

City of Northfield Planning Board
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May 6, 2021

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 March 29, 2021, 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.

This **REGULAR** meeting of the Northfield Planning Board was held on Thursday, May 6, 2021. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-8(b), this meeting was live-streamed using Zoom conferencing service and the public is restricted from attending in-person.

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

Peter Brophy

Mayor Erland Chau-absent

Joseph Dooley

Dr. Richard Levitt

Chief Paul Newman

Henry Notaro

Dan Reardon

Ron Roegiers-absent

Derek Rowe

Clem Scharff
Jim Shippen
Councilman Paul Utts
Joel M. Fleishman, Esq.-Planning Board Solicitor
Matthew Doran, PE, PP-Planning Board Engineer

Robin Atlas, Board Secretary, read the following statement:

“Based on an Executive Order of the governor due to Covid-19, public gatherings are still limited and social distancing parameters apply. For this reason, members of the public are still not able to attend tonight’s meeting in person, and virtual attendance has been made possible through Zoom video-conferencing. Participants can dial in by telephone and listen to proceedings, or they can access the meeting using a web-browser, and be able to view and listen. Instructions on how members of the public can access Zoom have been made available on the municipal website and were published in The Press of Atlantic City.

All participants will be ‘muted’ upon entry to the meeting. Web-browser participants will not be able to share their screens or see the camera-view of anyone other than the host, which is the City of Northfield.

When the time comes for public comment, a specific announcement will be made; one by one any telephone users will be asked to identify themselves and will be unmuted to permit commentary. Web-browser attendees may ask questions or make comments through the ‘chat’ function at the designated time. Please note that comments made through the chat function will not be acknowledged until the public portion of the meeting begins, at which time they will be read aloud into the record.”

There were no applications this evening. Mr. Stephen R. Nehmad, Esq. a partner with Nehmad, Davis & Goldstein of Egg Harbor Township was present for an informal meeting Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-10.1. The applicant is “Homes for All, Inc.”, a New Jersey 501c3 Non-Profit Charitable Corporation Housing Sponsor and Glen McDonald, Executive Director, was present to discuss the project with the Board. Mr. Nehmad opened by stating this project involves the Arthur Henry site on Wabash Avenue which is a 6.5-acre tract of land that in 2018 was included as part of the city’s affordable housing plan. Every municipality in New Jersey is constitutionally mandated and obligated to provide a realistic opportunity for affordable housing. They plan to file a major site plan application and it will be an important application to both the applicant and to the city. The plan has not been hard engineered as of yet, but Mr. McDonald wants to authorize Kevin Dixon, Engineer & Planner, to move ahead with the plans after the opportunity to discuss the project informally with the Board since they will be utilizing trust monies as a non-profit. Mr. Nehmad said the design is finely developed, dignified, and has shingle-style architecture. He introduced Glen McDonald. Mr. Fleishman said he did not need to be sworn in since this meeting is informal.

Mr. McDonald said he is a developer of affordable housing and his non-profit is Homes for All, Inc. He has been developing affordable housing for 35 years with properties in Atlantic, Cape May, and Ocean counties and the corporation is chartered throughout the state of New Jersey. He has offices in Northfield in the Arc Building on Tilton and New Roads and an office in Toms River. Homes for All is a charitable non-profit with the mission to provide affordable housing and wrap-around services that

support working-class families in our region. Mr. McDonald stated the organization owns, operates, manages and maintains most of its properties. They also provide rental assistance, emergency home repairs, property management and community outreach as well. Mr. McDonald said last year they served 445 families, built 395 affordable homes, made 40 emergencies home repairs, assisted 94 renters with rental assistance and managed 118 properties. He is very proud of the work his corporation is involved with. They are changing lives and there is no charge to those they help.

Mr. McDonald shared the Zoom screen and displayed the site plan. The homes will be at or below market price and only a portion will be income restrictive. Mr. Nehmad said a portion will be affordable units and the remainder will be market rate active adult units. Homes for All will own and manage the properties. Mr. Nehmad added that they are under contract with the Henry family to purchase under the contingency that all approvals are obtained before closing. Mr. McDonald described the site plan. The site is the Arthur Henry yard and the conceptual plan shows five buildings that are three-story with parking on the first level. There will be at least 70 feet between the buildings. The two floors above are approximately 16 units per building. The plan shows grass and buffered areas throughout and there is a 50 ft. area of existing buffering owned by the City of Northfield that will remain. They also intend to buffer the entire perimeter with heavy landscaping. The amenities include a small pool, a pickle ball court, a gazebo, and a small clubhouse in the first building. It will have its own entrance and will overlook the amenity package. There will be two dry drainage basins which need to be engineered by Kevin Dixon. They will require no variances when they come before the Board for preliminary and final approval. The entire lower level is for parking. There will be a total of 146 parking spaces, with 74 on the surface lot. There will also be five van-accessible spots to meet with ADA requirements. The plan includes 38 one-bedroom units and 39 two-bedroom units. The affordable housing obligation is 15% and they will contribute 15% of the units to the city's affordable housing requirement. Dr. Levitt said 15% is the minimum and he asked if they can go higher. Mr. Nehmad said they are still crunching the numbers, but the rent will be at or below market rate. The construction costs require 85% market rate units for active adults 55 and over.

Mr. Glen said that some of the one-bedroom units will have dens. The development will be called "The Gables on Wabash". The buildings will have a lot of gables in the design and there will be access to the bike path, shopping, the Northfield Library, and exercise. Mr. McDonald said this is not an ordinary affordable community, Homes for All does not believe affordable means low-budget. They believe people of all income levels should enjoy the same amenities and comforts as everybody. There will be a lobby with furniture and a gathering area with mailboxes in the center. There will be an elevator. It will have its own entrance. All the units will have a balcony and spectacular views. They will view the amenities or landscaped open spaces and the area is tree-lined throughout and in surrounding areas. There will be 8 units x 2 floors x 5 buildings.

Dr. Levitt asked if there were any environmental issues at the site. Mr. Nehmad and Mr. McDonald answered that there was a "No Further Action" (NFA) letter issued years ago from the DEP. Things are different now. Mr. Nehmad said developers hire their own Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (LSMR) who issue a de facto Response Action Outcome (RAO) letter stating that the remediation is

complete. Mr. McDonald hired their own consultants and they have done their due diligence and it has all been cleaned up.

Mr. Nehmad said Mr. Dixon will take 60 to 90 days to hard engineer the project and they hope to be back in July or August with an application. The City Engineer, Rami Nassar, has confirmed that there is sufficient sewer available. Mr. McDonald said this project will create a ratable and bring new residents to the city. Dr. Levitt said this is exactly the type of development we were looking for when we changed the zoning from residential to multifamily and the plan looks beautiful. Mr. Nehmad said he knows there are a lot of builders on the Board and for those of you who know construction, to see 1st floor parking like this, this is not least cost construction and is usually seen in higher end construction. Mr. Nehmad asked the Board if they had any questions.

Mr. Brophy asked if Mr. McDonald's group has studied the effect on traffic in the immediate area. Mr. Nehmad said the development is consistent with the density the city envisioned for the site when they put it in the housing plan and they knew it would generate traffic. He said Mr. Dixon is also a Traffic Engineer and they will do studies. Dr. Levitt commented that there is case law that says we cannot deny an application due to offsite traffic issues. He asked if they have a percentage of residents that will have vehicles. Mr. McDonald said he could not say for sure, but they will demonstrate that they will meet RSIS Standards. He noted that it will be a senior community. Mr. Nehmad added that RSIS are the Parking and Design standards for development in New Jersey. Dr. Levitt noted that there may be school age children who live with their grandparents. Mr. McDonald said he doesn't expect much if any, but it could happen. They expect to see more of grandchildren visiting grandparents. It is geared for active mature adults. Dr. Levitt asked about the age. Mr. McDonald said it is 55 years and over and by Federal law that is where you can draw the line in age restrictions. It can't be anything other than that. Mr. Shippen asked if there would be a foot path to the library. Mr. McDonald said he would love to see that. The residents would walk through the amenity package to the library. Dr. Levitt said that should be encouraged. Chief Newman asked Mr. McDonald to clarify wrap around services. Mr. McDonald said that means if folks need help from certain services, they can point them in the right direction. These units will be rentals and all maintenance is included. Their mission is to help people with their lives, not just their homes.

Mr. Fleishman reminded the Board that this is an informal review and nothing is binding and he wants that reflected in the record. Mr. Nehmad stated that they acknowledge that. Mr. Fleishman said he understands they are a non-profit, but he asked if there will be real estate taxes paid for this rental housing. Mr. McDonald said they have an obligation to pay real estate taxes. Mr. Nehmad said they are not 100% affordable housing and they would be taxed in the normal fashion. The affordable units would be slightly less.

Mr. Scharff commented that the pool is located at the end of the site and is surrounded by other residential properties. He asked if it could be located closer to the library lot. Mr. McDonald said they located it there since they did not want to double stack the buildings and want to keep the site open. The location also allows for better traffic flow and eliminates difficult turning radiuses. They looked at other areas for the placement of the pool, but it would have required more paving. Mr. Nehmad assured

the Board that there will be significant buffers around the pool. Mr. Nehmad thanked the Board for their time.

There were two resolutions to memorialize. The first was for Mary Rose Pullo, Block 111 Lot 20, Second Street who was approved for a “D” variance for a shed with no principal structure and “C” variance relief for shed setbacks. Abstentions were Peter Brophy, Dan Reardon, Mayor Chau, Henry Notaro, Councilman Paul Utts, and Joe Dooley. The voice vote was all in favor. The second was for Roger & Edwina Hansen, Block 175, Lot 38, 1300 Argo Lane who were approved for an extension of a minor subdivision, allowance to deposit the Performance Bond when the Building Permit is issued, and no fire hydrant installation or trimming of trees offsite and to include a \$1000 donation tailored to tree trimming and fire safety improvements related to Argo Lane. Abstentions were Peter Brophy, Mayor Chau, Henry Notaro, and Dan Reardon. The voice vote was all in favor.

The Board discussed getting back to in-person Planning Board meetings. Jim Shippen said he would like to get back to live meetings. Derek Rowe and Councilman Utts agreed. Dr. Levitt felt confident that most of the Board have received their vaccines and there would be a decreased risk of meeting in-person. Mr. Scharff suggested keeping the Zoom component as well. It was agreed to meeting in-person and on Zoom for the June meeting.

In light of the RV application at the last meeting, Dr. Levitt discussed the possibility of the storage of motor homes and boats at Birch Grove Park. He thinks it would be a significant revenue stream. Councilman Utts said it is an interesting idea. City Council is looking to add amenities to the park. He said Council wouldn’t be in favor of clearing any land. Dr. Levitt said the campsite area would be a possibility. Councilman Utts said Council is looking into those areas for other ideas such as Disc Golf and Pickle Ball courts. He added that there may be a liability issue as well. There is a lot of wildlife and it would be a liability if, for instance, a rat broke into a trailer and chewed up the upholstery. Also, access would be off limits after sunset and motor home owners would have to be amenable to that. He said the Birch Grove committee meets next Wednesday and Qwin from Public Works will be there as well. He would bring this up at the meeting. If the park committee is not in favor of it, City Council would not back it without their approval. Dr. Levitt said \$100 a month would not be unreasonable to charge for the storage and revenues could go to the park for improvements. Councilman Utts said he would definitely bring that up. City Council has been looking into a Farmer’s Market and a Food Truck festival and other ways to improve the park. Mr. Shippen said a waiver or liability can be obtained.

Councilman Utts informed the Board that the introduction for the Ordinance for marijuana facilities along the Regional Commercial Zone will be brought up at the next City Council meeting.

Mr. Shippen said the Board Secretary had a significant birthday yesterday and the Board wished her a Happy Birthday. (Thank you!).

The meeting was closed at 7:50 p.m. with a motion from Mr. Shippen and a second from Mr. Brophy.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Atlas

Robin Atlas, Secretary to the Board