

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MEETING
Monday, March 19, 2018

Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Mayor
Maria Connolly
Ian Dember
Philip Duran
James Kownacki, Councilman
Kevin Nerwinski, Municipal Manager
Terrence Leggett, Vice Chairperson
Stephanie Pangaldi
Kim Taylor
Edward Wiznitzer, Chairperson

Absent: None

Excused Absence: Doris Weisberg

Also Present: Phil Caton, Planning Consultant
James F. Parvesse, Municipal Engineer
Edward Schmierer, Planning Board Attorney
Susan Snook, Recording Secretary

Statement of Adequate Notice:

Adequate notice of this meeting of the Lawrence Township Planning Board has been provided by filing the annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk as required by law; by filing the agenda and notice with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building and mailing to the Trenton Times and the Trentonian newspapers.

Public Participation (for items not on agenda):

None

Minutes for Approval:

The February 5, 2018 minutes were approved per unanimous vote.

Resolutions:

Extending Period of Protection Application No. SP-2/07; **James & Hugh McGuire (Mabel Mews)**; Mable Avenue and Lawrence Road; Tax Map Page 9, Block 901, Lot 8 was approved per unanimous vote.

Major Site Plan – Preliminary & Final Approval Application No. SP-7/16; **Suresh Desai – Candlewood Suites (Sleepy Hollow)**; 3000 Brunswick Pike; Tax Map Page 40.01, Block 4001, Lots 39 & 41 was approved per unanimous vote.

Applications:

Minor Site Plan Application No. SP-2/18; **Lawrenceville Main Street (Weeden Park)**; Route 206; Tax Map Page 57.01; Block 5707, Lot 5

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Angelo Stio stated they were there over the summer and met with the Mayor and went over some of the plans that are in place. This started off at a Board meeting for Lawrenceville Main Street where someone asked if they try to get a statute, from the Grounds of Sculpture and put it in downtown Lawrenceville. The Board wanted to have some foot traffic to the businesses there, bring more activity to the center of Town.

The Board thought that was a good idea, made some phone calls and spoke with Margarita Warlick, who a few of her artists display statutes and sculptures. Ms. Warlick stated they are willing to put on an exhibit of anywhere from 12 to 15 sculptures, which can be done for one year and extended for two years. They had several meeting which involved looking at the park and went to the studios and looked at the art work and slowly started to come about. There are 13 artists committed to exhibit their art work in Weeden Park. They have agreed to install it on their own, so there is no cost to the Lawrenceville Main Street. Lawrenceville School stated they would provide the insurance for the art. Lawrenceville Man Street will install the security camera and would like to have a community event sometime in September for a grand opening.

The sculptures are a variety of artists and none of them are going to be larger than 16' tall or 5' wide. They will be set back from the road with the exception of one that would be in front of the gazebo, so people know this is a garden. Mr. Stio also asked approval for a small sign underneath the existing sign that states Weeden Park that will say Sculpture Garden. Mr. Stio continued that the property is owned by Lawrenceville School and has been a community park every Thursday night, where during the summer there is music and pretty well attended by 100 to 200 residents.

Mr. Stio referred to Exhibit A, which shows the sculptures around the perimeter of the property. There will adequate setback from the houses. The sculpture in front of the gazebo will be a piece of art by a famous artist named Andrew Budzinski. Mr. Stio referred to Exhibit A3 which shows the sculptures that will be put in Weeden Park and stated the largest piece of art will be the dinosaur that will be 16' high and currently is displayed in a neighborhood park in Hopewell. There are no pieces of art that the children would climb on and be injured. There would be wood chips or some type of boundary to keep children off of the art work.

The purpose is try to get activity to downtown to have foot traffic to help enhance the businesses where people can go on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon to look at the art work, go get coffee, ice cream or an early dinner. The artists have agreed to put on some art exhibits where maybe some of the local schools would want to have an artist show them or teach them a little bit about the art. It is free for the Township, free for Lawrenceville Main Street and will have some wonderful artists who have agreed to display their work.

Mr. Nerwinski stated he expressed this at the Council meeting, he wants to make sure that the art work going to be displayed we know what it is before it is displayed. Mr. Nerwinski continued that he does not want a controversy thing happen within the community, so pictures were presented, he just does not want any last minute swapping because they can't get that one so let's put this one up. He has a concern on behalf of the community and residents that it could be taken different ways and do not want to have a situation where it becomes offensive to one.

Mr. Stio stated he will give the Township pictures of the art work ahead of time. The Township has most of them, maybe one or two. Even if he gives us the pictures, he can't guarantee that the art work won't be offensive. Mr. Nerwinski wants some type of ability to review and know what is going to be displayed.

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Chairperson Wiznitzer stated placing art work in public places today is not as simple as it once was. There are a lot of controversy about statutes in public places all across the country and we have them being covered up with tarps, being removed in places because they no longer reflect the standards of our society. He continued that being on this Board he does not want to be responsible for any such controversy. Most of the sculptures are abstract; however, he referred to one that looks like a nude in heels with a combat helmet on and does not know what the message is or what the artist intended, or what impression the public would have and would like to have a better idea of what this and all the sculptures really are because he can't see them. He continued that because he can't see them he will have to abstain from the vote because he cannot tell what he is voting on.

Mr. Stio responded that the issues being talked about are statutes that were erected during the civil rights movement. There are not going to be any statutes that will be discriminatory in anyway. Pictures were provided and short of bringing the statutes here, can't assure that you are going to get a better view. Mr. Stio will provide pictures and would caution there is a first amendment right too and be careful what we doing on filing the first amendment. Mr. Stio is willing to give pictures of what is intended to be up there so that they can be seen. The issues is that a little bit of lead way time is needed to plan on getting these erected.

Witness #2: Margareta Warlick stated on the 24th there is an open studio day at the grounds and the one particular statute that is being questioned is there to be seen as well as several others of these that can be seen as well as talking to the artist.

Witness #3: Phoenix Smith stated that she has been involved with the Lawrenceville Main Street for about 20 years and are a community based organization. They depend on \$25.00 checks from the community in order to survive. They are all volunteers and currently there is no executive director. One of things that has been done from the beginning is tried to promote and maintain things for the community that they will enjoy. It would be against their best interest as a community based organization, to have anything that is offensive, whether it is an event or a sculpture, painting, etc. because that is how we raise our money, that is how we maintain our credibility in the organization by doing things that are family friendly and work on behalf of the community. Certainly if someone thought that something is offensive that they would not want to install, would not want to promote it, and would want to have a substitute for that. They will take the concerns of the Board into consideration and would get a good picture.

Councilman Kownacki stated that the artist's are installing the pieces so who will be here to supervise so they are properly installed and that no one gets hurt. Mr. Stio stated they will have people from the organization and probably people from the Lawrenceville School works department. Councilman Kownacki also stated to get pictures to the manager and left the professional staff to decide on the art pieces. Ms. Warlick commented that the rigger is Henry Rigger, who is a professional and does this for a living. Mr. Nerwinski stated that he thinks we can work with our Police Department in terms for traffic situations and safety situations.

Chairperson Wiznitzer asked which statute is going to be closest to the street to make sure it is not a distraction to motorists. Mr. Stio stated it looks a lot bigger than the picture, it is 12' high and horses, located in the photographs. Mayor Bobbitt thanked them for what Main Street has done; however, one of the troubles is that the presentation is not as a rigorous and part of what is being heard from the Board is trying to figure out what exactly you mean. He believes they have the best intentions and take care of the liability issues with people climbing on things, properly installing it; but it is not here exactly. When you have 13 sculptures that are being presented there are only 12 listed and 10 have photographs, it gives us pause and a trust factor on where most of the other applicant's that come before the Board we would not allow that. This is not as serious as a house, but at the same time it is one of those things that would have nice to have a little bit more information.

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Mr. Stio stated he understood and stated they went to the Township Manager with this idea and there were some people who stated it is private property and we could put up a sculpture if we want. However, they wanted to do it the right way and have every intention of doing it the right way and worked pretty well with the Township on sharing pictures and will get clear pictures to the professionals so they can see and will follow with whatever instructions that they give. The goal is not to create a junk yard, the goal is not to create a nuisance or danger to the community; the goal is to have something in the center of Town that is going to create foot traffic and enhance the businesses and bring the community together.

Mr. Nerwinski stated he does not want to censor anything and thinks this is a great project. There was conversations and thought the process would be smoother and wants to assure that Lawrenceville Main Street that his concern was not of a censorship mode at all and does not think there will be placement of things deemed offensive. Mr. Caton wanted to clarify in terms of the signage, the signage for Sculpture Garden will be hung below the Weeden Park sign. Mr. Stio stated it will be the same size and no lighting is proposed. Mr. Caton referred to his report regarding a potential variance and cleared it up with an e-mail; therefore, there is no variance. Mr. Nerwinski stated a condition should be the submission of good quality pictures of all the sculptures to be displayed.

Public Comment:

Charles Alben, 19 Craven Lane: This project is in his neighborhood and that some additional thought should be made in the arrangement of the sculptures on where they are placed in relationship to the trees on the property and to the gazebo and in relationship to one another. You could not tell from the sketch and this looks like a group of musicians coming together to perform some jazz and might work out well and might not work out. He would like the Township to take some time, not in restraining them, but to make sure that it is done to the satisfaction of the public that this plan works for the foundations, the sculptures have been reviewed by an engineer and they are secured and detailed in a safe manner. Drawings should be seen of the installation of each sculpture and that a site plan be drawn up for the review. Only then could you then make a final decision on what is being proposed. It is a great idea but would like to have it thought through thoroughly and for the public to have an opportunity to review it in detail.

Mr. Dember stated to Mr. Alben that we count on our professionals who together make up the conductor that we do this with applicants who appear before the Board. They are the ones who help them flush out the on the ground details. Mr. Alben responded that the public might have some interest in this process and there might be some benefit to the community even if the children and the school would be involved with the process whereby the decisions were made about where the sculptures should be placed and why placed there, if it would interrupt the musicians and would be surprised if you did not require more than a napkin sketch to get an approval of this idea. It is on Main Street and should be done the right way and done well.

Mayor Bobbitt responded that Main Street has appeared before Council last year and talked to the Township Manager, they have come before this Board now when they don't have to because it is on a private piece of property. They have done a lot of work and they are a community organization and presented before their own Board and membership. It is some of the presentation materials that fell a little short, but the effort has not fallen short on Main Street and this is one piece of the process. Mr. Alben asked if this is one piece of the process and Mayor Bobbitt stated it will see the proper people.

The Board discussed the stake out and if it did not work out, then we would request the applicant to return to the Board.

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Major Site Plan – Preliminary & Final Site Plan Application No. SP-3/18; The Trustee of the Lawrenceville School (Gruss Center for Arts & Design Addition); Main Street; Tax Map Page 58.03, Block 5801, Lot 12

Thomas Letizia represented the applicant and presented that the construction of a 15,000 sf addition to the Gruss Visual Art Center located on the main campus which is located in the southwest corner of the campus. The building will be located in the center of the existing Gruss Center, where there is currently a 3,500 sf building, which is going to be demolished and the 15,000 sf building will be located in its place with a net increase of new building area of 11,500 sf. The proposed project includes modifications to existing walkways, landscaping and lighting. This project is intended to serve the existing student population which is set at 815 students. Existing facility will staff the center and there is no additional hiring of facility. There are no variances or design waivers for this application because it complies with all zoning requirements of the EGI zone.

There are no issues with the professional reports. Exhibit A1 – all Power Point and hard copies were handed out to the Board.

Witness #1: Pete Devine, Chief Operating Officer commented that Martin & Audrey Gruss are the benefactors of the project, who graduated from the school and has been an incredible donor. This is a maker space which is a wood shop, metal shop, facility and some classrooms to teach the maker space classes that are spread out throughout the campus and now will be in one in one location. There will be no additional students.

Witness #2: Marta Guerra, Architect presented the limit of work and the building. The building is for engagement for creativity such as wood shop, metal shop and spaces to meet and discuss. The second floor is 2,000 sf room that can be divided into four rooms to host a science fair or workshops. The basement is essentially the clean lab with printers, reality space and meeting rooms. The building is very transparent to invite the kids to come in and engage in the activities inside. A historic presentation was presented to the Board last year.

Witness #3: Andrew Gutterman, Landscape Architect commented that the idea is to create a clear entry sequence which is the main entrance. There will be gathering spaces to have outside for the kids to gather and bring their projects outdoor to work on. There will be two walkways at the north and south get in; there is a 2.5' elevation changes between the finished floor of the first floor of the building because of the connecting wings that are staying; steps along the path on the south side and north side and the road is a bit higher which is designed to be below 5% slope for an accessible way to get into the building from the east; the extension of the line of Holly Locust Trees along the road and bringing in additional lighting; enhancement of the walkway on the west side; smaller gathering spaces at the entrance of the building to meet a friend or work outdoors; relocating existing light poles and adding additional light poles and will make sure it meets the illumination requirements and protecting a 48" Oak tree; the walkways are met for pedestrians only but will be for maintenance vehicles; spoke about the materials being used; proposing on the east side of the building to extend the Holly Locusts that exist and matches the other side; introducing small scaled flowering trees along the west side of the building; the Planner's report stated a conflict with utilities and will work with the planner to find the appropriate spacing for the trees; it was noted that a 10' buffer will be a challenged because of the tight space and will work with the Planner.

Witness #4: F. Mitch Ardman, PE stated it is landscaping and architecture project which is well laid out. Mr. Ardman spoke about the stormwater management that will runoff from the roof drainage to a dry well. The report will be updated referring to the Engineer's report dated February 5, 2018 referring to the stormwater drainage report.

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The Planner's report dated March 7, 2018 referred to Comment #4 to the floor area ratio (Comment 4.2) and is well under that. There has not been a full audit done of the school recently. The parking is on the student population which is 1 per 3 students which is the requirement. There is approximately 2763 spaces required and there are 450 to 500 parking spaces. There are no new students being generated by this project and no need for additional parking or events.

Mr. Letizia requested that they proceed with the building permit review because the School is under some time constraints to do when the students are not on campus. Mr. Parvesse responded that we do that, once the application makes it through their initial approval we tell the Construction Official and he will start the review of the application. He won't approve it until the resolution is adopted, but will start the review.

No public comment. Mr. Caton went over the conditions.

Old Business / New Business / Correspondence:

None

Closed Session Resolution:

None

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

Respectfully submitted,


Susan J. Snook
Recording Secretary

Minutes approved: 6/18/18