

Call to Order:

The regular meeting of the Monroe Township Planning Board was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Chairman O'Brien. The Board saluted the flag.

Roll Call:

Present – Mr. Boorstein, Mr. Caspar, Mayor DiLucia, Mr. Garbowski, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. O'Reilly, Mr. Verratti. Absent – Mr. Helsel, (excused), Mr. Laughlin, (excused), Mr. Schwaiger, (excused). Also present – Ms. Gaglione, 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 in the Annual Notice of Meetings on January 8, 2021. In addition, notice for this evening's public hearing was published in the newspaper.

Memorialization of Resolutions:

1. PB-09-21 – App. #1838 – Blaze Mill Development Group, LLC – Final Major Subdivision

Motion by Mr. Kozak, seconded by Mr. Caspar to adopt resolution PB-09-21. Roll call vote: Ayes – Mr. Caspar, Mayor DiLucia, Mr. Garbowski, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O'Reilly, Mr. Verratti, Mr. O'Brien. Nays – Zero. Abstentions – Zero.

2. PB-10-21 – App. #498-SP – Sahara Sand, Inc. – Prelim. & Final Major Site Plan

Motion by Mr. Kozak, seconded by Mr. Garbowski to adopt resolution PB-10-21. Roll call vote: Ayes – Mr. Boorstein, Mr. Caspar, Mayor DiLucia, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O'Reilly, Mr. Verratti, Mr. O'Brien. Nays – Zero. Abstentions – Zero.

Public Hearings:

1. #1857 & #505-SP – Lidl Us Operations, LLC – Minor Subdivision & Site Plan

Chairman O'Brien announced that the applicant has requested to move the hearing to the regular Planning Board meeting scheduled for March 25, 2021. Members of the public were informed that the applicant will be sending new notice of the new hearing date.

Public Hearings: (continued)

2. #496-SP – Tall Pines Day Camp, Inc. – Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan/Cond. Use

Present – Andrew Yankowitz, applicant, Clint Allen, applicant’s attorney, Lance Landgraf, applicant’s planner, Jesse Dougherty, applicant’s engineer, Andrew Feranda, applicant’s traffic engineer.

The applicant is seeking approval for the expansion of the exiting day camp to allow for additional recreational facility improvements. The applicant is subject to conditions imposed by the Pinelands Certificate of Filing. The property is located at 1349 Sykesville Road, also known as Block 10801, Lots 21 and 22 in the AG Zoning District.

Clint Allen introduced himself as the applicant’s attorney. Mr. Yankowitz, Mr. Dougherty, Mr. Riccardi, Mr. Feranda, and Mr. Landgraf were sworn in by Ms. Gaglione. Mr. Allen stated they are before the Board to request a conditional use variance and preliminary and final major site plan approval. The Tall Pines Day Camp property is comprised of approximately 65.74 acres. It has been in existence since 1996 and received approval in 1992. They are seeking approval for improvements that have been made to the day camp such as new athletic facilities, recreational pavilions and such that have occurred on the site since 1996. The conditional use approval is required as an intense recreation facility and as a condition of the permitted use they have to show that since they received the original approval, they do not exceed twice the capacity of what was permitted. They also have to show that the facility satisfies a recreational element of the Pinelands as well as showing that the day camp is aesthetically and environmentally compatible with the agricultural production zone. The applicant is also requesting two bulk variances; the first is to allow just over 44,000 square feet of building coverage and the second variance is for perimeter buffering. The ordinance requires that a 25-foot vegetated buffer be provided around the perimeter of a commercial development. Mr. Allen stated there are extensive wooded areas around the site and they are not proposing to cut down or disturb any existing trees. In addition, they have also received a Pinelands Certificate of Filing which was provided to the Board office.

Mr. Humphreys reviewed his completeness letter for the Board. He asked for the applicant’s response to a couple of issues but felt the application could be heard by the Board. Mr. Humphreys stated he is in support of the waiver request to not provide the topography 200 and 300 feet beyond the property lines. He also is in support of the waiver requesting no landscaping plan be provided at this time unless additional plantings are needed for the buffer. A waiver for providing a circulation plan at this time is also supported. Motion by Mr. Kozak, seconded by Mr. Caspar to grant the waivers and deem the application complete. Roll call vote: Ayes – Mr. Boorstein, Mr. Caspar, Mayor DiLucia, Mr. Garbowski, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O’Reilly, Mr. Verratti, Mr. O’Brien. Nays – Zero. Abstentions – Zero.

Public Hearings: (continued)

2. #496-SP – Tall Pines Day Camp (continued)

Mr. Allen stated they have received the review letters from the Board professionals and they are prepared to address them this evening. He stated the applicant's professionals will be addressing the various improvements on the site including the proposed six new stormwater management basins along with the modification and improvement of the existing stormwater management basin. Mr. Yankowitz testified as to the operations of the day camp. He stated he is the owner and director of the Tall Pines Day Camp and has been since its inception. A lot of fun is had by all at the day camp and campers come from the entire Delaware Valley. They employ local residents at the day camp as well and they have a ninety percent return rate with regard to campers and staff every year. The business is a good business and provides the local community with income not just from local residents but from people outside the community.

Mr. Dougherty placed his qualifications on the record as a licensed professional engineer in the State of New Jersey. The Board accepted Mr. Dougherty as an expert in his field. Mr. Dougherty displayed the aerial photograph which was marked as Exhibit A-1. He pointed out the loading area on the site. The parking area is equipped with 9' x 18' parking spaces and they have the required number of handicap accessible spaces as well. They are required to modify the site to remove any impervious coverage located in the existing wetlands buffer. It is approximately ninety feet which consist of an archery field and various concrete pads that were used for activities, storage sheds, and a climbing area that will be relocated. The extent of the driving range will be reoriented to remove it from the wetlands buffer as well as a volley ball court. The six additional basins were mentioned as well as the modification of the existing basin. The existing basin is adjacent to the pool and tennis court areas. All the basins are designed in accordance with Pinelands standards and will collect and infiltrate the ten-year storm from all of the impervious coverage on the site and will decrease the downstream runoff currently on the site. Pinelands has accepted the design of the proposed basins. The site is bordered with existing evergreen trees and the existing wetlands. The lighting on the site is provided by ACE and is in accordance with the street lighting provisions of the town. Activity on the site is limited to the daylight hours so site lighting is very limited. With regard to circulation on the site, there isn't a lot of vehicle traffic other than the small golf cart or gator type vehicles for access around the property; the property is designed for pedestrian access from area to area.

The NJDEP has issued a GP19 for the activities in the wetland buffer areas which allows them to remove the previously mentioned impervious coverage and activities from those areas. The Pinelands will do a final inspection of the work when it is completed. All of the work in the wetlands areas must be completed by the end of May 2021. Mr. Dougherty stated the storage sheds have already been removed and work has started to remove the volley ball court. The majority of the work that needs to be done has already been completed or is in the process of being completed.

Public Hearings: (continued)

2. #496-SP – Tall Pines Day Camp (continued)

Mr. Dougherty addressed the issue of sidewalk and curbing stating that they are not proposing any sidewalk or curbing as Pinelands has requested they reduce the impervious coverage across the site. There is no pedestrian traffic that accesses the site; all pedestrian traffic is from the drop off area of the parking lot which leads directly to the site. The day camp is located well off of the main road. With regard to the perimeter buffer variance request, Mr. Dougherty stated that there are significant evergreen trees that buffer the site from the roadway. The majority of the site has a wetlands complex which is naturally vegetated. No new landscaping is proposed on the site and they are not removing any trees. The site is accessed from Sykesville Road and campers are dropped off on the site and the vehicles leave the site. Staff and counselors park their vehicles in the parking area as there is no vehicle circulation throughout the camp other than the previously mentioned golf carts or gators. It is basically in and out for drop off and pick up.

Ms. Pellegrini asked if there is enough area for the vehicles to turn around on the site. Mr. Dougherty replied there is enough room for them to turn around. Mr. Allen pointed out on the plan where the drop off and pick-up area is located and also stated that is the area where deliveries are made. The deliveries to the site occur prior to 9:00 a.m. or after 4:00 p.m. Ms. Pellegrini asked the largest size truck accessing the site. Mr. Yankowitz replied that an eighteen-wheeler can easily turn around in that parking lot; they can backup, unload, and exit the site. The Township trash trucks and school buses are also able to maneuver and turn around on the site.

Mr. Humphreys reviewed his report for the Board. He asked for some clarification on a couple issues concerning the stormwater management. He asked for a supplement to the stormwater management report indicating the reduction of the runoff as testified to by Mr. Dougherty. Mr. Dougherty displayed Exhibit A-3 which depicted the location of the existing basin and the six proposed basins. He stated he will provide the supplement Mr. Humphreys requested. The basins have been designed to collect the runoff from all of the impervious area on the site. The new basins will discharge into the Hospitality Creek Branch that exists on the site as most of them are located adjacent to the wetlands buffer. Mr. Humphreys asked if the applicant will be supplying a stormwater maintenance plan. Mr. Dougherty replied once Mr. Humphreys is satisfied with the final stormwater management plan they will also submit the maintenance plan.

Mr. Landgraf placed his qualifications on the record as a licensed professional planner in the State of New Jersey. The Board accepted Mr. Landgraf as an expert in his field. Mr. Landgraf addressed the conditional use variance requirements. The site has been classified as an intensive recreational use even prior to it being a day camp.

Public Hearings: (continued)

2. #496-SP – Tall Pines Day Camp (continued)

The conditions that have to be met for the classification are that the use was in existence on February 7, 1979 and the capacity of the use will not exceed two times the capacity, that the recreational use is necessary to achieve an element of the Pinelands environment, and that the use is environmentally and aesthetically compatible with the Agricultural Production Area. Mr. Landgraf stated they meet the first criteria because they are not expanding more than double of the existing use. The second criteria are met because the day camp services a recreational element for the entire region as children from as far as Ventnor and Philadelphia utilize the day camp during the summer months. They are out in the environment enjoying creative activities, experiencing nature and learning to respect the environment. The last criteria are met as they do not negatively impact the surrounding uses, which is mostly farmland, they are only in operation a few months during the year, the camp provides a fun, safe, and healthy atmosphere for the campers, the footprint is located in the previous cleared area of the property, and none of the activity at the camp adversely affects the surrounding wetlands. Mr. Landgraf stated it is his opinion the use is compliant with the conditional use standards.

Mr. Landgraf addressed the bulk variances requested for the application. The ordinance limits the building coverage to 2500 square feet. This day camp would not be able to exist under those requirements. It has exceeded the building coverage with the existence of the office, the sheds, etc. for quite some time and proposes to increase the coverage by 26,124 square feet from the 1991 conditions for a total of 66,141 square feet. Mr. Landgraf stated it sounds like a lot but on an approximately 65-acre site, it is not very much building coverage. Mr. Landgraf stated the positive criteria for the granting of the variance noting that the use of the property as a day camp for children which promotes a healthy, safe environment and is a good use of the land meets the positive criteria. In addition, the building coverage is not overwhelming on the site due to the overall size of the property. With regard to the perimeter buffer variance, Mr. Landgraf stated they are not doing anything in the buffer area and the majority of the surrounding limits of the property have a significant amount of large pine trees. He stated there is no impact to the surrounding uses which are generally agricultural uses. The activity on the site is limited to the daytime hours and is much less intense than another type of commercial agricultural operation. They also comply with the majority of the land development regulations of the town as they are only requesting the two minor variances.

With regard to the negative criteria, the relief being requested cannot be a substantial detriment to the public good and it should not impair the intent and purpose of the zone plan or zoning ordinance. Mr. Landgraf stated the site is not really changing much and any potential impact of the use is contained within the site so there is no adverse effect on surrounding properties. He also stated they do meet the conditional use standards as set forth in the town's code and the use of the site does not impair the intent of the zone plan or the zoning ordinance.

Public Hearings: (continued)

2. #496-SP – Tall Pines Day Camp (continued)

Ms. Pellegrini reviewed her report for the Board. She stated she agrees that they meet the conditional use standards set back in 1992 and they continue to meet those standards today. With regard to the bulk variances, she stated there really aren't any specific standards for the expansion of intensive recreational uses so she used the standards for agricultural commercial establishments. That is why there is such a disconnect with regard to the building coverage allowed; however, she does not take any exception to the granting of the variance. Ms. Pellegrini stated that most of the site is sufficiently buffered; there are some spaces here and there that are not buffered but it does not appear there is any intense activity near those areas so she did not take any exception to the granting of the variance. She also did not take any issue with the Board granting the sidewalk waiver as there isn't any sidewalk in the area as well as granting the waiver for the size of the parking spaces.

Ms. Pellegrini asked for some testimony with regard to the number of parking spaces and the adequacy of the parking lot during events. Waivers are required for the typical screening requirements for the buffers in addition to the perimeter buffer variance. The applicant has agreed to comply with her comments to add some items to the plans and make some necessary changes to the plans. The applicant satisfied her question concerning unloading and loading areas. She did state there was some confusion about the deed restriction as the plan indicated 34.61 acres was to be deed restricted; however, the Certificate of Filing shows the entire parcel as being deed restricted. There are also several conditions the Pinelands is requiring and she asked if the Freshwater Wetlands permit was obtained by the applicant.

Mr. Feranda placed his qualifications on the record as a licensed professional engineer specializing in traffic engineering in the State of New Jersey. The Board accepted Mr. Feranda as an expert in his field. He responded to Ms. Pellegrini's concern regarding the adequacy of the number of parking spaces on the site during special events stating that the site utilizes buses and vans that bring the campers and also some of the camp counselors to the site on a daily basis. Those vans and buses leave the site and do not park on site. There is also some drop off by parents but they also leave the site after dropping off. The site has operated for many years and the conditions with regard to parking and traffic has not and will not change. Mr. Allen addressed the deed restriction question raised by Ms. Pellegrini and stated that they have agreed to deed restrict vacant areas in perpetuity and they are located primarily to the north of the site. He did state they will have a conversation with the Pinelands to correct the letter. Mr. Kozak asked if there is any signage proposed. Mr. Allen stated there is no new signage proposed; the only sign is the arch sign at the driveway which has existed since 1996.

Public Hearings: (continued)

2. #496-SP – Tall Pines Day Camp (continued)

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

Ms. Gaglione reviewed the application for the Board. She stated that the request is for conditional use approval for the continued operation of the day camp along with the two bulk variances; the one for the building coverage and the other for the perimeter buffer along with the waivers for sidewalk, landscaping, the number of parking spaces, and size of the parking spaces. Motion by Mr. Kozak, seconded by Mr. Caspar to grant the conditional use and preliminary and final major site plan approval. Roll call vote: Ayes – Mr. Boorstein, Mr. Caspar, Mayor DiLucia, Mr. Garbowski, Mr. Kozak, Mr. O'Reilly, Mr. Verratti, Mr. O'Brien. Nays – Zero. Abstentions – Zero.

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:

2/11/2021 regular meeting.

Motion by Mr. Kozak, seconded by Mr. Caspar to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2021 regular meeting. Voice vote; all ayes, motion passed.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 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.