

Township of Pilesgrove Planning Board

Minutes

Held at the Pilesgrove Township Municipal Building

October 20, 2021

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. He announced that the South Jersey Times and the Elmer Times were noticed on June 16, 2021. Notice was posted on the bulletin board outside the municipal building. All of the above was done in accordance with the New Jersey Sunshine Law.

Members stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Members:

Jeff String, Chair
Mark DeSiato, Vice Chair -- **absent**
Joe Crevino
Russel Davis -- **absent**
Mark DeSiato -- **absent**
Milton Eachus
George Brooks
Craig Lewis
Bill Miller
Jeff Dobbs

Alternate #1 Mark Valente
Alternate #2 Ruth Peters
Alternate #3 Joe Blandino -- **absent**
Alternate #4 Matt Hitchner -- **absent**

The Chair seated Mr. Valente for Mr. Davis and Ms. Peters for Mr. DeSiato. The Solicitor swore in the Board's professionals.

Motion to approve September 15, 2021 minutes, Crevino/Peters, all ayes with Lewis and Dobbs not voting.

Resolutions

Memorializing Resolutions by the Board:

Resolution # 2021-028 **Christopher Moore**, Block 2.07, Lot 18. *Motion to approve (Lewis/Crevino) all ayes on voice vote.*

Resolution # 2021-029 **Michael Leonetti**, Block 42, Lot 3. *Motion to approve (Brooks/Valente) all ayes on voice vote with Miller, Crevino, Lewis, and Dobbs abstaining.*

Resolution # 2021-030

Rich Warner, minor subdivision, B 22 Lots 3 and 7. *Motion to approve (Crevino/Eachus) all ayes on voice vote with Lewis and Dobbs abstaining.*

Resolution # 2021-031

North Point, use variance, Block 45, Lots 1 and 7. *Motion to approve (Miller/Peters) approved on voice vote Peters, Miller, voting yes and Eachus voting no, with Lewis, Crevino, String, Dobbs and Valente abstaining.*

Completeness Hearing

2021-015 James Parenti, minor subdivision, Block 7 Lot 4

Mr. McKelvie provided an overview of the application. Applicant proposes no new construction. Waivers were requested for wetlands delineation. He had no objections to being deemed complete.

Motion to deem complete, Crevino/Dobbs, all ayes on voice vote.

Mr. Miller asked if final approval could also be granted since it does not involve a variance. The Engineer noted stipulations that would need to be made and said he had not issued a review letter. The Chair recommended waiting.

2021-016 Auburn Road Properties, LLC, use variance and site plan waiver, Block 24 Lot 5

Lewis and Crevino stepped down.

The Planner reviewed prior Resolutions for use variances previously granted to Auburn Road Properties for the winery. He gave an overview of the newly proposed application, which includes an additional vestibule and a building dedicated to agricultural use. He said the winery is an accepted agricultural use, which may not have been the case in 2009 when the Board considered the application. He does not believe a use variance is necessary for what they are proposing. The vestibule change will not intensify the use of the building and all other site improvements remain unchanged. He said the board, if comfortable, has the authority to grant a waiver of site plan approval, and all other previous conditions would remain in effect. No bulk variances are involved. The Solicitor said he agrees with the Planner's assessment as the winery is an acknowledged agricultural use and the barn proposed is an accessory use, and such are excluded. He said as part of deeming the application complete, the Board can state they are not required to have a use variance. The Planner reviewed the applicant's checklist, and said he *supports the waivers requested as it is an agricultural use.*

Motion to deem the application complete (Eachus/Miller) all ayes on voice vote, with Crevino and Lewis having stepped down.

Motion that the application does not need a use variance, (Miller/Eachus) all ayes on voice vote, with Crevino and Lewis having stepped down.

The Board moved forward with the issue of the site plan waiver.

The Solicitor swore in Julie Donnini and Scott Donnini of Auburn Road Properties.

William Horner Jr., attorney for the applicant, asked the Board for direction on testimony. Ms. Donnini, as the head winemaker and head of operations, described the winery operations. She said the operation process is maturing to a more mechanized system, and more appropriate space is required, thus, the construction of a barn. She described the efficiencies that would be achieved with the improved process. She further described the need for the improved vestibule to handle customers more safely, and she said nothing proposed would alter the previously approved site plan.

Mr. Horner said winery building process started in 2004. He asked for permission to work with the Board's attorney to put together an amended declaration of covenant so that it is consistent with the approval record and make it flexible going forward. The Solicitor said this should have been done in 2009, when the applicant came before the Board.

Motion to open to the public (Eachus/Dobbs) all ayes on voice vote. No comment. Motion to close (Brooks/Dobbs) all ayes on voice vote.

Motion to approve waiver of site plan for the addition of the vestibule with the stipulation that the Solicitor and the applicant work to clarify the declaration of covenant (Dobbs/Peters) all ayes on voice vote with Lewis and Crevino having stepped down.

Discussion

1) Update to Farmland Element

Township Administrator Maureen Abdill introduced her successor.

The Township Administrator described the need to update the Farmland Element, which was recommended by Consulting Planner Kevin Rijs, and this would be in compliance with recommendations from the State Agriculture Committee. She said the update is necessary to qualify for preservation funding and to be eligible for \$20,000 in planning offset funds. During the Farm Element Update, the targeted areas can be expanded and the township mapping will be greatly improved. She answered questions on the process.

Motion to approve moving forward with an RFP to secure the \$20,000 planning (Crevino/Dobbs) all ayes on voice vote.

2) Planning Board/Zoning/Treasury Administrative Procedural Changes

The Township Administrator said there are gaps in communication and applicants are frustrated when they leave the meeting they do not have a Resolution when they go to Zoning for a permit. The proposed process would improve communications. She described proposed procedures. She recommended regular office hours for the Planning Board Secretary. She also created a form that would be given to the applicant once they are approved. Escrow also is a problem due to a lag in billing. Escrow delays are a huge issue, she said. Also, escrow amounts need to be reviewed. And because more applicants are coming without counsel, they are having to spend more on services from our professionals. She said more details in Resolutions are required. There was lengthy discussion about how to resolve the issues.

The Board asked the Township Administrator to make recommendations on new escrow amounts. Another issue is multiple plans being submitted to Zoning; they would rather have one final one plan.

The Chair said the Board was in agreement with: a checklist of steps for applicants to be taken prior to permitting; Resolutions must be signed by the applicant prior to issuing permits; escrows must be up-to-date; plans will be stamped final when designated by the Engineer; bullet list will be created for the Board for responses; recommendations will be made for increased escrows. It was agreed that the applicant will not receive a permit until all conditions are met. The Township Administrator will follow up..

3) Planning Board Application Instructions.

The Planner reviewed recommended changes to help clarify the procedure for applicants. He said he will make final changes based on this evening's discussion.

Motion to approve vouchers (Crevino/Dobbs) all ayes on roll call.

Motion to open to the public (Lewis/Miller) all ayes on voice vote. No public. Motion to close (Lewis/Crevino) all ayes on voice vote.

Motion to adjourn (Crevino/Dobbs) all ayes. Meeting agenda approximately 9:15 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Board Secretary Rita Shade