

**Borough of Florham Park
Planning Board
Work Session Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2019**

The Work Session Meeting of the Borough of Florham Park Planning Board was called to order on Monday evening, September 9, 2019 , 2019 at 6:40p.m. in the Municipal Building located at 111 Ridgedale Avenue, Florham Park, New Jersey.

Members Present:

Mr. Michael DeAngelis – Chairman
Mrs. Jane Margulies – Vice Chairman
Mrs. Carmen Cefolo-Pane
Mr. Gary Feith
Mr. Joseph Guerin
Mr. John Buchholz
Ms. Kristen Santoro (1st Alt)

Members Absent:

Mayor Mark Taylor
Mr. Michael Cannilla
Mr. David Roberts

Also Present:

Mr. Michael Sgaramella, Borough Engineer
Ms. Katherine O’Kane, Borough Planner
Mr. John Inglesino, Esq. Board Attorney

Statement of Adequate Notice:

Mr. DeAngelis issued the following statement:

“I hereby announce and state that adequate notice of this meeting was provided by the Secretary of this Board by preparing a notice, specifying the time, date and place of this meeting; posting such notice on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building; filing said notice with the Clerk of the Borough forwarding the notice to the Florham Park Eagle, and forwarding, by mail and fax, the said notice to all persons on the request list, and that said notice will be included in the minutes of this meeting. This action is in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, et seq., “Open Public Meeting Act.”

Site Plan Waivers:

None

On a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

September 9, 2019

Marlene Rawson
Board Secretary

Courtesy Concept Review:

8. Toll Brothers

50-60 Hanover Road
Block 303, Lots 5 & 12

John Inglesino, Esq. informed the Board that the potential applicant, Toll Brothers, is in negotiations with ASCO for their site on Hanover Road. The project would be for multi-family age restricted housing. The request at this time is for a zone change to permit this use. The Borough Council has heard the plan and is looking for feedback and a recommendation from the Planning Board as to whether they are in favor of a zone change to allow this project to move forward.

Stan Omland, owner representative and advisor for ASCO gave some background on the property. It is a large parcel of 55 acres. It has 47% improved coverage in its present state. It currently has 400,000 square feet of building coverage, and 1300 parking spaces. It is in the C-1 zone where 60% of improved coverage is permitted. This can translate to 840,000 square feet of building coverage, traffic, and trucking.

ASCO vacated the property in 2016. The Borough indicated to them that they were not interested in projects that included high density rentals. Last year, a potential project was brought forward. It was a continuing care retirement community of that would include 1,000 units. After several meetings with Borough Officials, the contract purchaser ultimately decided to withdraw the request and expand their facility in New Providence instead.

A number of national developers stepped forward with interest in this property. Those developers presented very high density projects. ASCO was not interested in a high density land plan and knew that Florham Park would not be in favor of such projects.

The current proposed plan is for a 100% age restricted development. The potential buyer is Toll Brothers and they have partnered with ASCO in this venture. ASCO is very pleased with the Toll Brothers business model. This project would appeal to a different market. It involves a lower density with more green space. The Toll Brothers buyer desires those design elements. There would be no children, a low traffic generator, and low service needs.

They are willing to participate in the inclusionary housing program in Florham Park if requested. A 20% set aside would be dedicated to low and moderate income housing. It was brought up that although Florham Park has satisfied their current requirement, this additional housing could go towards a future obligation in future rounds. They will propose an RSIS compliancy within this development. They are also willing to provide excess visitor parking.

The environmental cleanup on the site is completed and there is now unrestricted access for residential housing. Stan Omland stated that although efforts were made to market the property for two years under the current zoning, there are no interested and viable users for the site.

John Inglesino added that although Florham Park has a settlement agreement with Fair Share Housing, there is a mid-point review where they "look back" or evaluate the progress of the projects to see if they are actually being constructed. The ASCO site could be brought up if there is no progress on satisfying the affordable housing obligation. It would be beneficial have site spoken for and unavailable for high density projects. Having excess affordable units will also help in future rounds. He also stated that Florham Park has not used all of the age restricted credits that they are entitled to.

Katherine O'Kane, Planner, stated that there are 458 units of age restricted housing in Florham Park. This is 10.7% of the total housing. The addition of this project would bring the percentage to 12%. This is not an over-supply of this type of housing. The typical percentages for Morris and Essex Counties are between 5% and 14%, so Florham Park's number is very normal. She added that the Master Plan supports more age restricted housing.

The percentages of affordable housing to market rate are 20% affordable on "for sale" units, and 15% affordable for "rental" units. Stan Omland stated that Toll Brothers does not want a high density development. He stated that this plan offers a low density development at 5.5 units per acre and also offers an affordable housing component. This is

a plus for Florham Park as most developers have higher density to fund and pay for the affordable units. He noted that the Loveys project at 2 Vreeland has a density of 10 units per acre. Toll Brothers is not asking for that and will remain at the low density while still providing affordable units.

Stan Omland gave a background on Toll Brothers. They are the largest homebuilder of active adult communities in New Jersey. The project is similar to Shackamaxon in Scotch Plains and High Mountain in Franklin Lakes. There is a strong demand in NJ for active adult, especially in towns like Florham Park.

This project would be comprised of 303 units which is 5.5 units per acre. There is a 7,500 square foot clubhouse with a pool and various recreational courts. The style homes offered would be a carriage home (90) which would be clustered in groups of four, and stacked villas (152), which would be one unit above another. There will also be 61 affordable housing units under this plan. Preliminary price points would be \$1 million for the carriage home, and in the \$600,000 range for the stack villa. The carriage homes would be approximately 2300-2800 square feet, and a standard unfinished basement, plus a two care garage. The villa style homes would be 1650-2150 square feet.

The taxable value of the project is estimated to be \$181 million. This equates to \$2.7 million in annual tax revenue, with net benefit to Florham Park of \$2.1 million.

Stan Omland responded to questions on landscape buffers and exterior greenspace. They want to blend into the community and not be overly visible. The property naturally slopes down from Hanover Road to the east which is the rear of the site. There would be rolling berms along Hanover Road and a sizeable buffer along the Crescent Road properties. There will be less improved coverage than what exists today. They intend to revegetate the interior of the site. Homes are proposed to be situated 70 feet off of Hanover Road.

Overall, the site would generate only 20% of the traffic numbers that a commercial use would create.

Mike Sgaramella asked them to look into sidewalks along the Hanover Road frontage and Vreeland Road since there is now more pedestrian traffic in the area. Jane Margulies stated that the commercial users along Hanover Road have been resistant to installing sidewalks since it becomes a maintenance obligation for them. Also, they would be responsible snow removal. This is problematic when County snow plows pile the snow to the point of being impossible to clear. She suggested meandering the sidewalks further away from the roadway. Stan Omland stated that they would look into the suggestion.

Mike DeAngelis suggested having walkways throughout the development since this will be an active adult community. It was confirmed that there is no access to Vreeland Road is contemplated in the plan, other than emergency access. John Buchholz stated that the Northgate residents will appreciate that.

It was stated that the conceptual plan puts the affordable units in two buildings with surface parking. They plan to offer a mix of one, two and three bedrooms, they will blend in seamlessly with the market rate buildings.

Katherine O'Kane asked if they would consider a higher set aside of these units. Stan Omland replied that the higher number of affordable units will increase the overall number and create a more dense development. He said that would be contrary to their business model that offers a superior land plan and less density.

Mike Sgaramella asked about the drainage on the property that is an ongoing issue in the rear of the property. Stan Omland stated that it will be managed and they can improve the condition. They will comply with the ordinance requirements and try to make it better.

Stan Omland stated that they have met with the sewer and water utilities and they hope to work with them to assure capacity.

A representative from Cushman and Wakefield, who is the real estate firm handling the property, stated that they have aggressively marketed the property for some time with no serious offers from commercial users. The building is obsolete.

Stan Omland explained that timing is becoming critical to enter into a firm contract with Toll Brothers. They want a sense of whether Borough Officials are comfortable and happy with this plan before financial and contractual obligations are entered into. ASCO is anxious to have an answer.

Carmen Cefolo-Pane asked whether this application should go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Stan Omland stated that the process is extremely risky, and planning proofs are extremely high. Toll Brothers indicated that they would not proceed with the project if required to go to the Board of Adjustment. John Inglesino added that large developments such as this prefer not to go to the Zoning Board because of the uncertainty of an approval. The investment is significant for them and they need to be confident that the project will be looked upon favorably. A zone change will give them the degree of certainty that they are looking for. He said that the Planning Board is the appropriate board to hear an application of this magnitude. The purpose of the Zoning Board is not to rezone a property. There is a very high legal bar with a very uncertain outcome. A Zoning Board is more suited to a use variance for small projects only.

John Inglesino said that the Borough Planner will do a planning review of the surrounding properties of this project and how this will fit into the character of the area. The area has changed and has gotten more residential. The ASCO property has lived its life in the zone that it is in. The property is now in a non-utility state and the use is now antiquated by all accounts.

Katherine O'Kane stated that a future master plan amendment could recommend a zone change on this piece and other parcels that have become obsolete. She agreed that a zone change is appropriate in this case so that the bulk standards can change as well.

John Inglesino explained the chain of events that would happen if the Planning Board feels that this project is a good fit and should be permitted to move forward. He said that he would communicate that recommendation to the Council. It is the Borough Council who ultimately has the power to change the zoning on the property.

The Borough Planner will work to create the parameters of the permitted uses in the new zone, along with bulk standards. The draft ordinance would be referred to and reviewed by the Planning Board before adoption by the Borough Council. Once the ordinance is adopted, then the applicant can then prepare a site plan application to be heard by the Planning Board. A realistic time frame to expect before finally reaching the Planning Board with a site plan application would be in late spring of 2020.

Mike DeAngelis asked if the zone change process could be done this year. John Inglesino replied that a January 2020 introduction is more realistic. However, all the preparation work must happen this year.

Stan Omland said that why Toll Brothers wants a sense of direction as soon as possible since the entire process is lengthy. The need to be efficient in their planning.

Mike DeAngelis said that he is satisfied with the concept plan and is ready to make a recommendation tonight. Other Board members agreed that they have a good sense of the project and are comfortable in making a recommendation.

Mr. Feith made a motion to authorize the attorney to notify the Borough Council that the Planning Board is in favor of proceeding with a zone change for Block 303, Lots 5 & 12, based on the concept review testimony of the potential applicant. Second by Mr. Guerin.

John Inglesino said that he would prepare the letter and forward it to the Borough Council. Stan Omland and the Toll Brothers representative thanked the Board members.

On a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 8:15p.m.