

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING
March 22, 2021**

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Monaco at 7:00 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

CHAIR MONACO ANNOUNCED THAT IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH THE EXECUTIVE ORDERS SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR AND IN AN EFFORT TO FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES RECOMMENDED BY THE CDC, THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY FOR ALL BOARD MEMBERS, BOARD PROFESSIONALS, APPLICANT AND APPLICANT'S TEAM, ANY INTERESTED PARTIES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO VIEW MEETINGS LIVE USING WEBEX WHICH ALLOWS THEM TO "RAISE A HAND" AND CONTRIBUTE WITH VOICE AND VIDEO DURING THE PUBLIC PORTIONS OF THE MEETING. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO ARE CALLING IN BY PHONE WILL ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE WHEN CALLED UPON TO SPEAK.

ROLL CALL

Board Members in Attendance:

Albanese, J.

Allen, J. (Arrived at 7:10 p.m.)

Cook, J.

Duffy, E.

Filler, C.

Fort, B.

John, C.

Monaco, R.

Rohrbach, T.

Hindle, J.

Others Present:

Attorney Kathryn Razin for Board Attorney Jonathan Drill, Esq., Board Planner Michael Sullivan, Board Engineer Rob O'Brien, Construction Official Angela DeVoe and Board Secretary Ann Marie Lehberger

MINUTES

Ms. Fort, Chair Monaco, Ms. Allen and Mr. Albanese abstained

Ms. Filler moved, and Ms. Duffy seconded a motion to approve the March 8, 2021 minutes.

The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS

There were no resolutions presented for Board consideration.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chair Monaco noted that a memo was received from Township Committee dated 3/2/21 with a Resolution to accept the recommendation of the Planning Board for Block 36 as an Area in Need of Redevelopment.

PUBLIC HEARING

Branchburg Route 22 LLC (Verano)

Appl# PB19-011- B 14 Lot 49, 3576 Route 22

Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan- Cannabis Grow Facility

Attorney Frank Regan was present on behalf of the applicant.

The following individuals were present for the applicant. It was noted that they were previously sworn

Ted Bayer, applicant's engineer

Arie Henry, construction project manager for the applicant

Paul Psenka, applicant's architect

Board Planner Michael Sullivan was sworn. It was noted that Board Engineer Rob O'Brien and Construction Official Angela DeVoe were previously sworn.

Exhibits presented:

A-1 Revised Site Plan dated 3/11/21

B-1 Photo of Rear of the Building taken by Board Planner Michael Sullivan on 3/22/21

B-2 Photo of Front of the Building taken by Board Planner Michael Sullivan on 3/22/21

Attorney Frank Regan was present on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Regan explained that based on the comments from the last hearing, the applicant's engineer revised the site plans.

Referencing Exhibit, A-1, Ted Bayer, the applicant's engineer provided an overview of the changes made to the site plan as follows:

- The proposed fire lane will be moved south away from front of building
- The fire lane will be curbed
- ADA parking will be installed between the fire lane and the front of the building
- Pavement will be removed within the parking lot adjacent to Island Road and Rt. 22 to eliminate spaces and provide planted buffers. The impervious coverage will be reduced by over 3.5%
- A vinyl fence is proposed behind the fire lane that will be screened with landscaping
- Center curb island parking spaces will be eliminated to provide pedestrian route to front entrance
- Pavement and parking spaces will be removed at the west side of building and restored to lawn area
- All entrance and exit driveways to Rt. 22 will remain open
- The Island Road entrance will be used by emergency vehicles only and signage will be provided, and gates will be removed

The Board expressed concern about vehicles being able to exit safely through the western

exit onto Route 22 due to visibility and the incline.

Mr. Bayer described the proposed sound barrier fence that will be installed on the western side of the building.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan questioned what the sound protection elements in the wall were made of and how it will hold up over time. Mr. Regan confirmed that the applicant will provide all details of the sound barrier wall to the Board's professionals for their review and agree to make modifications if deemed necessary.

The Board requested that additional information on the footings of the proposed sound barrier be provided to the construction office.

In response to a question of the Board, Mr. Bayer confirmed that there will be an underground storage tank installed for graywater. He also noted that there is an existing tank on site that holds clean well water.

Mr. Bayer stated that a landscaping plan and a site lighting plan have been provided.

In reference to the lighting plan provided, Board Planner Michael Sullivan recommended that the illumination be managed to reduce the intensity of lighting where unnecessary at night and that a diagram also be provided with an accompanying description of how the illumination will be managed. Mr. Sullivan also noted that the plan should include a calculation summary table so that the Board can better understand uniformity of the proposed site lighting.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Henry stated that some lights would need to remain on in the parking lot at night for safety.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Bayer confirmed that after they remove the proposed number of parking spaces there will still be more parking spaces than needed at the site. Mr. Bayer explained that the applicant is a tenant on the property and there could potentially be a different use on the property in the future

Mr. Bayer reviewed the reports of the Board's Engineer.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Bayer confirmed that the existing ramped walkway in the rear of the building will be removed.

The Board requested clarification as to whether there would be a berm installed. Mr. Bayer noted that a small berm is proposed at the entrance to Island Road and Route 22 to provide a screen for the trees.

The Board questioned if a sidewalk was proposed on Route 22. Mr. Bayer stated that there is not a sidewalk proposed on Route 22.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien requested additional detail on where the proposed pavement repair would be. Mr. Bayer stated that it would be repaired as needed.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien noted that the applicant should get input from emergency services regarding the use of the Island Road entrance. Mr. Bayer confirmed that the gates would be removed.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan recommended that a plan showing proposed curbing and curbing to be removed be provided to provide a clear picture of the circulation on the site.

Mr. Bayer reviewed the report of the Board's Planner.

The Board asked if the existing freestanding sign would be removed. Mr. Bayer confirmed that it would be removed.

Mr. Bayer reviewed the proposed landscaping plan and noted that it would be clarified and updated as requested by the Board Planner.

Mr. Bayer explained that the proposed fencing and sound wall will match the color of the exterior of the existing building.

Mr. Bayer reviewed the variances and exceptions required as follows:

Variances

§148-21.E(2)	Maximum impervious coverage
§148-21.E(4)(a)[3]	County or state road buffer
§148-21.E(4)(b)[3]	Local street buffer
§148-21.E(4)(d)	Residential zone buffer
§148-52.A	Fence height
§148-52.B(5)	Sound wall height
§148-52.B(5)	Screening of mechanical equipment

Exceptions

§148-67.B	Lighting in parking areas, walkways, etc.
§148-70.A(3)	Landscaping of off-street parking area
§148-70.H(1)	Loading area requirement

The Board questioned the penetrations that were made in the front of the building. Mr. Henry explained that they are the return and supply ducts for the air handlers. He confirmed that it was a closed system.

The Board questioned if they would be screened. Mr. Henry stated that the fence and landscaping will screen the mechanical equipment from the highway.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan noted that the duct work in the front of the building is not

clearly shown on the architectural plans.

Mr. Sullivan shared two photos of the site that he took that were marked into evidence as B-1 and B-2.

The Board questioned what the insulation on the ducts would be made of. Mr. Henry noted that it was standard fiberglass material.

The Board expressed concern about the visual impacts of the ducts in the front of the building since they are higher than the proposed fence.

The Board questioned if the insulation came in a color that would match the building. Mr. Henry stated that he did not know.

The Board questioned if the vent openings and exhaust fan are causing odor to escape. Mr. Henry stated that the vent openings are covered with plastic and explained that since the last meeting, charcoal filters and a bubble gum air diffuser have also been installed.

The Board questioned if the applicant had a mechanical plan showing all the rooftop equipment.

Mr. Henry stated that the applicant is committed to address any issues that may remain with odor once construction is complete.

Chair Monaco stated that the applicant will need to come back to the Board with a plan on how they will adequately screen or shield the ducts in the front of the building. Board Planner Michael Sullivan noted that the plan should be in color, at a scale that would be clear and in dimensions that will help the Board visualize what is proposed.

Paul Psenka, the applicant's architect noted that the intention was to paint the ductwork the same color of the building so that it blends in.

The Board noted that painting of the duct work could affect the UL rating and would need to be confirmed with the manufacturer. Mr. Psenka stated that the duct work could also be capped.

Chair Monaco noted that the actual penetrations that were made on the building for the ducts are higher than what is shown on architecture plans

In terms of the odor, the Board stated that they would like to see a plan that shows where all the exhaust outlets are as well as an internal ducting plan that clearly shows where the air is coming from.

The Board also requested a contact person from the applicant that can be reached at any time during the day to report odor issues.

The Board reiterated that they would need assurance up front that there will not be an issue with odor at the site.

The Board questioned what percent of production that the facility was currently operating at. Mr. Henry stated that they were currently running at 25-30% capacity.

The Board also asked the applicant to provide details on the protocol for the alarm system if it goes off in the middle of the night.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of the witnesses.

Bryan Iwicki, Bishop Place explained that he would like to see the odor mitigation plan because he lives nearby and smells the odor all day long.

Pat Deseno, North Ryland Road also noted that she smells the odor.

Neil Hendrickson, Glenmont Road commented on the planting plan and questioned if the applicant would consider diversity in the species selection.

Todd Sona, Ridge Road stated that the smell from the site is pungent and questioned if any of the Board members or professionals had been to the site and also smelled the odor.

Andrew Roth, Route 523 asked for clarification on the permitted use and the production process.

Chair Monaco reviewed the items that were discussed that the applicant will need to come back to the Board with additional information as follows:

- An interior duct work plan and roof top plan showing locations of any and all exhaust penetrations on the building
- An odor control plan that uses best practices
- Details on the alarm system and how it operates
- Clear plan on how the duct work in the front of the building will be screened
- Circulation placed on the site plan and input from emergency services regarding the Island Road access

Construction Official Angela DeVoe went over the construction permits that that applicant has at this time.

It was announced that the application would be carried to the meeting on April 26, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. The Applicant agreed to an extension of time through April 26, 2021. It was noted that it would be a virtual meeting and there will be new log in information for the meeting that will be provided on the agenda that will be posted on the Township website. It was also noted that those without computer and internet access can call the Board Secretary directly to obtain the call-in information. No additional notice will be provided.

OTHER BUSINESS

Request for New Street Name- Ryland Developers LLC

Chair Monaco noted that this request has been referred to the Township Street Naming Committee for review and recommendation.

Request for Vacation of an Easement on Property-Block 72 Lot 15, 102 - Bertron Road

The Board requested that Board Planner Michael Sullivan review the request and provide a recommendation back to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Cook moved, and Mr. Mueller seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marie Lehberger
Planning Board Secretary