



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday October 30, 2024

Opening:

The regular meeting of the City of Lackawanna Planning and Development Board was called to order at 6:00pm.

Mr. Clark changes to the Board

Mr. Clark informed the Board member Geercken has been moved to the Zoning Board and Debbie Gable our City Assessor will be on the Planning Board as of 12/1/24

Present: Galanti, Algawani, Friend, Zambron, DeSantis, Smith

**Motion to approve minutes for the meeting on 9/25/24: Friend: Second: Zambron
All yeas carried 6-0**

New Business

Item #1

Site Plan Approval

Naef Alhajjaji
19 Wasson Ave
Requesting to open new store
(MR) Mixed Residential

Naef Alhajjaji representing

Mr. Alhajjaji stated we would like to reopen the store, we sold it and the lease ended and we took it back again

Chairwoman Galanti ask if any structural changes

Mr. Alhajjaji replied no

Chairwoman Galanti ask how long has it been between when they operated and now you are taking over

Mr. Alhajjaji said a year

Member Friend ask are there four apartments also

Mr. Alhajjaji said yes

Mr. Hayes informed the Board that they are granted the variance for 14 spaces by the Zoning Board and there is no parking on the property for the apartments or the store.

Member Smith stated you said it is family owned but this piece of property came to us a year ago and it was approved to open a deli and it never did open.

Mr. Alhajjaji said the guy that was going to lease it from my Dad moved to Pennsylvania, so we terminated the lease

Member Smith said so it never opened when it was approved

Mr. Alhajjaji said no

Member Smith ask if Code Enforcement been to the property

Mr. Hayes said they were there a couple of months ago

Member Smith ask what is the status now far as code violations

Mr. Hayes said there are no open written violations on the property and for the business registration we will be going back through everything once it goes through all the departments.

Member Smith said you will have to go in and do an inspection of the residential and commercial

Mr. Hayes said yes

Member Smith ask didn't this property have a history of code enforcement issues in the past.

Mr. Alhadjaji said his father owned the building for ten years

Member Smith ask who is your father

Mr. Alhadjaji said Abdullah

Member Smith said it was a lot of criminal history

Mr. Alhadjaji said how long ago

Member Smith said when you got it and try to give you a way out

Mr. Alhadjaji said when we had it we know Mr. Watkins and Mr. Blue and never had a problem with them. If the people before us did we will make sure it doesn't happen again.

Member Smith stated it was harassment with the people at Family Dollar and what are the hours of operation

Mr. Alhadjaji said 9am to 12midnight

Member Smith said since you have Family Dollar right there and eventually a convenient store on the corner where the gas station is going to be. There is another store 4 blocks up, so what are you going to be doing that is not already there.

Mr. Alhadjaji said they will have bags, accessories, speakers, lottery and whatever comes to mind.

Member Smith said so a clothing store

Mr. Alhadjaji said not really a grocery store with accessories

Chairwoman Galanti said the previous applicant I believe was going to do food preparation inside or are you doing any type of prepared foods on the premises or just selling groceries

Mr. Alhadjaji said if we do hot food or anything like that I have to contact the fire department and Scott

Motion to open public hearing: Galanti: Second: DeSantis

All yeas carried 6-0

Neighbors

Rev Blue-18 Church St- stated they own both parcels on each side of the store, with all of the other development happens with the gas station having a grocery store. There is a grocery store located less than 200 feet away and with Family Dollars there is no need for another grocery store. Also this place has apartments are they handicap accessible with no parking, when we look at this type of store it is not needed in the community. I applauded his afford to try to reestablish but you have those particular stores already going up and there is no need for another grocery store there. I haven't seen the plans for this store, but is there any way to have a public meeting regarding this. I don't know who was contacted by the Planning Board in order to get more senses from the community on this. I don't know what regulations that they have on this, I was contacted, but don't know if any other community or residents in that area was contacted. He was part of the ownership and I don't know when he leased it to another person or when he got it back. During that time there was some suspected activities going on at that time of selling individual diapers, lucies and a lot of things. Some of my memberships have complained about what was going on at that store the harassment. For our congregation this store is not needed because we have the Family Dollar that has more items for the community. With his store I haven't seen the plans even when it was operating it didn't have all the things that were needed the resources for the community. As Pastor of the Second Baptist Church we are not in favor of another grocery store that has limited resources to help with the needs of the community.

Member Smith ask who receives notification when something is happening

Mr. Balon said the immediate neighbors and in this case it was Second Baptist on both sides

Member Smith is concern about the people across the street

Mr. Balon said the property touching and in this case it was Second Baptist Church

Board discuss notifying neighbors

Member DeSantis said my concern with Rev Blue is correct saturating the area with a grocery store and how can this business work with that many stores in that area and also there have been some incidents there over the years. If it is the same ownership then it will be the same type of business cliental and I would like to see some police reports on what activity was there in the past

Mr. Balon said the Zoning Board asks that as well and we did not do any research but we could if you want us to.

Alex Grimes explain he is across from a propose project

Mr. Balon said everyone on Lincoln was notified

Board discuss the publishing of Planning and Zoning

Member DeSantis ask about the dumpster

Mr. Alhajjaji said there is a space next to the yard for upstairs and downstairs
Member DeSantis as is it enclosed

Mr. Alhajjaji said he can put up a fence and the place has always been a store, I don't
know what the big deal is today and most of the people ask about opening the store

Motion to close public hearing: DeSantis: Second: Friend

All yeas carried 6-0

Board is asking for more information on the property such as police reports, past history
and proper notification by code.

Motion to adjourn until all information is presented to the Board for the property located
at 19 Wasson Ave: DeSantis: Second: Smith

All yeas carried 6-0

Item #2

Site Plan Review

Frank Wailand

108 Dona St

Conversion of existing 1921 ERA Church into a Mosque

For the Fouta Islamic Center

(MR) Mixed Residential

Motion to open public hearing: Friend: Second: DeSantis

All yeas carried 6-0

Frank Wailand representing

Mr. Wailand explained last time we were trying to have seven parking spots on the
property and it was a horrible layout. Tonight the Zoning Board allowed street parking
(showing on map) there is more than adequate street parking on Dona for seven cars. We
do have two handicap spots on the site and the reason we changed it around is we have a
ramp entrance for the lower level for the women and for the men there will be a handicap
wheel chair lift to get to the second level. The handicap is in the back for more assessable
and more green space. There is demo going on inside on non bearing walls and cleaning
some areas up.

Member Smith ask when you come in the front door you had to go up steps to get into the
sanctuary, so what is happening now

Mr. Wailand said we have a wheelchair lift in the back of the building, but the front stairs will remain. It is a lot of cosmetic work inside such as insulation and walls to bring it up to code.

Mr. Hayes inform the Board they got granted their seven space variance from the Zoning Board

Chairwoman Galanti said with the parking in the back your two handicap spots and there was a concern about the utilities on the west wall where the gas and electric meters are. The concern was how close people would be driving and what have you changed. You are maintain green space on this side

Mr. Wailand said green space on both sides

Chairwoman Galanti ask about a curb

Mr. Wailand said the curb is only 3 inches high and have been paved numerous times over the years

Chairwoman Galanti said between black top and green space there is nothing

Mr. Wailand replied correct

Chairwoman Galanti said you are going to have to spots is there room for someone to pull in and out

Mr. Wailand said it is limited to two and we have about forty feet behind these cars to maneuver out

Member Smith ask about a gas line

Chairwoman Galanti replied that was the meters on the opposite side of the building

Mr. Wailand said they are ten feet away from the building

Mr. Wailand stated there is little repair work to be done on the bell tower and it will be covered synthetic plastic, also we will keep the gothic windows.

Member Smith ask about the trash

Mr. Wailand said doesn't see no need for a dumpster

Member DeSantis said churches, mosque, etc does not have City pickup

Member Algawani said they do but they are not suppose to but they do

Mr. Wailand said there is no food being served just services

Member DeSantis ask no one will be living there

Mr. Wailand replied no

Motion to close public hearing: Friend: Second: Zambron

All yeas carried 6-0

Motion to approve: Algawani: Second: Smith

All yeas carried 6-0

Item #3

Site Plan Approval

Christopher Wietig

Bethlehem Solar Park LLC

Property owner intends to construct a 1.936 mega watt

Commercial Solar Facility

(MC) Mixed Commercial Industrial

Motion to open public hearing: Zambron; Second: Algawani

All yeas carried 6-0

Lori Riker representing

Ms. Riker explained they were in front of the Board in the Spring of 2022 my company was Benchmark the applicant at that time was On Sun Tower that project fell through and Bethlehem Solar Park LLC is now the owner of the property and will be the operator of the facility. This project is now going to be a community solar project which means the energy will stay in Lackawanna. The Lackawanna residents will have first bid on the 10% credit for their electric bill. The Bethlehem Solar hired Good Energy as the company that does the marketing for this kind of program. They do direct mailing to the low to moderate residents of Lackawanna. They need 250 homes to sign up and if they don't get 250 they will go outside of Lackawanna. Bethlehem Solar Park and Good Energy have meant with the Mayor a couple of months ago. We went in front of the Zoning Board and was approved to have a commercial solar facility. We are in front of the Planning Board for a landscaping variance and the setback on one portion of the project. The plan for landscaping is the same as last time which was approved by the Planning Board to have berm, planting and new fence. The other requirement by the Board was to remove the metal wall and it has come down.

Member DeSantis stated when the winter the plows push snow against the berm, they should make ample space with snow being on the side.

Mr. Balon said they could set the fence back

Ms. Riker stated their time line for construction the financing and design in place and once they get approval they would like to construct in the spring which should take 5 to 7 months and all the mechanic, electrical connection should be done a year from now and up and running by 2025.

Member DeSantis ask about an excess road to Lincoln Street

Ms. Riker replied no access

Chairwoman Galanti said the elevation start to change at the curb

Ms. Riker said that is existing

Chairwoman Galanti suggested three feet setback

Neighbor

Alex Grimes 40 Lincoln stated currently I am on the second block going up Lincoln and the fence is at road side. The berm start going up just beyond the fence 2to3 feet even moving the fence back can the berm be move as well. Moving the fence back is going into an elevation change.

Motion to close public hearing: Friend: Second: DeSantis

All yeas carried 6-0

Motion to approve the Negative Declaration: Friend: Second: Zambron

All yeas carried 6-0

Motion to approve with a minimum three foot setback for the fencing from the current location: DeSantis: Second: Smith

All yeas carried 6-0

Mr. Marion explained to the Board publishing notices and will have more information by the next meeting

Motion to adjourn: Friend: Second: Zambron

All yeas carried 6-0