

**MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 26, 2019 PLANNING BOARD MEETING
BOROUGH HALL, BOROUGH OF HILLSDALE**

MEMBERS PRESENT: E. Lichtstein, E. Alter, M. Kates, Vice Chairwoman J. Miano, F. Franco,
S. Raymond, S. Riordan, D. Burleson, Chairman M. Giancarlo, Mayor J. Ruocco

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilman Z. Horvath

EMPLOYEES PRESENT: N. Nabbie, Esq., Board Attorney
C. Statile, P.E., Board Engineer
R. Preiss, P.P., Board Planner
C. Ryan, Board Deputy Secretary

Chairman Giancarlo called the meeting to order with a reading of the Open Public Meetings Statement at approximately 7:35pm.

OPEN TO PUBLIC (for matters not on the Agenda):

Bob Bachman, a Washington Township resident appeared to speak about his concerns regarding the Habitat for Humanity property in Hillsdale which borders his residential lot. Board Attorney Nabbie and Board Engineer Statile explained to Mr. Bachman that the Habitat for Humanity lot was part of the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan which was chosen by the Council. Mr. Bachman asked why the governing body chose this land by emmanent domain. Chairman Giancarlo explained he and the Board are not attempting to duck his questions but the Mayor and Council must be the ones to address this. Mayor Ruocco stated emmanent domain was not involved in the transaction as the land was owned by the Borough and donated to Habitat for Humanity as part of the State mandated affordable housing requirements. Mr. Bachman referenced a resolution which states the property was obtained by emmanent domain. Mayor Ruocco asked which resolution and Mr. Bachman replied Resolution No. 19144 adopted June 11, 2014.

At this time, the meeting was closed to the public.

RESOLUTIONS:

***Resolution No. 2019-17; PSE&G Block 1212, Lot 14; 295 Patterson St. & Block 1209, Lot 18; 319 Knickerbocker Ave.
Approval of Major Site Plan with Variances associated with 69kV upgrade***

A motion was made by Ms. Kates to adopt the resolution, which was seconded by Vice Chairwoman Miano. The Board was polled and the motion passed; the resolution was adopted.

DISCUSSION:

***2020 Planning Board Meeting Schedule
2020 Board Professionals***

The Board determined it needed additional time to review the proposed meeting dates for the upcoming year. It was also determined the Deputy Secretary will publish legal advertisement in *The Record* for the 2020 RFQs for Board Professionals.

Given the use variances involved with the upcoming public hearings, Mayor Ruocco recused himself at this time.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

PZ-06-19; Block 1622, Lot 9; John & Virginia Gray; 245 Lincoln Ave.

Bulk Variance application for reconstruction of an existing single-family dwelling

Counsel for the Applicant – John Conte Jr.

Mr. Conte began by explaining to the Board the house was built in 1944 and reviewed the area of the lot and home, 6,158 sq. ft. and 1300 sq. ft., respectively. The applicant seeks to construct an addition which will involve moving the living space primarily to the first floor of the home. Mr. Conte explained the applicants wish to grow old in their home and the reason for the addition is so they can avoid using the stairs.

At this time, John A. Gray, Jr. was sworn in to testify. Mr. Gray stated he has lived in Hillsdale for 41 years and is active in the community as well as an ordained deacon at St. Johns, the local Catholic church. In addition to eliminating the need for usage of the stairs, Mr. Gray stated the home has fallen into disrepair and requires renovation.

The applicant's architect Joe Bruno was sworn in to testify at this time. Mr. Bruno stated the proposed addition would allow the Gray's to age in their home without needing to relocate. The first floor has an open floor plan which would allow them to live primarily on the first floor without needing to use the stairs to access the other rooms. The first floor would contain a dining room, master bedroom, bathroom, etc. Mr. Bruno reviewed in detail the current conditions of the home, and also reviewed the conditions and dimensions as proposed. The necessary variances for the addition were also listed and discussed.

The second floor of the proposed addition will add back one of the bedrooms being eliminated on the first floor and will also contain a second bathroom. Mr. Bruno reviewed the proposed site plan, measurements, and variances needed for the addition. It was confirmed the house is located on a corner lot and the proposed addition, if approved, will have dormers and a covered porch. Photographs of the property and surrounding properties were presented to the Board. Mr. Bruno confirmed for Mr. Statile that the first floor walls will remain with the exception of the rear wall where the garage will be located. New insulation and electric will be installed but the framing will remain the same.

Mr. Statile discussed seepage pit tanks and tree removal. Mr. Bruno stated no trees are being proposed for removal at this time. Mr. Statile stated the seepage tank cannot be close to the house and he is also concerned about lack of backyard space. Mr. Statile stated he checked the area of the lot and it seems the envelope is being pushed on the size of the house given the undersized lot. Mr. Statile stated the setbacks calculation to the east is incorrect due to the roof over the porch/steps not being accounted for and he apologized for not picking up on the error during his initial review of the application. Mr. Statile also stated the living room, family room, and dining room are a bit large and will create a very long house, if approved. He continued the house is even a bit large for a conforming lot. Mr. Bruno stated if the lot was conforming in width, the same goal of having an aging friendly home would be possible to accomplish in a much more compact house.

The meeting was opened to the public at this time.

Dan Miranda of 243 Lincoln, Hillsdale stated he is concerned with the height and depth of the extension and how far it goes into the yard regarding its proximity to the property line. Mr. Bruno stated he did give some thought to move the proposed addition farther away from the property line, however to do so would have resulted in even narrower rooms. Mr. & Mrs. Gray agreed to plant an evergreen hedge along the entire length of the house as a buffer. The distance between the steps and property line is 5.3 feet. Mr. Miranda stated the proposed addition looks great however he does not want to see a big wall along the property line and as it currently exists he has a view of trees not a building. Mr. Bruno states the applicant has no

intentions of having living space located on the second floor. Mr. Miranda asked if shrubs at least 6 ft. could be installed. He further stated he would like the design to take his and his wife's side of the property line into consideration and would like privacy maintained.

Dr. Lichtstein asked why there are five exterior doors on this home. Mr. Gray stated one of the side door is being kept in case he needs to move large appliances in and out of the house such as if a washer or dryer breaks, etc. Dr. Lichtstein stated it bothers him that these doors are on the same side of the house as the neighbor. Mr. Gray stated one of the three separate entrances on the side of his home would rarely be used. In response, the Board asked if he really needs it considering it would not be used often. A discussion was had regarding possible removal of the door at the top of the exterior stairs on the east side of the home, specifically as a possible condition of approval.

Mr. Bruno stated the aesthetic benefits outweigh the detriments of the size of the addition, specifically regarding the covered porch. Mr. Bruno reviewed for the Board the various steps he took to reduce the impervious coverage. Vice Chairwoman Miano stated she believes there is an underground stream that runs through this property; Mr. Statile confirmed. It was determined the house currently has a sump pump that runs to the street and always has according to Mr. Gray. Mr. Statile discussed the possibility of conducting a percolation test. Ms. Kates asked if the stairs on the side of the home are being removed and Mr. Bruno replied if the door is removed the stairs would also be removed and impervious coverage reduced accordingly. Ms. Kates also requested a site inspection for landscaping to ensure plantings will work on the property, etc. as she and Mr. Statile do not know enough information about the current landscaping on the site. The canopy over the house also poses a problem to certain trees surviving especially if it is blocking the sunlight. Mr. Miranda stated he observed most trees on the property as being dead evergreens that Mr. Gray removed and installed a fence. Ms. Kates and Mr. Statile upon learning more information about the site, and the location for proposed trees, confirmed they would not be able to survive due to insufficient sunlight. Ms. Kates stated she appreciates the applicants' needs associated with aging but the Board must make a determination based on the applicants' hardship and any efforts the applicant makes to reduce or conserve the space. Mr. Raymond discussed landscaping details with the applicant and Mr. Bruno. The Board asked if the applicants considered reducing the size of the house to reduce the F.A.R. and Mr. Bruno replied he can look at that with the Grays.

The meeting was then opened to the public. As no one wished to speak, the meeting was closed to the public.

A brief recess was taken. The Board returned from the recess at 9:24pm. Mr. Bruno informed the Board the applicants would like to carry the application for a chance to revise same. Board Attorney Nabbie announced the application is carried to December 12, 2019 at 7pm and no further notice will be provided to the public.

***PZ-06-18 Block 1308, Lots 15 & 16, RJN 333, LLC, Applicant, 333 Washington Ave.
Four-Lot Major Subdivision with Bulk Variances***

Counsel for the Applicant – Russell Huntington, Esq.

Michael Hubschmann, P.E. was sworn in to testify on the engineering aspects of the application. Mr. Hubschmann reviewed the site plan including the dimensions of the site and proposed project. Sheet 1 of the Site Plan was marked **Exhibit A1**. It was confirmed the applicant is proposing four residential dwellings on four rectangular lots and is not seeking an impervious coverage variance. Each home will have a two car driveway and a one car garage. Staggering of the homes was suggested and discussed. The drainage and grading plan was reviewed and discussed. The driveways will be macadam and have a concrete apron. The required setbacks versus proposed setbacks were discussed in detail. Mr. Statile confirmed with Mr.

Hubschmann that a total of five variances are being sought by the applicant.

The meeting was opened to the public at this time. As no one wished to speak, the meeting was closed to the public.

Mr. Hubschmann confirmed no fencing is being proposed at this time. The applicant agreed to a condition of increasing the width between the driveways. The applicant previously agreed to one 3,000 gallon seepage pit per dwelling/unit.

The meeting was again opened to the public. Josh Denbo of 321 Washington Ave. located directly east of the proposed development spoke. He asked if the applicant has considered building two modern homes instead. Mr. Hubschmann stated he never spoke about this with the client and perhaps the question would be better directed to the professional planner. Mr. Denbo asked why break the 75 ft. barrier four times. He also asked if it would be the right density for the neighborhood if the entire street were converted to 50 ft. lot frontages and Mr. Hubschmann replied probably not. The meeting was closed to the public.

Mr. Bruno reviewed the architectural aspects of the application, specifically the details of the floor plans. Mr. Statile asked Mr. Bruno if the first floor elevation could be decreased. Mr. Bruno stated yes, from an architectural standpoint but he must first confirm same with the applicant's engineer to accommodate the grading plan. Mr. Statile stated the homes need chimneys. Mr. Bruno reviewed additional details and measurements of the proposed homes. It was confirmed the homes will be marketed for sale only, not lease. The proposed lighting on the front of the homes will be typical to that of any home, Mr. Bruno stated.

Board Attorney Nabbie stated the application is carried to December 3, 2019 at 7:30pm and no additional notice will be provided to the public; the announcement serves as notice.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Caitlin Ryan
Deputy Secretary to the Board