

**TOWNSHIP OF RIVER VALE
JOINT PLANNING BOARD
June 23, 2021
7:30 p.m.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Approved 7-28-21

ADEQUATE NOTICE STATEMENT:

In accordance with the provisions set forth in the Open Public Meetings Law, notification of this meeting has been sent to all officially appointed Township newspapers and notice is posted at the River Vale Municipal Office.

The Joint Planning Board saluted the flag.

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ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

John Donovan	Councilman (7:56pm sign-in)
Robert Fortsch	Vice-Chairman
Scott Lippert	Chairman
Matthew Ross	(Alt. #1)
Susan Vaccaro	Secretary
Peter Wayne	

Also Present:

Marc E. Leibman, Esq.	Board Attorney
Christopher Statile, P.A.	Board Engineer
Maria Haag	Land Use Administrator/ Recording Secretary

Absent:

Robert Adamo	
Glen Jasionowski	Class I-Mayor
John Puccio	

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REGULAR MEETING

APPLICATIONS:

Westcott Properties, LLC - Block 1719 Lot 6 - 215 Rivervale Road

- Monument Sign

Counsel for the Applicant - Dennis J. Francis, Esq.

Mr. Francis presented an overview of the application. The applicant would like to replace the existing free standing monument sign with a new monument sign having space for six tenant names and install four ground lights. The new proposed sign requires a variance for height because it exceeds the height requirement by 2 feet - 2 ½ inches. The proposed sign is 10'x 6' and 60 square feet. Mr. Francis stated that the applicant purchased the property in December of 2020 and seeks to beautify the sign and façade of the building. The applicant feels that the existing sign is inadequate. The height of the existing sign is 5 feet.

Mr. Francis presented witness Wayne Guskind, RA, the applicant's architect. Mr. Guskind was sworn in and his credentials were accepted as a licensed architect. Mr. Guskind presented four sheets of plans which he had prepared, dated April 13, 2021, showing the site plan, location map, zoning table, location survey, proposed elevation of monument sign, and six photographs of the subject property and existing sign. He explained that the new sign would be in the same location, with a slightly larger footprint. He stated that the only issue with the new sign is the height. The illumination will follow the municipal standards. Mr. Guskind stated that the existing sign is inadequate and is not illuminated at all. Mr. Guskind presented existing photos of neighborhood signs including signs from 688 Westwood Avenue - The River Vale Plaza, the 7/11 sign, and a sign directly across the street. The photo was marked as exhibit A-1 and was passed around to board members.

The board members did not have questions for the witness.

Mr. Statile stated that he had concerns regarding the type of ground lighting that is being installed and would like shop drawings of the lighting fixtures to be submitted beforehand for review. Mr. Statile stated that internally lit signs are not permitted in River Vale, and if the applicant would like to internally light the sign another variance would be required. Council for the applicant stated that they would go with

external illumination of the sign. Mr. Statile asked about the applicant's plans for hours of illumination.

Mr. Francis introduced Joseph Manzo, the owner and operator of Westcott Properties, LLC, who testified that he purchased the property in late 2020 and was bringing the application to install a better-looking sign which is only 1' 2 1/2" taller than the existing sign. Mr. Manzo stated that the lights would be on a timer and would go off from 12:00am until dawn.

The board members did not have questions for the witness.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions. The following resident came forward:

Paul Shields, 636 Montview Place, River Vale, and stated his opposition to the application. He stated that in his opinion, the installation of a larger sign along the roadway does not serve a purpose and interferes with the residential nature of the neighborhood.

There were no additional members of the public with questions or comments. The meeting was closed to the public.

Mr. Francis summarized the application and concluded his presentation.

Mr. Fortsch stated that he does not think a larger sign serves a purpose for the businesses currently in this building, and that allowing a larger sign may open the door for more businesses along Rivervale Road to also want larger signs. He stated that he does not think the height of the sign should be raised.

A motion to deny the application was made by Mr. Fortsch; seconded by Mr. Wayne; on a roll call vote, Mr. Fortsch, Ms. Vaccaro, and Mr. Wayne voted yes; Mr. Lippert and Mr. Ross voted no; the motion to deny was carried.

Dombkowski - Block 1701 Lot 26 - 298 Cedar Lane

- Addition

Keith Dombkowski the applicant and property owner was sworn in and presented the application. Mr. Dombkowski stated that he is seeking approval for a variance to renovate his existing

single-family home on the property with the addition of a second floor over the existing footprint of the home. He is also proposing a new covered front porch on the front of the house. He stated that he is seeking a variance for front yard setbacks for the second-floor addition of a corner lot. He stated that because this is a corner lot, the property has two front yards. Mr. Dombkowski stated that although his home faces Cedar Lane, the Herrmann Avenue side of his home is considered the primary front yard due to the fact that it is the longer side of his property. He stated that he is seeking a variance for a front yard setback to Herrmann Avenue at 20'1" whereas 25 feet is required, a deficiency of 4'11".

Mr. Dombkowski presented witness James S. McNeight, RA, the applicant's architect. Mr. McNeight was sworn in. Mr. McNeight presented three sheets of architectural plans which he had prepared, showing four existing and proposed elevations, site plan, floor plans, bulk table, roof plan and other details. He stated that the only variance that comes into play is the setback on the Herrmann Avenue side of the property,

Mr. Lippert stated that there is an existing setback deficiency of five feet. Mr. Lippert stated for clarity that the setback will remain at 20.1 feet and the second-floor addition has the same nonconformity at the existing structure. Mr. McNeight confirmed this information and stated that this is a technical variance due to the Township ordinance.

Chris Statile stated that this is an exacerbation of the current substandard setback.

The board members did not have questions for the witness.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions or statements. There being none, the meeting was closed to the public.

A motion to approve the application was made by Mr. Lippert, seconded by Councilman Donovan, on roll call vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

Conceptual Review:

**Roger Mumford Homes, LLC - Block 1714 Lots 2 & 52 - 557 & 565
Central Avenue**

- Preliminary and Final Subdivision

Counsel for the Applicant - John A. Conte, Jr., Esq.

Mr. Conte explained that the applicant has decided to present the application as a conceptual review at this time.

Marc Leibman explained that the application was submitted for a hearing and public notices were served and published in the newspaper. He stated that the applicant's attorney submitted a letter stating that they were withdrawing the application. After reconsideration, the applicant asked the board for permission to present as a conceptual review application. Mr. Leibman explained that conceptual applications do not require public notice, no one will need to be sworn in, there will not be any testimony, and the board will not be making any decisions on the application. The applicant has the opportunity to present an idea, get feedback from the board, and then decide if they would like to proceed. This is an informal process. The board is able to take questions and statements from the public should they choose to do so.

Mr. Conte explained the plan for the subdivision of the properties. The applicant is planning on subdividing the property into four lots.

Mr. Conte introduced Brigette Bogart, Planner. Ms. Bogart presented and described concept photos of the project. She stated that a two-lot subdivision was previously approved and that the applicant purchased an additional lot in order to create a four-lot subdivision. She stated that the four lots would be of similar size and meet lot size requirements, however would require variances for lot width and lot frontage. Ms. Bogart stated that one of the reasons that the applicant decided to withdraw the application was because he felt that he would not be able to meet the requirements stated in the Township Engineer's letter, making the application more complicated than anticipated. These issues included trees, drainage, road widening, and sidewalks. Ms. Bogart spoke about the proposed landscape plan and staggering the homes.

Mr. Fortsch asked questions of Ms. Bogart regarding the builder of the homes and the practicality of sidewalks at those properties.

Mr. Statile explained the option of contributing into escrow for a sidewalk fund.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions and statements. The following residents came forward:

Ken Chiellini, 249 Rockland Avenue, River Vale, stated that he has built homes in town and contributed to a sidewalk fund. He questioned approval to fix drainage issues on Rockland Avenue. Mr. Chiellini questioned the location of the homes on the properties and setbacks. He commented that the style of the homes should fit in with the character of the neighborhood.

Chris Pinto, 564 Central Avenue, River Vale, commented on the size of homes being built on the block, very large homes on small lots. He is concerned about the types of homes being built in the neighborhood.

Eileen Quartuccio, 562 Central Avenue, River Vale, commented on the subdivisions in the neighborhood and had concerns with the overbearing nature of the new homes being built. She stated that she is concerned about the setbacks of the homes and the lines of sight and obstructing views. Mr. Leibman asked the applicant to bring in a site plan showing the location of the homes should the applicant move forward with the application. Discussions continued regarding the square footage of the proposed homes and heights. Mr. Statile commented on the width of the street and possibility of widening of the street in the future. Ms. Quartuccio showed the board members pictures of current construction on the street.

Bill Medea, 544 Central Avenue, River Vale, stated his concerns about preserving the character of the neighborhood. He also stated his concerns about increased traffic with the widening of the road. Mr. Statile explained the township setbacks and how the roads would be widened.

Mr. Conte stated that he will go back to the applicant with the comments and concerns of the neighbors so that he can make an informed decision as to whether he will move forward with the application. He thanked the board members for their time.

Resolutions:

Lagala - Block 801 Lot 3 - 524 Wittich Terrace
- Patio/Set Backs

A motion for approval was made by Mr. Ross; seconded by Mr. Fortsch; and carried unanimously on voice vote.

MINUTES :

A motion for approval of the minutes of May 26, 2021 was made by Mr. Lippert; seconded by Mr. Ross; and carried unanimously on voice vote.

PAYMENT OF INVOICES: Chairman Lippert reviewed and signed

The meeting was opened to the public for non-agenda items. There being no additional questions or comments, the meeting was closed to the public.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Lippert reminded the board members to submit their financial statements as the deadline is approaching.

NEXT MEETING:

Regular Meeting - Wednesday, July 28, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers at River Vale Town Hall.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

MARIA HAAG

Recording Secretary