does that by proposing two permitted uses. The applicant is not looking to deviate from land use zoning. The proposed application will provide adequate light, air, and open space. The buildings will be modest in the footprint and will maintain a spacious yard. It promotes a desired visual environment. The project is about enhanced harmony in the neighborhood. The project promotes the efficient use of land by using the infrastructure that is already established in the neighborhood.

Mr. Pessolano said he does not believe there is any negative criteria. It will look different, but better. The area and frontage short falls are not detrimental as other properties in the area are affected by this. The finished appearance will be more visually appealing. The proposed homes are modest and comparable in scale to those in the development. The rear set back on corner lot is the area between the two proposed homes. The deficiencies are mitigated by the visual harmony and upgraded appearance with new construction, as well as the addition of the seepage pits.

Mr. Pessolano said the new homes will be permitted uses, as part of the Master Plan. The buildings will be compatible with nearby structures. The applicant has designed a compatible project that will be visually appealing.

Mayor Barsa said he worked on the 2018 Master Plan and feels it is clear as to the direction the Borough is going. Mayor Barsa asked Mr. Pessolano if he feels it better to cut the lot in half. Mr. Pessolano said it's not cutting the lot in half but adding two (2) homes. Mayor Barsa asked why a 4,000 square foot home couldn't go on the existing lot, without an variance. Cutting the lot in half to put (2) two homes looks more like row style homes. By approving this application it allows for other homes in the neighborhood to subdivide. Mr. Pessolano said the use aspect is 100 percent in agreement. Mayor Barsa said over the years there have been water issues in this neighborhood. The town just put in new drainage in the area. Mr. Pessolano said it was part of his analysis to see if this application was conducive to this setting and he felt this would be a nice match to the neighborhood.

Mr. Regan said the testimony did not mention the lot area and frontages in the neighborhood as defines in Ordinance 233-28.1 and feels the applicant is asking the Board to ignore 233-28.1. Mayor Barsa said the town has been benefiting from this ordinance since 2005. Prior to 2005 there was an average of thirty (30) house per year being built in town. Since 2005, the average number of homes built yearly is seven (7).

Councilman Ascolese said the houses are not the main concern because that can be manipulated. What cannot be manipulate is the size of the property. Lot 34.01 is just barely over 60% of the requirement. Lot 34.02 just over 40% of the requirement. That is a far cry from being near the mark.

Mr. Pessolano said his focus when looking at an application is he looks at the setting. The setting is material to the Boards consideration to the substantiality to any detriment.

Councilman Ascolese said to take into consideration the age of the homes. There were homes twenty (20) feet from the road when they were built in 1920's and 1930's. If that house gets razed it will need to be rebuilt with the Borough requirements. This is an older part of town when houses were built close to the road.

After a brief recess Mr. Capazzi advised that the applicant withdrew the application.

Approval of Resolution Application PB 25-01
Octane Associates, LLC
90 Oak Street
Block 88, Lot 7

Mr. Rapaport made a motion to approve the resolution for Octane Associates, 90 Oak Street. Councilman Ascolese seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed on a roll call vote.

Mayor Barsa made a motion to open the meeting to the public. Mr. Rapaport seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

There was no one in the public who wished to speak.

Mayor Barsa made a motion to close the meeting to the public. Ms. Cerbasi seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Councilman Ascolese made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rapaport seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

Mr. Harper thanked the Board and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lindsay Volpitta
Board Secretary