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

ROLL CALL

Present: Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Willard, Mr. Daddario, Mr. Leoncio, Mr. Brocco, Mr. Cupersmith, Mr. Fanelli, and Mr. Vandergrift

Absent:

Also, present, Stuart Platt, Board Solicitor, Ben Matlack, CME, Board Engineer, Chris Dochney, CME, Planner, and Corrine Tarcelli, Zoning Board Secretary

**MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

Mr. Willard motioned to approve the minutes from October 25, 2018; seconded by Mr. Daddario; none (0) against, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Brocco, Mr. Cupersmith abstained. Mr. Senges was absent for the vote.

**RESOLUTIONS FOR APPROVAL**

Mr. Willard motioned to approve Resolution for Case #ZC2018-022, Kyle Lehman, presented before the Board on October 25, 2018; seconded by Mr. Daddario; none (0) against, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Brocco, Mr. Cupersmith abstained. Mr. Senges was absent for the vote.

Mr. Willard motioned to approve Resolution for Case #ZC2018-023, Terence McSweeney, presented before the Board on October 25, 2018; seconded by Mr. Leoncio; none (0) against, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Brocco, Mr. Cupersmith abstained. Mr. Senges was absent for the vote.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Voorhees Animal Orphanage, Inc.**

419 Cooper Road

Block 230.27, Lot 51

Case #ZC2018-010

Seeking a Use Variance to permit the continuance of the pre-existing non-conforming use in the RR Rural Residential Zoning District pursuant to NJSA 40-55D-70(c)(2)(d)(2) and a preliminary and final major site plan to permit the construction of a new kennel. Also seeking any and all other variances, waivers, and/or other relief as may be deemed necessary by the Board and/or its professionals.

Mr. Senges recused himself from the meeting due to a conflict. Mr. Cupersmith filled in as Acting Chair. Mr. Platt summarized the case. Mr. Chris Dochney of CME was sworn in as Planner. Mr. Dochney is a licensed professional planner in the state of New Jersey and was qualified by the Board.

David Carlamere, attorney representing the Voorhees Animal Orphanage stated the applicant has applied for a preliminary and final site plan with a use variance specifically because the Voorhees Animal Orphanage is a long-standing non-conforming use on the site. The application is not for the expansion of the facility but the actual purpose of the expansion is to modernize the facility. The facility has existed at the site for decades and there is a need for modernization to better serve the community. The applicant will provide testimony of improved lighting and improved parking facility, one ingress, one egress instead of two, and landscaping. All of this is an enhancement to the aesthetics of the site which in Mr. Carlamere’s opinion is important to the Board as well as to the residents in the community.

Mr. Carlamere stated David Semless, Board President of the Voorhees Animal Orphanage, Mike Avila, Engineer, Avila Engineering and Jack S. Smith, Architect, Bishop and Smith will be testifying on behalf of the Applicant. The contractor is also present should the board have any questions.

David Semless, 419 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ, a volunteer and President of the Board of Directors, Mike Avila, Avila Engineering 228 West White Horse Pike, Suite B, Berlin, NJ, Jack Smith, Bishop and Smith Architect, 1344 Chews Landing Road, Laurel Springs, NJ were sworn in to testify.

Mr. Platt requested the experts be qualified. The experts were qualified. Mr. Carlamere requested Mr. Semless discuss his background and his relationship to the orphanage. Mr. Semless stated he has been volunteering for six years and has been involved with the board for 4.5 years. The orphanage operates seven days a week. There is a mixture of full time and part time employees approximately 15 total. At any given time there are approximately five employees rotating and the orphanage is a volunteered based organization as well. They have a steady stream of volunteers throughout the day and evening. Staff arrives during the week at 7 a.m. and the orphanage opens to the public at 12 p.m. During the week the hours for the public are 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. On weekends the staff arrives at 8 a.m., they open at noon and close at 5 p.m. They have been operating at this facility for 30 years, this year being their 30th anniversary. Mr. Semless further stated the facility itself needs constant repair, and it’s an eyesore. They have been working on this project before Mr. Semless was involved. He feels the time is now and in looking at the rendering it is definitely an improvement. The Voorhees Animal Orphanage is very aware of their neighbors and the design addresses the concerns of the neighbors. Currently there are 68 kennels. They are not expanding the shelter, simply modernizing it. They will still have 68 kennels. The shelter is set up currently as a straight run. When one dog barks it sets the second one off, etc. The same goes with illness, when one dog gets sick, it easily spreads. The new design breaks 68 kennels down into three runs. They will be moving the kennels further away from the development of the residents, and will isolate the barkers to the extreme end of the facility. The animals that are not well will be contained. It will be much safer for the public, the employees, as well as the volunteers.

Mr. Semless also stated the administration offices will be up front facing Cooper along with the cattery. The first phase will include building the first 46 runs alongside the firehouse. When that is complete they will move the dogs into the new kennels and start construction on the second phase. This is the only way they can maintain their operation and keep the animals on-site. They are hoping to complete the project within six to eight months once the project is started.

Mr. Avila, professional licensed engineer was qualified as an expert. Mr. Avila was requested to explain the layout of the building, lighting and landscaping. He has been working with the Voorhees Animal Orphanage (VAO) since 2008. Throughout the years the VAO has come before the board with various concepts they are extremely happy finally coming before the board after ten years. Mr. Avila further stated the applicant has been diligently pursuing the approvals for ten years. Mr. Avila worked with the Board Engineer and addressed their concerns. In the past month he met with the Board’s professionals to provide clarifications to some of the comments in the engineer’s letter. They are proposing a 9,000 square foot facility with 32 parking spaces. They are proposing lighting and landscaping around the perimeter. The total lot is 3.66 acres and the orphanage will be developed on one acre. Therefore 70% of the site will remain empty. There will be two entrances. The balance of the site will remain as it is today. The one entrance near the firehouse will be closed and placed further south. There will be one way in and one way out. The first phase will include construction of 46 kennels. The second phase will include the construction of the remaining kennels as well as the offices. The reason for the two phases is to have the flexibility to contain the animals at the site and shift them to the new facility. Sidewalk, curb, pavement, lighting and landscaping will all be within a one acre area. They are going to use public sewer and a portable well which is what they currently have. The new building will be outside of the wetland development.

Currently there are about 15 or so parking spaces. The parking will be defined with handicapped accessible areas for a total of 32 spaces. Phase I and Phase II will be contiguous. The site will be a more improved site, energy efficient, as well as a welcoming facility. The 32 parking spaces are in compliance. The outbuildings and sheds will be removed. Everything will be consolidated and contained within the new structure.

Mr. Matlack, Board Engineer questioned whether or not there is any reason or is it possible that Phase I gets constructed and Phase II does not? Mr. Avila stated there’s always a possibility, however, it is the intention of the applicant to basically complete Phase I and Phase II. It is not uncommon for construction to be separated into two phases. In this case, they have to complete the project in two phases because the applicant cannot move the animals to another facility. They have to build the new kennel, transfer the animals to the new kennels then the second phase can be completed. Phase I and Phase II are contiguous.

Mr. Platt stated the purpose of the question is if the VAO is seeking approval in phases the Board will require all infrastructure be completed in Phase I in case Phase II is never completed. Is that what the VAO is seeking this evening? Infrastructure, lighting, landscaping, parking all of these things have to be completed in Phase I. Mr. Avila stated ‘Yes’, the infrastructure will be completed in Phase I. Mr. Avila clarified his statement and indicated some of the portions of the existing facility are in Phase II, parking and things of that nature. To put parking from Phase II, into Phase I will actually take away some of the flexibility his client is seeking. If he has to put all of the infrastructure included footings that are allocated that would mean demolishing portions of the building that they will need. Lighting and the landscaping can be completed in Phase I as well as portions of the parking and roadway improvements. Mr. Platt inquired as to whether or not Phase I can stand alone? Mr. Avila stated ‘Yes’. It is important that the Board is aware that if Phase II never gets built that the kennel can actually function. Mr. Matlack stated based on the testimony the kennel will be able to function if Phase II never gets completed. There will be nine parking spaces in Phase I and nine parking spaces will be sufficient if only Phase I is completed. Mr. Carlamere stated there is also to the northern portion an existing parking lot that can accommodate more than what the building requires. The new parking plus the existing parking will more than suffice. The new driveway will be installed in Phase I as well. The VAO will change their plans to make sure the new driveway is installed in Phase I. They will shift Phase I to include the entrance off of Cooper Road. Mr. Matlack stated this is the way it should be done, a driveway, the nine parking spaces and the existing parking lot. When Phase II is built the older lot will go away and the new lot will take its place.

Mr. Avila further stated the rest of the parking spaces, sidewalk, the second portion of the building, handicapped parking spaces, curbing, a portion of the landscaping will be completed in Phase II.

Mr. Platt requested a list of all the infrastructure that is going to be completed in each phase.

Mr. Avila stated there will be signage on the northern part of the property on Cooper Road closest to the fire station and there is also some signage on the building.

Mr. Matlack questioned as to whether or not there is any building mounted lighting proposed. Mr. Avila stated there will not be any building mounted lights only new lighting in the parking area. He also stated they are using existing vegetation as a buffer. Mr. Matlack inquired as to whether or not they will need to install wheel stops. Mr. Avila stated they will be installing wheel stops.

Mr. Platt requested Mr. Avila comment on the letter from the Township Sewer Engineer, Mr. Churchill dated June 29, 2018. Mr. Avila stated they met with Mr. Garcia of Mr. Churchill’s office and will make the changes he requested. Mr. Platt further stated the Board is in receipt of a memorandum from the Environmental Commission and their letter dated August 10, 2018 summarizing the memo dated September 12, 2018 which requested the applicant utilize acoustical tile wall covering and flooring to reduce and control sound. Mr. Avila stated that would have to be approved by the Board Engineer or the Environmental Engineer.

Mr. Carlamere requested Mr. Avila address the use variance portion of the application. Mr. Avila stated as part of the application they had to provide reasons for the use variance; both positive criteria and negative criteria. Mr. Avila stated with regards to the positive criteria quoting 50:55b-2A. The VAO believes the continued use of this facility is an appropriate use and promotes general welfare and common good. It is an appropriate use of this zone and promotes general welfare because this site is particularly and uniquely suited for this use. The site is already a kennel and the applicant is seeking to remove the existing kennel and place a new kennel on site that is larger than the one that is there now, however, they are not adding additional kennels. It is an appropriate use because of the already existing use. It is not a new facility. It is the same kind of facility that has been there for 30 years and they are simply seeking to continue the use. Mr. Avila also stated the VAO believes it promotes the general welfare it that it provides a safe environment. Currently the property is not in the best condition, there are no hard surfaces, it is deteriorated, and they are currently utilizing sheds for offices. It is not the best or safest environment. This facility will provide a safe environment, hard surfaces will be installed. The facility will be a clean facility. The clients will have the ability to get into and out of the facility in a safe way. There will be a new entrance with clearer sight triangles.

Mr. Avila further stated another thing to consider is the VAO provides uses for the citizens as well as the municipality for animal control. Animal control would be able to deliver and drop off animals to a specific location to the north of the facility any time during the closed hours. It provides services to the community by allowing them to adopt. The shelter is also a no-kill shelter and the VAO strives to find a new home for animals. Their goal is not to put down animals via euthanasia. He also believes the space is sufficient and in an appropriate location. There is enough appropriate space for the building. They can stage the kennels in different locations to avoid a chorus of dogs barking at the same time. There is ample parking. There will be less than an acre of disturbance just a different area of disturbance moving further away from the residents to the east. The new facility promotes a desirable environment and it will be aesthetically more pleasing. The facility will be located out of the wetlands and wetlands buffers. Mr. Avila further stated it is his opinion as a Professional Planner that the new facility is much more beautiful than what is existing now.

Mr. Avila stated regarding negative criteria. In spite of all the good things the facility will bring, does it provide any negative impact and does it affect the ability for others to do something else with the property? The property is zoned RR rural residential and is located next to a development. However, this is not the best site for a residential use. It sits right next to a fire house. So the best use would be something that is not really effected by the alarms, the noise of the fire house on a county highway, a busy road. Mr. Avila doesn’t believe anyone would want to build a house on this site. The building will not affect the character of the neighborhood. It will improve the character of the neighborhood just by the sheer development of the new facility. There is nothing adjacent to the facility other than the fire house to the north, woods to the south and the Royal Court development to the west. Southwest is the Alluvium development. Therefore it does not change the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Avila further stated relative to traffic as indicated by the hours of operation, he believes traffic will not be an issue. There are no new traffic patterns. There will not be an increase in volume to be altered in such a way where there would be an increase in traffic. Mr. Platt inquired whether or not they are relying on the information provided in the traffic assessment dated 8/23/18. Mr. Avila confirmed that they are relying upon the report as well.

By modernizing the kennel, it will reduce some of the problems that existed previously. Mitigating materials will be installed to damper the noise. Currently there is concrete block that reverberates as dogs bark. He believes the facility itself will mitigate the noise. A veil for the kennels will be installed opposite of each other so the dogs cannot see each other.

There will be no impairment on the Masterplan for Voorhees Township. The VAO is already located on the site and is consistent with the use.

Mr. Smith, Architect was previously sworn in and qualified as an expert for the record. As noted in the letter from CME dated August 9, 2018, Page 4 there must be an area of at least 30 feet. The request for this variance is due to the fact that the VAO has environmental constraints relative to the wetland buffer. Therefore it is a hardship variance. The other variance is for the fence, not to exceed 4 feet in height. We believe given the fact that this is an animal orphanage, a higher fence is necessary in order to keep the dogs contained. Mr. Platt stated this variance is not necessary because it’s only applicable for a residence. The other variance request is regarding illumination to the north on the side located next to the firehouse when the orphanage is closed. The orphanage allows 24 hour emergency access for animal control. The lights will be dimmed or placed on a sensor. The minimum width entrance of a driveway is 30 feet based on the speed limit. Mr. Smith is proposing 24 feet. Currently, the driveway is less than 24 feet. The VAO went before the County Planning Board and they did not have any objections. Curbing will also be provided. The flow of water onto the roadway is going to be stopped by the curbing and can meet the goals of the discharge flow. Mr. Smith stated they provided a vehicle access plan with different size vehicles such as emergency vehicles, etc. Mr. Smith in response to Mr. Matlack’s question stated there were no objections by the County Planning Board regarding the curbing waiver and the storm water characteristics of the site will maintain the drainage patterns.

Mr. Smith, Architect was qualified as an expert. Mr. Smith had the opportunity to work with the VAO in the design of the project. Exhibit A-1 Colored Rendering of the proposed building was marked for the record. Mr. Smith stated the façade was designed to fit in within the community, stone and stucco, not so commercial while still trying to maintain some representation of the animal shelter. The building is designed to meet all current codes. It will include all the requirements for ADA compliance and accessibility. He worked along with the facilitator to design the new treatment centers, new kennels, and new administrative offices. The building will be built in two phases. Exhibit A-2 Floor Plan was marked for the record. Section I holds 46 kennels, the dogs will then be moved to the new facility and the old facility will be demolished along with the other areas of the existing building. The new office space, treatment area and reception area will then be constructed. A T-type section was designed so we can place some of the ‘barkers’ in that section to control sound. Acoustical materials will be placed in the roof system to absorb the sound and not reflect it. Movement of waste and hard surfaces will allow volunteers and employees maintain the kennels, keep odor down, and remove it as quickly as possible.

The meeting was opened to the public. Seeing no one, the public portion was closed.

Mr. Platt summarized the application. Design waiver will comply and the fence variance does not apply to this application. The project will be designed in two phases; 46 kennels, 9 parking spaces. Phase II will be the balance of the kennels totaling 68, office, reception area, as well as the area for the barking dogs. The kennels will be constructed in three wings. The applicant has agreed to comply with the requirements in the review letter from CME dated August 9, 2018. CME provided us with a specified list of infrastructure improvements in each phase. The Board Engineer believes there is sufficient infrastructure to service Phase I and Phase II. The Applicant has also agreed to comply with the Township sewer’s engineer’s letter of June 29, 2018 and they also agreed to comply with the Environmental Commission’s memo dated September 12, 2018 with the exception of the condition regarding the barking dogs. The Applicant is not seeking a bifurcated vote but rather in the aggregate, use variance and bulk variances, design waiver(s) and preliminary and final site plan.

Mr. Cohen made a motion to approve the application as summarized by Mr. Platt; seconded by Mr. Weil.

Ayes: Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Willard, Mr. Daddario, Mr. Leoncio, Mr. Brocco and Mr. Cupersmith.

Nays: None

**The Chakrabarti Foundation**

111 Centennial Blvd.

Block 200, Lot 10.03

Case #ZC2018-018

Seeking Use Variance relief from Section 152.142 of the ULDO to allow an ‘Ashram’ with 20 efficiency age-restricted residential units with a large welcome/community center in an Economic Industrial Business (EIB) zone; seeking relief from Section 152.145(H)(2) to permit parking setbacks of 35 feet to right of way where 50 feet is required; and 25 feet to the property line where 50 feet is required; and from Section 150.16(A) a de minimis exception is requested from the Residential Site Improvement Standards if more than 0.8 parking spaces per unit as provided are required. Also seeking any and all other variances, waivers, and/or other relief as may be deemed necessary by the Board and/or its professionals.

Mr. Cupersmith recused himself from the meeting due to a conflict. Mr. Platt summarized the application. Unlike the application for the Voorhees Animal Orphanage, the Chakrabarti Foundation is not seeking site plan approval at this time. Should the Board act on the application, they will have to approve or deny the use variance. Should the Board approve the application, the applicant would have to return with a fully developed site plan application which would be a separate hearing and a separate hearing process. They are bifurcating this application and it is unlikely the case will be decided this evening.

Donald Cofsky of Cofsky and Ziedman, Haddonfield, NJ representing the Chakrabarti Foundation introduced himself. Mr. James Miller, 222 Nicholson Drive, Moorestown, NJ, Professional Planner, Joseph Mancini, Tri-State Engineering, 901 Route 168, Blackwood, NJ, Rick Fumo, Architect, 101 Route 130, Cinnaminson, NJ, Paritosh Chakrabarti, President of the Chakrabarti Foundation, David Shropshire, P.E., P.P., Shropshire Associates LLC, 1288 Route 73, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054, were sworn in to testify.

Mr. Cofsky stated the Chakrabarti Foundation (CF) is a 501c3 foundation. The foundation is a charitable foundation and has been in existence for many years. In addition to the personal contributions Dr. And Mrs. Chakrabarti have made to educational facilities they have also started a foundation to accomplish this same goal, an Ashram.

They are seeking a use variance. The location is in an EIB Zone. The zone allows public storage facilities, one-story, two-story up to 50 feet in height, community recreation, wholesaling, research development and testing laboratories, vehicle repair facilities, bulk laundry processing facilities, auction houses, retail and service uses as long as they do not exceed a certain percentage of the space. The location is directly in front of the Centennial Mills development. It is a 7.15 acre tract. There are wetlands along the left side, there is a basin for drainage, and there is a small repair facility along the side. Across the street is a rather large repair facility. The reason the application is being presented before the Board is because an Ashram and residential units are not permitted in this zone. Mr. Cofsky further stated he looked through the Ordinance and could not this use in any other zone in Voorhees. This is not a typical use anywhere and not something people were thinking of in the past. Mr. Cofsky continued to state in the United States in the past 311 days there were 304 mass shootings. Given what is going on in our world, the violence, the hatred that leads to violence, this is why Dr. and Mrs. Chakrabarti wanted to create a center of community acceptance.

Any bulk variances will be applied for at site plan approval. Mr. Cofsky stated they are not only going to discuss the concept, but also what the facility will look like so the community can understand what the Applicant would like to build. The traffic engineer will also discuss the impact on traffic this would have if any. They will also present information relative to parking, shuttle, etc.

Mr. Cofsky stated Dr. Chakrabarti will explain what an Ashram is. The use is to heal this divide. How can one small facility of 20 people heal the divide? The idea to unit, to research, write, lecture, communicate and improve Voorhees, the country, the world. The facility itself will consist of small living units occupied by individuals. There will be a Board of Trustees of the Ashram. People will be there because of a calling and because they share the vision of Dr. Chakrabarti. Their job is to live in and provide a think tank. They are there to research, write, communicate, lecture, and to try to accomplish the goals of the Ashram. They are going to be required to contribute their time each week to this cause.

There will also be a 6,500 square foot conference center, a welcome center. Conferences will not last days or weeks. There will be half-day conferences from one to five in a year, by invitation only. Neighbors can utilize the library and meditation room. This is a low intensity of use, very quiet, low in traffic and consistent with the Centennial Mills community. The individuals living in the units will only be there for five years to ensure they are doing their work. The facility will be age-restricted, not a place where people are aging. These glorious scholars, must be financially secure, they must have a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree and Doctorates are preferred and must be dedicated. The motto is to stay and serve. The Board of Trustees will set the rules, the final criteria. Those living there will be required to pay for their utilities, will have to pay a maintenance charge, and contribute to a fund so there will always be funds available for repairs. They will live there rent free. The individuals will be of various professional, educational, and discipline backgrounds, lawyers, doctors, engineers. This will not be a group of one ethnicity. The idea is to have individuals from multiple ethnicity backgrounds, color, creed, religion. This is not a mosque, a church, a temple, not a religious institution, and not limited to race. There will be diverse views, not tolerance but acceptance, acceptance of differences.

Mr. Cofsky further stated the community, in particular those individuals residing at Centennial Mills, are concerned about parking. The Applicant will show that parking is not an issue and as far as traffic is concerned, this use will generate far less traffic than any other permitted use for this site. Mr. Mancini, Engineer on behalf of the Applicant, will discuss the site itself, the surrounding aerial, what the layout will look like. Mr. Fumo will discuss what the building will look like. Mr. Shropshire will discuss the impact on traffic. Mr. Chakrabarti will discuss his vision, his mission and his thoughts as to why he is doing this and why he is willing to contribute so much to make this work. The Applicant’s Planner will discuss the positive and negative criteria, and beneficial use. Mr. Cofsky stated several concerns have been raised and those concerns resulted in changes to the plan relative to the site. However the use remains the same. The Applicant hopes this site ultimately will be half as successful as the Foundation is hoping for. There will be a lot of focus on Voorhees, for the surrounding townships, for the region, for New Jersey, and for the Country. It is the Applicant’s opinion that centers like this will pop up throughout the United States and throughout the world.

Mr. Mancini stepped forward to testify. He has appeared in front of the Zoning Board of Adjustment for Voorhees Township in the past. He is a licensed professional in the state of New Jersey. Mr. Mancini distributed copies of nine (9) photos of the site in question that were marked for the record as Exhibit A-1. The aerial view of the site shows the west side of Centennial and south of Matlack Drive. There is a photo of the Centennial Mill development to the north. To the south is the auto repair facility. There is an existing basin for storm water. In the center of the site is an area of wetlands and transitional area. The surrounding area including the proposed site is in the EIB zone. The site is vacant with the exception of the retention basin. Another photo showed the location of the proposed site as well as the dwellings in Centennial Mills that are closest to the proposed development. Centennial Mills is designed with alleyways with access to the garage. The proposed site will face the rear closest to the garages. There is an existing four foot berm. The plan is to install a privacy fence and landscaping to shield the view. Open space exists across from Centennial Mills which was previously a landfill. Further north past Centennial Mills is a large open tract zoned O4 suitable or slated potentially on the Master Plan for additional Senior Housing.

An 11 x 17 site plan, last revision date November 1, 2018, was produced and marked as Exhibit A-2. Modifications to the site layout were made based on the comments and concerns of the residents. The project proposes approximately 6,500 sq. ft. for a welcome center in the center of the site and on either side, ten (10) single story one-bedroom residential apartments, ten (10) on the left side, ten (10) on the right side. Access to the proposed site will be from Centennial Blvd. only. There will be no access from Matlack Drive. The project has 13 parking spaces in the front of the site. The project proposes two way drives along the front of the building and left side of the building. There is a two-way drive isle. On the one side of the building, there is a one-way drive for circulation. Currently Mr. Mancini is proposing 46 parking spaces and a total of 30 phantom spaces. Sixty-six spaces required which represents 1.8 spaces per unit and the welcome center 4.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. According to the ordinance requirements, the Applicant is required to have 66 parking spaces. Mr. Mancini doesn’t believe they are necessary. However, there is ample room on the site to accommodate 66 spaces if necessary. Out of the 66 spaces, 30 parking spaces will be allocated for the welcome center and 36 for the residents. Because of the nature of the use and type of residents, Mr. Mancini doesn’t anticipate the same sort of in and out traffic of a typical residential development. Based on the use of the welcome center, he does not anticipate the need for a lot of overflow parking. Mr. Mancini further stated he also contemplated that on special events there is a possibility to shuttle visitors from another site to the center and that the center can easily accommodate a drop off location. The phantom spaces will be located on the left side and the rear.

Mr. Mancini in response to Mr. Platt’s questions stated this is the first Ashram he has worked on and it is the first one he is aware of. He further stated his testimony is based upon a similar type of operation as well as his discussions with the Applicant. Mr. Platt stated the Board needs to be made aware of what the conference center will entail. How many people will be living there, what type of events will be held there, as well as the number of people that will be attending the events? Mr. Mancini stated it is his understanding that there will be between one event to five events a year with approximately 50-60 people for each event including the residents. To his knowledge there will not be any outdoor events scheduled. It is also Mr. Mancini’s understanding that the events will not be opened to the public but will be by invitation only. The welcome center is open to the public at other times. The age of the residents will be 55 and over. However, there is not a restriction on age for individuals attending events.

Mr. Mancini stated in response to Mr. Cofsky’s question according to the engineer’s report, there is a need for 66 parking spaces, 30 parking spaces for the welcome center and 36 for the residents. The plan currently shows 76 spaces. A parking variance will not be required and impervious coverage is not impacted. The plan shows coverage substantially below black lot coverage at 30% coverage and the allowable amount is 60%. Mr. Cofsky further stated the plan is to install a six foot high solid wood privacy fence and behind the fence will be a double row of evergreen, landscaping in that the Applicant wants to create an environment of seclusion on both sides of the property. The landscaping will include green giant Arborvitae with an eight-foot planting height.

Mr. Mancini stated he does not anticipate any pedestrian or vehicular traffic between the two sites. The facility is 76 feet from the property line. The back of the garages and the Centennial Mills homes are approximately 32 feet. There is over 100 feet between the buildings and the proposed site is approximately 120 feet from the actual living space at Centennial Mills homes. The Centennial Mills homes are approximately 70 to 80 feet amongst each other. Fifty feet is the permitted height limit. The townhomes are 29-30 feet grade to peak. The maximum height is going to be 30 feet. As evidenced by the berm the new site is a few feet lower than the Centennial Mills development.

Mr. Fumo in response to Mr. Senges stated the townhomes are not two stories but rather one story with a loft and the pictures in the packets the Board received are accurate. Mr. Fumo further stated it’s the height that’s important. The height of the proposed facility is less than 30 feet where 50 feet is permitted.

Mr. Cofsky requested Mr. Mancini discuss lighting. Mr. Mancini stated the lighting will have back side shields to minimize the throw of light and there will be minimal lighting on the right side and the site will definitely have less lighting than that of a commercial site.

Mr. Baron stated in response to Mr. Platt’s question that he will cross-examine the professionals once all of the professionals have been heard.

Mr. David Shropshire of Shropshire Associates was qualified by the Board as an expert and has been before the Zoning Board of Adjustment in Voorhees Township on numerous occasions. Mr. Shropshire stepped forward to discuss the traffic impact. He stated he relied heavily on the Applicant regarding the daily activity of the Ashram. There will be 10-15 visitors per day maximum. The other component he reviewed would be the actual residential use. With regard to the welcome center, they’re anticipating 15 people on a daily basis to attend. He created a worse- case scenario. A trip is either an entering or exiting trip generated by a facility so when an individual exits the facility and returns back it’s considered two trips. Worse-case scenario with all visitors entering and exiting at the same time would result in 14-22 peak hour trips. Peak hours are typically during the morning or afternoon rush hour from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The counts were done in the month of May. The peak hour in the morning was from 7:45 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. the afternoon peak hour was 4:45 to 5:45. Mr. Shropshire stated this particular facility is a low trip generator. Other permitted uses would substantially generate a lot more traffic. Parking and traffic would be significantly greater with other uses. A retail strip center would be the highest. With office being the second highest but with no traffic on the weekends. Mr. Shropshire recommended that Centennial Road be restriped with a left-hand turn lane onto Matlack Drive. He further stated there is sufficient room in the roadway to do that. The site is more than able to accommodate the circulation of traffic and parking. One space per unit as opposed to two parking spaces per unit and there is enough room on the site to meet the parking requirements. With the banking spaces there is sufficient room on the site to accommodate the needs. Those parking spaces can be banked, not provided initially, and can be added in the future if the demand cannot be met.

Mr. Matlack indicated regarding the four quest units in addition to the 20 residential units, by his calculations it looks like 73 spaces might be required due to the guest units. Mr. Shropshire stated he did not evaluate traffic relative to special events and further stated there would be a nominal amount of trips should off-site parking be utilized. He compared this facility to an assisted living facility where individuals utilize a shuttle bus when there’s a special occasion and off-site parking is utilized. An offsite parking site has not been identified. During a special event is when the Applicant would need the 76 parking spaces. If alternate parking was not an option, the Applicant may meet the demand for the 76 parking spaces. The special events may need to be scheduled out of the peak hours or he would have to reevaluate the traffic impact for special events. In his professional opinion, and based on the fact that he has never evaluated traffic for an Ashram, if arrangements for off-site parking were not made, then the Applicant would need the 76 parking spaces. In Mr. Shropshire’s opinion there will not be a substantial detrimental impact based on having 40 to 60 attendees at a special event. He does not believe it would create a substantial impact where the Applicant would have to change the level of service.

The current level of service for traffic is a D or better. Most jurisdictions accept a D level. There is a left turn delay of 25-35 seconds during peak hours out of Matlack Drive. There were five to eight trips generated during peak hours off of Matlack Drive. Matlack Drive was removed as an access to the site therefore traffic on Matlack Drive will not be hindered. There are sufficient spaces between the two accesses, the one into the new site and the Matlack Drive entrance into Centennial Mills. There is sufficient space as discussed for a left hand turn lane into the center as well as a left hand turn lane into Centennial Mills.

Mr. Fumo, Registered Architect in the state of New Jersey was qualified as an expert. Mr. Fumo introduced four exhibits into the record, Exhibit A-3 Aerial View, Exhibit A-4 Site Plan dated August, 2018, Exhibit A-5 Front Elevation dated July 24, 2018, and Exhibit A-6 Floor Plans. The Welcome Center is the focal point and the facility includes 20 residential units all structurally connected. It’s a rectangular shaped site and the only location to place the building was on the right hand side as the left hand side is wetlands so hence the location of the building with parking and driveway on the left. Mr. Fumo proceeded to state there will be a solid fence installed in the back of the facility six feet in height, as well as a four-foot ornamental fence in the front of the facility. The townhomes are staged single story townhomes with a loft. In the front is a low wall garden area. In the back is a roof covered promenade that connects the entire structure. A dumpster will be placed within an enclosure. The entrances to the units is on the opposite side in the back. The residents will park in the front between the residences and on each side of the welcome center is a breezeway for the residents to walk through to their unit. The maximum height from grade to peak is 28 feet, the welcome center is 30 feet in height. The building was designed as an early Colonial style building to compliment the properties within Centennial Mill and is compatible with Centennial Mills. The inspiration was the Monticello Thomas Jefferson facility in Virginia, with a traditional look. The welcome center is 6,500 sq. feet. There is a main entry into a lobby. Octagonal shape meeting room will be utilized for seminars, lectures, etc. On the right hand side is a lounge area, restrooms, a library on the opposite side. There is one guest room on the first floor that is ADA compliant. The second floor has a balcony that can look down on the conference center. The individual units are one bedroom, and one bath totaling 590 square feet with a 200 square foot loft. The loft does not have a closet. Each unit has an eat-in kitchen area, great room, restroom, and bedroom. We do not have a living area or TV area on the first floor which is why the loft was created. Mr. Platt inquired as to whether or not the loft can this be converted into a bedroom? Mr. Fumo stated that would have to be approved by the Board. Mr. Platt stated the Board wants to make sure the Applicant is not generating additional living areas. Mr. Fumo stated a condition can be made. The loft is completely open. There is no bathroom, no closet and the loft is strictly to be utilized as a living room area.

As previously mentioned there are four guest rooms. The guest rooms do not have kitchens or kitchenettes in them. There will not be any facility within the welcome center for cooking.

Mr. Brocco questioned why this site and why this location? Mr. Cofsky stated that question will be addressed by the Planner and Dr. Chakrabarti at the next meeting. Mr. Weil questioned what will the individuals staying in the guest rooms do for food? Again that question will be addressed at the next meeting. Mr. Platt requested a view of the site as to where the residents will be entering their units be provided at the next meeting.

Mr. Platt stated the Board would need a motion to continue this meeting to December 13, 2018. If there is a reason why the meeting does not take place that evening, the Applicant will have to extend the Action Date to January 30, 2019. If the meeting is not held on December 13, 2019 Mr. Cofsky will have to re-notice. However, he does not have to re-notice for the December 13 meeting.

Mr. Platt made a motion to continue the meeting to December 13th; seconded by Mr. Weil. Mr. Platt requested Mr. Cofsky submit in writing his request to extend the Action Date to January 30, 2019.

Ayes: Mr. Cohen, Mr. Weil, Mr. Willard, Mr. Daddario, Mr. Leoncio, Mr. Brocco and Mr. Cupersmith.

Nays: None

Seeing no further business Mr. Cohen makes a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Weil.

Meeting was adjourned.

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Corrine Tarcelli

Zoning Board Secretary