Voorhees Township Environmental Commission Minutes August 13, 2019

The Chairperson called the meeting to order. It was stated that this meeting is being held in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act and has been duly published and noticed as required by law”.

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

Present: Mrs. Brown, Mr. Rashatwar, Mrs. Schwartz, Mr. Pike, and Mr. Hale

Absent: Mr. Gaffney, Mr. Khayati and Walter Sytnik

Mr. Joseph Giddings, CME Consultant also present.

NEW BUSINESS

Laurel Office Plaza, LLC

Minor Site Plan

Block: 150.05 Lot: 1.01

101 Laurel Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043

Mr. Madden introduces himself and the application on behalf of the applicant Laurel Office Plaza, LLC as part of their Minor Site Plan application. The applicant is requesting to expand their parking spaces from 38 to 59 spaces to accommodate the employees at the facility. Mr. Madden explains that the Voorhees Township code triggers an impervious coverage variance at 52 spaces. He further explains that the applicant has been at this location for several years and as of current he has employees parking across the street and crossing Laurel Road is unsafe.

Mr. Madden introduces the consultant’s recommendation letter dated August 9, 2019. He advises that they will comply with the Compensatory Tree Planting requirement and be able to plant those trees removed, on site. He further acknowledges the request for an onsite rain garden to offset the additional stormwater runoff. Mr. Madden, Mr. DiRosa and Mr. Colleluori do not see the need for and have denied the request for a rain garden as it would require they remove natural vegetation to accommodate such.

Mr. Madden then turns the meeting over to the commission for discussion and recommendations. Mr. Hale addresses the rain garden concept. He explains that with the increased impervious coverage to make room for additional parking spaces, the site will be increasing the oils and hydrocarbons washing off of the road way. The concept of the rain garden would be to collect some of those contaminates before being deposited into the south branch of the Cooper River. Mr. Hale asks the applicant why they require 59 spaces and why 52 would not suffice. Mr. Madden states that the applicant requires 59 because his employees have grown with the business and there are now 63 employees. Mr. Colleluori advises that Laurel Office Plaza, LLC is not even fully staffed and has room to grow and that to remain in Voorhees there is an economical need for more parking. Mr. Hale states that environmental concerns can not be trumped simply to accommodate the needs of an expanding business and would much rather see the parking spaces be limited to 52. He further explains that there must be a way to re-design the plans to only increase to 52 spaces, to which Mr. Madden said there is indeed but that does not fit the needs of the client. Mr. Colleluori claims that his employees currently use the mall parking and walk across Laurel Road and he worries about their safety. Mr. Hale advises that as a matter of safety the office plaza could add sidewalks, which do not exist at this site, and possibly add off-site parking. Mr. Madden asks Mr. DiRosa whether the site is maxed out for impervious coverage. Mr. DiRosa explains that the maximum impervious coverage allowed is 60% and the applicant is proposing 72%. Mr. Colleluori states that he is concerned that with the proposed re-development of the mall complex that his employees may no longer be allowed to park where they have previously. He further states that he is happily anticipating the re-development but, in the event, that his employees cannot park there, his growing business may need to relocate and leave Voorhees Township. Mr. Rashatwar questions how long the business has been there, and the applicant advises 11years. Mr. Colleluori explains that at the time they moved into the building there were no variances needed and that he was advised that they would not be permitted to utilize the front portion of the property because it was owned by Voorhees Township and was not part of his deed. Mr. Madden explained that there was a larger portion of the property that the Township owned but that the applicant received this land as conveyed by the Township in December 2018. Mr. Hale and Mr. Rashatwar question whether with the new land acquired will the parking setbacks of 15 feet be met? Mr. DiRosa states that their plan only allows for an 8-foot setback and that they will request a design waiver, as per the planning board, instead of a variance.

Mr. Hale advises there will be no public portion as there is no one present from the public and moves onto Commission discussions.

Mr. Hale addresses the Commission and explains that there comes a time when a business grows and expands, and their building no longer meets the needs of the employer. He does not feel that the environmental concerns should be negated by the need to expand. He questions where the commission should “draw the line”. He does however feel that a little lead way on both the applicant and the Township is a good thing. Mr. Rashatwar explains that he feels that as a business owner himself that the need to accommodate his employees with safe and efficient parking is essential. Furthermore, he thinks that the slight increase of 52 to 59 spaces should be enough. Mrs. Brown suggests that the applicant switch the top ten spaces and make them “permeable pavement” to reduce the proposed 73% “impervious coverage”. Mr. Hale agrees that it may be a feasible agreement, but Mr. Giddings explains that it would not be to our benefit because permeable material would introduce drainage toward the foundation. Mr. Madden explains that this is the first-time permeable pavement has been suggested and it may not be a benefit to the applicant cost wise.

Mr. Hale then suggests that the memo to the Planning Board read as follows:

1. The Environmental Commission suggests that considering the local environmental conditions, (i.e. discharge into the south branch of Cooper Creek) that the applicant be limited to an increase in the number of parking spaces at 101 Laurel Road from 38 to 52 spaces.
2. The Commission suggests that should Laurel Office Plaza be approved to increase the number of spaces to be in excess of 52, that additional spaces be made of permeable material.
3. The applicant has agreed to the conditions of our consultant’s letter dated August 9, 2019 (except for a rain garden which will not be installed) and will provide the Planning Board with a Compensatory Tree Plan in accordance with Township Ordinance 154.006€.

Seeing there is no public and no further business, Mrs. Schwartz makes a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Rashatwar seconds the motion

MEETING ADJOURNED

VEC Secretary,

**Kendralyn Cornwall**