

BOROUGH OF METUCHEN
PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 19, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:30PM by the Chairman, Mr. Erickson, who read the statement in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL

Ellen Clarkson, Vice Chairperson
Jason Delia, Councilmember
Eric Erickson, Chairman
James Griffin
Linda Koskoski
William Love, Mayor's Designee
Lauren Cohn, Alt. 1

Robert Renaud, Board Attorney
Robert Mannix, Board Engineer
Christopher Cosenza, Board Planner
Sharon Hollis, Board Secretary
Kim Kirk

ABSENT:

Mayor Busch
Alan Grossman
Jonathan Lifton
Lynn Nowak
Shannan Foat-Gelber, Alt. 2

RESOLUTIONS

Planning Board Secretary – Kim Kirk

Mr. Erickson motioned to approve the resolution and Mr. Delia seconded the motion.

Vote On Motion

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Ms. Clarkson | Yes |
| Mr. Delia | Yes |
| Ms. Koskoski | Yes |
| Mr. Griffin | Yes |
| Mr. Love | Yes |
| Ms. Cohn (Alt. 1) | Yes |
| Mr. Erickson | Yes |

NEW BUSINESS

23-1354 **First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen** – Applicant is seeking preliminary and final major site plan, exception for parking regulations and request for waiver of submission requirement to construct a 1,142 square foot addition to the existing Social Center with a 163 square foot covered entry.

270 Woodbridge Avenue Block 164 Lot 49.011

John DeLuca the attorney, summarizes the application and the location. This addition will be a storage area for the food pantry at the Social Center with an outside covered entry area. Mr. DeLuca introduces his first witness, Sara Teti, who works at the food pantry.

Sarah Teti is sworn in and indicates that the food pantry services Edison and Metuchen residents which is approximately 150 families per month. There are about twenty-five volunteers. On Tuesdays, there are just volunteers present and Wednesday and Thursdays between 9 and 11, residents come in. There are only three families per time slot that come in to shop for their food. The social center is used by many different groups and currently the food pantry only has a small closet. The addition is a much-needed storage area. This will just service existing residents. With this expansion the food pantry will be able to operate even when the church has large events as now the food pantry needs to shut down during these events.

The Board asks about parking issues and Ms. Teti indicates they do not have any parking issues.

Kurt Ludwig, the applicant's architect, is sworn in and accepted as an expert witness. Mr. Ludwig displayed architectural plans showing the proposed addition. The addition will include a one-story, one-room larger pantry. Mr. Ludwig points out the addition will have a rear door for private use. All sides of the exterior are displayed including the existing parking lot.

The Board asked if the new addition would be visible from Woodbridge Avenue, and it will not.

Marc Leber, the applicant's engineer, is sworn in and accepted as an expert witness. Mr. Leber displays the property survey with an aerial view of the property which was marked as P-1. This exhibit also shows the proposed addition location, as well as a view from Woodbridge Avenue demonstrating that it will not be visible from the street.

Mr. Leber indicates that the addition would have no effect on ingress and egress, parking, level of activity, noise or traffic and no new utilities are required. Mr. Leber

displays a color rendering of the proposed addition marked as P-2 with an aerial view of the property. Roof runoff and lighting is discussed.

Mr. Leber indicates that the square footage discrepancy of 1,142 and 1,153 square feet can be discussed by the Board where a determination can be made.

The Board and professionals asked questions about an additional inlet being needed and it will not; gates, landscaping, solid waste, and recycling; and an additional A/C unit that will be placed next to the existing one on the roof.

The Board planner notes for the record, the applicant states they are not agreeing to limit the food pantry service to the earlier stated hours, only that the operation will not conflict with church services and the applicant has agreed to this characterization.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions.

There were none.

Mr. Griffin motions to approve the application and Ms. Koskoski seconds the motion.

Vote on Motion

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|-------------------|-----|
| Ms. Clarkson | Yes |
| Mr. Delia | Yes |
| Ms. Koskoski | Yes |
| Mr. Griffin | Yes |
| Mr. Love | Yes |
| Ms. Cohn (Alt. 1) | Yes |
| Mr. Erickson | Yes |

23-1358 **First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen** – Applicant is seeking preliminary and final major site plan, variance for fence and wall height, and request for waiver of submission requirements to construct an approximate five-foot-tall wrought iron fence and masonry support columns containing columbarium along Woodbridge Avenue.

270 Woodbridge Avenue Block 164 Lot 49.011

John Wiley, the applicant's attorney, briefly goes over the application. Mr. Wiley calls his first witness, Reverend Fred Garry, who was sworn in. Reverend Garry is the senior pastor at the Church. He states that the hedges on Woodbridge Avenue will be removed, and the replacement fence is depicted in Exhibit A-1. He feels the fence will provide added security.

The Board asks questions regarding decorative columns at the beginning and end of the fencing on Woodbridge, the height of the fence, the current hedges and landscaping, and location of the fence.

The meeting is opened to the public for questions.

Christopher Menschner of 299 Woodbridge Avenue was sworn in and indicated he objects the application as he feels it would increase the visibility of the cemetery to his property and negatively impact his home's value.

Rakesh Patel of 291 Woodbridge Avenue was sworn in and provided photos, which were marked O-1, O-2, and O-3, of his view of the cemetery and feels that tall trees or hedges would benefit.

The Board asks the professionals about height regulations for hedges, conditions on removing hedges, and the noticing of the hearing.

Reverend Garry states that no landscaping will be addressed unless the application is approved and Mr. Herits, the Borough Engineer, points out that the plans indicate evergreens and geraniums.

The Board takes a brief recess.

The landscaping is further clarified by Mr. Cosenza for Mr. Menschner and Mr. Menschner reiterated his desire for taller evergreens to block his view of the cemetery.

The meeting is closed to the public.

Ms. Cohn motions to approve the application and Mr. Love seconds the motion.

Vote on Motion

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|-------------------|-----|
| Ms. Clarkson | Yes |
| Mr. Delia | Yes |
| Ms. Koskoski | Yes |
| Mr. Griffin | Yes |
| Mr. Love | Yes |
| Ms. Cohn (Alt. 1) | Yes |
| Mr. Erickson | Yes |

23-1363 **Metuchen Jewish Community Center** – Applicant is seeking preliminary and final major site plan, exception for parking regulations and request for waiver of submission requirements, to convert part of the existing ballroom to additional classrooms and allow enrollment up to 120 students.

250 Grove Avenue

Block 126

Lot 7

John Wiley, the attorney for the applicant, briefly goes over the application and introduces his first witness, Frances Brennan. Ms. Brennan is sworn in and indicates she operates the preschool center at the subject property, known as the Metuchen Preschool, which is a nondenominational school sponsored by the Metuchen Jewish Community Center. Ms. Brennan states that the preschool is licensed for up to 120 students, which was determined by the number of sinks and toilets on the property. Their proposal is to convert ballroom space into two additional classrooms to bring their total of classrooms to five. Ms. Brennan gave a description of how the school was run and the calendar they follow.

The Board questions the number of students at different parts of the day; and clarification of what other activities are occurring while the school is in session.

Michael Seidner, the Vice President of the Metuchen Jewish Community Center, states the size of the congregation has shrunk and the only staff members on site apart from school staff are a secretary and a Rabbi.

Mr. Cosenza indicates that the questions in his memo have been adequately answered.

The meeting is opened to the public for questions.

There are none.

The meeting was closed to the public.

Ms. Clarkson has recused herself from voting.

Mr. Delia motions to approve the application and Ms. Koskoski seconds the motion.

Vote on Motion

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Mr. Delia | Yes |
| Ms. Koskoski | Yes |
| Mr. Griffin | Yes |
| Mr. Love | Yes |
| Ms. Cohn (Alt. 1) | Yes |
| Mr. Erickson | Yes |

PUBLIC PORTION

There is none.

CORRESPONDENCE

There is none.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Delia motions to adjourn and Ms. Koskoski seconds the motion. All ayes.

/jr