

The Chairman called the meeting to order and stated it was being held in compliance with the "Open Public Meetings Act" and had been duly noticed and published as required by law.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mr. DiNatale, Ms. Augustine, Mr. Ravitz, Mr. Rashatwar, Mr. Schwenke

Absent: Mr. Kleiman, Mr. Nicini, Mr. Kleinman, Mr. Platt, Ms. Branch, Mr. Schallenhammer

Also present was Mr. Norman, Board Solicitor.

Board engineer Mr. Rakesh Darji is sworn in.

MEMORIALIZATION OF RESOLUTIONS

PC#24-013

Dean Development Associates, LLC

Extension of Approvals

122 Route 73

Block 252; Lots 9&9.01

Mr. Dinatale makes a motion to memorialize the resolution, seconded by Mr. Rashatwar. Motion carries by the following Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Mr. DiNatale, Ms. Augustine, Mr. Rashatwar, Mr. Schwenke

ABSTAIN: Mr. Ravitz

NAYS: None

PC#24-002

Jerome Muratore

Minor Subdivision

54&56 Lafayette Ave

Block 271; Lots 9&9.01

Ms. Augustine makes a motion to memorialize the resolution, seconded by Mr. Rashatwar. Motion carries by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Mr. DiNatale, Ms. Augustine, Mr. Ravitz, Mr. Rashatwar, Mr. Schwenke

ABSTAIN: None

NAYS: Mr. Kleiman, Mr. Nicini, Mr. Kleinman, Mr. Platt, Ms. Branch, Mr. Schallenhammer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Ms. Augustine to approve the minutes dated August 14, 2024; motion seconded by Mr. DiNatale. Motion carries by the assenting voice vote of all present board members with the exception of Mr. Ravitz, who must recuse himself.

Motion made by Ms. Augustine to approve the minutes dated August 28, 2024; motion seconded by Mr. Schwenke. Motion carries by the assenting voice vote of all present board members with the exceptions of Mr. DiNatale, Mr. Ravitz, and Mr. Rashatwar, who must recuse themselves.

NEW BUSINESS

PC#24-007

Racetrack Gas LLC

Minor Site Plan with Bulk (c) Variance

18 Berlin Rd

Block 271; Lots 9&9.01

Appearing before the board is the applicant's attorney Joseph Pinto of law firm Polino and Pinto, P.C. At this time the applicant, Mr. Sakvinder Singh and the applicant's engineer, Mr. Marur Dev of Dev Engineering LLC are sworn in. Mr. Pinto testifies that the applicant is seeking to convert the existing two bay garage onsite into a convenience store. He states that the current tenant of the garage will leave pending board approval of the application. Mr. Pinto states that as the site is an existing non-conforming use, the applicant is requesting multiple bulk variances.

Mr. Singh testifies that he has owned the gas station property for 7 years and it has been used as a gas station since time of purchase. Mr. Singh states that they are seeking to convert the garage into a gas station to improve business, as the Royal Farms nearby takes business with having a convenience store as well. Mr. Singh states that the proposed convenience store will be small scale and offer grab-and-go type products. He testifies that no expansion of the garage structure where the convenience store will be is being proposed. The applicant's engineer, Mr. Dev states that the existing structure is approximately 1,400 sq ft in size. Mr. Singh testifies that a portion of the structure will also be used as an office for operation of the convenience store. He states that there will be 2 employees working per shift and the store will operate from 6AM to 11PM. For trash pickup Mr. Singh states that pickup will occur once a week and for unloading of product only small trucks or vans will be used. He states that he will comply with the engineer's review letter recommendation to place evergreen landscaping at the rear of the property as well as to change the rear parking spaces to diagonal spaces. For entrances and windows Mr. Singh states that the existing garage doors of the structure will be converted into raised windows, and there will be one set of doors for entry and exit. He states that the existing signage on a pole on the property and on the building façade will remain and no exterior changes to the structure will be made besides addition of new windows and possibly painting of the exterior.

The applicant's engineer Mr. Dev testifies that there will be at least four lights on twenty-foot-high poles along the rear of the property, and he is willing to comply with the board engineer's review letter on light pole height. Mr. DiNatale asks board engineer Mr. Darji if anything can be implemented to help reduce light spillage from the lights onto neighboring properties. Mr. Darji states that light shields can be added to efficiently reduce spillage to adjacent properties. Mr. Dev states that there are existing twenty-foot-high light poles at the rear of the property, and they are proposing to add new light poles with new spacing and locations along the rear. Mr. DiNatale asks Mr. Dev if the direction of the lighting will spill out towards neighboring properties. Mr. Dev states that the light poles will be shining downwards, not out towards other properties. Mr. Darji states that installing fourteen-foot-high light poles with light shields would be more beneficial for decreasing light spillage.

Mr. Dev testifies that at the southwest area of the property there is an existing stairway going down below the structure that has railing. For part of the fence in the property, Mr. Darji asks Mr. Dev if they will be removing the portion of the fence that extends into the right of way. Mr. Dev states that the portion of the fence extending into the right of way will be cut.

Mr. Schwenke asks Mr. Darji if any bollards or striking should be added to the area around the areaway and drive aisle. Mr. Darji states that railing currently exists around that area, but the addition of three bollards could help with preventing vehicular traffic encroaching into the areaway. Mr. Schwenke asks Mr. Darji if there is adequate driveway width between the first ADA's loading zone and the canopy. Mr. Darji states that the required aisle width in that area is eighteen feet and there is currently adequate width, but they have asked the applicant to increase parking stall length as they currently don't encompass the eighteen-foot length of a vehicle.

Mr. Darji testifies further on a few points from the review letter. Mr. Darji states that the applicant should provide plans with spot grades for the ADA spaces and the accessible route, and the item should be a condition of approval. Mr. Darji asks the applicant's engineer for testimony on how truck turning for accessibility to the trash enclosure will work, and if they will add turning templates to the plan. Mr. Dev states that truck turning templates will be provided and he will see how the turning templates work with the existing parking spaces.

Mr. Schwenke asks Mr. Darji asks if removal of a parking space would cause non-compliance on parking. Mr. Darji states that it would not. Mr. Darji asks Mr. Dev if gravel area in the rear will be removed and replaced with vegetation as recommended in the review letter. Mr. Dev states that the applicant would agree to replacing the gravel with vegetation.

Mr. Ravitz asks if any environmental remediation requirements would be needed for the structure due to its use as an auto body shop. Mr. Darji testifies that because those are all for the interior of the structure, it would be a matter handled by the Construction department when the applicant goes to obtain construction permits. Mr. Rashatwar asks Mr. Dev if there will be any change to the sewer connections to the structure with the new convenience store use. Mr. Dev states that there will be no changes, and the existing bathroom will stay as is and will be available to both staff and customers. Mr. Darji states that the township sewer engineer should review plans for the sewer connection.

Seeing no further testimony, Mr. Schwenke opens the meeting to the public. Appearing before the board is Agnes Peraino of 113 Haddonfield-Berlin Rd. Ms. Peraino testifies that she likes the proposed change in use from the auto body shop to a convenience store as there are often numerous cars around the property that become an unpleasant sight. She states that she has concerns about traffic safety along Haddonfield-Berlin Rd/561 and Salem Ave. Ms. Peraino asks board members if speed limit or other signage could be put up along the roads around the property. Mr. Ravitz states that the county would have jurisdiction on signage. Mr. Singh states that he could put up drive slow or directional signage within his property along the roads to aid in traffic safety. Ms. Peraino asks Mr. Singh about the timeline for the proposed work. Mr. Singh states that pending the required planning and other approvals

they anticipate a few months, possibly sometime in the first quarter of 2025. Ms. Peraino asks Mr. Singh what kind of food products will be sold at the convenience store. Mr. Singh states that only premade and quick, grab-and-go food products will be available at the store.

Appearing before the board is Ann Corsini of 15 Ford St. Mr. Corsini testifies that she is concerned about flooding into her property from adjacent lots, including from 18 Haddonfield-Berlin Rd. Ms. Corsini states that she is also concerned about speeding/traffic safety along Salem Ave, Ford and 561 as well as trash disposal and littering. Mr. DiNatale asks Mr. Darji if there is anything the applicant would be required to or could do on topography of the edge of the property to address stormwater flooding into other properties. Mr. Darji states that the applicant does not have requirements to alter topography as there is no change in impervious coverage or drainage, but the applicant has agreed to remove a compacted stone area and replace it with vegetation, which would help to reduce stormwater runoff from the property. Ms. Corsini states that the ground at the rear edge of the applicant's property is higher elevation and slopes down towards the neighboring lots and she asks the board about the possibility of putting in a retaining wall at the property to reduce stormwater runoff. Mr. Dev testifies that the portion of the rear edge of the property near the neighboring homes is actually higher than the rest of the property, and there is a belly on the applicant's side of the property where the gravel currently is that absorbs stormwater runoff. Mr. Schwenke states that the spot elevations provided by the applicant also only show lower elevations towards Salem Ave. Mr. Darji testifies that the elevations at that edge of the property indicate that stormwater is flowing towards Salem Ave. Members of the board, Ms. Corsini and the applicant continue to discuss the direction of water flow between the project site and neighboring properties. Mr. Darji asks Mr. Dev if the applicant would be willing to do further surveying to see more grading and how drainage is occurring at the site. Mr. Darji testifies that he could meet with the applicant to review grading at the property to see if any modifications to the grading could be done to direct runoff to the street and away from neighboring properties. Mr. Dev states that he would be willing to do the grading and surveying and review with the township engineer.

Regarding traffic safety and speeding Mr. Ravitz states that staff of the township engineer may be able to assist in getting 'drive slow' and other signage installed along the property.

Mr. Darji asks Mr. Dev if the existing changeable copy sign on the building will be replaced with a new, non-changeable copy sign. The applicant states that the existing sign will be replaced with a new sign and it will not be a changeable copy sign.

Seeing no further public comment, Mr. Ravitz makes a motion to close public portion, seconded by Mr. Rashatwar. Motion carries by the assenting voice vote of all present members.

Ms. Augustine makes a motion to grant minor site plan approval with bulk (c) variance for the property located at 18 Haddonfield-Berlin Rd Block 141 Lot 3 for a change of use from an auto body shop to convenience store and related site improvements with the following conditions/stipulations:

1. Applicant has agreed to comply with the board engineer's review letter dated September 9, 2024
2. Applicant will modify plans to show down-facing lighting fixtures that are fourteen feet high along the rear of the property
3. Applicant will serve only quick, grab-and-go type food products at the store
4. Applicant will provide spot grades and surveys for review, with ADA improvements as needed
5. Applicant will install four bollards along the ramp for pedestrian safety
6. Applicant will remove a portion of the fence from the right-of-way
7. Applicant will have only small vans deliver goods, not full size trucks or tractor-trailers
8. The Township engineer will conduct a review on sewer connections and issue a report
9. Applicant will provide proposed plans for directional signage to the Township engineer for pedestrian safety

Motion seconded by Mr. DiNatale. Motion carries by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Mr. DiNatale, Ms. Augustine, Mr. Ravitz, Mr. Rashatwar, Mr. Schwenke

ABSTAIN: None

NAYS: None

Seeing no further business Mr. Schwenke adjourns the meeting.

Rashane Thapa

Planning Board Secretary

Voorhees Township Minutes prepared by Rashane Thapa. The minutes are intended to reflect the basic comments and action. Verbatim transcripts of all electronic recordings can be available upon proper request and payment