



**CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
500 Mill Road
Absecon, New Jersey 08201**

PLANNING & ZONING

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**OCTOBER 28, 2020
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman, Bob Preston

**FLAG SALUTE
NOTIFICATION OF MEETING**

ROLL CALL

Present: Aleli, Horton, Howell, Reilly, Seher, Tiberio, Strugala, (late) Preston

Absent: Gersh, Ciccone

OLD BUSINESS:

Vote: Approval of Minutes of August 26, 2020 meeting

Motion to approve: Nick Larotonda – second – Lou Strugala

All were in favor.

Release of Performance Bond for Guzzo Landscaping – Block 262 – Lot 7.02 – Pleasant Avenue

Motion to approve Greg Seher – second – Kim Horton

All were in favor.

NEW BUSINESS:

Appl. #1-2020 for Gokul Brothers, LLC – Block 236, Lots 2 – 3 & 4 – 209, 211-215 and 217 S. New Road for Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan approval to construct a single commercial/retail building with site improvements.

Appearing were: Bill Gasbarro, attorney for applicant; Matt Doran, Engineer, Harry Harper, Architect, Yogesh Patel and Rakesh Patel, owners and all were sworn in.

Bill – he didn't want the meeting to go long so instead of him going through the reports, they agreed to comply with all the comments by our professionals in their reports. He made a brief presentation of what the applicants would like to do. They plan on taking down three buildings on 3 lots and then

doing a deed consolidation and putting up larger building. One large unit would be the Gokul supermarket; El Tricolor Pizza, a laundromat and a barber shop.

Rob – went through his review memorandum dated 10/19/2020. He is very excited about this application and he has worked on it for awhile with them. It's an attractive building, but they need some relief that he feels is acceptable in his eyes. One variance would be for a front yard setback on Orchard Avenue. The new building will be close and the trash receptacle is going to be placed along the side of it having a setback of 14 feet. He did ask for additional landscaping along the trash enclosure to soften the appearance. Another variance would be for lot coverage. It's currently about 71% and they have been able to reconfigure it to about 68%. The allowable amount is 60%. If it were a DEP zone, you'd be allowed 80%. Another variance would be for landscaping in front of the building and the parking stalls, which is a requirement. What they have done in lieu of it is to have a nice country front porch across the entire front, which is similar to a Cracker Barrel. It's a nice enhancement to the building. They do comply with all the landscaping with one other exception. There should be shade trees in the inner islands of the parking lot rather than evergreen trees. He has a list of standard requirements and recommendations in his report that they agreed to comply with. Signs are not part of this application yet, because they haven't finalized what it's going to be. What they would like to do is submit diagrams to him once they know. They intend to comply with the sign ordinance so no variance relief is requested. We can work on it together if the board agrees.

Bob – mentioned the fire department letter that questions the location of the trash enclosure and to relocate it in a manner that is not adjacent to the structure to minimize possible trash fires spreading to the building.

Harry – One is to move it out a little bit or simply make the wall of the building adjacent to the enclosure, a fire-resistant rating wall or a block wall behind it so if a fire were to occur it would stop there. That location makes the most convenient because of road access and in general. He feels if you move them away from the buildings, most times the trash sits between the enclosure and buildings. He is willing to talk to building inspector and the Fire Chief about it.

Bob – feels it should be a masonry enclosure and something that would match the building and help to dissipate this concern.

Michele – asked about the discrepancy between CAFRA and our ordinance. Is there a reason we are more restrictive?

Rob – it just evolved over time. He explained why the DEP requirements are what they are.

Andy – referred to his report is dated October 26th. We heard that the applicant was willing to comply with all his comments in his report, but there are some issues that need board discussion and input. The stormwater basin is not proposed to be fenced in and he asked Matt to testify about the depth of the water in the basin after various storm events.

Matt – he explained a 2-year storm and the maximum water depth for the front basin is under 2 ft. and the rear basin is 2 ft. It's the industry standard on fencing or not. Andy suggested putting a sand bottom in the basin for better percolation, since we had a grass bottom and we will change it to sand.

Andy – there are no signs proposed yet, but he would like to see the foundation design for the sign be an amendment to the plan that could be reviewed administratively and not come back before the board. Orchard Street is undersized with the cart way width and the applicant proposes to widen it to

the city standards and details will have to be added to the plans and he will review them. There is a need for a design waiver for paving and explained. He asked for testimony as to whether the building will require a fire suppression system.

Harry – it does not need to be sprinkled because we fall under mercantile use group. What they did was, with the wall between the grocery store and the pizzeria, they will provide a two-hour fire separation there. That is not required, but he is more comfortable with it because of the uses.

Andy – then explained the stormwater management plan. This lot will not increase impervious coverage more than a ¼ of an acre, so they don't need to comply with the water quality standards, which he then explained. The traffic pattern will have controlled access with an entrance and exit on Rt. 9, an entrance and exit on Orchard Street and only an exit onto Keefer Avenue. Keefer will be all curbed and sidewalk put in. The parking stalls are proposed to be 9 ft. x 18 ft. parking spaces and the code requires 10 x 19. The board has discretion and he feels it would be fine to approve it. The design waiver they need is for 1 ft. of depth. One loading zone is needed and they are supposed to be 12 ft. wide and 45 ft. long. They are proposing one long loading zone in the back of the building. It's 170 ft. long and they want an 8 ft. wide x 170 ft. loading zone. On a site like this, his opinion is that the major traffic will come from the front of the building; there won't be much in the back. He thinks it's reasonable to approve the loading area. We did receive a response from the fire department and they should confer with them as to what they propose with the trash enclosure. He also recommends a deed consolidation of all three lots into one be made a condition of approval.

Rob – forgot to mention that he feels the back of the building should be “dressed up” a bit by adding some landscaping, since it backs up to a residential block with homes that face it. He is pleased as to what they did and thinks it will be much better than it is today and thanked them for cooperating.

Bob – what about lighting?

Andy – it conforms with our code and they show the details. There are freestanding lights in the parking areas and then there is wall mounted at the entrance doors.

Lou – asked about the delivery hours with having a residential area there and is there a sidewalk for product to sit if it's delivered off hours?

Matt – there is no sidewalk, but the owner can answer the hours of delivery.

Harry – the deliveries will be put into a storage area and he can't imagine off hours deliveries

Yogi – we won't get any off-hour deliveries. It's from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Bill then questioned Yogi Patel, one of the owners. Questions dealt with:
Deliveries and trucks; recycling, trash, the laundromat use and the pizzeria use.

Greg – questioned the one-way driveway off of Rt. 9 into the rear of the property. Asked if signage could be put up to delineate the rear for deliveries and employee parking only. At the front of the property, it's just a swale and he wanted to make sure it met the design standards. Asked if there would be other locations for the trash enclosure.

Matt – you don't want to put it off of Keefer or the front and the only other spot is the other side of the building. Since the grocery store will generate the most trash, it was best to put it closer to that store.

Bill – brought up Mr. Patel's desire to keep the existing grocery store open during construction. We have a couple of solutions and they are agreeable to any reasonable signage or separation that will be needed for safety issues.

Bob – he asked the board professionals if this necessitates a phasing plan.

Rob – yes it should clarify exactly how the safety features will be laid out. We can review it.

Matt – explained that the reason for the submittal of the amended plans was due to keeping the grocery store operational during construction. They also cleaned up some landscaping that Rob wanted.

Harry - we've done a lot of buildings that have phasing. We are thrilled to death that he is doing this new building. We will work it out.

Bill – questioned Matt regarding the positive and negative criteria; lot coverage and variances needed. Even though they need a variance for lot coverage, they have reduced the amount that it already has. They agree to all of the professionals' comments and conditions in their reports.

Harry – described the building and went through the design of it and its characteristics. There will be four uses: the grocery store, that will take up most of the building; a pizzeria; a laundromat and a small barber shop. They took into consideration the look of the building since it's 170 ft. long. It kind of looks like a Cracker Barrel type of building. There will be some dry storage upstairs for the grocery store only.

Bob opened the meeting to the public.

Mario Flores – 207 Keefer Avenue – he lives directly behind the building and he thinks they are doing a great thing because right now it's chaos. He asked if the lights were going to be bright and keep him up during the night and if parking would be blocking the road. As to drainage, when it currently rains, he has a lot of water that stays in his driveway and down the street a bit. Will the new building make this worse?

Matt – explained the lights are a standard pole with a standard box that has a rear cutoff, so much of the light will go forward. We can certainly add a back shield to the rear of the lights if there ends up being a problem afterwards. We are only touching our side of the street, so the drainage on our side will be taken care of. It wouldn't be adding to his problem.

Brenda Burroughs – 321 S. New Road – she is happy with what they are doing because she has seen the eyesore her whole life. She had drainage questions too, but they were answered.

Edwin Miles – 313 S. New Road – he wanted to know how much they were touching of Orchard Avenue.

Matt – we will be doing new curb and sidewalk on our half of the road and not across the street and it will be widened to take into account the traffic.

Bob closed the public portion.

Bill – we presented our application and requesting the specified variances and waivers mentioned: Parking space size; landscaping between the front of the building and parking area; paving cross section; aisle width in the rear loading area. We will be doing a deed consolidation and a phased plan which will be reviewed administratively and signage plans will be sent for review administratively as well. He asked that the resolution include the approval of keeping the grocery store open during

construction, unless that falls under the phasing plan.

Debbie – Absecon needs this and thanked them for doing it. It looks absolutely beautiful and if it starts something positive, it's a great thing. She hopes all the people who are around it are too.

Kim – agrees as well and she is thrilled about it.

Betty – we really need this especially during the times we are going through.

Joe – we will need a motion to approve the preliminary and final major site plan with two variances being lot coverage and front yard setback and the conditions in our professional's reports.

Motion to grant approval – Deb Reilly – second- by Betty Howell

ROLL CALL: Horton, yes; Howell, yes; Kirk, yes; Reilly, yes; Seher, yes; Tiberio, yes; Strugala, yes; Preston, yes

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Joseph McGroarty - \$689 for general Planning Board matters

Andy Previti - \$43.75 and \$396.79 for Gokul Brothers, LLC

Rob Reid - \$1,182.50 for Gokul Brothers, LLC; \$110.00 for WPAbscon, LLC; \$522.50 for TimTay, LLC; \$1,100.00 for Planning Board services dealing with the proposed Transit Village Ordinance; \$2,640.50 for Planning Board services regarding potential future Ordinance revisions

Motion to approve the bills – Betty Howell – second – Lou Strugala
All were in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting – Betty Howell – second – Nick Tiberio
All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Tina Lawler, Secretary

Approved: 12/9/2020