

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MINUTES  
VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING  
April 26, 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.

Cook, J.

Duffy, E.

Fort, B.

John, C.

Monaco, R.

Mueller, A.

Rohrbach, T.

Hindle, J.

**Board Members Absent**

Filler, C.

**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

Mr. Cook moved, and Mr. Mueller seconded a motion to approve the April 12, 2021 minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

**RESOLUTIONS**

There were no resolutions presented for Board consideration.

## **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.

Ted Bayer, applicant's engineer

Arie Henry, construction project manager for the applicant

Paul Psenka, applicant's architect

Keith Weber, applicant's mechanical engineer

Seth Morrison, applicant's security consultant

Mr. Weber and Mr. Morrison were sworn. It was noted that Mr. Bayer, Mr. Henry and Mr. Psenka were previously sworn. It was also noted that Board Planner Michael Sullivan, Board Engineer Rob O'Brien and Construction Official Angela DeVoe were also previously sworn.

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. He also stated that the applicant's mechanical engineer and security consultant were present and would provide testimony this evening.

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

- A gate with a Knox Box will be installed at the western exit onto Route 22 so that the delivery and emergency vehicles can go around the site in a counterclockwise direction.
- A gate with Knox Box will be installed at the Island Road entrance and access will be limited to emergency and service vehicles.
- Directional arrows were added to parking bays near the building entrance, truck route, maintenance lane and fire lane. "No Parking Fire Lane" markings were added as requested by the Fire Official.
- "One Way" signs will be added for clear identification of the traffic pattern.
- The ADA parking area was reconfigured as suggested by the Board Planner.
- The pedestrian walkway will be striped.
- Curb detail was added to the plan.
- The main entrance/exit to Route 22 will remain open. The existing gates will be removed.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan noted that the curbed areas must be clearly identified on the plans.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan requested that the planting plan be updated, clarified and the buffers clearly delineated.

Mr. Bayer explained that the lighting plan was updated to show the light spillage on the property extended to zero and the color of the light was reduced. He stated that the hours for the lighting would be time clock controlled from dawn till dusk for security purposes.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan questioned the uniformity of the lighting proposed on site and noted that details of the proposed new lighting fixture must be provided along with diagram showing the areas used to calculate the lighting levels.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien questioned if new light fixtures had already been installed on site. Mr. Henry confirmed that the fixtures had been replaced.

Mr. Bayer confirmed that tan vinyl fencing to match the color of the building will be installed along the western side of the building.

The Board questioned if there was room for landscaping between the proposed fence in front of the air handlers and the fire lane. Mr. Bayer confirmed that it was a 10-foot-wide buffer strip that could accommodate plantings. Board Planner Michael Sullivan confirmed that there was adequate space for plantings noting that they suggest a different species be used. The applicant agreed to work with planner regarding species and placement of the plantings.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien expressed concern about the circulation through the site noting that it should be adequately signed to avoid confusion.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien requested that the plans be updated to show the existing versus the proposed curbing.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien also questioned why they are proposing more ADA parking spaces than required. Mr. Bayer confirmed that some of the spaces near the sidewalk can be removed to avoid any conflicts.

In response to a question from the Board Engineer, Mr. Bayer confirmed that a fire truck was used as a template for the truck circulation plan.

The Board questioned if tractor trailers would be accessing Island Road. Mr. Bayer stated that all deliveries in and out will be by vans.

The Board questioned if the tractor trailer truck spaces in the rear of the building are needed. Mr. Bayer noted that they are existing. It was also noted that the building is leased by the applicant.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien asked for clarification of the total disturbance on site.

The Board questioned why the pedestrian walkway cuts off. Mr. Bayer explained that it is designed for people who are walking in the parking lot.

The Board questioned if the proposed plantings along the Route 22 buffer would interfere with a potential sidewalk along Route 22.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan requested that details on the material and color of the proposed sound wall be added to the plan.

The Board expressed concern about the exhaust from the vans entering the building for deliveries.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of Mr. Bayer.

Todd Terricone, Lamington Road questioned if there was adequate signage proposed on the site for people driving and walking near the property.

Referencing the colored architectural rendering of the building, Paul Psenka, the applicant's architect explained that the intent is to try and screen the ductwork that is above the fence line as much as possible. He stated that the actual units will be below the fence and not visible. Mr. Psenka explained that they looked at several different options and determined that the best option would be to paint the ductwork to have it blend in with the existing building.

The Board questioned if the ductwork can be painted. Mr. Psenka confirmed that the ductwork is made of metal and can be painted.

The Board expressed concern that the paint will peel and wear over time.

Construction Official Angela DeVoe noted that the ductwork has insulation around it that will ultimately be painted.

Board Sullivan Michael Sullivan requested that manufacture specifications be provided as well as a mockup of the colors of all the proposed elements to confirm that they match as closely as possible.

Construction Official Angela DeVoe noted that the construction office would be issuing permits and ensuring code compliance.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of Mr. Psenka. There were no questions.

Keith Weber, the applicant's mechanical engineer was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. Referencing the mechanical plans that were previously submitted, Mr. Weber gave an overview of the building rooftop equipment that is proposed. He explained that

that the way the systems work in the grow rooms for these type of facilities is that they do not have any outside air or exhaust to them so none of the air handlers have any outside air or exhaust air component to them. He noted that all the duct work penetrations will be sealed airtight.

The Board asked for confirmation that they are completely recirculating the indoor air and that no fresh air comes into the system and no exhaust comes out. Mr. Weber confirmed that was correct for the grow areas.

In response to question from the Board, Mr. Weber confirmed that no new air is introduced into the grow areas.

Mr. Weber clarified that the cabinet is the housing of the air handling unit and penetrations are the duct work that goes in and out of the building.

Mr. Weber explained that there are exhaust fans in the locker rooms, bathrooms and in the common areas that have a carbon filtration system.

In response to a question of the Board, Mr. Weber explained that there is an emergency exhaust fan on site in a storage room that will ventilate the space in the event of an emergency.

The Board questioned what was in the storage room. Mr. Weber explained that they do have some butane that is used in the process stored on site.

The Board questioned the ventilation in the drying rooms. Mr. Weber explained that the units are set up the same as in the grow rooms.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Weber confirmed that the carbon filtration system on the exhaust fans will mitigate any odor that may escape into the common areas.

The Board questioned if there is data available on the carbon filtration systems to show that they are effective for odor mitigation. Mr. Weber explained that this is the best known practice for these facilities to mitigate odor and is a proven reliable technology.

The Board questioned if the applicant considered PCU (Pollution Control Units). Mr. Weber stated that it is not a product that they have used.

The Board questioned what the maintenance was on the activating charcoal filters. Mr. Weber stated that it was not any different than any of the other filters used in the air handlers.

The Board questioned if there is a maintenance plan in place for these filters. The applicant agreed to put a standard operating procedure in place.

The Board questioned if the best available technology is being proposed for odor mitigation. Mr. Weber confirmed that this is standardly used in this industry.

It was noted that there is still active construction going on at the site.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Weber described the air path through the grow process.

The Board questioned if there have been any efforts to try and trap the air. Mr. Weber noted that there are several sets of doors in between.

The Board discussed that they want to have a process in place beforehand to be able to address complaints about odor should they come in. Mr. Henry confirmed that the applicant is committed to address any issues that may arise.

The Board questioned if there is was anything out on the market that could filter the odor better. Mr. Henry stated that the use of the charcoal filters is proven methodology and standard practice in the industry.

The Board questioned if air scrubbers could be used. Mr. Weber stated that it was another similar choice of technology.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Henry confirmed that the full odor mitigation system has not yet been installed on site.

The Board discussed the process on how odor complaints will be addressed when received.

The Board questioned if the external air handlers run all the time. Mr. Weber confirmed that the units do operate continuously when the grow rooms are in use.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of Mr. Weber.

Michelle Jaunarjas, Pulaski Road questioned if there was any current technology that could measure the odor levels. Mr. Weber stated that it was not his area of expertise.

Seth Morrison, the applicant's security consultant was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. Mr. Morrison described the security system at the site. He explained that due to construction there had been some false alarms activated. He explained that when an alarm goes off, notification is immediate to those people from the client on the call list first and then police are notified.

The Board questioned who the Township could contact to turn the alarm off in the event of a false alarm. Mr. Morrison stated that they would work with the Township police and fire on a procedure.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of Mr. Morrison.

Michelle Jaunarjas, Pulaski Road questioned how far the alarm could be heard. Mr. Morrison stated that he did not know how far it would be heard.

The Board commented on a previous proposal on the site regarding a cell tower.

Chair Monaco opened the public portion of the meeting for comments from the public.

Michelle Jaunarjas, Pulaski Road was sworn and thanked the Board for offering the meetings virtually and by phone and commented on the odor and security at the site.

Andrew Roth, Route 523 was sworn expressed concern about the nature of the project.

Holly Roth, Route 523 was sworn and expressed concern about a potential communication tower in the future on the site. It was noted that there was no communication tower proposed as part of this application.

Chair Monaco reviewed the items discussed that the applicant will need to provide as follows:

- Curbing must be delineated on the plans
- Update the planting plan
- Provide a detail for the gate and the new lighting fixtures
- Details for the carbon filters
- Mockup of the proposed colors for all the proposed elements in the front of the building to ensure they will blend
- Standard Operating Procedures for changing out the carbon filters and alarm procedures
- Detailed procedure for dealing with complaints and issues regarding odor.

The Board deliberated and discussed whether to vote on Preliminary Site Plan only and have the applicant come back for Final Approval or consider both Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval at this time with the outstanding items listed as conditions of approval.

Mr. Albanese moved, and Ms. Duffy seconded, a motion to approve the application for Branchburg Route 22 LLC for Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan with Variances subject to the conditions discussed. The roll call vote follows:

Member	Motion	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Not Eligible	Recused
Albanese			X					
Allen			X					
Cook				X				
Filler						X		
Fort			X					
John			X					
Mueller				X				
Duffy			X					
Monaco				X				
Rohrbach Alternate #1				X				
Hindle Alternate #2							X	

**OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Resolution of the Township of Readington County of Hunterdon and State of New Jersey amending Resolution #R-2018-95 directing the Planning Board to conduct a Preliminary Investigation of the Three Bridges Study Area (Block 81, Lot 1) as a possible area in need of redevelopment (non-condemnation) to include block 81, lots 2, 3 & 4

Mr. Cook moved, and Ms. Duffy seconded a motion to engage Clarke Caton Hintz to conduct a Preliminary Investigation of the Three Bridges Study Area (Block 81, Lot 1) as a possible area in need of redevelopment (non-condemnation) to include block 81, lots 2, 3 & 4. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Request for Vacation of an Easement on Property-Block 72 Lot 15.10, 102 Bertron Road- Memo from Board Planner dated 4/21/21.

Ms. Duffy moved, and Ms. Allen seconded a motion to recommend to the Township Committee the vacation of the easement on Block 72 Lot 15.10. The motion carried unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Fort moved, and Mr. Cook seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Ann Marie Lehberger  
 Planning Board Secretary