

City of Northfield Planning Board
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Minutes: January 3, 2019

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 had been given to The Press, posted on the bulletin board in City Hall, filed with the City Clerk, and posted on the City website, stating the date, time and place of the meeting and the agenda to the extent known.

This RE-ORGANIZATION meeting of the Northfield Planning Board held on Thursday, January 3, 2019 in Council Chambers, City Hall, Northfield, was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:00 p.m. with the reading of the Sunshine Law and the following members present or absent as noted:

Mayor Erland Chau
Jim Leeds
Dr. Richard Levitt
Joe Massari
Chief Paul Newman
Henry Notaro
Councilman Frank Perri
Daniel Reardon
Ron Roegiers
Derek Rowe
Clem Scharff
Jim Shippen

Matthew Doran, Professional Engineer
Mark H. Stein, Esq.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Levitt at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Stein said a roll call was needed prior to the oaths to state that a quorum exists. Mayor Chau was detained so Robin Atlas read the Oaths of Office as a Notary Public. Councilman Frank Perri was sworn-in as City Council Liaison for a one-year Class III appointment. Chief Paul Newman was sworn-in as a City Official for a one-year Class II appointment. Mr. Jim Leeds was sworn in to a four-year term as a Class IV Planning Board member. Mr. Dan Reardon was sworn in to a two-year term as Alternate #4. Mr. Steve Vain will be sworn in at the next meeting.

The Board then proceeded with yearly appointments. Mr. Scharff nominated Dr. Richard Levitt to be appointed as Chairman for a one-year period. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor with no other nominations. Mr. Shippen nominated Mr. Clem Scharff to be appointed as Vice-Chairman for a one-year period. Mr. Roegiers seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor with no other nominations. Mr. Scharff nominated Robin Atlas to be appointed as Secretary to the Board for a one-year period. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor with no other nominations. Mr. Scharff nominated Mark H. Stein, Esq. to be appointed as Planning Board Solicitor for a

one-year period, replacing Norman L. Zlotnick who retired at the end of 2018. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor with no other nominations. Mr. Scharff nominated Matthew Doran, PE, PP to be appointed as Engineer for the Planning Board for a one-year period. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor with no other nominations.

The next order of business for re-organization was to adopt and approve the resolutions for the 2019 meeting dates and the yearly appointments. Mr. Stein noted that the resolution for the meeting dates must also include The Press of Atlantic City as the official media source for publication of all notices. The voice vote was all in favor.

There were two resolutions from the December meeting to memorialize. The first was for Daniel J. Lawless, Block 51, Lots 1 & 32 known as 525 Spruce Avenue and 538 Walnut Avenue for a minor subdivision. The voice vote was all in favor with Mr. Massari, Mr. Notaro, and Mr. Rowe abstaining. The second resolution was for Institute of Esthetics, Inc., Block 41, Lots 4,5, & 23 at 1205 Tilton Road, Units 6-9, in the CenterPoint Plaza Shopping Center. The voice vote was all in favor with Mayor Chau, Mr. Massari, Mr. Notaro, Councilman Perri, and Mr. Rowe abstaining.

The first application was John B. Price and George C. Price, Block 145, Lots 4,5, & 6, at 29 Fairway Avenue in the R-2 Zone for a Minor Subdivision. The brothers were sworn in and stated that they inherited the property in 2007 after their mother passed away. The family has owned the property since their father returned from World War 2 in 1946. They purchased the vacant lot soon thereafter. They currently would like to sell the property. They have found that people are interested in the lot with the house, but are not interested in the vacant land. Most of the houses on Fairway Avenue existed as houses with the extra lot of land and over time, most have subdivided. Their property is one of the only properties existing as it is and a minor subdivision would not change the character of the neighborhood. A minor subdivision would allow them to sell the lot with the house at a lesser price and sell the other lot separately as a buildable lot.

Mr. Doran read through his report and said the property is in the R-2 zone and both lots will comply. They will have a 70 ft. frontage and all setbacks for the house comply. They have curbs and sidewalks and two on-site parking spaces will be required for the new lot when they apply for a Building Permit. They will be required to obtain a Road Opening Permit from the City for the concrete apron on the new lot and for any new gas, water, and sewer services. The need for street trees was discussed. George Price said there were originally Norway Maples, a Pinto Pine, and White Pine trees. The old original trees have been slowly dying off and have been replaced by smaller trees and landscaping. Dr. Levitt asked the Board if they felt additional trees were necessary. The Board agreed that there are enough trees on the property.

Dr. Levitt asked for a motion for a by-right subdivision with no variances required. Mr. Scharff made the motion and Mr. Shippen seconded.

Dr. Levitt noted that the final plan must show the driveway location and off street parking for two vehicles and will need to be submitted the Building Department. Mr. Shippen added that utilities will need to be shown as well. Dr. Levitt opened the public session before the vote and there was no one who wished to speak on the application.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Leeds-yes

Mr. Massari-no vote -9 voting members present

Chief Newman-yes
Mr. Notaro-yes
Councilman Perri-yes
Mr. Reardon-no vote-9 voting members present
Mr. Roegiers-yes
Mr. Rowe-yes
Mr. Scharff-yes
Mr. Shippen-yes
Dr. Levitt-yes
The motion carries.

The second application was for Republic First Bank/Republic Bank, Block 17 Lot 9.01 located in the Tilton Shopping Center for a Major Site Plan with variance relief in the C-MF Zone. Keith A. Davis, Esq. of Nehmad Perillo & Davis in Egg Harbor Township represented the bank. Mr. Davis gave an overview of the project. The site is located at the corner of Tilton Road and Cresson Avenue at the vacant site of the OceanFirst Bank. The applicant intends to demolish the existing bank which has been there for 9 years and construct a new state of the art, aesthetically pleasing bank as a stand-alone in the Tilton Shopping Center. Mr. Davis described the variances and waivers as being a front yard setback at Tilton Road, a buffer requirement, and freestanding sign variances for height, setback, and area. The waivers pertain to the building mounted signs.

Three witnesses were sworn in; Dave Fleming of Marathon Engineering and Environmental Services, Nathan Mosley of Shropshire & Associates, L.L.C., and Sharon Hammel, a Republic Bank Representative. Mr. Fleming testified first. He presented Exhibit A-1, a color photograph of the Bank, and Exhibit A-2, an aerial depiction of the site, and Exhibit A-3, a detailed site plan. He described the new bank as having three drive-thru lanes with access off Cresson Avenue which is northeast of the pad site and Tilton Road. They will be eliminating an existing curb cut closest to the intersection. Dr. Levitt said it is a beautiful building and he asked if the access is usable for the rest of the shopping center. Mr. Fleming said yes; the curb cut is just north of the bank into the parking lot and leads into the circulation around the bank. Mr. Fleming described how the circulation would occur from the drive aisles to the drive-thru area and it will not be much different for what exists currently. He said there will be some improved circulation with the elimination of the curb cut. Dr. Levitt had concerns with drivers making the turn off Tilton Road and having to make a sharp right turn. Mr. Fleming said the interior circulation is away from Tilton Road and moves toward the facility. Dr. Levitt said as it exists now you can turn into the first curb cut and keep on going. By eliminating it, he had concerns that cars can stop dead, and if there is a car behind, they will have to stop on Tilton Road. Mr. Davis asked if these questions could be reserved for the traffic professional. Mr. Fleming added that Atlantic County prefers the new configuration. Mr. Davis said they received input from the County at the early stages of the project. He added that new islands will also improve circulation after entering the site. Dr. Levitt reiterated his concerns that cars will come to a stop once they enter the site. Mr. Davis said their traffic expert says this will not occur. Mayor Chau asked about the comparison in size of the existing bank and the new bank. Mr. Fleming said he did not have the dimensions of the existing bank, but said they are similar in size with the new bank being somewhat bigger, but not significantly. He said the building reflects modern banking. They will have three drive thru aisles, but with the advances of internet banking, they will not be used as much as in the past. Dr. Levitt asked how the exits would work. Mr. Fleming said there is a center parking lot drive aisle in addition to internal circulation. There will be no parking in the drive aisle areas.

Mr. Massari asked about the ATM machine. Ms. Hammel stated that there will be an ATM at the front of the bank. There will be no drive thru ATM such as the one located at the OceanFirst/Sun Bank store. Mr. Davis said in regards to impervious coverage, they intend to add greenery up to ¼ acre including shade trees on site by Ordinance. The drainage on the site will remain the same with some improvement from the additional greenery. Mr. Fleming noted there will also be minor drainage improvements with the added inlets. Mr. Davis said there are 31 spaces within the leased area plus more in the parking lot. Republic Bank customers can use the overflow parking areas in the lot. Mr. Davis discussed deliveries. There is no trash receptacle on site due to sensitive financial materials. Trash is hauled off-site and handled appropriately by a trash contractor. There is appropriate parking for a small delivery van for supplies. Mr. Davis and Mr. Fleming discussed Matt's letter and floor area ratio which is the comparison of the size of the floor area of the building with the size of the lot and this complies with FAR standards. There will be new sidewalks installed along both right of ways. The Fire Department has requested a Knox Box which is a master key box the Fire Department can use to gain rapid entry in case of an emergency and the applicant had no problem agreeing with this.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Fleming described the variances. They are requesting a front setback on Tilton Road where 65 ft. is required and the existing is 54.39 ft. and they are proposing 54.59 ft. which is a slight improvement. The buffer variance is a current existing condition where 15 ft. is required and 0 ft. is proposed. Mr. Doran explained there are two types of buffers. One is between commercial and residential properties and the other is for commercial buffers between businesses. This is a shopping center so the buffer is really a technical issue. There are three variances pertaining to the freestanding pylon identification sign. A variance is needed for Freestanding Sign Height where 15 ft. is allowed and 17 ft. is proposed. A freestanding sign setback is needed as 15 ft. is required and 1 ft. to the County Easement is proposed. A variance is also needed for Freestanding Sign Area where 50 sf is permitted and 58.17 sf is proposed. Mr. Fleming also mentioned an encroachment of the cube at the entranceway of the bank which angles outward. It is an architectural feature of Republic Bank and it angles out slightly. Mr. Roegiers asked if Mr. Fleming knew the setback off Route 9 of the Somers Point location. Mr. Fleming said he wasn't sure and Mr. Davis said it is very de minimis. Mr. Davis also mentioned in regards to the free standing sign that the 1 ft. setback will not be an issue since the sign will be located in an island and the access there is being eliminated. Dr. Levitt wanted verification that the sign will have no LED or changeable aspects. Mr. Fleming said it will be an illuminated panel sign. Mr. Davis commented on the C-1 variance analysis and said it is an existing bank site in an appropriate location and configuration. Mr. Fleming said it will be a beautiful building and will be an accent to the shopping center and is a better planning alternative than what currently exists.

Mr. Fleming discussed the Design Waivers as outlined in Mr. Doran's report which require a lower threshold for justification. The first waiver is for a shield tree in the parking area which they feel they don't need as they are providing sufficient landscaping alternatives. Relief is requested to allow parking in the front yard setback, and to allow parking within 20 ft. of the Right-of-Way of Cresson and Tilton Road. They also requested relief from providing a 10 ft. wide landscaping strip along the rear and side lot lines. They feel they are providing improvements over existing conditions. There were also a number of sign waivers. Six directional signs are proposed and the maximum size permitted is 3 ft. They are proposing 3.5 ft. The total building mounted signs maximum allowed is 100 sf and they are proposing 108.5 sf. They require a waiver from façade sign projection and height for 2 poster board signs for displaying special promotional information. These are internally lit back lighting signs that are changed manually with informational panels. Mr. Fleming said they are located at the back of the building and Dr. Levitt said they are directed to customers already on the site. Mr. Doran wanted to know the height of the bottom of the sign. Mr. Fleming said the area is vegetative and there is no walkway. Nobody will

walk back there. Mr. Doran said in order to grant a waiver he needs to know the height. Mr. Davis said he did not have the number available, but will verify the height for safety purposes. Dr. Levitt wanted to know the location of the directional signs. Mr. Fleming said they are shown on the site plan on the detail sheet.

Mr. Davis continued reading through Mr. Doran's report regarding the waivers. They are requesting a waiver to provide the street address on the sign since it is part of the overall shopping center. There is no separate or specific address for the bank. Lastly, they requested a waiver for trees 30 ft. on center since they are providing trees on the site which will exceed the Ordinance requirement.

Mr. Doran noted that an Environmental Impact Statement is needed for projects in excess of 10 acres. The entire complex encompasses over 19 acres. Dr. Levitt noted that there is really no environment so there is no impact. Mr. Doran noted that the leased bank area is less than 1 acre.

Ms. Hammel reported in regards to the height of the promotional façade signs, that are shown on the architectural plans submitted, that the signs will be 60 inches from the ground to the bottom of the sign which is about 5 ft. Mr. Massari had a question about the free standing sign and asked if it had any capability to be changed to an LED sign. Mr. Fleming answered no. Dr. Levitt said the testimony was that there will be no LED signs and if they proposed any, they would need to come back before the Board. Dr. Levitt said these signs are non-conforming and according to the Ordinance, they cannot become LED signs. Mr. Leeds asked for details on the free standing sign and where exactly it would be on Tilton Road. Mr. Fleming showed him the location on the aerial display. Mr. Davis added that there are two free standing signs presently and they are decreasing this to one sign. Mr. Fleming asked that the traffic professional explain the visual aspects of the signs by motorists and he noted that all of the signs are important and the desire is that they be easily recognized. Mr. Davis said by Ordinance, they are permitted to have one sign. Dr. Levitt noted that the stainless steel frame is also included in the sign calculations and the actual sign area is close to conforming. Mr. Leeds asked if the Board was allowed to approve things that are in the County easement. Mr. Stein addressed this question. He said the applicant needs approval from both entities. If there is any inconsistency, they will have to come back before the Board. He explained this is why the applicant had preliminary discussions with the County prior to submitting their application. Mr. Stein also noted that the County doesn't want curb cuts so close to an intersection. Dr. Levitt said he recognizes the County as being a higher authority, but he has issues with eliminating the current access. Mr. Shippen felt most cars will enter the site from Cresson Road. Dr. Levitt said with the new configuration, cars going to the bank will have to make five turns upon entering the site. His concern is that cars will enter the site and come to a dead stop to read the small directional sign. He felt that it is a better plan for cars to enter the site and keep moving. Mr. Fleming stated that the sign is setback on the proper side of the County easement.

Mr. Davis called the traffic expert to answer some of the questions being discussed. Nathan Mosely of Shropshire & Associates, L.L.C. addressed the Board. He is a Professional Engineer with a specialty in traffic and has been with Shropshire for 16 years. Dr. Levitt said that the Board is well aware that Tilton Road is a high traffic area and a summary without all the car counts will be sufficient. Mr. Stein said the traffic report submission is part of the evidence and testimony and that is sufficient. Mr. Mosely said the leased area has always been a bank. Dr. Levitt reiterated that he had concerns with cars heading west or northwest on Tilton Road and pulling into the drive aisle and stopping dead to read the sign and the car behind them not having anywhere else to go but to hit the stopped car from behind. Mr. Mosely said motorists generally know where they are going when they enter the site. They will come onto the site and flow around the building. There is an adequate radius in front of the building going around. This

type of travel on site is what currently exists. Dr. Levitt said but you are eliminating the drive aisle. Mr. Mosely said he does not anticipate any issues. They have met with the County and they want it removed because of the proximity to the intersection. Mr. Mosely described current issues with cars making left turns. They want to improve conditions and the free flow of traffic and the County wants the access as far from the traffic signal as possible. He said consolidating access points is a major benefit. Mr. Shippen asked if there was room for a car to pull in and stop and not block the road. Mr. Stein said the average standard size of a car is 18 ft. Mr. Scharff said this is not much different from the access situation at TD Bank up the road. Dr. Levitt said his biggest complaint is with the exit. It is poorly marked. He noted that everyone on the Board has had experience with exiting this site by going over the curb. Dr. Levitt asked how they intend to mark the exit and what else can be done to improve the existing condition. Mr. Mosley said they will be providing delineated curbs and there will be a stop sign. Dr. Levitt said more is needed so cars stop going over the curb. Mr. Mosley said they have proposed doing what they can to the curbing on their side of the leased area. Dr. Levitt said he wants to see more improvement. Mr. Davis said they are providing additional lighting as well. Mr. Shippen suggested lane markings and painting. Dr. Levitt said drivers can't see the curb cut. Chief Newman said the black top goes right up to the edge of the street making it difficult to navigate the curb cut. Mr. Stein said the whole shopping center is one block and lot and Republic Bank is leasing an area of it. That is why this issue is coming up.

It was decided that there would be a short recess to allow Mr. Davis to speak with Mr. Gurwicz concerning the curb cut issue. Mr. Mosley said he covered his testimony. Mr. Davis asked if there were any other issues before the recess. Mayor Chau asked about the drive aisles. Mr. Mosley said the main aisles along Tilton Road and along Cresson Avenue are two-way drive aisles, and the drive aisle to the rear to the drive thru area is a one way drive aisle. Mr. Perri asked if this is a typical traffic flow for this type of bank and Mr. Mosley said yes. There was a short recess at 8:23 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Davis said he talked with Mr. Doran, Chief Newman, Mr. Mosley, and Mr. Gurwicz. Mr. Mosley stated that the proposal is to curb both sides of the driveway with a small island and double yellow striping for identification. Mr. Davis added that this is not being done on the leased area and Mr. Gurwicz has agreed to allow them to do this. Dr. Levitt asked if the curb can be painted yellow. Mr. Mosley said he is not sure this can be done as it may be a conflict with the fire lane. Mr. Stein asked Chief Newman. He said he was unsure and would suggest calling the County. Mr. Fleming said he has never seen a yellow painted County curb. Dr. Levitt said he would be happy with these improvements. Mr. Mosely said they will also have a stop sign and the curbing will be typical county curbing. The Board was satisfied.

Mr. Davis had one more witness. He called Sharon Hammel who is a regional officer with the bank and oversees store operations. She said there will soon be two stores in this area and the new Northfield bank will nicely compliment the new bank in Somers Point. She said they are excited to come to Atlantic County and customer service and convenience are the main mottos of the bank. They offer free checking to businesses and customers, free ATM service, and seven day banking. They are open 11 to 4 on Sundays. They offer enhanced products; they will have coin counting machines and dog campaigns. They are not like their competitors. They are headquartered in Philadelphia and have 25 locations. Mr. Davis added that they also have an application on file with Ocean City. Mayor Chau said he wants to hear more about the dogs. Ms. Hammel said they hold events involving dogs and their owners and they love to be involved with their community. Mayor Chau asked when they anticipate opening in

Northfield. The Mayor said things happened fast with the Somers Point location. Ms. Hammel said she is not exactly sure as there are lots of factors, but the company hopes to open as soon as possible. Mr. Davis said the Somers Point location was exactly one year from approval to finish. Mayor Chau said it must be expensive to heat and cool the building with all the windows and the ceiling height. Ms. Hammel said the glass is friendly, open, and airy and the building is very comfortable.

Mr. Davis thanked the Board for their time tonight and the applicant would appreciate being able to move forward. Dr. Levitt asked Mr. Doran to cover anything not already covered in his report. Mr. Doran said he will give a quick summary. He said they addressed almost everything. As to drainage, it is now 100% paved and since they are adding greenery, this can only help with drainage. The lighting is good, the curbing and sidewalks have been addressed, and the tree waiver is good for the sight triangle. He said it is important to maintain the landscaping, especially the plantings in the sight triangle which must stay below the 30 inches required. This is enforceable.

Mr. Stein added that as a condition of approval, a copy of the lease must be submitted to the Board Secretary for the file and to Mr. Stein for review. They must also submit a revised plan to adopt the testimony concerning the curbing and driveway area and striping which was agreed upon this evening. This must be given to the Board Secretary for the file and to Mr. Doran for review. Mr. Stein added that the resolutions will be more extensive than in the past moving forward. Dr. Levitt said that is fine, but they shouldn't be too repetitious which will increase expense to the applicants. Mr. Stein said Resolutions should be as comprehensive as possible since they are easier than pulling and referring to plans. Comprehensive Resolutions are helpful to everybody.

Mr. Doran had one more issue to discuss concerning the handicapped parking spaces. He said by law they should be as close to the main entrance as practical. Mr. Davis said he will work with Mr. Doran on the location of them as a condition of approval. Mr. Stein suggested showing this on the revised set of plans. Dr. Levitt agreed this can be done administratively.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session and seeing that no one wished to speak on the application, he closed the public session. It was noted that the physical address of the shopping center and bank site is actually 331 Tilton Road, not 201 Tilton Road. This was agreed as such by everyone.

Mr. Scharff made the motion to include the variances and design waivers as outlined in Matt Doran's Engineers report and the Marathon Variance report and as discussed in testimony. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. Mr. Perri asked if the intersection of Tilton Road and Cresson Avenue were ADA compliant. Mr. Doran said it is a County intersection and he believes it was re-done not too long ago and must be compliant. Mr. Perri reminded the applicant that Cresson Avenue will be paved in the near future and will have a moratorium. They were not aware of that, but are now on notice. Mr. Perri also suggested that a flag pole would be nice in that area. Mr. Davis said he would pass that on to Republic Bank. Mr. Perri added that the area near the bank is dangerous for pedestrians. Mr. Doran said curbs and sidewalks are existing at the corner and they plan to tie into that.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mayor Chau-yes

Mr. Leeds-yes

Mr. Massari-no vote-9 voting members present

Chief Newman-yes

Mr. Notaro-yes

Councilman Perri-yes
Mr. Reardon-no vote-9 voting members present
Mr. Roegiers-yes
Mr. Rowe-yes
Mr. Scharff-yes
Mr. Shippen-yes
Dr. Levitt-yes
The motion carries.

Dr. Levitt mentioned that Mr. Zlotnick will be stopping by at the February meeting to say goodbye after serving many years with the Board. He retired at the end of 2018. Mayor Chau said Mr. Steve Vain will be taking an oath to serve a two-year term as an Alternate Board member at the February meeting. He thanked all the Board members for their time.

Mr. Shippen made a motion to close the meeting with Mr. Scharff seconding the motion. Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board