

VOORHEES TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD MINUTES –JULY 10, 2014

The Chairman called the meeting to order and stated it was being held in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act” and has been duly noticed and published by law.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Daddario, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Willard, Mr. Quraishi, Mr. Cupersmith, Mr. Senges, Valerie Marchitto, Board Secretary, Mr. Eric Riso, the board attorney from Platt and Riso, Doug Rohymeyer from CME and the planner from CME-Mr. VanDecoy

ABSENT: Mr. Leoncio

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: NONE

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS:

ANIMAL WELFARE

Motion was made by Mr. Weil; Seconded by Mr. Cohen; Abstentions: Mr. Kerr and Mr. Cupersmith

SWEENEY:

Motion was made by Mr. Willard; Seconded by Mr. Cohen; Abstention: Mr. Kerr

CORRESPONDENCE:

Mr. Riso read into the record a letter submitted to the zoning office from Charles Block, the legal counsel for Animal Welfare asking for an extension due to the fact that they have to work out issues with DEP-they are asking to be extended and their action date to November 2014. A motion was made by Mr. Willard; Seconded by Mr. Cohen. The remaining voice vote was in favor for this item.

NEW BUSINESS:

KHMER BUDDIST HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION

1232-1238 Berlin Road

Block 262, Lots 6, 6.02, 7 and 8

The applicant is seeking the following:

- 1). Use variances from Section 152.082 and 152.084 to permit the use of the existing home located on Block 262, Lot 6 (1234 Berlin Road) to be used as a residence rectory for three (3) persons (monks) in a B zone which does not permit any residential dwellings.
- 2). Use Variances from Sections 152.082 and 152.084 of the Voorhees Township Zoning Ordinance (Code) to permit a house of worship and meditative gardens to be constructed in a B zone on Block 262, Lot 7 (1236 Berlin Road, a/k/a Haddonfield-Berlin Road), Lot 8 (1238 Berlin Road), and Lot 6.02 (1232 Berlin Road), in the Township of Voorhees, in a zone that does not permit said use.
- 3). Variance from Section 154.013 (B) (2) requiring a recreational impact fee to allow no recreational impact fee to be imposed.

In addition, the applicant will be requesting any and all other variances, waivers, design waivers and or ordinance interpretations that may be necessary. At the public hearing the aforesaid plan and any other matters related to the aforesaid application will be considered and heard.

Mr. Grayson, the attorney for the applicant was present this evening along with the applicant and head of the temple Mr. Muni Ratana. Mr. Grayson wanted to have all their professionals sworn in. Mr. Riso wanted to have the planner sworn in for the board because Mr. VanDeCoy was not at the beginning of the year. The attorney brought a person who is experience in Buddhism to have sworn in to give testimony. The person was Julie Regan-she gave a full summary of her education –her credials and where she works (LaSalle) she has her doctrine and her master’s degree in Tibet’s and Buddhism. Mr. Senges wanted to know if she had a working involvement with this project-she stated no. Mr. Senges stated that you are going to talk in general about the practice of Buddhism as opposed to what may or may not occur here in this facility. Mr. Grayson wanted to let the board know about the religion in

general and the practices and then the officials will talk about the practices of the facility. Mr. Riso asked if she has ever testified at a board, she stated no, she has never been qualified in any court of law, committee, or land use. She stated no, this is her first year. She gave the courses that she took in school and taught-she is teaching currently now at LaSalle. Mr. Grayson -she is a third party and she is unbiased. MR. Senges stated that the board could always use some education on Buddhism-they may not have much knowledge whatsoever, but from a legal standpoint-in terms of the use variance-it is an inheritedly beneficial use -it is a religious facility -the things that are important to the board on how the facility will operate and how the operation may or may not fit appropriately with the space and the location at which it is being proposed. Mr. Grayson stated that he would have her go over the Buddhism and when the services are being held, the set times, because it has a direct impact on the times-whether you are expecting all the congregation show up on Sunday at 10:00a.m. Mr. Riso stated that the real issue would be the relevance and/or the nature of her testimony vs the representative who is simply going to confirm. MR. Riso stated that the bulk of the testimony will come from representative of the temple.

Mr. Grayson asked Ms. Regan -he wanted her to describe Buddhism and how it works, attendance

In Cambodian Buddhism -the lady only comes to the major celebrations-typically one in the spring and one in the fall-the new year, which is generally in April-it goes by the lunar calendar. The fall is ancestor's day. They would come at all different times of the day -people come at different times of the day to make offerings -there is no a service -this is particular to Cambodia Buddhism. They practice Cambodian Buddhism -yes. Mr. Willard thinks she will add flavor to the meeting. Ms. Regan stated that in all Buddhism traditions-the temples are built on models of stupas-which go back to the ancient Buddhist practices-the tower is part of the architecture-which is called a stupa. The tower represents the Buddhist's mind-it is very significant-it is based on mathematical principals-that go back to the ancient times. The mathematical principal-varies in each tradition-each are different. Mr. Cohen asked about offerings-what are they? It is traditionally a food offering-money if they want. The offerings are to the monks they are the ones that care for the facility. MR. Willard asked if there are any funerals, weddings, etc. Ms. Regan stated no.

Mr. Muni Ratana- he is the chief monk and CEO. He started his studies Cambodia and then came to continue his study and have a temple in the US at Penn State. He is a Buddhist monk. He is the cofounder/Chief Monk and CEO. Mr. Grayson asked him how many members? He stated that right now in Philadelphia they have about 200-people can come and go freely. Mr. Grayson wanted to know how many reside in south jersey. He stated about 10 people -mostly in Camden, Pennsauken and Cherry Hill; not in Voorhees. When the temple opens-how many people will come? 150-200 because some of them from Philadelphia. There are three holidays. The temple is always open to the public-anyone could walk in freely; they do not tell people not to come to their temple.

Mr. Senges stated that the expert witness- Mr. Henry Haley is the engineer for this project. He stated that the dimensions and height were determined by the traditions of each different sec of Buddhism-how is it determined that the spire would be 90 ft and some of the peaks needed to be 60 ft in order to fit with the traditions or needs or significances of the religious practices. Mr. Ratana stated that the architectural and style and design; they want it to look beautiful. Mr. Senges stated that 90 ft is high-especially where the zoning requirement is 35 ft -this is triple the height. It is to resemble one in Cambodia -the temple is the height-Mr. Cohen stated that it has significance. Mr. Willard asked if it is architecturally driven or something else-the answer is the look of the building. Mr. Cupersmith stated that it is the same as in Cambodia-is it a religious requirement or architectural. Mr. Money stated it is an architectural requirement. Mr. Willard stated he did not want to be disrespectful or out of line with anything that is their practice. Mr. Senges wanted to know if an architect was here-they said no. Mr. Senges wanted to know 5-6 story building. Mr. Senges stated that the roof peaks themselves are at 60 ft -so at the point of the roofs peak would be equivalent to a 6 story building. It is vacant -above the ceiling area-some of them are open. Mr. Haley had other pictures of temples in Washington DC area-to give you the idea. Mr. Haley stated that the building is almost in the center of the site; the property is 10 acres-it sits considerably back from the roadway. It is visible because of the height of the building you will see portions of it-it will not be massive. Mr. Haley showed the board the side show presentation that he had to show the buildings and where they line up and the properties that are surrounding the project.

He showed the aerial picture-the tract itself-it borders on Haddonfield Berlin Road. There is a border line between Berlin Township and Voorhees Township. To the west is open field -sand pit/gravel area

(west)-the lot is owned by JDR. Mr. Senges wanted to know how far from the front edge of the property-edge of the roadway. The beginning of the building approx... 160 ft from the right of way. Mr. Senges wanted to know if they were clearing a good portion of the site-the site buffer- a perimeter will be a wall that is proposed -25 -30 off the property line itself. The trees will remain in its perimeter area. Interior will be mostly cleared and then there will be a lot of landscaped designs for massive gardens for the site itself and they are putting in the building and community center building. The dark area he described is the paved area -entrance will be one way in and one way out-coming in off lippard avenue. The entrance will be on the side-this was suggested with preliminary meetings from the professionals. The community building will be 50 ft to the top of the structure-the structure is slightly elevated-sits off the road. Mr. Ratana stated that the style is what they are trying to achieve and have; Mr. Senges stated couldn't it look nice if lowered in height. Mr. Ratana stated that it is tradition and style of the temple and that is what they would like for their temple and religious needs. Mr. Haley stated that they are trying to do a very up scaled opened architectural features with gardens. The top of the gates -two pedestrian in the front of the site. There will be circular walkways and figurines with water features that be throughout the garden complex. There is a worship building is off the side. The building is very detailed; hand craftsmanship throughout the buildings. Mr. Senges didn't want to speak about site plan issues, we will wait to address those items when the site plan comes back to the board. The parking is for 202 spaces in the back of the site-away from the front. If there is a need there would be a phantom for 48 spaces. Mr. Senges stated that this is site plan. There is water and sewer facilities -will be on public on water and sewer and they will meet the storm water management requirements.

Mr. Grayson would like to adjourn the application for the next meeting-they will have the site lines for the board at that time, they will have a planner at that time. They asked the secretary for the next available open dates-the material has to be in for 10 days-with nothing on agenda. The secretary gave the dates in August-the last Thursday-this is now Labor Day -vacations?? Mr. Daddario is out and Mr. Kerr is out-so no good; September 11, 2014. Action date -October 9, 2014. Mr. Senges asked if all on board; the chairman stated that he wanted a full board.

OPENED TO THE PUBLIC; SEEING NONE, THE PUBLIC PORTION WAS CLOSED

Mr. Behke

He resides right there-he owns a landscaping business and his property was not even mentioned this evening. He is not against the project, just curious as to what is being proposed because he abuts to this lot.

The application was continued until September 11, 2014. The board wanted the engineer to do a sight line from the view point of the nearest residential property on Devonshire Drive. The board felt that even though there were not residents here for the hearing itself the top of the steeple they felt may be an issue for residents if they walk out into their front yard-they wanted to know what they were going to have a vision of with this project.

Respectfully submitted:

Valerie S. Marchitto, Board Secretary