

Call to Order:

The regular meeting of the Monroe Township Planning Board was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Chairman Schwaiger. The Board saluted the flag. Roll call was as follows:

Present – Mr. Crane, Mr. J. Garbowski, Mr. Helsel, Mr. Kozak, Mr. Laughlin, Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Scardino, Mr. Schwaiger. Absent – Mr. Conte, (excused), Mayor DiLucia, (excused), Mr. R. Garbowski, (excused). Also present – Mr. Boraske, Solicitor, Mr. Humphreys, Engineer, Ms. Pellegrini, Planner, Mrs. Farrell, Secretary, Mrs. Orbaczewski, Clerk Transcriber.

Proper notice of this meeting was given as required by the Open Public Meetings Act and was published in the newspaper on August 3, 2020.

Memorialization of Resolutions:

1. PB-12-2020 – App. #499-SP – Streamwood Associates, LLC – Minor Site Plan Approved

Motion by Mr. Crane, seconded by Mr. Scardino to adopt resolution PB-12-2020. Voice vote; all ayes, motion passed.

Administrative Amendment –

1. #498-SP - NJ Restaurants, LP

Present – Laura D’Allesandro, applicant’s attorney, Brian Cleary, applicant’s engineer, Joseph DePascale, representative for NJ Restaurants, LP.

The applicant is proposing to amend their preliminary and final site plan approval to allow for two drive through lanes at the proposed new Taco Bell restaurant instead of one drive through lane. The property is located at 110 N. Black Horse Pike, also known as Block 1503, Lots 1,2, and 3 in the Commercial Zoning District.

Mr. Boraske stated that the applicant discussed the changes to the plan with the Board professionals and it was determined that the addition of a drive through lane was a minimal change and could be handled as an administrative change.

Ms. Pellegrini stated she only had one comment on the proposed amendment and that is concerning the truck turning radius. The applicant submitted a plan which does show the truck turning radius although it appears to be a little tight. She asked for testimony from the applicant on this issue.

Ms. D’Allesandro introduced herself as the applicant’s attorney. She stated that since the COVID 19 pandemic, the drive through service is even more essential to the business than ever before which is why they are proposing the change to a second drive through lane on the property. The proposed change does not result in any new variances.

Administrative: (continued)

1. #498-SP – NJ Restaurants, LP

Mr. Cleary was sworn in by Mr. Boraske. He placed his credentials on the record as a licensed professional engineer. The Board accepted Mr. Cleary as an expert in his field. Mr. Cleary displayed the original approved the site plan and then the amended site plan. The amended site plan is basically the same as the original site plan. One parking space had to be eliminated along the front of the building to accommodate the change to two drive through lanes, however, that parking space was relocated to the drive through side of the site. The truck turning template is shown on the plan and they will work out the specifics between the Board planner and Board engineer. Additional testimony on this issue can be provided by Mr. DePascale regarding the operation of trash removal on the site as being during off peak hours. Mr. Cleary stated aside from relocating the parking space and adding the second drive through lane, the rest of the site plan is the same as the original approved plan. With regard to stormwater management and the additional impervious coverage, the increase is an additional 2.4% of impervious coverage which is still a 3.9% reduction in impervious coverage currently on the site and as such there is no impact to the existing stormwater management basin.

Mr. Humphreys commented that he is satisfied with the testimony with regard to the existing stormwater management basin and the impervious coverage. Ms. Pellegrini stated she is satisfied with the issue of the truck turning radius as long as the applicant is testifying that the trash removal will take place at off peak hours and will not interfere with the second drive through lane. Mr. Kozak commented the applicant should be aware of the timing of picking up the trash because there are residential uses adjacent to the site.

Motion by Mr. Helsel, seconded by Mr. Scardino to approve the amendment to the plan to add a second drive through lane and relocate the parking space as shown on the revised plans conditioned upon the applicant's testimony that the trash removal will take place at off peak hours but will not be at such a time as to affect the adjacent residential properties. Roll call vote: Ayes – Mr. Crane, Mr. J. Garbowski, Mr. Helsel, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Scardino, Mr. Laughlin, Mr. Schwaiger. Nays – Zero. Abstentions – Zero.

Site Plan Waiver:

1. #WSP-05-20 – Culture Church

Present – John Gaines, Pastor of Culture Church, Len Schwartz, applicant's attorney.

Site Plan Waiver: (continued)

1. #WSP-05-20 – Culture Church (continued)

The applicant is requesting a site plan waiver to be permitted to utilize an existing building as a religious house of worship. The property is located at 1401 North Black Horse Pike, also known as Block 701, Lot 10 in the Commercial Zoning District.

Mr. Boraske stated the Board can grant a site plan waiver if it determines the property and use meet the requirements of the ordinance and the proposed change of use is a modest change.

Mr. Schwartz introduced himself as the applicant's attorney. Mr. Gaines was sworn in by Mr. Boraske. He stated that he is the Senior Pastor and President of the church. The property in question is owned by Mr. Hargrove and was previously used for the Fastenal business. They are not proposing any changes to the exterior of the building. There are no signs proposed; however, they will put their sign on the existing sign board located along the Black Horse Pike. There are two existing access drives off of the Black Horse Pike and the applicant is not proposing any changes to that condition. Mr. Schwartz asked Mr. Gaines where the church services are currently held. Mr. Gaines replied that they were utilizing the VFW building located in Williamstown but due to the pandemic, they were unable to continue to lease the building.

Mr. Schwartz asked the number of members of the church. Mr. Gaines replied there are approximately 60 church members. The hours of operation are proposed as Monday through Friday evenings, 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The hours of operation do not conflict with any other adjacent businesses. There are approximately 120 parking spaces on the site which is more than sufficient for the number of members of the church. Mr. Hargrove has indicated that he will provide new striping of the parking spaces. There also two handicap parking spaces but they are going to add two more handicap spaces in the front of the building.

The interior of the building is depicted in photographs distributed to the Board and posted online. Mr. Gaines stated that they do not need to make any interior changes since the interior is laid out in such a way that they will utilize the interior spaces in much the same way. He is proposing to add a non-permanent stage that is approximately four inches off the floor with a small platform in the back for sound. The applicant is requesting a waiver of the filing fee since they are a non-profit.

Motion by Mr. Helsel, seconded by Mr. Crane to grant the site plan waiver and the waiver of the filing fee. Roll call vote: Ayes – Mr. Crane, Mr. J. Garbowski, Mr. Helsel, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Scardino, Mr. Laughlin, Mr. Schwaiger. Nays – Zero. Abstentions – Zero.

Presentation/Discussion:

1. Township of Monroe – Joint Solar Project

Present – Gracie Wynter, attorney, Ben Jones, DSD Vice President, Dan O’Brien, Senior Sales Director, Dennis Breza, Project Development Manager, William Boat, Professional Engineer.

The Township has approved a Joint Solar Initiative along with the Monroe Municipal Utility Authority to allow Distributed Solar Development to install Solar PV Systems at various sites in the Township. The presentation will include solar canopies proposed at the Municipal building parking lots, the Monroe Township Public Library, and a MMUA property located at 1935 South Black Horse Pike.

Mr. Boraske stated that the use is permitted by the ordinance and the applicant is before the Board for an informal presentation and to give the Board a general overview of the solar systems proposed. The use proposed is an inherently beneficial one and permitted by the code. The Board can make recommendations and ultimately will vote to memorialize its recommendations and any findings related to the Master Plan.

Ms. Wynter introduced herself as the applicant’s attorney. They are before the Board with three solar projects for the municipality. Mr. Jones is the Vice President and Director for the canopy design, Dan O’Brien, the Senior Sales Director, Dennis Breza, the Project Development Manager, and William Boat, Professional Engineer. Mr. Boat placed his credentials on the record as a professional engineer. The Board accepted Mr. Boat as an expert in his field.

Mr. O’Brien introduced himself as the Senior Sales Director and stated that DSD is a full-service solar project developer. They are a subsidiary of General Electric and in seven years have grown from a three-person shop to over one hundred people. They are now in partnership with General Electric and Blackrock. They design custom configurations based on the site and they figure out what the best value for financing or ownership is for the customer. In this case it will be a power purchase agreement which means DSD will own the system and will sell the Township the power at an extremely reduced rate. They also hold all the warranties for all of the equipment and they handle the long-term operations and maintenance during the course of the 15-year contract.

Mr. Jones stated he leads the canopy design team that will be providing the Township with the beautiful canopies at both the municipal building and the public library. They intend to use the very best solar modules and converters. The canopies will have LED lighting for safe illumination of the areas. He displayed the canopy design for the municipal building which showed two proposed canopies; one at the police station parking lot and one at the municipal building parking lot.

Presentation/Discussion: (continued)

1. Township of Monroe – Joint Solar Project (continued)

Mr. Jones stated that no parking spaces will be lost with the design of the canopies. The one at the municipal building parking lot will span over the center stormwater drainage area in the center of the parking lot. The canopies are fourteen feet in height so emergency vehicles can pass under them easily. They will be discharging the water runoff into the existing stormwater drainage system. Mr. Jones displayed the proposed solar canopy at the public library site. He indicated it is setback 50 feet from the property line. The footprint of the canopy will span across the parking area and will not really change the way the parking lot is currently used. Mr. Jones stated that they came from GE so they are quite innovative and they have received patents on water management systems that address the problem of how to make the solar canopies functional and still manage the water runoff, especially concerning icicle prevention. Icicles tend to fall between the gaps and they can be quite hazardous. They have innovated a water management system on all of their canopies which is quite effective and low in cost. It is a system of mini gutters that catch all of the runoff, prevent icicles from falling, as well as catching leaves to prevent clogging of the system. This water will be directly funneled into the existing stormwater drainage system on the sites.

Mr. Breza gave a brief overview of the ground mount solar array proposed at the MMUA site. He displayed the proposed solar array for the Board. The array will be located on the northeast end of the site and will be a fixed twenty-degree tilt array and south facing which creates the greatest exposure for the array. There is an interconnection at the northeast corner of the storage tower near the block house which has the existing panel board and meter. A seven-foot chain link fence is proposed around the solar array. There will not be any tree removal and the installation will require minimal disturbance on the site.

Mr. Schwaiger thanked everyone for the presentation. He asked the expected build out date for Phase I of the project which is the municipal parking lots, the library parking lot, and the MMUA site. Mr. Breza replied that they would like to start late October or early November; it will depend on how quickly they can get approvals from the Pinelands and then go through permitting through the Township. Mr. Schwaiger inquired about the scheduling of the second phase, which will include solar canopies at the middle school, high school, and Radix Road school. Mr. Breza replied that at this time their scheduling shows they would like to start the second phase in March 2021 with completion at the beginning of July. Mr. Schwaiger inquired as to the savings to the Township. Mr. O'Brien replied that the Township will save approximately 90% of their current electric bills. Mr. Helsel wanted to be sure that when they choose a contractor that they have a NJ electrical license. Mr. O'Brien replied that they require the contractor to be licensed in the state. Mr. Boraske stated that he will do a letter which states the presentation was made before the Board and Board was in favor of the proposals; the applicant can use that letter, if needed, for any other approvals they may need.

Public Portion:

Motion passed to open the meeting to the public. There being none, motion passed to close the meeting to the public.

Reports:

No reports.

Approval of Minutes:

1. 7/23/2020 special meeting.

Motion by Mr. Crane, seconded by Mr. Helsel to approve the minutes from the July 23, 2020 special meeting. Voice vote; all ayes, motion passed.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

These minutes are an extract from the meeting that was held on the above date and are not a verbatim account or to be construed as an official transcript of the proceedings.

Respectfully submitted by: Ninette Orbaczewski, Clerk Transcriber