

**SITE PLAN REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD**

**NOTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**

**Wednesday, April 8, 2015**

**PRINCETON MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**Meeting Room A -7:30 P.M.**

**Princeton, New Jersey**

PRESENT: Alyce Bush, Harry Cooke, Robert Freudenberg, Dana Molina, Lydia Robinson, William Wolfe

ABSENT: Robert Cerutti, Holly Nelson, Pamela Rew

ALSO PRESENT: Jack West, Municipal Engineer; Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer; Kerry A. Philip, Secretary

Secretary Philip called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. reading the Opening Statement as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, acknowledging that notice of this meeting was issued on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2014.

**REORGANIZATION**

A. Bush and H. Cooke reported that after a polling of the members, it was determined that W. Wolfe would remain as Chair for 2015 and R. Cerutti would remain as Vice Chair for 2015.

- a) Nomination and Election of Chairman – Motion was made by Mr. Cooke and Ms. Bush seconded the motion to elect William Wolfe as Chairman for 2015. The vote was 6-0 in favor. Motion carried.
- b) Nomination and Election of Vice-Chairman - Motion was made by Mr. Cooke and Ms. Bush seconded the motion to elect Robert Cerutti as Vice-Chairman for 2015. The vote was 6-0 in favor. Motion carried.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Wolfe welcomed Robert Freudenberg and stated that Princeton is very fortunate to have him on the Site Plan Review Advisory Board. Mr. Freudenberg is a member of the Regional Planning Association in charge of the environment.

**MINUTES**

- a) February 11, 2015 – Motion was made by H. Cooke and L. Robinson seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The vote was 5-0 in favor of those eligible to vote. Motion carried.

**APPLICATION**

- a) Princeton (Edens) LLC  
Prelim/Final Major Site Plan w/variances  
301 North Harrison Street  
Block 7401, Lot 1  
File #P1414-146P  
MLUL Deadline: 6/4/15

Representatives for the applicant: Thomas Letizia, Esq.; Pepper Hamilton LLP; David Germakian, Edens; James McKinney, Edens; Joshua Zinder, JZA&D; Tony Diggins, Bohler Engineering; Tom Grimm, Nomad Pizza.

The request by Edens is for site plan approval for construction of road, parking, lighting and landscape improvements for the Princeton Shopping Center and the conversion of the old gas station property into a restaurant.

Thomas Letizia, Esq., attorney for the applicant, stated that the site plan application is for improvements to the Shopping Center. The improvements can be broken down into two sections: 1) the conversion of the former Amoco gas station as a restaurant operated by Nomad Pizza and 2) enhancement and improvement to the overall parking area and landscaping. To improve the circulation, the applicant is proposing to demolish the existing storage area in the northeast corner of the property near Grover Park to provide additional parking spaces and landscape islands are proposed at the end of parking rows. Dead end parking will be eliminated along the front of the center (near Harrison Street), and the southernmost entrance from North Harrison is relocated to improve access. A resurfacing and restriping of the parking area is also proposed, all lighting will be on 25 foot high poles with LED lights. The project provides an additional 19 parking spaces, 160 trees will be on site in addition to 2000 groundcover plantings.

David Germakian, Edens - Director of Development, stated that there are massive holes in the parking lot and they are proposing to repair the entire parking lot, replace the lighting with LED lighting, gain additional parking spaces, reconfigure the dead end parking aisles, provide pedestrian connections to Grover Park and replace the sidewalks. The landscaping will be increased and the impervious coverage decreased one-third acre.

Tony Diggins, engineer for the applicant, identified the variances associated with this request. A variance is required for the height of the light poles, 25 foot high light poles are proposed for uniformity and they are working with the town's landscape consultant for a zero light spill. He presented an aerial of the site and noted that there is light spillage is an area of the walkway near Grover Park but this was considered a good idea for pedestrian circulation. He presented the site plan showing existing conditions, the main entrance off Harrison at the intersection with Valley Road will be improved with landscaping and the one-way drive aisle in the rear of the site will be reduced from 30 feet to 20 feet. Methodology will be put into place which will take the rainwater to irrigate the landscape islands within the parking area. D. Molina recommended one parking space at the end of each parking aisle on the north side be removed to provide the needed visibility for oncoming traffic.

Chairman Wolfe asked the applicant to consider a small roundabout for the southernmost entry drive to keep traffic flowing. Mr. Diggins stated that there is a lot of truck traffic in that area and this may not be the right location for a roundabout. Joshua Zinder, Architect for the applicant, stated that a mountable curb would be needed for the roundabout and this would require the elimination of many parking spaces that are being provided.

R. Freudenberg asked if any new angles or a width adjustment to the drive aisle near bus stop are created that may impact buses. Mr. Diggins advised that there are no changes to the area proposed for the bus stop. R. Freudenberg asked that any changes to the circulation plan should not impede bus access.

Mr. Diggins noted that the impervious coverage is reduced. The landscape islands will have an underdrain which improves water quality, curb depression of the islands is proposed to achieve adequate runoff for watering the trees and this can be tied in with the grading. They are able to do depressed islands in only two areas although the Land Use Engineer requested that this be done for all the islands in the rear. James McKinney, applicant, stated that pedestrian connections from Harrison Street to Grover Park are proposed, curbing is proposed in the rear to reduce the water flow across the parking area. The applicant will look at converting additional islands if possible. D. Molina stated that swales can be around the light fixtures instead of an island. Mr. McKinney responded that drains will be in place to capture the water. Mr. Diggins stated that they will review the swales and the roundabout. Structural material will be added for the landscape islands, there will be adequate room for root growth and detail will be provided outlining that the soil will not be compacted. Mr. McKinney stated that some of the landscape islands are smaller than nine feet, smaller islands (4 feet) will be in locations where a 9 foot island cannot be installed.

Mr. Diggins stated that a perforated drainage pipe is proposed within the parking area off Harrison Street which will bring excess water to the root system for the plants. A bike rack plan was presented to the board and a copy was given to the Secretary for the file. Mr. Diggins stated that the bike rack plan will be presented to the Planning Board. He advised that the dumpster near the Nomad Pizza restaurant will be widened a bit because it is considered to be undersized, one parking space will be lost adjacent to the restaurant for a wider dumpster. Mr. Diggins stated that they would like to use water based acrylic over the epoxy for the pedestrian crosswalks because it is less slippery and touch-ups are easier. D. Molina stated that epoxy is not recommended by PEC.

Mr. Diggins stated that improvements are proposed for the dumpster enclosures, they will be enclosed with a pedestrian entrance. The drop boxes for the library will remain in the same location. The lighting proposed is similar to the lighting for the PNC Bank Drive-Thru building and will be uniform throughout the site.

Chairman Wolfe noted that as the shopping center is designed, it is unclear as to where a bicyclist should leave the site and bicyclists headed south on Harrison Street typically use the sidewalk because using the roadway is hazardous. Jack West, Land Use Engineer, stated that this is something that the town has been struggling with, putting bicycles on the roadway or give them a separate lane. He advised that he is working on a bicycle route master plan. Chairman Wolfe suggested that more bike racks be provided on site.

Mr. Zinder presented renderings of the proposed Nomad Pizza building (Sheets A1-1 and A11-1). He stated that the existing face of the building will remain but the materials proposed will make it appear warmer. The modern form will be retained, the materials on the McCaffrey's façade will tie in with this building to make it warm and welcoming. A walk in cooler is proposed to be added and will be screened with cedar. All exterior lighting will be LED and the garage doors will be replaced with windows and will create a connectivity to the street and the shopping center. The mechanical system is proposed on the roof and will be screened with metal louvers. The patio will have a seasonal awning which is similar to Mediterra within Palmer Square. A halo light is proposed above the signage for the restaurant, the name of the restaurant will be on two sides of the upper most element of the structure. Mr. McKinney stated that the lighting proposed on site including the restaurant will be on timers. Mr. Zinder stated that halo lighting creates a soft glow. H. Cooke expressed concern about the large lit sign for the Nomad restaurant which will face Harrison Street.

Mr. Germakian noted that the new restaurant would be the best use for the center. Tom Grim, Nomad Pizza, stated that this space would be a great location for their business. They are considering having planters with herbs surround the building and wish to make this building as sustainable as possible. Pertaining to potential smoke concerns from the wood fired oven, Mr. Grim advised that having another establishment in Montgomery, the best way to manage the smoke from wood fired ovens is to start with 20 pounds of charcoal to heat up the oven and dry wood throughout the day for the food. The State and Federal DEP checks their oven regularly and there has been no issue. Mr. Zinder noted that the planters are not shown on the plans. D. Molina stated that she has concerns about pedestrian circulation and children running in the patio area because the parking lot is so close. An enlarged plan of this area was requested for review by the Planning Board. Chairman Wolfe stated that the colors proposed are soft urban colors restoring unity with the shopping center but he does not like the white color proposed on the Nomad Pizza building and recommended a pallet that is more harmonious with the recent façade improvements for the shopping center. Mr. Zinder noted that the white color provides a background when warmer woods are inserted.

Ms. Bush asked why the gas station building was retained instead of providing more parking. Mr. McKinney stated that reusing the building was the best thing to do because there was nothing wrong with the building. H. Cooke questioned trash pick-up for the dumpster near Nomad Pizza, Mr. West stated that one parking space may be impacted briefly. Mr. Diggins stated that food waste from the Nomad Pizza restaurant will be picked up from a local pig farmer. A 20 scale blow up of the restaurant and surrounding parking will be provided to the Planning Board. A bike plan will also be provided to the Planning Board. Regarding the proposed rain gardens, these are areas in front of the stores that will have soil and an underdrain. Chairman Wolfe asked the applicant to consider an alternative to using sodium chloride for salting during the winter months.

Mr. West stated that currently the town is reviewing bus stop locations throughout Princeton and an enhanced bus stop is being considered for this location with a canopy. He is unsure as to what the Traffic Committee envisions but if something can be worked into this plan this would satisfy that concern. He also advised that another crosswalk on the north side of the main entrance to the shopping center is being considered.

Mr. Diggins then referenced the report from the Princeton Environmental Commission noting that they are looking into alternatives for #1 but they have no intention to comply with this recommendation. Solar carports were recommended by PEC, Mr. McKinney advised that these would not be appropriate for the shopping center. All demolition and construction waste will be recycled, this is something that they incorporate into all of their projects. Regarding solar installation, Mr. McKinney stated that they are looking at solar for all of their properties, regarding this site the rooftop for the restaurant is too small so solar is not proposed, if the roofs of the remaining buildings in the shopping center are able to hold the equipment and a provider is located, this will be done.

Chairman Wolfe asked if the applicant considered constructing a new restaurant building in the southwest corner of the site. Mr. McKinney stated that this was not considered, a 170 foot setback would be required and they are hoping that the restaurant is a part of the center and not an outbuilding. Mr. West advised that a phasing plan must be provided by the applicant.

Pertaining to the former recycling shed area in the northeast corner of the site, Mr. Germakian stated that this area will be made over to make it pedestrian friendly. Mr. McKinney stated that this area may be a compost area, no final decision has been made.

Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer, identified the variances associated with this project. He stated that some variances are necessary for what they are trying to do at this location, most are technical in nature (pole height, light spillage, landscaping) but those variances are all very reasonable requests.

Based upon the foregoing, a motion was made by A. Bush, seconded by L. Robinson and carried by a vote of five ayes and one nay to classify this application as a Major Site Plan, endorsing all the recommendations contained in the joint Engineering and Zoning Report dated March 2, 2015, the Princeton Environmental Commission memorandum dated 3/31/15 (with four exceptions – see comments), the Traffic Safety Committee memorandum of 3/17/15 (with one exception), and the Shade Tree Commission memorandum dated 3/31/15 (with one exception) and to recommend approval of the application with the following recommendations as conditions of approval.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Although some members took issue with (3.1), a SPRAB majority endorsed approval of variances for front yard setback (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3); side yard setback (3.4); parking stall size (3.5.); light pole height (3.7), and light spillage (3.8). Variance 3.6 was unclear. See the following item #2.
2. The applicant was asked to work with the Land Use Engineer to confirm that the maximum number of vegetated areas possible are installed and landscape grading of all landscape islands promotes filtered drainage for run off.
3. The applicant was asked to consider redesigning the intersection of the southern and western loop roads and the southern shopping center entrance as a roundabout to eliminate the conflicting left hand turns.
4. The bus stop must be accommodated and any changes to circulation must continue to allow for adequate bus access.
5. Since storm water flows from the shopping center are directed towards Harry's Brook, the applicant was asked to work with the Land Use Engineer to determine if the low grades in the back section towards the Harry's Brook can be redesigned to filter storm water as effectively as possible in the manner of a bio-swale.
6. The applicant was asked to present to the Planning Board a bicycle circulation plan and to study how to minimize conflicts with automobiles. Bicycle parking should be included on this plan and details shown. Additional bike racks were recommended.
7. The applicant should allocate priority (nearer) parking spaces for electric and hybrid vehicles.
8. One handicapped parking space should be provided in the southeast corner of the site, near the laundromat.
9. One parking space at the end of each aisle on the north side of the property could be removed to provide the needed visibility for oncoming traffic.
10. A construction phasing plan should be provided for review by the Land Use Engineer.
11. A Smart Energy Plan should be developed as part of the Nomad Pizza building design. Project approval should be contingent on revision of the Green Building Checklist (Item C) to provide details of mechanical design and energy use prior to building permit review.

12. The applicant was asked to look into alternative paving treatments for winter storms that are less toxic to landscaping than salting with sodium chloride.
13. A larger scale plan of the area surrounding the Nomad Pizza building was requested.
14. Additional detail and an enlarged plan for all trash enclosures was requested to be presented to the Planning Board.
15. Planters for herbs are proposed for the Nomad Pizza building, the plans should be revised to show the location of these planters.
16. The drop boxes for library and post office should remain, preferably in the current site location.
17. All site lighting should be on timers.
18. All landscaping should be reviewed by the landscape subcommittee.

### COMMENTS

Chairman Wolfe asked for a bicycle circulation plan within the shopping center and the ROW along Harrison Street. As presently designed, exiting the site to travel south is hazardous and the sidewalk is used by bicyclists. A bike lane along the ROW of Harrison Street into the site should be considered. The Land Use Engineer advised that he is working on a bicycle master plan for the municipality.

Chairman Wolfe believed that the existing building had probably been allowed so far into the front yard set-back because of its unique function as an automobile service station, and once the use changed, the existing building should no longer be allowed to remain. He felt that it detracted from the overall appearance of the shopping center and caused a noticeable shortage of parking in the front. The applicant agreed that a new building would be no more expensive. Mr. Wolfe suggested that Nomad Pizza could be elsewhere in the center, but if it were to be allowed within the front setback, Nomad Pizza would be less disruptive if located at the southwest corner of the shopping center. In that location it would not block the view of the existing storefronts. Mr. Cooke supported moving the proposed pizza restaurant to the southwest corner. He also opposed the proposed large lit sign so close to and facing Harrison Street.

Half of the present SPRAB members asked the applicant to change the white paint on the Nomad Pizza building to an earth tone color, to be less aggressive and more sympathetic to the shopping center.

Solar panels were recommended on the rooftops of all shopping center buildings, although the roof of the Nomad Pizza building may not have room because of the large area of mechanical equipment and screen. Since the owners would benefit from the tax incentives and could profit from the reduced electric rates, they will review both purchasing a photovoltaic system and power purchase agreements. First, the owner will investigate whether the roof structures can support this installation.

Ms. Bush asked if the applicant had considered using the recycling area at the north end of the shopping center for another purpose. The applicant said a compost area is under consideration.

Ms. Molina expressed concern about pedestrian circulation and children running in the patio area of the Nomad Pizza building so near to traffic.

SPRAB took exception to the following PEC report recommendations:

- a) Landscape strips reduced from 9 feet to 5 feet.
- b) All comments pertaining to a shower, no shower is proposed.
- c) Energy Star appliances and equipment are not available for commercial use.
- d) Solar car ports since this would be a major expense for an already developed site.

Shade Tree report exception:

- a) Re-designing the parking islands as rain gardens, since this would be a major expense for an already developed site.

Vote on motion:

For: Bush, Cooke, Freudenberg, Molina, Robinson

Against: Wolfe

Abstain: None

With no further business before the Board, motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kerry A. Philip  
Secretary