

ALLOWAY TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD

Township Municipal Building, Auditorium
49 South Greenwich Street
Alloway, New Jersey 08001

MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING –March 12, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:02 P.M.

Statement of adequate notice of meeting was read and the flag salute performed.

Present: Walter Leslie, Betsy Burden, Craig Kane, Beth Reilly, Kristen Coleman, Warren Wieting, Tracy Stites (Alternate No. 2), Ron Zarin (Alternate No. 1), Patrick Jamison (Alternate No. 4)

Absent: Alexis Coleman, Jack Cianfrani, Allen English, Mark Stecher (Alternate No. 3)

Also present: Michael Albano, Solicitor; Mark Brunermer, Engineer

Tracy Stites - Alternate #2 sworn by Solicitor Albano.

A Motion was made by Reilly, seconded by K. Coleman, to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2014 meeting. Unanimous voice vote.

Vice Chairman Burden opened the meeting to the public for comment on matters not on the agenda. None.

Public comment closed.

Resolutions: None.

Business:

Ranch Hope (B 61, L 7) – Applicant’s professionals, Jean Chetney, Esquire, Robert Seeberger, P.E., and Dale Boston, P.P., were sworn, as well as David L. Bailey, Jr., CEO of Ranch Hope.

Ms. Chetney questioned Mr. Bailey about the project, as well as requesting him to give an overview of Ranch Hope’s operation and services provided to youth at the facility. Mr. Bailey explained Ranch Hope is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and has faithfully provided both short- and long-term Christ-centered care to youths from South Jersey. The complex currently is home to a shelter, temporary residence to 57 boys, has a 6-bed diabetic care unit, the Strang School, as well as a cafeteria, gym, indoor athletic area, auto shop, horticulture center, and Cowan Cottage (which is to be demolished to make room for part of the proposed improvements). Ranch Hope is subject to bi-annual State inspections which review life safety and the quality of the program(s) being provided. The State is requiring the facility to be updated in order to continue operation at the site as individual bedrooms and a more family-inspired setting are now required for youths residing therein. They have already replaced two structures (on existing footprints which required no Planning Board approvals, only construction permits) and will continue, if approved, with the construction of eight (8) new family living-based cottages.

Ranch Hope appeared before the Board in 2005 to update the administration building and shelter which added to the capacity of residents by 10. They also appeared in 2007 when the main office was damaged by fire, needed to be rebuilt and enlarged, as well as adding additional storage.

Mr. Bailey discussed the positive and negative criteria and offered that the facility will be able to continue to serve the youth in the area, provide counselling, and offer safe, spacious housing. They have been a positive member of the community in that they provide a location to conduct sporting events and practices, hold church group meetings, have supported the Salem County Fair, local fire company, and host a new traveling baseball team in the athletic center.

Ms. Chetney marked as Exhibit 1 the March 8, 2014 Letter of Interpretation received from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and later Exhibits 2 and 3, respectively, the front elevation and floor plan for the structures.

Mr. Bailey continued by explaining the project is estimated to cost approximately \$1,500,000, and they have secured partial funding through their current \$5 Million Capital Campaign, and will obtain the balance from local banks. Construction is proposed to begin, if approved, in or about June and end approximately 18 months thereafter.

Member Leslie requested Mr. Bailey to confirm that no additional students will be housed at the facility, and that there will only be one youth per bedroom. He also questioned whether meals will be prepared in the cottages and was advised that meals will be prepared in the existing cafeteria and brought to the cottages at mealtime; however, there will be efficiency-style kitchens installed in each new cottage for basic functions and reheating meals, etc. Mr. Bailey also confirmed no additional students will be housed at the facility.

Mr. Albano requested confirmation of the number of youth approved to be housed at the facility. Mr. Bailey confirmed the number is 76, with 53 currently in residence, most of which are there for varying degrees of time, depending on individual situations.

Ms. Chetney then introduced Dale Boston, Professional Planner. Mr. Albano confirmed that Mr. Boston has previously been qualified as an expert in his field to provide opinions and testimony in applications of this nature.

He discussed the site plan identifying the eight (8) cottages to be built, their placement on the campus, as well as parking and lighting for the site. He felt the improvements are inherently beneficial as they will promote the public health, safety and welfare of the residents, as well as meeting the needs of the area.

With regard to negative criteria, there will be no substantial detrimental impact as the site is located in a rural area so no great change will be felt by the erection of the new cottages, no noise will be generated, odors, and it is compatible with the Zoning Ordinance as stated in the 2007 resolution.

Thereafter, drainage, lighting, and landscaping were discussed and applicant's engineer, Robert Seeberger, P.E., was introduced. Mr. Albano again confirmed that Mr. Seeberger has previously been qualified as an expert in his field to provide opinions and testimony in applications of this nature.

Mr. Seeberger advised increased drainage will not be an issue as all runoff drains to the South below the northerly proposed cottages off of roofs into ditches and existing swales. The structures proposed to the South will drain to the roadway, then into wetlands and ditches. This project is under the limits of the existing Stormwater development guidelines.

Mr. Brunermer, the Board's Engineer, advised the Letter of Interpretation (A-1) buffers are clear from the area intended to be developed.

Member Kane, also a member of the Township's Environmental Commission, questioned whether the five (5') foot sidewalks proposed could be constructed of porous/pervious materials, instead of impervious. It was discussed that sometimes the pervious material fails due to lack of maintenance. Mr. Kane questioned whether the horticultural adviser at the site could maintain same, as well as develop rain gardens and/or utilize rain barrels to divert some of the anticipated runoff.

Mr. Kane questioned what type of lighting will be utilized. The lighting will be "shoebox" style which will center the light downward onto the roadway, sidewalks, etc. and will not illuminate into the sky. Additionally, Mr. Seeberger advised, in a situation such as this, low poles will be used and the lights will be below tree level.

Mr. Kane requested the principals of the project to work with Mr. Brunermer to utilize native plant species. Mr. Kane is to provide a list which they may work from.

Mark R. Brunermer, the Board's Engineer, had no additional comments to the testimony, and requested only that the Applicant work with the Township Engineer and Construction Official, as well as satisfying all other outside agency approvals.

Ms. Chetney requested the requirement of performance and maintenance bonds be waived due to Applicant being a non-profit organization. The issue was discussed by the Board, including how much bonding would be set at for performance and maintenance based upon the cost of the project, if required.

A motion was first made for the use variance to approve the construction of eight (8) cottages with associated improvements with the positive and negative criteria having been met. Motion made by Member Kane, seconded by Member K. Coleman. A roll call vote was taken with seven (7) affirmatives votes and two (2) abstentions.

A motion was then made to grant the site plan and construct same as noted on the plans, limiting the number of students, with shoebox lighting being utilized, landscaping installed with the assistance of a list of native species provided by the Environmental Commission, considering the use of porous/pervious sidewalks, waiving the requirement to post performance and maintenance bonds, and complying with all other regulatory agencies. Said Motion was made by Member Reilly, and seconded by Member Leslie. A roll call vote was taken with seven (7) affirmative votes and one (1) abstention.

Vice Chairman Burden opened the meeting to the public for comment on matters not on the agenda. None.

Public comment closed.

Correspondence: None.

On motion by Reilly, seconded by K. Coleman, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM. Unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne D. Pierce
Planning Board Secretary