

CHATHAM BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD
March 5, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Susan Favate called this Regular Meeting of the Chatham Borough Planning Board of March 5, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. to order in the Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building. Mrs. Favate announced that all legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

Name	Present	Absent
Mayor Bruce Harris	X	
Council Member Fife	X	
Vincent DeNave	X	
Chrmn. Susan W. Favate	X	
Matthew Wagner	X	
H.H. Montague	X	
James Mitchell	X	
John Bitar		X
Joseph Mikulewicz	X	
William Heap	X	
Donald Dinsmore	X	
Vincent J. Loughlin, Esq.	X	
Dr. Susan Blickstein	X	

Also present was Robert C. Brightly, PE, Engineer for the Planning Board.

Open to the Public

No one came forward.

Adoption of Minutes

The meeting minutes of January 8, 2014 were approved as submitted.

Resolutions

There were none.

New Business

Discussion on Sign Committee

Mrs. Favate recalled that there had been an earlier discussion about who serves on the Sign Committee, who is able to serve on this Committee, and how the Committee relates to the Planning Board.

Mayor Harris pointed out that a resolution had been approved by the Board in 2010 adopting #2 of the Rules and Regulations of the Planning Board. Resolution #PB-2-10-13 specified the re-creation of the Borough Sign Committee. The recording secretary will make copies of these documents and send them to all Board members.

Referring to these documents, Mayor Harris reviewed what entities each Sign Committee member represented. Mayor Harris asked the recording secretary to look up that the Planning Board Reorganization meeting of 2013. Sign Committee members were mentioned in these particular minutes.

Pending Business

M District Zoning

Dr. Blickstein reported that work is being done on the draft zoning language. The subcommittee held a productive meeting today. They will meet again in April.

New Application

Application #PB 14-01

Capital Project Review

School District of the Chathams

102 Washington Avenue

Block 78, Lot 5

Peter Daquila, School Business Administrator for the School District, introduced himself.

Mr. Daquila stated that the School District is proposing to expand the existing parking lot by the main entrance of the school on Washington Avenue. Currently there are 72 parking spaces; however, there are more staff members than parking spaces. Some staff members, most visitors, and all of the student teachers are parking on the street. If these people don't jockey their vehicles around during the day, they are subject to parking tickets.

Attorney Loughlin explained to the Board the reason why this application was before them tonight. He stressed that the Planning Board will not be giving their approval or disapproval on this project. The Board reviews and gives their recommendations for this parking. The Boards professionals are present tonight to give their feedback.

Mr. Daquila stated that the plans have been submitted to the Morris County Planning Board. They have reviewed the stormwater run-off and have approved the project.

After these preliminary remarks, Mr. Daquila was sworn in to testify.

Mr. Daquila testified that Washington Ave. School was currently full to capacity. The front parking lot has 34 parking spaces. The upper parking lot on Watchung Avenue has 38 spaces. He reiterated the difficulty visitors and student teachers have with regard to finding parking at the school.

Mr. Daquila testified that consideration had been given to extending the Watchung Avenue parking lot; however, that arrangement would affect a county road. The county would not give their approval to that expansion. Mr. Daquila pointed out that the School District tried twice to hold hearings with the Planning Board, but snowstorms had forced cancellations of these hearings.

Mrs. Favate asked if this additional property would be designated for only the teaching staff and how would this proposed parking fit in with the entire circulation pattern.

Mr. Mikulewicz asked if someone knew the actual number of the staff.

Mary Quigley, principal of Washington Ave. School, answered that the school had 32 part-time paraprofessionals in addition to the other 35 staff that are in and out on different days. There are also student teachers. Currently there is no visitor parking at the school.

Mary Quigley was sworn in to testify.

Beth Kenderdine, of Edwards Engineering Group, was sworn in to testify. She is the School District's engineer for this project. Ms. Kenderdine submitted her professional credentials to the Board.

Ms. Kenderdine put the plans prepared by her engineering firm on the easel. These plans included what will be taken out in order to construct the new parking lot. Using the proposed site plan, She testified that a new driveway, will go one way, around the parking lot. A new circulation driveway will be constructed off the existing driveway coming off of Washington Ave.

Ms. Kenderdine testified that 23 parking stalls are being proposed, along with two new lanes to allow for student drop-off during the morning peak hours. A sidewalk connection will be constructed off of Washington Ave. Another sidewalk connection will run through the parking lot, along the drop-off lane. Crosswalks will be established across both proposed driveways. A stop sign will be installed for pedestrian safety.

Mr. Daquila described a recently proposed sidewalk which a student would take, walking up Washington Ave., entering the school grounds. A parent had suggested this route so the student would not have to cross in front of traffic going in and traffic going out. Ms. Kenderdine drew this sidewalk on the plans.

Mr. Montague expressed concerns about possible queuing of cars going back and forth. He asked who would direct that situation.

Mr. Wagner noted that he drops his son off at Washington Ave. School. He suggested that cones be put out in the morning to direct drivers through the area. Even though a sign will be installed instructing driver to turn right when entering the school grounds, there should be a human presence enforcing that particular turn in the beginning. Otherwise, the drivers go ahead and drive straight.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there are buses bringing students to the school.

Ms. Quigley discussed the timing and the route the one Green Village bus and special needs bus will follow on the school grounds.

Mrs. Favate asked if this increase in parking spaces would change the school's handicap parking requirements.

Ms. Kenderdine answered yes, that's the reason why another handicap space had to be designated next to an existing handicap space. The number of these spaces will go up to three.

Mr. Dinsmore referred Ms. Kenderdine to the area which merges and continues on to the drop off area. He asked how visible would the first two parking spaces be with the location of the dumpster and existing tree.

Mr. Daquila answered that the dumpster is set back. It will not be a hindrance.

Mrs. Favate and Mr. Montague had a concern that a wrap-around of vehicles will result if the funneling of cars doesn't follow directions for the three lanes. Ms. Kenderdine suggested a person in a vest direct traffic.

Mayor Harris confirmed with Ms. Kenderdine and Mr. Daquila that, in theory, the proposals will be taking more cars off of Washington Avenue.

Ms. Kenderdine presented the grading plan and the utility plan for this project. She testified that the site had be filled in. A retaining wall has to be added. The existing slope was greater than what is allowed for a parking lot. The highest point the retaining wall reaches will be 4 ½ feet. A 4 feet chain link fence will be on top of the wall for safety reasons. Landscaping will be planted in front of the wall. There will still be a slope across the parking lot; however, it meets the code.

The Board discussed the landscaping that would be planted in front of the wall. Attorney Loughlin pointed out that if landscaping is installed, the Board should have an agreement with the installer or company, guaranteeing that the landscaping, as installed, will be alive and viable for two years. Mr. DeNave was concerned that 10 years from now this buffer may be dead or dying. Attorney Loughlin said there can be no guarantee for this landscaping's condition beyond the reasonable requirements that the Board has the authority to impose in this situation.

Mr. Brightly, the Board's engineer, asked Ms. Kenderdine to show the height of the wall as it progresses along the property line. Ms. Kenderdine did so. Ms. Kenderdine also testified that she has no problems with Mr. DeNave's comments on the stormwater system. She will work with Mr. DeNave on a suitable system.

Council Member Fife asked if these proposals were shown to the neighbors and parents of students. Mr. Daquila explained that a parent of one of the students made a suggestion to the plans to prevent students from having to cross two lanes of traffic.

Ms. Kenderdine and Board Engineer Robert Brightly reviewed his comment and recommendations listed in his letter to the Board dated January 21, 2014.

The Board and Ms. Kenderdine discussed possible places to plant new trees in the parking lot area.

Mayor Harris asked Mr. Daquila if he had spoken with any of the property owners along Chatham Street about a landscaping plan.

Mr. Daquila answered no. He has not reached out. The neighbors were welcome to come out to tonight's hearing and voice their feelings about these plans.

Mayor Harris pointed out that there was no notice requirement for this hearing; however, he announced at Council Meetings each time the hearing was re-scheduled due to bad weather. Mr. Daquila stated that he had announced at the last two Board of Education meetings when the hearing would be held.

Mrs. Favate asked members of the public if they had any questions or comments.

Eric Merse, 92 Washington Ave., came forward. He was sworn in. Mr. Merse stated that his driveway backs into the school's opening. He began discussing the tree cutting taking place on Washington Ave. School grounds on July 15, 2013. Attorney Dwyer stopped him, reminding him that the Board's authority is only to discuss this project. He asked Mr. Merse to confine his comments to the application discussed tonight.

Mr. Merse asked if the Board could suggest to the applicant that more trees be planted on the school property, especially on the traffic island. He was concerned that the proposed wall will cause flooding in the backyards of the houses to the right. Mr. Merse also asked how his driveway, which exits onto the school's driveway, which once was a public street, will be affected while construction work is going on.

Ms. Kenderdine testified that 4 new maple trees will be planted. These trees will grow significantly. Eastern Redbuds will be planted to try and recreate the trees that had been removed.

Ms. Kenderdine explained how the plans will reduce run-off going to the houses on the right, because of drainage improvements.

As for Mr. Merse's driveway, Ms. Kenderdine testified that the applicant can adjust where the entrance is located. This adjustment can be made part of the specifications that the contractor has to work with. Ms. Kenderdine assured Mr. Merse that access to his driveway would be maintained at all times.

Mr. Daquila pointed out the only time there would be limited access is when the school driveway is paved. Ms. Kenderdine told Mr. Merse that he will be given adequate notice when that paving will take place.

At Mr. Brightly's suggestion, Ms. Kenderdine reviewed the proposed lighting for this project. Four LED light fixtures are being proposed. They will 15 feet high. These lights will run on a timer-control inside the school building. Mr. Daquila said typically the lights are on from dusk until 10:00 p.m., according to what time of year it is.

Summing up, Attorney Loughlin advised the Board that he could do a resolution memorializing that this particular presentation took place tonight. The Board's comments will be referred to specifically in the resolution. The Board has met its responsibility, under the law, of offering their comments, including the references from the Board's professionals. Attorney Loughlin felt the applicant gave an excellent presentation.

For complete clarity, Mayor Harris asked to go over the Board's list of recommendations.

Ms. Kenderdine reviewed the list she had made:

- 1) A new sidewalk will be installed running from Washington avenue around the project
- 2) Moving the Stop Bar across from the crosswalk
- 3) Exploring the option of something more decorative along the top of the wall
- 4) Re-locating the Eastern Redbuds along Washington Ave. to add more trees along that section
- 5) Respecting the driveway belonging to Mr. Merse during the construction
- 6) Explore the option of additional lights for the existing parking lot.
- 7) Address the stormwater management comments

Miscellaneous

Mayor Harris confirmed with Board members that they had received the 2013 Annual Report of the Zoning Board of Adjustment. He noted that the Zoning Board wants the Planning Board to seriously consider their recommendations, particularly the one concerning applications involving corner lots.

After some discussion, Mayor Harris asked Mr. Montague, the Planning Bd. liaison to the Zoning Bd., to report to the Planning Board that this matter had been discussed. It sounded like only one corner lot application was difficult this past year. It would not be easy to deal with corner lot situations in our ordinances.

Regarding future applications, Mr. DeNave reported that a case that was originally to go before the Planning Board, will now appear before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. An expansion of a non-conforming use is now being proposed.

At 9:20 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Planning Board meeting will be held Wednesday, April 2, 2014, at 7:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building.

The Planning Board meeting scheduled for March 19, 2014 has been cancelled. Legal notification of this meeting cancellation was made on March 6, 2014 by Borough Clerk Susan Caljean.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Holler

Elizabeth Holler
Recording Secretary