

**Borough of Florham Park
Planning Board
Work Session Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2023**

The Work Session Meeting of the Borough of Florham Park Planning Board was called to order on Monday evening, January 23, 2023 at 6:30p.m. in the Municipal Building located at 111 Ridgedale Avenue, Florham Park, New Jersey.

Members Present:

Mr. Michael DeAngelis – Chairman
Mr. Joseph Guerin – Vice Chairman
Mayor Mark Taylor
Ms. Kristen Santoro
Mr. Gary Feith
Mr. David Roberts
Mr. Jeffrey Noss
Mr. Sid Dvorkin
Mr. Jeffrey Hegan

Members Absent:

Also Present:

Mr. Michael Sgaramella, Board Engineer
Ms. Katherine Sarmad, Board Planner
Mr. Derek Orth, Esq. Board Attorney

Statement of Adequate Notice:

Mr. DeAngelis asked the Board Secretary if the statutory requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act were met. Board Secretary Marlene Rawson responded that we are in compliance with the requirements.

Site Plan Waivers:

There were no administratively approved site plan waivers.

On a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 6:33pm.

Marlene Rawson
Board Secretary

January 23, 2023

Gregory Meese, Esq. represented the Applicant. He stated that the application is for a second freestanding sign to be located on Ridgedale Avenue. The sign will be similar to the other ground sign that fronts on the Columbia Turnpike entrance. There are variances needed for sign area and height.

Fred Kruvant, principal and owner of the shopping center was sworn in. He stated that he wants to support his tenants who are struggling. Other shopping centers in town that have two separate road frontages have two signs. He said that the proposed sign is the same size as the existing ground sign along Columbia Turnpike.

Mike DeAngelis asked if this can be accomplished without variances. Columbia Turnpike is a different road than Ridgedale Avenue.

Fred Kruvant stated that a compliant sign is too small and would lose any effectiveness.

Kristen Santoro noted that most drivers use GPS for directions and locations, and most residents know where the shopping center is. She wondered whether just the name and address would be enough.

Fred Kruvant replied that the requested sign would be an effective tool for pass-by traffic, especially from other towns. He added that the individual tenant signage is not visible from the road due to the layout of the shopping mall. He added many people are not aware of the stores that are in the shopping mall.

Mark Taylor thought the large sign would be a distraction and lead to more accidents at that location. He mentioned that the requested a guardrail near Panera Bread was never installed and a large sign would be even more of an interference. He also said that trees would block the sign once they bloom. Fred Kruvant agreed that tree trimming would be needed.

Mike DeAngelis noted that a second sign is allowed, but this request is not de minimus. They need to make a case for the variance and wants to hear from the Planner.

Paul Ricci, Planner, was sworn in.

A-1: photo of existing signs in the area

Mr. Ricci said that they are seeking a C-2 variance. The sign is proposed to be 111.96 square feet in area where 24 square feet is permitted. The height is proposed to be 15.75 feet where 8 feet is permitted. They are also planning to put individual business names on the sign, rather than only one shopping center name.

Mr. Ricci said that the Columbia Turnpike side has 755 feet of frontage and the Ridgedale Avenue side has 229 feet of frontage. Ridgedale Avenue is a busy area with lots of activity. There are five driveways along the side before the shopping center driveway so it becomes confusing. This creates a safety factor that must be considered.

He continued that the recent Master Plan suggested that the sign ordinance be reviewed due to the number of requested sign variances in recent years. Mr. Ricci pointed out that this is not a single occupancy building. An additional sign listing the tenants will help the businesses in this difficult marketplace. There is a need for proper identification, visibility, and roadside recognition. The sign will promote the general welfare. There are no residential properties in the area and it is consistent with what is already out there. It will benefit the drivers and the public.

He went on to say that the location would be behind the stop sign. He reiterated that the current tenant signs are not visible from the road. The shopping center is large and two signs are needed. He added that Crescent Plaza and Klein Plaza have similar sized signage. It will be compatible with the surrounding area. There is no detriment and no negative impact.

Mike DeAngelis commented that it is a very nice sign but there is a large area of the proposed monument that is not actually a sign. He went on to say that the sign location area is very small. The proposed sign looks oversized. He

needs more justification for a large sign. Ridgedale Avenue is very different from Columbia Turnpike and he feels that the sign is much too large.

Mr. Meese thought that the monument sign base structure design is what makes the sign attractive. He confirmed that the proposed sign is slightly larger than the existing monument sign.

Jeff Noss confirmed that the tenant signs change with new tenancy. Mr. Krivant stated that not every tenant has a spot on the existing sign and the tenant has the obligation to install their sign if they want it.

Katherine Sarmad stated that signage is important to wayfinding even with GPS. However, the scale of the proposed signage does not match with what is already on Ridgedale Avenue. It should be scaled back and she feels there is potential to do so. She added that it cannot be compared to what is on Columbia Turnpike. She went on to say each sign stands on its own merit. The Board must consider what is appropriate for this location.

She continued that the recent Omnibus ordinance addressed signage but the B-1 zone signage requirements did not change and were not expanded upon. She reiterated that the plan should be scaled back. Not every tenant will want or need a sign placard.

Mike Sgaramella said that an engineer should also address the site triangle. The county standard must be followed since it is a county road.

Gary Feith suggested that the shopping center name and the address might be enough. He agreed that it gets confusing with all the driveways in the immediate area.

Greg Meese responded that the Board's responses are being heard. However, they cannot conform to the ordinance and the signage would not serve its purpose. Nevertheless, he agreed that they would re-look at the plan and location. He asked to be carried to the February 13, 2023 meeting without further notice.

Mr. Guerin made a motion to carry the application to the February 13, 2023 meeting without further notice, second by Mr. Roberts.

Roll: On a roll call vote all members present and eligible voted to carry the application.

8. Open Space and Recreation Master Plan Element

Master Plan of Florham Park – Master Plan consistency & Public Hearing

Board Planner Katherine Sarmad stated that the last time the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan Element was updated was in 2011. The update is needed in order to apply for grant funding. This update began a few years ago but was tabled for two years because of the Covid pandemic.

The update began with a major focus on the recreation aspect so there is a lot of depth in that portion. Since then, the Environmental Commission revised it and a number of other groups provided input to it. There are many recommendations in the update. Also included are topics relating to preservation funding, record of past funding, environmentally sensitive sites, and a robust inventory of open space, preserved lands, and recreation sites.

Katherine Sarmad said that it is the Planning Board's sole responsibility to adopt this since it is part of the Master Plan. It does not codify anything, but is instrumental for grants and funding purposes.

Sid Dvorkin noted that the DEP grant of \$175,000 for the Spring Garden Lake was not included. Katherine Sarmad stated she would add it in. Mr. Dvorkin thanked Katherine Sarmad and was appreciative of her efforts throughout this process. The document will be available on the website once adopted.

There was a question on the Municipal pool and why it was not included. Mayor Taylor explained that the pool is its own utility and membership supported.

The meeting was open to the public.

John Winters, 32 Brooklake Road. He asked about the recreation trails. He also commented on the lack of recreation facilities on Passaic Avenue in proximity to Sun Valley Apartments.

Mr. Dvorkin made a motion to approve the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan with the amendment, second by Mr. Guerin

Roll: On a roll call vote all members present and eligible voted to approve the plan.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Marlene Rawson
Board Secretary

January 23, 2023