

Florence, New Jersey 08518-2323
July 16, 2007

The regular meeting of the Florence Township Planning Board was held on the above date at the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, NJ. Chairperson Hamilton-Wood called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood then read the following statement: "I would like to announce that this meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice has been provided to the official newspapers and posted in the main hall of the Municipal Complex."

Upon roll call the following members were found to be present:

Gene DeAngelis	Sean Ryan
Councilman John Fratinardo	John T. Smith
Mayor Michael J. Muchowski	Mildred Hamilton-Wood
Dennis A. O'Hara	Wayne Morris

ALSO PRESENT: Solicitor Nancy T. Abbott
Engineer Dante Guzzi
Planner Carl Hintz (late)

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution PB-2007-28

Dismissing the application of Roma Bank for an extension of Preliminary Site Plan approval for Block 166.13, Lot 1, located in an HC Highway Commercial Zoning District.

Motion of Fratinardo, seconded by DeAngelis to approve Resolution PB-2007-28.

Upon roll call the Board voted as follows:

YEAS: DeAngelis, Fratinardo, Muchowski, Morris
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

Resolution PB-2007-29

Granting amended Final Major Subdivision approval to K. Hovnanian at Florence I, LLC ("Manors at Crossroads") for Block 165.01, Lot 2.01 and 2.13, located in an R Low Density Residential District.

Motion of Fratinardo, seconded by DeAngelis to approve Resolution PB-2007-29.

Upon roll call the Board voted as follows:

YEAS: DeAngelis, Fratinardo, Muchowski, O'Hara, Ryan, Morris
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

MINUTES

Motion of Ryan, seconded by Morris to approve the Minutes of the June 18, 2007 meeting as submitted. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

CORRESPONDENCE

Motion of Muchowski, seconded by Fratinardo to receive and file correspondence A, B, and C. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Planner Hintz arrived at the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood called for application PB#2007-15 for Whitesell Construction Company. Applicant is requesting a one year extension of the protection period of Final approval granted by the Board for property located at 1000 John Galt Way, Block 158, Lot 8.

Attorney Lynn McDougall stated that Terrence Huettl would be testifying for the applicant. Terrence Huettl, Vice President at Whitesell Construction was sworn in by Solicitor Abbott.

Mr. Huettl stated that approximately 3 years ago Whitesell received Final Site Plan approval for a 250,000 square foot speculative warehouse building located on John Galt Way in the Haines Industrial Center. Mr. Huettl stated that the proposed building would be located between the wetlands area and the Bustleton Creek. This building was not built when approved due to changes in the marketplace as well as the fact that other opportunities occurred for buildings on the other side of John Galt Way from this site.

Vice Chairman O'Hara asked if Whitesell had any idea as to when this building would be constructed? Mr. Huettl answered that there were 3 buildings that are either completed or under construction at the Florence portion of the Haines Center. The first building that was constructed is almost entirely occupied by Home Depot. There is a back section of this building that is currently empty. The second building that was constructed is at 280 Daniels Way. This is a 400,000 square foot building that had been built on speculation. Currently Whitesell is finalizing negotiations for tenants to take all of that building. The third building that is under construction is the CTS (Christmas Tree Shops) building. This building is 700,000 square feet expandable to 1,000,000 square feet. Mr. Huettl stated that at this time there are no negotiations underway that would necessitate immediate construction of the proposed building and he has no idea when actual construction would begin.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood stated that this was the second requested extension for this site and that the applicant could ask for one more extension if needed. Solicitor Abbott stated that if they were to ask for a third extension and that then expired the approval would still be valid but the applicant would not be protected from any changes in the zone plan.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood stated that in the first extension the applicant had agreed to abide by any changes in the COAH requirements. Mr. Huettl stated that this was correct and that agreement would extend through this extension.

Motion of Fratinardo, seconded by DeAngelis to grant a one year extension.

Upon roll call the Board voted as follows:

YEAS: DeAngelis, Fratinardo, Muchowski, O'Hara, Ryan, Smith,
Hamilton-Wood
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

Motion of DeAngelis, seconded by O'Hara to open the public portion of the meeting. Motion unanimously approved by all members present. Seeing no one wishing to speak, motion was made by Fratinardo, seconded by Smith to close the public portion. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood called for the discussion of the Master Plan Re-examination report

Planner Hintz stated that a re-examination report is something that a Planning Board prepares every 6 years. The last re-examination report had been done in 2003. Planner Hintz said that his office had prepared a re-examination report dated June 18, 2007. This report lists the objectives that are required through state statutes and shows how they have been satisfied.

Planner Hintz read from the report stating that there had been an increase in commercial development, but in the same time period 7 major residential subdivisions have been approved. This resulted in 270 single-family homes and 112 age-restricted homes. The report points out that there is starting to be an imbalance between residential and commercial development, making it important to promote commercial development in appropriate areas in the township.

The COAH affordable housing requirements have been satisfied through the third round. The re-development plan is in progress for the Roebling Plant. The new high school has been constructed.

The plan then goes on to discuss the one area in the township in which the Town Council has asked the Planning Board to study in detail. This is the area adjacent to the Estates at Oak Mill subdivision that is still owned by Griffin Pipe.

This area is currently split zoned as SM Special Manufacturing and RA Low Density Residential. The recommendation is to take the existing SM and RA zones and make the whole area ROP Research/Office Park. This would help to correct the imbalance between the Residential and Commercial uses. The proposed uses for this zone would be lighter and not the same as the Special Manufacturing uses.

Councilman Fratinardo stated that the large area shown on the map that is listed as AGR Agricultural is now part of the park at the Municipal Complex and should be listed as Park.

Vice Chairman O'Hara asked how long it would be before the capped landfill on the Griffin Pipe property would be of any use to the town? Planner Hintz stated that they were not able to determine that. There are monitoring wells around it. Vice Chairman O'Hara asked if this was considered a "Brownfield". Planner Hintz stated that this was a Brownfield site. Vice Chairman O'Hara stated that he knows that in Middlesex County there have been some Brownfields developed as offices or warehousing.

Vice Chairman O'Hara asked Mayor Muchowski if during his administration there had been any type of advertising or marketing of what lands were available and what zones they are in? Mayor Muchowski answered that Mark Remsa at the County does a significant database of available lands. The Township also works with Economic Development at the State of New Jersey. He said that the Township hasn't done a formal marketing program per se.

Mayor Muchowski stated that several years ago the Township had brought in a couple of organizations from the Economic Development Council to look at a couple of scenarios. This was mostly web based advertising. He stated that the Township has worked in conjunction with local businesses and professionals and have sponsored some events to bring in commercial realtors and bankers. The large developers have been able to piece together the larger parcels of land and then take the marketing on their own. The Township hasn't had to expend their tax dollars to do that type of promotion. Fortunately the market had picked up and there was a lot of activity in front of the Board. Now the market is recycling and it may be an opportunity to look at what is still available and where the Township is heading over the next 3 – 5 years. The Township has a strong relationship with Mark Remsa at the County offices and he brings clients to look at available areas. Mayor Muchowski stated that there is a lot of interest in the Roebling site.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood asked where else the ROP zone was located in the Township. Planner Hintz stated that this is the first site for ROP. Planner Hintz pointed

out on the map the border of the proposed ROP zone. There would be access via a spine road from West Front Street.

Councilman Fratinardo asked if it would make sense to include the landfill in the ROP zone even though it is a Brownfield so that if someone wanted to do a clean up there they could use the site. It could be used as open space or a buffer.

Planner Hintz stated that keeping this area as SM would allow for a more intensive use. This is not an area that would need to be buffered from residential use.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood pointed out that the office building that had been approved for Railroad Avenue had still not been started and she was hoping that by changing this zone the Township was not limiting themselves with something that is not going to be of interest to anyone. Mayor Muchowski stated that this zone gives more options but it also protects the integrity of the area and the quality of life in the area. They are not trying to overwhelm the site with large-scale truck traffic from Front Street.

Mayor Muchowski stated that companies are looking to have more cost effective technology based offices and uses where they can have their facility in Northern New Jersey or in the city and have the basis of their operation within a couple hour commute of their high end location and still have a skilled labor force but not pay the high labor rates that go along with the metro type areas. This is what this zone is geared for.

Vice Chairman O'Hara stated that this would be contingent on Griffin Pipe choosing to sell the land. Mayor Muchowski stated that this would be a re-zoning whether Griffin Pipe chose to sell or not. Vice Chairman O'Hara asked if a building similar to the GSA Building in Burlington would be permitted in the proposed zone. Mayor Muchowski answered that the use at GSA is more intensive than what ROP zone is designed for. He stated that they went with ROP versus GM or SM to make sure that Front Street doesn't become a significant truck route because it runs through the heart of the community.

Councilman Fratinardo asked how many acres were in the area. Planner Hintz stated that there is approximately 53 acres and this site is very visible from the turnpike.

The Board had a discussion regarding the possibility of a road from John Galt Way to Front Street. Mayor Muchowski stated that there are larger scale considerations with public versus private ownership of the internal road systems through the Whitesell development.

Vice Chairman O'Hara asked about including the Brownfield area into the ROP zone. Mayor Muchowski stated that he believed the DEP is actively discussing what needs to be done with that site. He stated that he doesn't want to include a landfill into the zoning. We know that it is there and it is identified as a landfill. He said that he doesn't want a landfill to be used as open space.

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Chairperson Hamilton-Wood said that the building height is listed as 50' in the ordinance. She stated concern about this height. Vice Chairman O'Hara asked what kind of buffering was proposed to protect the residential. Planner Hintz stated that the required buffer would be a minimum of 100' to any common property line with a residential use.

Solicitor Abbott stated that the building height in SM is 30' and in GM is 75'. Planner Hintz stated that you expect 12' -13' per story. If you had a 3 story building you would need 36'. He stated that 30' isn't really workable. Chairperson Hamilton-Wood stated that the zone allows for 10' additional for rooftop equipment.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood asked if this was the only area in town being considered for a change? Planner Hintz stated that it was. Councilman Fratinardo stated that he thought that Council had been concerned with the 3 acre minimum zone in the Country area. They thought that they might want to increase the minimum lot size to 5 acres. Planner Hintz stated that he could check the surrounding towns and see what they have done.

Member Smith stated that he had mentioned before about the property on Cedar Lane that is zoned GM General Manufacturing. He said that he thinks the zoning on this should be changed. Mayor Muchowski stated that he had brought this concern back to Council and they were looking into this.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood asked if it was premature for the Board to act on this report while there were other areas that were under consideration?

Mayor Muchowski stated that he didn't think that this was premature because this is something that has been identified as an area that requires attention. The Board can continue to look at other areas of concern.

Solicitor Abbott stated that in the resolution the Board could make suggestions of changes. She stated that if the Board was going to accept the Re-examination report as presented then they could go ahead and adopt it, but if there is going to be amendments to be made to it then the amendments have to be made and a new Re-examination report would be prepared and the public hearing on it would be continued until next month.

Solicitor Abbott stated that part of the advantage to making the zone change as part of the Re-examination report is that you don't have to give personal notice to residents. If the change is done as part of a Re-examination report than personal notice is not required, just a general notice that there is a public hearing on the report.

Member DeAngelis asked if the zoning were changed on this parcel for office buildings, where would the town put the COAH units that will be generated? Mayor Muchowski stated that the build out of this area has been taken into account in the Fair Share Plan.

The Board discussed whether they should adopt the report or suggest amendments and continue the public hearing.

Solicitor Abbott asked if everyone was clear on the suggested amendments. Chairperson Hamilton-Wood stated that one was changing the AGR zone on the municipal grounds off of Broad Street to Park. Second was changing the General Manufacturing area on Cedar Lane to Special Manufacturing. The third was looking at the minimum lot size in the AGR Agricultural zone.

The Board had further discussion regarding the proposed 50' height of the office buildings and what potential impact there would be on adjacent residential properties.

Motion of DeAngelis, seconded by Fratinardo to table the Re-examination report for the purpose of amending it as previously discussed until the August 20, 2007 meeting.

On the Question:

Vice Chairman O'Hara stated that he hoped that the Board would act on this report next month and not table it again until September.

Upon roll call the Board voted as follows:

YEAS: DeAngelis, Fratinardo, Muchowski, O'Hara, Ryan, Smith,
Hamilton-Wood

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Motion of Fratinardo, seconded by DeAngelis to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

John T. Smith, Secretary

JTS/ne