

WARREN TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
MEETING minutes
7:30 p.m. – Susie B. Boyce Meeting Room – 44 Mountain Boulevard
March 8, 2021
APPROVED

CALL TO ORDER The meeting was called to order at 7:33

FLAG SALUTE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR TROOPS

ROLL CALL

Mayor Lazo (excused)	Mr. Scuderi
Committeeman DiNardo	Mr. Esposito (excused)
Mr. Toth	Mr. Pasi
Mr. Lindner	Mr. Villani (excused)
Mr. DiBianca	Mr. Gallic
Mr. Argiro	

Statement by Presiding Officer: Adequate notice of this meeting was posted on January 14, 2021 on the Township bulletin board and sent to the Township Clerk, and The Echo-Sentinel per the Open Public Meetings Act. All Board members are duly appointed volunteers working for the good and welfare of Warren Township. We plan to adjourn no later than 10:00 p.m.

■ **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

February 22, 2021

ROLL CALL

A motion was made by Mr. Lindner, seconded by Committeeman DiNardo to approve. All were in favor.

Reports:

Alan Siegel, Esq.

John T. Chadwick, IV, P.P., Professional Planner

Christian Kastrud, P.E., Professional Engineer

Maryellen Vautin, Clerk

There were no reports.

■ **CORRESPONDENCE**

■ **CITIZENS HEARING non-agenda items**

Mr. Gallic opened the meeting up to non agenda items. Mr. Dennis Sandow came up and stated he is the chairman for Long Hill Planning Board and hadn't seen his board in public for a year. The board welcomed him. Seeing no one else come forward, this portion of this meeting was closed.

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■ **RESOLUTIONS**

PB20-08 Kevin Thomasey Minor Subdivision

Gentry Drive and Round Top Swim Club block 55 lots 6.01 and 10.05

Motion was made by Mr. Gallic, seconded by Mr. Argiro to adopt the resolution.

Roll Call

For: Commiteeman DiNardo, Mr. Lidner, Mr. Argiro, and Mr. Gallic.

Against: None.

PB20-09 Warren Construction Co., Inc., Minor Subdivision

Brookside Drive, block 60 lot 44.02

Motion was made by Mr. Lindner, seconded by Mr. Argiro to adopt the resolution.

Roll Call

For: Commiteeman DiNardo, Mr. Lidner, Mr. Argiro, and Mr. Gallic.

Against: None.

Public Hearing:

PB20-07 RUDR SJ Urban Renewal Development LLC

Block 78 lot 12

Preliminary and Final Site Plan/Lightbridge Academy

Mr. Richard Sasso, attorney for the applicant, came forward and explained this application was for a school and he had four witnesses. The witnesses were Ms. Cathy Mueller, the applicant's engineer; Mr. Terry Owens, a representative from the Lightbridge Academy; Ms. Cheryl Schweiker, the applicant's architect. Mr. Matt Seckler is the traffic expert. All were sworn in, including the Township Planner, Mr. John T. Chadwick, IV, and Mr. Christian Kastrud, the Township Engineer.

This project was not the initial building or project. Mr. Jeff Beer, architect consultant, for the township, worked with the architect as this site is highly visible when coming into the Township. It used to be the King George Inn but was not able to be renovated.

The public were invited to come up closer to see any drawings/site plans as they are presented if they would like to.

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Ms. Mueller came forward and was accepted by the board. She went over the engineer plans last revised February 23, 2021. The property has three road fronts, to the north Mountain View Road, the signalized intersection at Mount Bethel (east side), (Exxon station is to the south), and King George Road to the west of the property. It slopes to the southwest corner down to the lowest corner. There is a terrain drop. There was a lower and upper parking lot previously and that topography was used in the design of the project. There are steep slopes in the middle. There is public sewer and water. There were two wells on the property but have been abandoned properly. There previously was access from Mount Bethel Road and King George Road. The proposed access now will only be on King George Road. The access is similar to the previously proposed condos and that access had been approved by the county. There will be two-way circulation around the whole parking lot. The driveway is approximately 122 ft. from Mountain View Road. There is adequate site distance. The location for the driveway was because of two overhead lines and poles. There are 43 parking spots proposed, that include two handicap spots. They provided three banked parking spots that will be a green area. They worked the stormwater management as if they were paved.

There are two play areas, an upper one that is towards King George Road, that is 26 feet from the property line. The second play area is on the lower level towards Mount Bethel Road. They have modified the play area which moved to the south a bit. There is one retaining wall proposed to the east of the upper play area. The maximum height is three feet. Mr. Lindner asked about retaining walls along Mountain View but none were needed. There is no access on Mount Bethel Road.

Fencing proposed will be white vinyl, 6 feet total, with five feet solid and one foot lattice at the top. There is an enclosure wall for the dumpster in accordance with Board of Health requirements.

Front yard setback requirements are met for the building as well as the side yard setbacks and rear yard. Maximum building height complies. They are asking for a variance for minimum recreation setback which is 50 ft along Mountain View Road at 26 ft. Redevelopment does reduce the impervious coverage.

Committeeman. DiNardo asked about the building (King George Inn). It was only 12.3 ft from the angled portion of the site and from Mountain View Road it was 2.6 ft. Now it is 52.5 and 52.9 ft. This will be a better perspective. The parking was suggested by Lightbridge.

Mr. Lindner asked about fencing in the front yard. Mr. Chadwick stated a four foot fence in the front yard is permitted, so this is a variance. Mr. Chadwick said that if the site is approved then the fence shown in the rendering should be specified and the applicant agreed to that.

Ms. Mueller went to the next page of the previously submitted plans.

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Mr. Gallic asked why the playground is where it is, in the front. Ms. Mueller said she worked with the topography of the property.

Mr. Lindner discussed the site and the historic nature and that the six-foot fence is an issue in the front yard and the variance on the other side is even closer. Mr. Gallic agreed that the play area is too close to a busy road and the whole idea of a redevelopment has so much flexibility. Mr. Gallic said the architectural drawing is very nice but the playground should be somewhere else.

Mr. Lindner mentioned that they had discussed this at length for any outdoor area during the previous proposal.

Ms. Mueller felt that the site is designed to the topography and the requirements for a day care/school. Mr. Gallic further discussed that the site does not make sense to him.

Ms. Mueller said they had moved the playground south and back from Mount Bethel (proposed now at 50 ft).

The amended application to the sewerage authority has been approved. They are awaiting Board of Health. They submitted in December. Health Department asked about bollards between parking area and the play area. There will be colonial style lights at 12 ft. mountain height throughout the parking lot.

Ms. Mueller went over the landscaping plan and there are details on the plans. Along the perimeter is a white horse fence, a mix of shade trees and evergreens at the perimeter and shrubs and greenery along the proposed fence, the building foundation, and along the perimeter of the wall and fence. There are higher elements at the outer/perimeter. There was further discussion on the specific plants proposed.

Mr. Gallic opened the meeting up to the public for any questions.

Mr. Sasso introduced Mr. Terry Owens who works for Lightbridge Academy. He has worked there four months. He is director of construction for Lightbridge. The day care system currently has 53 operating centers in five states; 14 are owned and operated as company centers. Lightbridge Academy went over their concepts and the children are at the center. They are a family-based business. They are a state of the art facility. He discussed the care and safety to all families and staff. There is an interactive white board system which allows parents and teachers to view their children the entire time in the school. This adds to the safety. Classrooms are tailored to each age group. All centers have an air purification system, a micron unit. The facilities are equipped with facial recognition systems.

The parent/guardian parks their car in the parking lot and bring the child into the school and also go into the school to pick up at the end of their day. There is a parent handbook to ensure all families know the procedures. There is an e-communication system to daily notify parents. There was discussion on the safety procedure of only

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having one or two persons designated to pick up or drop off. Mr. Toth asked if grandparents could pick up. Mr. Owens said it can only be a grandparent if they are registered by the parent. They adhere to state and federal standards to protect the children outside and inside. The fence is typically six feet high. There are always teachers with the children in a playground area. They will register 162 (maximum) students. The children don't come at the same time in the morning or evening.

Mr. Chadwick said that the other daycare facilities, Kindercare, Learning Express, all register for 180 children. There is no parking standard but Mr. Chadwick said the parking is very similar to what is proposed.

Mr. Sasso asked about fire safety zones. Mr. Owens said the fire safety plan is posted in every classroom and all the hallways, manager offices, rest rooms, etc. There is a sprinkler system and this will be tied in to the fire and police departments in town.

At full capacity there will be 25 teachers and 3 managers. Mr. Toth asked if there would be armed personnel. There will not be. There is a lock down system so if there is an attempt to get into the school an alarm would go off and there is a lock down system to lock doors (by the teachers).

The hours of operation are 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mr. Gallic asked if there were any more questions. Mr. Gallic opened to the public. Ms. Sue Kelble came forward from 2 Softwood Way. She asked about the 42 parking spaces with 28 staff members and that doesn't make sense for drop off.

Mr. Owens came back up and spoke about the staggering arrival of teachers and children. And the staggered hours of pick up. There was concern on a back up of cars in the lot.

Committeeman DiNardo has noticed that at the Primrose School it has always been staggered and has not seen an issue. The estimate on how long it takes to drop off a child is about five minutes.

Mr. Lindner has concerns it will over flow onto King George Road. Mr. Chadwick said the zoning office has not received complaints about parking or parking overflow at the other daycare facilities in town.

Mr. Sasso called the architect, Cheryl Schweiker. She received her license in New Jersey in 2017 and has appeared before other land use boards in New Jersey and has been qualified as an expert. She was accepted by the board.

The plan had some minor changes to the plan and it was marked as Exhibit A-1, dated March 8, 2021. Mr. Lindner spoke about the monument sign that in earlier applications it was going to be a sign that said something along the line of "Mount Bethel Historic Village". Mr. Chadwick said there is a memorial plaque shown on the site plan. It is on the engineering plan, page SP-6 and it is on the left pillar. There was discussion on the plaque and it's size, and what was previously proposed. Mr. Sasso said they would put

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what the Historical Society would like, although it was discussed that the pillar is 18 by 18 inches.

Ms. Schweiker went through the plans. Exhibit A-2 was brought in and it is a rendering of the building from the parking lot side (King George Road side). She went through the rooms and the younger children are on the upper level. There is an elevator. The lower level is for the older children and they can access their play area from there. The play area is designed for the ages. The equipment is secure. There are shade structures, which are fabric and are approximately 12 foot to shade the equipment.

The state requires a minimum of 350SF plus 35 SF per each child. The play area is 1200SF for the upper play area and 4680SF on the lower level. Lightbridge has a standard design for the sites and equipment. Mr. Lindner expressed his discontent. The fabric does come down in the winter.

Mr. Lindner asked about the copula and the copper on the King George side and that even if it is Lightbridge branding it is still located in the historic district. There was discussion on adding more stone (around the corners) and they agreed to that.

They discussed more on the playground, stone, fence, layout of the hallways downstairs, and access to the play areas. Mr. Gallic said they could grant variances if they could change the plans somewhat and they might show a sidewalk along the building and move the play area to the south. They may need changes in grade. Mr. Lindner does not like any fencing. This is the only surviving historic neighborhood. Mr. Lindner would like to see the changes to the plan before any decision would be made.

Mr. Gallic asked for a three minute break. Mr. Gallic called the board back into order.

Mr. Sasso called Mr. Matt Seckler as the traffic consultant and gave his credentials and is also a professional planner. He was accepted by the board. The traffic impact study was prepared utilizing the majority of the data from pre covid. In 2018 and 2019 there was some studies and they did some recent counts the month of February 2021 and adjusted them. The numbers are down about 80 % in the morning and after about as much as 30% compared to 2018 and 2019. The corridor has a lot of directional flow with Route 78 to the north. A lot of vehicles come down Mountain View and make a left turn in the morning and many cars are coming into Warren from the North. There are two signals close together and they are a little inefficient. They propose to extend the right turn land to improve the intersection about 80 feet so three or four cars in depth. They are working with the left turn lane. They evaluated the trip generation using the Institute of Transportation Engineer trip generation manual. Mr. Seckler mentioned that the daycare centers are chosen by parents because the facility is convenient to their commute.

Mr. Seckler has worked with day care centers often as well as his company associates. He did say there is a staggered drop off and pick up. There is often about 20% of children that are siblings. Often, there is an 8 to 10 absentee rate due to illness, and vacations. Many sites have been observed as to employees, the peak is usually

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between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. He feels there are plenty of parking spots. The maximum 15-minute interval throughout the day was about 13% of total drop offs. There is about a maximum of 30-31 on the site at any one-time including employees and parents.

There are the three banked parking spaces also. He believes the driveway is located properly and it should also slow down the cars with the flow of the lot. They did account for the volumes associated with the approved Pulte/Chase development (near Route 78).

Mr. Gallic asked if there were any questions for the traffic consultant. Mr. Lindner spoke about the narrow lanes of King George Road and that a car could not wait to turn into the day care. A car going around a car waiting would be dangerous. Mr. Seckler proposed a circulation pattern, and the entering traffic should have the right of way. They could also mark staff parking. Mr. Lindner wanted assurance the cars would not be backed up. Mr. Seckler also mentioned that there is no first day at a day care center.

Mr. DiBianca asked about a separate entrance for going in and one for exiting. They could put a right turn only when entering the lot. Mr. DiBianca said King George Road already backs up.

Mr. Scuderi said that King George Road backs up pretty far already. Many people are making the left to Route 78. There was further discussion on possible resolutions to this issue.

There was concern on events at the school. Mr. Owens came back up and ensured the board there would only be events per each grade and not the entire facility.

Mr. Sasso asked to open to the board for any further questions and then the public to speak on anything. Mr. Gallic did. Mr. Joseph Farro from 3 Sage Drive came up and stated he liked the concept for the site and thanked for board for their time.

Mr. Gallic suggested to revise site plans with some of the changes they have discussed. It was decided to carry the application/hearing for two weeks to March 22 without further notice.

■ **SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING:**

March 22, 2021, April 12, 2021

■ **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made to adjourn by Mr. Argiro, seconded by Mr. DiBianca. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.