

City of Northfield

Planning and Zoning Board

1600 Shore Road

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Minutes: June 2, 2005

Notice of this meeting had been given in accordance with Chapter 231 Public Law 1975, otherwise known as the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting has been given to The Press, posted on the bulletin board in City Hall, and filed with the City Clerk, stating the date, time and place of the meeting and the agenda to the extent known.

The regular meeting of the Northfield Planning & Zoning Board, held on Thursday, June 2, 2005 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was called to order by Chairman of the Board Richard Levitt at 7:35p.m. with the following members present:

Mayor Frank Perri
Mr. Mike Turon, Councilman
Mr. Rich Stevens, Construction Official
Ms. Alice Chambers
Mr. Art Barrera
Mr. Lou Milone
Mr. Nick Droboniku
Mr. Ronald Roegiers
Mr. David Notaro
Mr. Clem Scharff
Chairman Richard Levitt

Solicitor-Tom Subranni, Esq.
Engineer-Matt Doran, PC

There are two applications to be heard this evening. The first application on the agenda is for James & Cynthia Chambers of Block 136, Lot 7 (228 St. James Place) who are asking for a "C" Variance for an addition of a partial second floor over their one-story home. Chairman Levitt swore in the couple and their architect, Gary Mednick who designed the plans. Dr. Levitt had concerns that the 2nd floor would be wider than the first floor. Mr. Mednick reported that the first floor will be widened 3.5 feet and they will have a terrace at the front. There will be no impervious surface increase and the addition will keep in character with other homes in the neighborhood.

Mr. Doran discussed his engineer's report. The front, 2 sides, and rear setbacks do not conform. He also has concerns that there are no curbs and sidewalks in the plans. Mr. Mednick reported that there are none on this street. The street is narrow and resembles an alleyway. Dr. Levitt asked for public input. Finding none, he closed the public session. Mr. Mednick stated that no neighbors have expressed any objections to the addition.

Mr. Turon added that a concrete apron should be required to eliminate wash-out. Mr. Mednick agreed. Ms. Chambers stressed concerns over the trees which are located on the neighboring properties. They will look into having them trimmed and will add 2 shade trees as required by ordinance.

Mayor Perri made a motion to approve the Variance and waive the curbs and sidewalks. He also added the requirement of pavers and a concrete apron. Mr. Milone seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous with Mr. Barrera abstaining because he arrived late to the meeting.

Mr. Schaarf left the meeting at this time since he was unable to attend the initial meeting that involved the second application of the evening. The second application tonight is a continuation of House & Garden Plaza (2605 Shore Road, LLC) from May 5, 2005. Chairman Levitt swore in Mr. Nick Talvacchia, Esq., the applicant's legal representative and Arthur Ponzio, the project planner. The gentlemen gave a review of the project up to this point and then discussed the proposed changes. Mr. Talvacchia reported that the first floor will contain all office space and the second floor will be retail with the owner, Mr. Smyrnios occupying approximately 15,000 to 20,000 sq. ft. for his outdoor furniture business. The applicant's have agreed to close off the Erie Avenue exit with the use of attractive landscaping and to landscape the length of the building on Erie Avenue. A grant from the County to restrict in and out access on Shore Road will be sought. It was stressed that the offices would contain no medical facilities due to increased traffic generation and parking issues. Mr. Ponzio continued with further discussion of the buffering landscaping, roof leaders to deposit runoff, the installation of an underground drainage system to reduce stormwater runoff, the addition of 10 more stacked parking spaces in back for employees (for 150 total spaces). It was noted that the Fire Dept. and Matt Doran have not been given copies of the new site plan. Mike Turon reported that the Fire Dept. would most likely not be opposed to the closing of the Erie Avenue exit.

New exhibits were admitted to the record: A-1 New Site Plan
A-2 Permitted and Proposed Uses Plan

Mr. Talvacchia and Mr. Ponzio next gave testimony as to the types of business that would be permitted on the property. The first floor offices can include Credit services, Securities, Insurance, Real Estate, Title companies, Mortgage services, Investment Offices, Administrative Offices, as well as the existing Beauty Salon and Dance Studio located on Oakcrest Avenue. The 2nd floor will be limited to 3 retail business limited to Furniture, Home Furnishing & Design, Seasonal Items, and Kitchen and Bath. Dr. Levitt stated that 'seasonal' needed interpretation and Mr. Talvacchia noted that this would refer to BBQ grills, Hearth & Home, Fireplaces and items associated with outdoor furniture.

New Exhibit admitted: A-3 Variance Justification Board

The advantages this project will afford the business owners and the community was again discussed. There will be a decrease in total use since the offices constitute less 'use' than the retail. Drainage will be improved due to the installation of the underground drainage system which will be maintained by the owners, not by the city. There will be additional open space which will provide more buffering and better traffic flow. There will be additional parking with the addition of 44 spaces (106 to 150). The plans reflect a visual improvement. Chairman Levitt remarked that it is the goal of the master plan to preserve the residential character of Shore Road.

New Exhibits: A-4 Parking Summary

A-5 Parking Study Comparison with existing offices in Northfield

Mr. Turon noted that there was nothing proposed concerning drainage of the employee parking lot. He also wants the site plan to show more detail of the Erie Avenue closure. Jon Barnhardt, Professional planner & Engineer, commented that the asphalt along Erie Avenue would be removed, no parking would be allowed, and dumpster location and trash pick would be unchanged. He then discussed the ITE Traffic Report which compares the parking issues to national standards. He believes 2.6 parking spaces per 1000 sq. ft. will be needed not 1 per 500 sq. ft. Dr. Levitt raised concerns about these numbers and wanted a parking overflow remedy should future growth occur. At 9:16 p.m. Mr. Talvacchia asked for and was granted a 5 minute break to confer with his client about this issue.

Dr. Levitt called the meeting back to order at 9:30. Mr. Talvacchia stated that maximum employees would be limited to 100 and would be guaranteed in the leases. Mr. Stevens asked that the City Zoning Official be supplied with a lease schedule of employees once a year to ensure that employees do not exceed 100. Dr. Levitt noted that any new plans are conditional on approval by the Fire Department and Matt Doran.

New Exhibits: A-6 Elevations
A-7 1st Floor Plan
A-8 2nd Floor Plan

Dr. Levitt opened the public session. The following residents were sworn in and voiced their opinions:

Fred Klein	Concerned with controlling employee numbers. Dr. Levitt stated that they would be cited if they did not comply.
Lenny Rataski	Has issues with increased traffic and believes approval will hurt the neighborhood and outweigh any benefits.
Bill Griest	Feels that traffic will worsen at Revere and Shore by allowing exit access on Shore Road.
Kathy Griest	Worried that Palumbo's would be parking at her property once they cease parking at the H & G site.
Pat McGowan	In favor of the new plan but concerned about outside displays and sidewalk sales. He stressed that the Board approve a very detailed resolution.
Jin Pierce	Concerned with increased traffic on Revere Avenue due to closure of Erie exit.
Peggy Rataski	Feels increase in traffic will cause problems on the Bike path.
Mr. Wilson	Wants a traffic study.

Dr. Levitt closed the public session to discuss Erie Avenue with the Board. He believes it will be safer to keep Erie open. The Mayor and the Board disagreed. Mr. Stevens wants a no parking zone on Erie and noted that this will need to go before City Council. The Mayor wants a pedestrian way on Erie since one currently exists. Mr. Barnhardt noted that the existing sidewalk will remain and will be protected by landscaping. Dr. Levitt then re-opened the public session.

Pat McGowan Concerned with increased lighting in the parking lot. Dr. Levitt said lighting will be shielded so as not to reflect in the residents' homes but would be adequate for safety. Seeing that no one else wished to speak, Dr. Levitt closed the public session.

Matt Doran noted that the applicants have addressed and changed all that needed to be changed. Dr. Levitt commented that a revised plan must be submitted to Matt for approval.

Mr. Malone made a motion to approve the “D” Use variances, Mr. Stevens seconded. Mayor Perri and Mr. Turon abstained. The roll call vote was unanimous for approval. Mr. Stevens made a motion to approve the Site Plan-Major subject to conditions. Ms. Chambers seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the site plan and to waive the parking requirement.

There was no further business on the agenda and no resolutions to memorialize. Mr. Turon made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Rogiers seconded the motion at 10:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas-Clinton, Planning Board Secretary