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. Daddario, Mr. Leoncio, Mr. Willard, Mr. Schwenke, Mr. Senges

Absent: Mr. Brocco, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Cupersmith, and Mr. Weil

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

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence received from Mr. Luongo, Attorney for the Applicant, Jason Morovich, 9 Covington Lane, ZC2018-025 requesting application be carried with no further notice.

Mr. Senges stated the Applicant must re-notice.

Mr. Willard made a motion to carry the application to April 25, 2019 and extend the action date to April 30, 2019; seconded by Mr. Daddario.

Ayes: Mr. Willard, Mr. Daddario, Mr. Leoncio, Mr. Schwenke, Mr. Senges abstained.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals, Inc.**

1099 White Horse Road

Block 160, Lot 7

Case #ZC2019-002

Mr. Norman summarized the application. The applicant is seeking a Use Variance with site plan waiver for a Physician’s Assistant educational training program in a building containing multiple users (152.062, et. seq.), that parking space number under 150.16 is compliant and/or approval to be granted. 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. Mintz, attorney representing the Applicant, stated both professionals may be sworn in simultaneously. Mr. Herb Smith, Project Manager for Thomas Jefferson, 130 South Ninth Street, Suite 2300, Philadelphia, PA 19107 and Tiffany Morrisey, Planner on behalf of the Applicant, 7 Equestrian Drive, Galloway, NJ 08205 were sworn in. Ms. Morrisey is a licensed Professional Planner in the State of New Jersey, member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and has been practicing in the planning profession since 1995 with a Master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania and has presented before several planning boards. Ms. Morrisey was qualified by the Board as an expert.

Mr. Mintz stated the University owns Block 161 lot 22, 443 Laurel Oak Road, Voorhees, NJ. The lot size is 6.3 acres. Along Laurel Oak Road there are a series of office buildings. Thomas Jefferson owns four of them. Along the same roadway is the Skate Zone. There is somewhat of a ‘T’ intersection with Laurel Road. North of the property there is another series of office buildings. Thomas Jefferson is located in a non-residential community and has been in the building for numerous years. The request is for an educational use to train toward licensure and national certificate of professional physician assistants. The use is not permitted under section 152.062 of the ordinance and in the O3 Zone with a Town Center 1 Overlay. Mr. Mintz stated the applicant will prove there is adequate parking to satisfy the need under section 150.16 as the ordinance does not define educational parking requirements. Physician’s Assistants are graduates of the college. They have their Bachelor’s degree and seek through this program to obtain a Master’s of Science in Physician Assistant’s studies. It is a 25-month course conducted 12 months of the year. Physician assistant’s render healthcare providing diagnosis, treatment of patients as well as writing prescriptions under a physician’s supervision. The program is licensed by the State of New Jersey and is also certified by ARCPA. A national accreditation commission for physician assistants is a program that defines how many students are permitted in a program. The program is proposed for the building which is 32,250 square feet. It is a two-story office building and has been occupied for quite some time. There is no proposed change to the footprint of the building and as a result the Applicant is requesting a site plan waiver. Within that building on the first floor there is a physician’s practice. The program is intended initially for 90 students which will be phased over two to three years until they reach 90 students. The Applicant is requesting the Board’s consideration with respect to the load capacity of the building or the number of licensees by the association whichever is less. The Applicant will show that there is not only adequate parking but there is excess parking. If the program is able to grow into that excess parking, the Applicant would agree that anything over 90, they would go back to the Zoning Officer, if that is approved by the Board, and show that any additional students would not impact the parking.

Mr. Senges stated since there are only five board members present, the Applicant would need a unanimous vote and the Applicant is entitled to a board of seven members. Mr. Mintz stated the Applicant is prepared to proceed. The Applicant believes in the application and they are under a very tight schedule.

Mr. Senges stated the Board does not approve site plan waivers. The Board will only address the use at this hearing. Should the Applicant be approved with the condition of a certain number of students, anything over that would require the Applicant come back to the Board.

Mr. Mintz stated a parking summary was submitted. Due to the fact there was no specific definition Under Section 150.16, the Applicant looked at the square footage of 16,126 square feet and by ordinance and perceived the need for 73 spaces. That calculation is based on 4.5 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet as a medical building. If it were interpreted as a medical care center it drops down to 4.0 per thousand and only 65 spaces would be needed. The original approval was for a medical office. Mr. Senges stated, therefore, the calculation that will be utilized will be 73 spaces.

That space also utilizes 5-7 physicians and 16 other staff. With the calculation of the 73, there are 208 plus parking spaces on the site. That would provide 135 that would be available for the second floor. On the second floor utilizing one space per three seats, one space per student at 90 students with 11 employees staffed for the second floor would result in 101 spaces where 135 are available exclusive of the first floor. That would provide an excess of 34 spaces.

Mr. Smith, Sr. Project Manager, is in charge of the renovations and moving the school from its current location, stated the school is currently placed at Stockton University and the lease is up on the building. They recently merged with Philadelphia University and have become part of Thomas Jefferson University and would like to move to this facility. The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for Physician Assistant’s (ARCPA) license the facility and the State also has to provide approval. The number of students is set by the commission. The students will perform examination, diagnostic testing and certification. The physician assistant operates in a typical fashion as any other doctor. They would typically perform surgeries, patient examinations, write prescriptions under the supervision of the doctor. The field is growing and is predicted to grow 38% over the next 12 years. There is a proposed fit-out for the second floor. There is currently one large classroom. There will be a second meeting room that will act as a second classroom. The one classroom will be partitioned so there will potentially be three classrooms. There will be 30 students. Based on the schedule it’s possible not all 30 students will be in one classroom at the same time. The Applicant submitted a demo plan and the proposed fit-out. School is scheduled to start July 1st of this year. It is a twenty-five month program, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30/6:00 p.m. This will be the first program in Camden County. The students may go into a computer lab or practice lab off hours but would have to be given permission to do so. There is already a licensed medical pick up because of the physician’s practice that would be applicable to the second floor. There will be a change to the signage of what is existing. Currently the sign denotes Nemours. Nemours moved to another location and no longer occupies that space. The Applicant would apply for a sign permit. The parking lot provides ADA parking. There will be classroom time, practice lab, the students would draw blood, take blood pressure, basic medical, and there would be an anatomy lab with actual cadavers. The anatomy lab is three months long and will take place from July through September. The next twenty-two months would be classroom and clinical practice. There is a kitchenette with a microwave where the students could have lunch and they are proposing a lounge in the lobby area where the students can sit and eat lunch. They can also go out to eat. The refuge will be emptied on a daily basis commensurate with the first floor. There will be a sharps container. The existing dumpster will be adequate because the size of the building is not changing. Mr. Matlack agreed and does not see this use generating a lot more trash than the current use. Mr. Mintz stated if there was a need for an additional dumpster, one would be provided. It is a very controlled atmosphere and there will not be any need for large numbers of volunteers. The students attending are not necessarily local and would require housing, potentially within the local community etc.

Ms. Morrisey, Planner stated the building is located in an O3 zone with a TC1 overlay. The educational use is not a permitted use. It is not an uncommon use in the area. There are a number of educational facilities in the area, Harris School of Business, a private school on Laurel Road. There are other variety of uses in the area including the skate zone, restaurants, medical professional office facilities etc. The proposed use we believe would qualify to satisfy the special reasons under the inherently beneficial use status. The MLUL defines inherently beneficial as a use that is universally considered of value to the community because it fundamentally serves the public good and promotes the general welfare including but not limited to hospitals, schools, childcare centers, group homes, etc. This facility is an educational facility, a school that provides education to the general community. It provides a benefit to the surrounding area and to the overall education of our medical professionals. According to a study that was done by the Physician Assistant Educational Association, they are projecting a shortage by 2030 by almost 50,000 physicians. The physician assistant is trained to provide that coverage for the shortage of physicians. This program fills that gap and that need and shortage in the medical professional field. Under the MLUL a school is considered an inherently beneficial use. In addressing the balancing test, one must look at the benefits and what the purposes are, identify the impacts of the proposed use and ways to mitigate those impacts. As part of the review of this analysis under the general use standard Ms. Morrisey feels as though the site itself would promote the general welfare because the use is particularly suited for this site. This is an existing office development with medical professional uses. There are no changes necessary to the site. The site can accommodate the needs of the proposed school and with Jefferson being in the area and the medical uses in the area, this site surrounded by an area of non-residential community is particularly suited for this use. The existing second floor provides an opportunity for both medical offices to exist in combination with training for people that would eventually occupy this office in either employment or trade. The completed site development pattern and the marriage of the uses go well together on the subject property. There is a growing need for physician assistants. The program provides many of the same services a physician would provide and are licensed and educated by the State. Once the program is completed, they would become certified through the state. This is a specialized type of education that is really regulated and accredited. In terms of the potential impacts, since this is a developed site in a commercial area, when you look at the other permitted uses, hotels, banks, offices, banquet centers, shopping, retail, all of these uses are uses that are traffic generating uses. Because of that there is really no substantial change or impact on this proposed use. The proposed use would operate in the general compliant hours of operation of other uses in the surrounding area, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. limited weekend activity.

Ms. Morrisey stated she did not perform a traffic analysis. She further stated, the second level was approved for professional office which would generally have the same hours of operation. This use would use and require less parking in her opinion less of a parking need would generate less of a traffic demand.

Mr. Senges did not agree given the fact that as an office use there would be people coming and going all day long. It is his understanding that upwards of 90 people will be coming and going at the same time.

Mr. Smith stated not all of the students would be arriving at the same time. The classes are staggered. The original number of students will only be 30. A second class of 30 will not start at the same time.

Mr. Senges stated typically for a Use Variance, the Board requires a traffic study. Mr. Mintz stated the traffic impact should not be significant. Mr. Mintz further requested that due to the time constraint, if the Board would consider the application conditional on providing a traffic study report.

Mr. Matlack agreed with Mr. Senges, the potential for all of the classes starting at the same time. The roadway is a four-lane road. It is not a particularly heavily traveled. If they were able to provide a traffic report that demonstrated they are not causing a significant impact, he would feel comfortable with that.

Mr. Senges stated that he is concerned with the two intersections that have signals on them, White Horse Road, and Haddonfield-Berlin Road (Rt. 561).

Ms. Morrisey stated there will be no changes to the site, lighting, landscaping, etc. There is no substantial detriment to the zoning ordinance or to the public good. While it is not a permitted use in the zone, a public school however is a permitted use. Thomas Jefferson is a private school. There is not an inconsistency. The site is fully developed. She stated she does not find any substantial impairment in that there are not any proposed changes to the property. The overview of the existing parking shows there is a surplus of parking. The Master Plan does discuss creating opportunities for other uses. The zoning ordinance does permit educational facilities.

Mr. Smith stated he did not have an exact schedule relative to the classes. The classes run starting July for twenty five months. Next July they may start a new schedule and it’s possible to have 60 students starting simultaneously. The 25th month is completed off-site as an intern. The maximum student capacity would be 90.

Mr. Senges stated the Board would need to see what the impact will be on traffic. Mr. Senges inquired should the Applicant be approved this evening, would they accept the approval to be conditional upon review of a traffic study and site plan. Mr. Mintz agreed. He also inquired should the use be permitted and there is no change to the structure whether there is a need for a site plan. Mr. Senges stated the site plan will include egress and ingress and there are a number of other reasons the Board requires a site plan. A use variance almost always requires a site plan and a traffic study, it would be unusual to approve a use variance without a traffic study and site plan.

Seeing nothing further from the Applicant, the hearing was opened to the public.

Seeing no one from the public, the public portion was closed.

Mr. Norman summarized the application stating the use variance would be subject to site plan approval and submission of a traffic study.

Mr. Willard motioned to approve the application subject to site plan approval and submission of a traffic study; seconded by Mr. Daddario

Ayes: Mr. Willard, Mr. Daddario, Mr. Leoncio, Mr. Schwenke, Mr. Senges

Nays: None

Seeing no further business Mr. Senges made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Willard

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Corrine Tarcelli

Zoning Board Secretary