

Florence, New Jersey 08518-2323
August 9, 2021

A special meeting of the Florence Township Planning Board was held in-person and virtually via Zoom on the above date at the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, NJ. Chairman Montgomery called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Secretary Mattson 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:

Emma Cartier	Councilman Bruce Garganio
Newell Kehr	Carl Mattson
Ray Montgomery	John Pagano
Tara Sandusky	Mayor Craig Wilkie

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Solicitor David Frank
Planner Barbara Fegley
Engineer Ted Wilkinson

RESOLUTIONS

There were no resolutions.

MINUTES

It was the Motion of Councilman Garganio, seconded by Mr. Kehr to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting of May 25, 2021 as submitted. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

CORRESPONDENCE

- A. 5/13/21: Letter from NJDEP regarding Permit Renewal BC Resource Recovery Complex
- B. 5/25/21: Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Plan for Potts Mill Road Improvement Phase III
- C. 6/09/21: BC Planning Board letter regarding Modern Equipment
- D. 6/21/21: BC Planning Board letter regarding Florence Turnpike Crossings East
- E. 7/21/21: Letter from DuBois Associates regarding Block 171.02, Lot 1, Fountain Gardens, Inc.

It was the Motion of Vice Chair Pagano, seconded by Mr. Mattson to receive and file Correspondence A through E. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

APPLICATIONS

- A. PB#2021-03: Application by Project Freedom for Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan to construct an affordable housing 72-unit complex on property located at 2135 US Route 130 & Hornberger Avenue, Florence Township; Block 121, Lots 4.02 & 9.

Planner Fegley and Engineer Wilkinson were sworn in by Solicitor Frank for this meeting and the remaining meetings for 2021.

John Dumont, the attorney for Project Freedom stated they are here tonight for a Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan approval. If they obtain the approval tonight from the board, they will be

able to apply for financing for this project of 72 units of affordable housing; 4 buildings containing 18 units each. Florence Township has been involved with affordable housing and how many residential units they are obligated to provide. This project, if completed, would result in 78 residential credit units for Florence Township. This property has been designated as an area in need of redevelopment. They have several witnesses here tonight who will testify about various aspects of the project. There are no variances required and none of the improvements will encroach on any wetlands area.

Solicitor Frank stated this project is being constructed pursuant to a Redevelopment Plan that was found consistent with the Master Plan by the Planning Board and adopted by the Governing Body to specifically implement this plan. This plan is a part of the judgement that the township received from court to satisfy their affordable housing obligation, so if it is constructed, it will contribute significantly to the township's affordable housing plan.

Tracee Battis was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Ms. Battis stated she is the President and CEO of Project Freedom, Inc. They are a 501(c)3 non-profit developer of affordable housing for people with disabilities. They have been in business for 37 years. They do all barrier-free, accessible housing with elevators. Initially, their projects were for only the disabled; however, as the policies of the federal and state government have evolved over the years, the government wants to see fully integrated projects, so Project Freedom expanded its mission about 10 years ago to include non-disabled with disabled for families in need of affordable housing. They've developed, constructed and currently own 624 units in 5 counties in New Jersey. They have one in Westampton, so this will be their 2nd in Burlington County if approved. They do not build and leave; they stick with their projects.

Ms. Battis explained the following:

- They will be signing a deed restriction for 45 years for this project and will be here for the township as a partner with this housing project
- This project will be named Freedom Village at Historic Roebling
- It is 4 residential buildings, 3-stories each, 72 units in total. There is a series of 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom and 3-bedroom units
- There will also be a 5,000 sq. ft clubhouse, which is the hub of the non-profit and all of their social service and recreational activities. The large community center of 5,000 sq. ft. will be the center of all recreational activities. They have a partnership with Virtua who will do various clinics (vaccination, health & wellness, etc.) and they have a partnership with the Investor Bank foundation who will provide various financial trainings throughout the year.
- 25% of their units (18 units) will be deed restricted for people with disabilities
- Because they are all barrier-free housing, the federal government requires that they give a priority to people in wheelchairs. They have worked with the township and the township has asked that they give a priority for military veterans and the last priority is given to people who live or work in region #5 (which means anybody who's living or working in Burlington County, Camden County or Gloucester County).
- The project will help Florence Township satisfy their affordable housing requirement
- They will be applying for federal low-income housing tax credits. The application is due at the end of this month and the last piece of documentation they need is the site plan approval by this board. The project will cost about 21 million dollars. The tax credits will be bringing 13 million dollars of tax credit equity into the project. They will be applying for a federal home loan bank funding of about 1.8 million dollars. They will be getting

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special needs trust fund dollars from the State of New Jersey for \$1,250,000, Florence Township has given them \$600,000 from their affordable housing trust fund to help with predevelopment costs and they will also have a mortgage from New Jersey Housing for about 3.5 million dollars.

- They will have 2 property management staff on site and 2 full-time maintenance people
- They pride themselves on keeping our projects pristine and in a good state of repair.
- Project Freedom has a bus and will offer it once a week to this project to transport residents to medical appointments or grocery shopping
- This project will be in a good location because of the light rail train stop, a bus stop and a Bur-link stop.
- They would also love to have community support so if the governing body or planning board would ever like to host a meeting in their community center, they would love that. A lot of their projects are polling places, so whatever kind of activity the town would like them to host, they would be happy to do that.
- Their reputation is critical to them and it is important the township is satisfied. Robbinsville Township and Hamilton Township have invited them back to their townships to build a 2nd project.

Vice Chair Pagano stated that he is familiar with both projects and they look as though they are very well maintained.

Ms. Battis stated the unit breakdown will be:

- 6 units for those earning 30% or less of the median income (this is a requirement to help Florence Township meet its needs)
- 18 units for special needs, which most can be under 30%; however, there are some that work so they could be higher
- 32 units for those earning 50% or less
- 16 units for those earning 60% or less

Brian Murphy was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Murphy stated he is a principal of FWH and is a licensed professional engineer in the State of New Jersey. Although he has not appeared before this board, he has appeared before many other boards in New Jersey. He was accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Murphy presented Exhibit A-1, aerial photo of the site. He stated the following:

- The property is 10.09 acres and is located in the Highway Commercial Zone (HC) along Route 130 and Hornberger Avenue
- The existing use of the property is vacant and wooded
- The Conoco gas station is located on the southwest corner of the property
- Single family houses are located to the west of the property

Mr. Murphy presented Exhibit A-2, color rendering of the overall site plan. He stated the following:

- The complex will consist of 72 units in 4 buildings plus a club house
- There will be an area reserved for a future gazebo and future tot lot
- The access to the site off of Route 130 will be a divided boulevard. There is a proposed access on Hornberger Avenue, but that will be constructed at a later time.
- All internal roadway, parking and access aisles will be privately owned
- The stormwater basin will be privately maintained
- The site will have public water and sewer

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- The site is compliant with the proposed signage
- There will be 3 trash enclosures surrounded by fencing that will be handicap accessible
- They will comply with all buffering comments
- 143 parking spots are required; they will provide 147
- They are not requesting any waivers or variances
- The proposed development is entirely consistent with the applicable zoning and design standards in the relevant Redevelopment Plan, the RSIS and applicable stormwater management regulations.

In response to Engineer Wilkinson's review letter, Mr. Murphy stated the following:

- They agree to comply with Engineer Wilkinson's comments in his review letter, except for the provision of the underdrains as called for in Items XV.U. and XVII.A. He explained they are not looking to do the underdrains at this time, but will do so if the basins fail. He also mentioned there will be no dog amenities on the site as noted in paragraph 4, Item I.
- They will provide a full wall design prior to building
- They will show the lighting and underground utility (water & sewer) on their plan. The electric and gas utility design cannot be provided at this time because that will be designed by PSE&G.
- They will provide a hydrant testing prior to submitting for a building permit. This issue with providing the test now is that the line is to be upgraded. If the test is done before the upgrade, the results will ultimately be different.
- They will work administratively with the Board's professionals to provide the adequate landscaping and visual screening

Solicitor Frank asked for clarification from Engineer Wilkinson regarding the applicant not wishing to do a flow test until after the water main is installed. Engineer Wilkinson stated he is asking for it to be done at the street where the water main is not being replaced. He is recommending they do 2 hydro flow tests and believes there are 2 fire hydrants close by. He stated those results could let the architect know how big the water main has to be that comes into the site. Mr. Murphy stated they will comply with Engineer Wilkinson's request.

Engineer Wilkinson stated his 8/5/21 review letter replaced the 7/9/21 letter. He stated all of his comments have been addressed. He is satisfied with their testimony.

Mr. Murphy stated Planner Fegley's letter is dated 8/6/21 and is amenable with all design comments. Police Chief Boldizar's review letter dated 7/20/21 had no comments and they agree with all of Fire Marshal Richardson's comments in his review letter of 7/19/21, including providing evacuation chairs for each building.

Planner Fegley stated she does not have any questions. She stated the applicant's response to her letter was that they would either comply or meet with her and work out the particulars for landscaping, etc. and is confident there will be no issues. She is aware of Project Freedom's other projects and they are very beautiful and proficient. She has no other comments unless the Board has questions.

Paul Mutch, Project Freedom's traffic expert was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Mutch stated he is from Stonefield Engineering, is a licensed professional engineer in the State of NJ, and has been practicing in the field for 10 years. Mr. Mutch was accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Mutch stated the following:

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- This project will have 345 feet of frontage along Route 130 and roughly 400 feet along Hornberger Avenue
- The access off of Route 130 will be a boulevard entrance and will be right in, right out only.
- Someone traveling north on Route 130 will use the U-turn at the intersection of Route 130 and Hornberger Avenue to then enter the site. Those utilizing this process will be protected from oncoming traffic because of the separate phasing of the traffic signals. He stated someone leaving the site and wishing to travel north on Route 130 would make a right exiting the site and travel on Route 130 South to utilize the U-turn at Oasis Beauty Salon or at the traffic signal at Route 130 and Delaware Avenue.
- The weekday morning peak hours would be from 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM and the evening would be from 4:45 PM – 5:45 PM. Midday peak hours would be from 12 PM – 1 PM.
- The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) publishes a manual that gives them a look at traffic patterns for a multifamily complex like the one proposed. Using the ITE trip-generation data, they have calculated weekday evening has the highest trips of 32 trips, or 1 car every 2 minutes, added to the roadway. The threshold is 100 trips to cause an effect to the roadway. He feels confident that the proposed complex will not have a significant impact to the roadway. The traffic it generates will only be adding 3 – 4% to the volume. This is a well-positioned and thought-out use for this site and access points are well planned.

Mr. Kehr questioned why there was not going to be any access on Hornberger Avenue. Mr. Murphy stated that is currently inside a flood hazard area, but it is planned for the future. Engineer Wilkinson stated the township has agreed to apply for the permits to turn the current gravel driveway into a real driveway and anticipates the process will take approximately 6 months from the time we know this project has all its approvals and funding.

Vice Chair Pagano asked if there will be enough area for the fire department's heavy equipment to maneuver about the site. Fire Marshal Richardson was present and was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Fire Marshal Richardson stated that as far as circulation within the development, their equipment will be able to travel about the site with no problem. They will access the site by traveling Firehouse Lane to Olive Street to Hornberger Avenue to turning right onto Route 130 and immediately turning right into the complex. Mayor Wilkie asked if they are responding to a fire at the site, will there also be response from neighboring communities. Fire Marshal Richardson said absolutely and that Bordentown Township and Burlington Township would respond as well.

Harry Osborne, Project Freedom's architect was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Osborne stated he is licensed in the State of NJ, has been practicing since 1987, and is a principal architect for PS&S Integrated Services. Mr. Osborne was accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Osborne presented the following exhibits:

- A-3: view from the site entrance showing the entrance to the site, clubhouse and residents' buildings. The residential buildings will be 96,000 sq. ft. in total.
- A-4: typical front elevation showing a 3-story building with all exterior corridors coming into a stair tower on the side of the building. Materials are a hardy plank with brick wainscot on the bottom. The railings and columns will be in white.
- A-5: clubhouse elevation showing a single-story building made of the same materials as the residential buildings.

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- A-6: interior courtyard rendering facing east showing L-shaped buildings facing a courtyard. The residential buildings will have a full sprinkler system, Knox boxes and rescue chairs in each tower.
- A-7: color rendering looking into the courtyard, facing northeast

Chairman Montgomery asked if the handicap accessible units will be on the first floors of the buildings. It was noted that every unit will be handicap accessible and there are elevators in each building.

It was the Motion of Mr. Mattson, seconded by Councilman Garganio to open the meeting for public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Kristan Marter, 220 E. Front Street, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Ms. Marter asked if there will be any screening provided for buildings 1 and 2 so that headlights from vehicles on the site will not shine into existing neighboring houses. Mr. Murphy stated they will be working with the Board's professionals on buffering for the site.

Joe Bogdovics, 260 Norman Avenue, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Bogdovics stated his concern is the woodline behind his house and between the site and asked if that was going to stay or if the trees were going to be cut down. Planner Fegley and Engineer Wilkinson stated there will be no disturbance in that area and the tree line will not be taken down. Mr. Bogdovics also stated he had a concern with the amount of water on this site and there was a large amount of water there after the July 12th storm. Mayor Wilkie stated the July 12th storm was classified as a 500-year storm.

Keith Crowell, 74 Creekwood Drive, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Crowell was concerned about the following:

- If they have soil sample results and if there is any contaminated soil. Mr. Murphy stated the soil samples are not tested for contamination but for strength. Engineer Wilkinson stated that Trident Environmental did not find anything out of the ordinary for the soils tested.
- The amount of water on that site. Engineer Wilkinson stated the applicant is following the township ordinances and the DEP guidelines. The site will be designed with emergency overflow; all the small basins and the one big one will flow from basin to basin and into Crafts Creek. Flood lines and elevations have been established.
- If the current sewer infrastructure could accommodate this project. Mr. Wilkinson stated the pumping station on Hornberger Avenue is antiquated so the township is looking to construct a new one and have it online when the buildings are constructed. He stated this is part of the township's capital improvements.
- Will there be sidewalks bordering the site. Mr. Wilkinson stated yes.
- Asked where the entrance will be located on Route 130 for the cars entering and exiting and if there will be a deceleration lane on Route 130. Mr. Wilkinson stated the entrance is 250 ft past the Conoco gas station and that DOT will determine if a deceleration lane is needed. Mr. Crowell stated he agrees with the project but is concerned that there may not be a deceleration lane. Solicitor Frank stated that that is DOT's jurisdiction and this Board could not impose that even if it wanted to. Mr. Wilkinson stated the Hornberger access should line up with the construction of the project. Mr. Mutch stated that once the Hornberger access is in, you'd have split trips with that access. Those wishing to travel south can go south, and those wishing to travel north can go north. This will split the amounts into ½ from the other access, further mitigating the effect on traffic.

David Monti, 35 W. Fifth Street, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Monti stated he has the same concern with flooding. He stated the retaining basins will hold back water from flooding the units, but there is a big ravine/culvert in that area and when it rains heavily, everything collects there. The water runoff from Mallard Creek collects there. The bridge washed out years ago which had 4-foot piping at that time, but was replaced with 3-foot piping. He stated the bridge is acting like a dam now and it is flooding. Mr. Wilkinson stated he will contact the County to see what's causing the dam and getting it cleared. He thanked Mr. Monti for bringing this to our attention. The County can view the original drawings for the bridge and the drawings for the replacement bridge. Councilman Garganio asked Engineer Wilkinson if we could get someone to check that out tomorrow. Engineer Wilkinson said that can be done.

Joe Bogdovics, 260 Norman Avenue, commented that there is a beaver dam under the bridge and that is what is causing the problem.

Mary Pakan, 38 Brookside Drive, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. She stated she is also concerned about the traffic. She believes that cars exiting the complex will turn right onto Route 130 and immediately turn left into the Mallard Creek development to travel through the development to access points south. She is also concerned about pedestrian traffic running across Route 130 to access the Mallard Creek shops because they will not wish to walk to the traffic signal to cross.

Anthony Nutter, 230 Norman Avenue, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Nutter was concerned about the following:

- Water runoff, flooding and the traffic on the secondary roads. He asked if there is a plan to deal with traffic on the secondary roads and flooding. Solicitor Frank stated that the Board's job is to review things under our adopted ordinances. The Board does not have the ability to deal with traffic or flooding. The Board can make the applicant comply with ordinance standards, and they can do that in great detail. If the application meets those standards, then they are entitled to approve the application.
- He is not in favor of the project's location, but is in favor of people moving into the township.
- Mr. Nutter stated he doesn't believe the traffic numbers given are correct. Solicitor Frank stated the applicants professionals have been accepted as experts in their fields and their testimony is accepted as being correct. Chairman Montgomery stated the Board's professionals have reviewed this application and have given us their review comments.

Kristan Marter, 220 E. Front Street, spoke again and reiterated Mr. Crowell's comment about having a deceleration lane or to somehow shape the driveway to ease the entrance into the driveway. With all the present truck traffic and future truck traffic once the proposed warehouses in Mansfield Township are constructed, it is a safety concern for the cars slowing to enter into the complex. Her other concern is the future drive off of Hornberger creating additional impervious surface coverage and water draining onto Hornberger and into Crafts Creek creating possible flooding.

Anthony Nutter, 230 Norman Avenue, asked with the new warehouses proposed for Mansfield, will there be a study done to time the traffic lights? Mayor Wilkie stated that unfortunately, we don't have control of that and is hoping DOT or DEP will be able to stop the warehouses because he is unable to stop them.

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Hearing no one else in person or online wishing to speak, it was the Motion of Vice Chair Pagano, seconded by Mr. Kehr to close public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Solicitor Frank stated that the application before us is for Preliminary & Final Site Plan approval with no variances being requested, no design exceptions, and no submission waivers. The applicant is agreeable to comply with plan design and detail mentioned in Board Planner's letter of 8/6/21, the Fire Code Official's letter of 7/19/21, and with the Board Engineer's letter of 8/5/21. The applicant is also agreeable to working with Planner Fegley and Engineer Wilkinson regarding the landscaping and buffering. The usual conditions of outside agency approvals, escrow, and deed restrictions would apply to this approval.

It was the Motion of Vice Chair Pagano, seconded by Mr. Mattson to approve application PB#2021-03 with the conditions mentioned by Solicitor Frank.

Upon roll call, the Board voted as follows:

YEAS: Pagano, Mattson, Cartier, Kehr, Garganio, Wilkie, Montgomery

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

Motion carried

At 9:22 PM, the Board took a 5-minute recess for the Project Freedom team to leave the meeting.

The meeting was back in session at 9:27 PM.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was the Motion of Councilman Garganio, seconded by Mr. Kehr to open the meeting for public comment on any item. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

The Zoom moderator confirmed that those attending virtually have not been muted by us. All members of the public attending in person had left the meeting.

Hearing no one wishing to speak, it was the Motion of Councilman Garganio, seconded by Vice Chair Pagano to close public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW/DISCUSSION

Mayor Wilkie mentioned that knowing the length on tonight's meeting and 3 applications on the agenda for the regular August meeting, there was no Master Plan discussion prepared for tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

It was the Motion of Mr. Kehr, seconded by Vice Chair Pagano to adjourn the meeting at 9:29 p.m. Motion unanimously approved by all those present.

Carl Mattson, Secretary

CM/kf