

**City of Northfield Planning Board**  
**1600 Shore Road**  
**Northfield, New Jersey 08225**  
**Telephone (609) 641-2832, ext. 127**  
**Fax (609) 646-7175**

November 2, 2023

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 of Atlantic City on October 21, 2023 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. Digital copies of the application documents, exhibits, and the Planning Board Engineer's report have been uploaded onto the city website as well if applicable.

The **REGULAR** meeting of the Northfield Planning Board was held on Thursday, September 7, 2023. ***In following with the decisions of Mayor Chau and City Council, the Planning Board will be eliminating the mandatory observation of Covid-19 related social distancing measures at their public meetings. In addition, the Planning Board will continue to air the regular meetings on Zoom video conferencing for convenience of those who do not wish to appear in public.***

Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

The meeting was opened by Chairman Richard Levitt at 7:00 p.m. with the reading of the Sunshine Law and the roll call. The following were present or absent as noted.

City of Northfield Planning Board is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

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Peter Brophy  
Matthew Carney  
Mayor Erland Chau  
Councilman Eric Leeds

Dr. Richard Levitt  
Henry Notaro  
Dan Reardon  
Ron Roegiers-absent  
Derek Rowe  
Clem Scharff  
Jim Shippen  
Paul Utts  
Joel M. Fleishman, Esq.-Planning Board Solicitor  
Matthew Doran, PE, PP-Planning Board Engineer

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Brophy.

Mr. Scharff made a motion to approve the minutes from September 7, 2023. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The voice vote was all in favor with no changes, additions or deletions.

There were three applications on the agenda this evening. The first was from residents Lauray and Robert Hogg, Block 175 Lot 37.03, at 13 Argo Lane, for a minor subdivision. Mrs. Hogg had a medical issue and did not testify and Mr. Hogg was sworn in by Chairman Levitt. Mr. Hogg explained that he is exchanging ground with his neighbors Joseph and Meryl Rodgers who reside next store at 11 Argo Lane, Block 175 Lot 37.02. The exchange of land will allow better access to a cabana. The Hogg property will gain approximately 5.5 ft to the rear property line. Mr. Hogg said there are no violations or issues with this minor subdivision lot alignment. Mr. Doran said there are two existing non-conformities for a rear setback and a rear accessory structure, but there are no new non-conformities. There are no curbs and sidewalks and there never have been on this rural lane. Mr. Doran said this section of Argo Lane is very narrow. Mr. Hogg added that there are plenty of trees. Dr. Levitt suggested a waiver of curbs, sidewalks, and trees.

There was no one from the public who wished to speak on this application and no questions from the Board.

Mr. Scharff made the motion for the minor subdivision and waivers. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Brophy-yes

Mr. Carney-did not vote

Mayor Chau-absent for this vote

Councilman Leeds-yes

Mr. Notaro-yes

Mr. Reardon-yes

Mr. Roegiers-absent

Mr. Rowe-yes

Mr. Scharff-yes

Mr. Shippen-yes

Mr. Utts-yes

Chairman Levitt-yes

The motion carries.

The second application was from Michael A. Tepedino and Sons Insurance Agency, LLC, Block 30 Lot 23, located at 2408 Cedarbridge Road, for a “c” variance, “d” use variance, and a waiver of site plan. The attorney was Brian J. Callaghan of Margate. Mr. Callaghan explained that Regina Tepedino, Michael’s wife, is the owner of the building. They want to demolish the existing insurance building and construct a two-story building which will have a dual use on the first floor. It will contain the insurance office and a construction office for Jon Tepedino’s business who also live next door to this property. The second floor will be a two-bedroom apartment. The dual use of commercial and residential will require a “d’ variance and they will require “c” variances for the existing freestanding sign and for the building signs, one on each side, that total 50 sf and the requirement is 26.5 sf.

Mr. Callaghan had four witnesses to testify. Dr. Levitt swore them in together. Present were Michael Tepedino, Jonathan Tepedino, Tom Sidrane, the architect, and Paul Kates the engineer appearing for Arthur Chew who designed the plans. Michael Tepedino spoke first. He has been an insurance agent since 1981 and the property was purchased in 1998. His son Jon has expanded his construction business of 15 years. The business is now a one-man operation with Jon working as the field representative and Mike does the books. They subcontract everything out and there are no employees. There will be no increase in traffic and they would like a newly constructed building on the property. Jon lives next door on Cedarbridge Road. They want it to fit into the neighborhood and they want to keep a lot of the trees. Mike has three employees in his insurance business. He said that everything has changed since Covid and they do a lot of business online and very few people come into the office. Michael Tepedino said he goes back and forth to Florida and may use the apartment if he sells his home in Ventnor. Otherwise, the apartment will be used by family. There is no one using the upstairs presently.

Thomas Sidrane, a licensed architect in New Jersey, addressed the Board next. He described the existing site. The house is old and the property has many mature trees over 20 ft. in height. They will only be cutting a few for the parking lot. There is a trash receptacle in the rear of the property and it is landscaped with grass. The freestanding sign will remain as will the two building signs. The first floor will have two offices each with their own bathroom. There will be a stairway to the second floor and another that leads to the basement. The apartment upstairs will have two bedrooms. This will be an asset to the neighborhood and he described the building materials. The two building signs will be for each of the offices and they will be internally lit and the size will be 1 ft. 9 inches in height by 14.4 inches.

Paul Kates was introduced and he is a licensed engineer and planner in New Jersey. He described the site as being 140 ft. wide on the New Road side and 174 ft. deep and the lot is just over 20,000 sf in the O-P zone. The parking area is both paved and stone and is not currently striped. They plan to demolish the building and construct a new parking lot. It will be safer and more consistent. They are seeking a “d” variance for the dual offices and the residential use which is not allowed in the zone. They need “c” variances for the signs. The freestanding sign is non-conforming, but they are not increasing the non-conformity and are not changing it or moving it. The two building mounted signs are facing Cedar Bridge Road and are 25 sf each. The freestanding sign has two pylons and is open at the bottom so even though

it is in the sight triangle, motorists can see through the sign with no problem. Mr. Doran added that the intersection is signaled so it is safe. Mr. Kates said there is no detrimental effect. The sign will not be an LED sign and will be in the same location and the size will not be increased. He discussed positive criteria and noted that the new building will enhance the visual effect in the corridor, and there is no detriment to light, air, and open space. The design is an improvement as is the parking area. They are not increasing the intensity of use and there is no detrimental effect to the zone plan or the neighborhood. Also, the next-door neighbor is the son of the owner. Mr. Doran said they are seeking a 15 ft. buffer waiver. They will be enhancing the trees that will be removed with additional plantings. Mr. Doran and Dr. Levitt suggested adding evergreens to increase the buffer area. Mike Tepedino noted that the offices are not open at night. Mr. Doran commented that the property could be sold at a later time and could become a problem. Dr. Levitt said the plan has to speak for itself now and in the future. Mr. Callaghan added that the neighbors have a vinyl stockade fence. Mr. Callaghan said they will provide a buffer/landscape/tree plan to Mr. Doran for review.

Mr. Kates said they need a parking waiver since the parking for nonresidential uses must be 50 ft. from residential areas and they are 28 ft. from Jon Tepedino's property. A waiver is also need for the requirement that parking areas cannot be located within 20 ft. of a street and they are proposing 12.2 ft. Mr. Kates added that they have no intention to store bulk items for the construction office on site. Mr. Doran said the lights must be back shielded and cannot shine beyond the edge of the property.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session and no one wished to speak on the application. Mr. Scharff noted that no one on Zoom chat wished to be heard. The public session was closed. Dr. Levitt and Mr. Fleishman discussed the variances. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor apartment is an existing non-conforming use and needs a variance to allow residential and also because there are more than one principal uses on the property. Mr. Kates said there is a great need for housing and in addressing positive and negative criteria, they are not increasing the density, they will be providing a more attractive building, the apartment will not be a rental and it will be used for personal use. They will be creating a better visual environment. This will be a benefit to zoning and there are no negatives. Mr. Shippen thought that it should be in the resolution that the apartment should not be available for a rental. Mr. Callahan said they have no problem with notating that the apartment has to be owner occupied. The Board discussed this. It was agreed that there would be no restrictions that could be complicating and to abide by the Ordinance which says no rentals less than 30 days would be allowed. Dr. Levitt noted that the upstairs would have to remain residential as another business would affect parking. Two spaces would be delegated for the residential apartment. Drainage was discussed. Mr. Kates said they want to improve it to state standards. Mr. Kates agreed that there would be no increase in drainage from the site and they expect no issues. Mr. Doran said the application should be a major site plan not a minor site plan since there is more than three parking spots.

Mr. Scharff made the motion for the "d" variances vote for two principal uses at the site and for the second story residential use. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Carney-yes

Mr. Notaro-yes  
Mr. Rowe-yes  
Mr. Scharff-yes  
Mr. Shippen-yes  
Mr. Utts-yes  
Chairman Levitt-yes  
The motion carries.

The second vote was for the “c” variances for area of the façade signs where 26.6 sf is permitted and 50 sf (collectively) is proposed and for the freestanding sign. A 15 ft. setback is required on Route 9 and 4.25 ft. is existing and will remain and the setback requirement on Cedarbridge Road is 15 ft. and 9.42 ft. is existing and will remain. Mr. Scharff made the motion and Mr. Shippen seconded. Buffering, landscaping, and trees will be approved by Mr. Doran administratively and a design waiver is required for parking for nonresidential uses that are located 27 ft. from a residential zone and 50 ft. is required and also for parking located 12.2 ft. from a street where 20 ft. is required. They are adding sidewalks to the Cedarbridge Road side. The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Carney-yes  
Mr. Notaro-yes  
Mr. Rowe-yes  
Mr. Scharff-yes  
Mr. Shippen-yes  
Mr. Utts-yes  
Chairman Levitt-yes  
The motion carries.

There was a third application on the agenda from Apex East, LLC, Block 34 Lot 21.02 located at 824 W. Mill Road in the R-1A zone. They are before the Board seeking “c” variance relief for signage and parking, a “d” use variance, and a site plan waiver. Bridget A. Sykes, Esq. of Fox Rothschild in Atlantic City was the attorney for the applicant. She introduced Jon Barnhart, the Engineer and Planner for the project, and the contract purchaser Robert Guy Richards who will be purchasing the property from Robert G. Sr. & Georgetta Richards, Sr. They were sworn in.

Ms. Sykes said the business was previously Richard’s Sharpening Service which was run by Mr. Richards’ grandfather. Mr. Richards said the business started in 1976. He used to sweep the floors as a kid and it was his first job. The area used to be all fields and he spent his childhood there. He now owns Apex East, LLC which is a roofing and siding company. He would like to operate the site as a design center with a secretary. It is important to him to use the family shop. His clients would come to the site and look at samples and go over plans. Dr. Levitt asked if there would be trucks and loading and unloading. Mr. Richards said his deliveries come from ABC and they deliver to the actual site using booms and the materials are delivered directly to the roofs. He will not store roofing materials for jobs at this site. He

said there are two sheds and a chipper on the site and he wants to get rid of them. Dr. Levitt asked if he would be storing in the field behind the shop and Mr. Richards said no. He added that his daughter is the project manager. Mr. Carney asked how many trucks will be on site. Mr. Richards said none. There will be no commercial parking of vehicles. Mr. Richards said he has been operating out of Central Park East in Linwood for 20 years. He wants to use his family's business site. He doesn't really need this site, but it is important to him. Dr. Levitt said this application is a change of use and the Board wants to make sure that the use will not be intensified and create more of an impact on his neighbors. Mr. Richards said commercial vehicles will not be going in and out of the site. He uses a third-party service who takes materials to ACUA. His business is more of a design company and there is no generation or storage of waste. Materials will be displayed indoors on boards. He wants to have a design showroom and the boards will be back-lit with LED lighting. He wants to remodel the whole building with a new roof and shingles and he will fix and restore the exterior. Dr. Levitt commented that the field behind the building abuts many residents. Mr. Richards said there will be no storing of building materials and he will be installing a new vinyl fence. Mr. Notaro asked if all the work was subcontracted. Mr. Richards clarified that it is.

John Barnhart addressed the Board next and was accepted as a professional engineer and planner who has been before the Board many times. Mr. Barnhart said Richard's Sharpening Service was in this neighborhood first and the residential properties were built up around the business. He said the building is actually bigger than his design business needs. Customers will visit the site on occasion to see samples. This is a large piece of property. Mr. Richards is currently in a condo office site and he runs a clean operation. This is an opportunity to refinish the exterior and signage and to make it more architecturally pleasing. He plans to demolish the existing fence and replace it with a 6 ft. solid vinyl fence. He will clean up the debris in the yard and it will be entirely cleaned out. Two sheds will be removed but he plans to retain the two sheds near the fence for storage of small items. The circulation will not change. The county installed curbs and sidewalks two years ago. Additionally, Mr. Richards is proposing to repave the entire parking lot. He would like to add 4 additional parking spaces to eliminate the variance. This would give him the required 14 parking spaces. The lot will be graded to avoid any additional runoff.

Mr. Barnhart discussed buffering. He said there is a major buffer on the left side of the property between the neighbor's property and the Richards' property. They want to add an evergreen row to the most affected property at the rear. They will add evergreens to the other side as well. They are proposing to dress up two brick planters in the front as well. Mr. Barnhart said he visited the site before the meeting and there is soffit lighting and they don't want to add any additional lighting and they want to maintain what is existing. Mr. Barnhart felt there was adequate lighting with the street light and he used his light meter to measure. They don't want to add any site lighting. He added that there are no major deliveries at the site. They are asking for a use variance since this is a residential zone.

Mr. Barnhart discussed positive and negative criteria. He said the site is well suited for the use and the property has existed as a commercial use for over fifty years. This is a great opportunity to clean up the site. It is a large lot with a small building near the road. The rear of the site is unused. The site is well suited for the proposed use. A desirable visual environment will exist after the improvements are made.

It is an eyesore at the present time. The building is already there and because of the nature of the use, there is no detriment to the public good or to the Zoning Ordinance. It is a betterment and when renovated and considering the use is passive, the neighbors will be pleased.

Mr. Barnhart discussed the signage. The Richard's Sharpening building sign that is a painted sign will be eliminated and it will say Apex East Roofing. The 26-sf sign will not be increased; it will be reworked with the company's name. There were two box signs on the side of the roof and one remains. Mr. Richard's proposes to keep the 18-sf left side box sign and the sign will say 'Design Center' and will be back lit. The Apex sign would also be back lit with soffit lighting. Mr. Fleishman labeled Mr. Barnhart's plan Exhibit A-1 and the landscape plan Exhibit A-2. Dr. Levitt had concerns about the brightness of the box lit signs in the residential neighborhood. Mr. Richards said he didn't like the box sign and would like to see a handwritten font in green lettering and have the lettering back lit instead of a white back lit box with letters. Ms. Sykes said there will be no free-standing sign. Mr. Richard's said most of his island clientele get off the parkway and take Mill Road to avoid Tilton Road traffic and he wants them to see the sign. Mr. Doran added that the four stacked parking spaces would best be located along the building and not along the fence line. Mr. Richards and Mr. Barnhart agreed and said they want the parking away from the property lines. Mr. Rowe clarified that the gate of the storage area would be front facing and Dr. Levitt clarified that only the roofs of the sheds would be visible. Mr. Rowe asked about hours of operation. Mr. Richards said Monday to Friday from 8 to 5 and mostly by appointment only. Mr. Fleishman wanted clarification about the 4 parking spaces. The area is only 800 sf and considering the size of the property, this is di minimis. There is plenty of grassy area. Mr. Doran stated that they would be adding landscaping. Mr. Doran said there would be a condition that the 4 stacked parking spaces would be for employees only and there would be a design waiver that no further stormwater management would be required.

Mr. Scharff check Zoom chat for comments. The following was taken directly from Zoom chat:

- 00:33:28      Marcia Fiedler: We cannot hear discussion
- 01:20:44      Carmela Somershoe: It is very difficult to hear presenter
- 01:21:23      Marcia Fiedler: Please ask woman to speak into the Mic
- 01:22:10      Carmela Somershoe: They need to get closer to the microphone. It is curing in and out
- 01:23:02      Marcia Fiedler: Use it for what?
- 01:24:07      Marcia Fiedler: No sound
- 01:26:11      Marcia Fiedler: What about the yard behind the building?
- 01:26:34      Carmela Somershoe: Is anyone moderating this chat
- 01:27:00      Carmela Somershoe: Is the field going to be maintained

01:27:12 Carmela Somershoe: It is currently a disgrace

01:27:41 Carmela Somershoe: Disgrace

01:27:51 Marcia Fiedler: The field is a currently a mess.

01:28:10 Marcia Fiedler: It is in our backyard

01:31:19 Marcia Fiedler: Will lights be put up in parking lot or in the back?

01:31:25 CPS: I will bring your concerns to the Board during the public comment part.

01:31:38 Marcia Fiedler: Thank you

01:32:08 Carmela Somershoe: Will the signage only be facing mill road

01:32:36 CPS: On the plans we have it is only on the front

01:34:40 Marcia Fiedler: Can we request clean up in the back now?

01:35:12 Carmela Somershoe: It really should be addressed asap

01:39:26 Marcia Fiedler: The storage behind the building will be visible from the second floor of any home.

01:46:56 Marcia Fiedler: I agree

02:06:43 Marcia Fiedler: Thank you for listening to our concerns. I am sure he will make the structure much better than it currently is. We welcome him to the neighborhood and his children

02:15:44 CPS: I will relay that to Guy

The storage areas were discussed and Mr. Richards said he would be planting Leland Cypress and they grow fast. Ms. Sykes said there will not be pallets of storage and it will be clean. Dr. Levitt said to make sure that nothing s stacked higher than the fence.

Dr. Levitt opened the public session. Darren Boyd was sworn in. He resides at 402 Franklin Avenue. He is the current Public Works supervisor in Northfield and has known Guy Richards for half of his life. He stated that if Guy says he will do something, he will do it. He suggested allowing him to improve and fix up the property and regulate him through the Zoning Officer. Mr. Scharff relayed to the Board the comments and concerns on Zoom Chat. There was no one else at the public hearing who wished to speak and Dr. Levitt closed the public session.

Ms. Sykes gave a brief summation of the Retail Design Center.

The first vote was for the “d” variance and Mr. Scharff made the motion. Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows with reasons for the vote:

Mr. Carney-yes; He looks forward to the improvement.



Mr. Notaro-yes; The application is an improvement to the neighborhood and the city.

Mr. Rowe-yes; The applicant more than adequately demonstrated testimony as to pros and cons of the project.

Mr. Scharff-yes; He is glad for the improvement to the city.

Mr. Shippen-yes; It is good that the property is staying with the family and looks forward to the improvements.

Mr. Utts-yes; He also is looking forward to seeing the improvements and the clean up will be good for the neighborhood.

Chairman Levitt-yes; This property has a pre-existing condition and is a commercial use in the middle of a residential zone. This use is as much of a minimal impact as we could hope for.

The motion carries.

The second vote is for a waiver of site plan approval, a "c(2)" variance for business signage in a residential zone, design waivers for additional storm water drainage improvements and use of stacked parking on the side of the building for the business. Conditions include adding landscaping and evergreens as buffers along both property lines adjoining residential properties, adding planters to the front of the building, 4 stacked parking spaces will be constructed, a new white vinyl 6 ft. fence will replace the existing fence, no roofing or construction materials will be stacked higher than the fence, 2 existing sheds will be removed, the property will be cleaned up of debris and soffit lighting will continue and no additional lighting will be required. Mr. Scharff made the motion and Mr. Shippen seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Carney-yes

Mr. Notaro-yes

Mr. Rowe-yes

Mr. Scharff-yes

Mr. Shippen-yes

Mr. Utts-yes

Chairman Levitt-yes

The motion carries.

The Board reviewed Ordinance No. 13-2023 which was sent by email. The Ordinance will amend Chapter 215 if the City of Northfield Code, Land Use and Development, specifically 215-37.01 titled Generators.

The changes have passed the First Reading by City Council and it was referred back to the Planning Board for review before the Second Reading and passage. The Board noted that the Ordinance reflects the summary of discussions of suggested ordinances for requirements to install an emergency generator within the City of Northfield presented to City Council earlier in the year. There were no further comments from the Board and they voted unanimously in favor of referring this ordinance back to City Council for final adoption November 14, 2023.

There was on resolution to memorialize for First Baptist Church of Northfield, Block 33 Lot 63, at 1964 Zion Road who were approved for Preliminary and Final Site Plan, "d"(3) conditional use, and "c" variance to construct an addition and site improvements. Abstentions were Mayor Chau, Councilman Leeds, Mr. Reardon, and Mr. Utts. The voice vote was all in favor.

Regarding the Master Plan, Dr. Levitt said the discussions with the Economic Development Committee would be included with revisions. There will be a committee meeting and then Mr. Doran will finish his draft and forward to the Board. Mr. Fleishman stated that the Master Plan is not to address specific properties. The Master Plan creates concepts.

Mr. Scharff made the motion to close the meeting and Mr. Shippen seconded. Dr. Levitt closed the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Robin Atlas*

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board