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From: "Lynne Eckardt" <midfarm@bestweb.net>
Date: Mon Nov 21, 2005 11:18 am
Subject: SE Planning Board Recap 11/14/05

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Hi All-

I've been very derelict in getting this Planning Board recap out- and for that I apologize. I was particularly perturbed by the latest 'Home Depot' request. Rant to follow.

Another lowlight was the Triple J property. You know, the one where the barns were demolished because (in Councilman Johnson's words and an all new low in 'government speak') they posed an 'attractive nuisance'. Anyhow this sneaky little maneuver is now considered a 'field change'. Only it isn't. At least not according to our Town Code Book as I read it.

Overall this was a rather low key meeting. Interestingly a Terravest item was removed from the agenda and will be on the November 28th meeting.

I'll also take a minute here to thank two of the Planning Board members for their graciousness in approaching me to congratulate (huh?) me on running a good race for the Town Board. Jeeze- I'm so mean to these guys it amazes me they're so nice. I even received a call from another Planning Board member the morning after the Election. Anyhow- I'm protecting their identities so they're not ostracized from Southeast Society as we know it. By the way, this doesn't mean I have to be nice back does it?

Quote of the night (and it was a gem) Chairman Rohrman said that the 'Truck Height Restrictor' (located above Marshalls at 'The Highlands') looked like there was going to be 'a hanging in the middle of town'. I love this quote and I pretty sure I actually heard the theme from 'High Noon' right after he said this.

As always the caustic and sometimes sullen opinions expressed are mine alone.

WORK SESSION:

1. Home Depot:

Home Depot was asking to close off 40 parking spaces so that they can set up more 'seasonal' merchandise outside. They have 684 spaces now. Mr. Armstrong asked what constitutes 'seasonal shopping'? Sheds and gym sets were mentioned during the course of the discussion. Also garden items in spring. Home Depot was asked to bring in an amended site plan.

The poor traffic patterns were discussed and Zoning Enforcement Officer Ron Harper spoke. Fire lanes need to be marked and trucks should not be unloading in them. Mr. Armstrong asked if Home Depot had been cited for any violations. Mr. Harper said yes but that these violations had been cleared up.

REGULAR SESSION:

1. Unilock, New York, Inc.

Theresa Ryan of Insite representing. Unilock is not adding storage but re-configuring. Traffic flow patterns are being changed and the building will be given a 'face-lift'. More landscaping will be added. Mr. Armstrong asked that the lighting be changed as it's very bright at night. This will have to go before the ARB as an addition is proposed. There will be no additional impervious surface. Chairman Rohrman was unsure whether or not a Public Hearing would be needed.

2. Terravest

Removed from agenda- rescheduled for November 28th.

3. Triple J Subdivision, Welfare Road

Chairman Rohrman gave a brief history about the demolition. Applicant asked for demolition permit, Building Inspector (at the time) Ed Jasko inspected, permit granted. The town attorney told Mr. Rohrman that the demolition could be considered a 'Field Change'. The Board voted 6-0 to approve.

4. Pine Ridge Subdivision

Jon Petrillo was mentioned as being the applicant. Bond reduction referred to the Town Board. Passed 6-0

5. JP International Subdivision, Old Milltown Road

EAF reviewed, letters from Town Planner and Engineer reviewed. Negative Declaration passed 6-0. Applicant's engineer, Harry Nichols asked to be referred to Conservation Commission. Planning Board asked Mr. Nichols if there had been a Public Hearing- yes. Referred to CC by a vote of 6-0.

6. Vails Grove Golf Course, Peach Lake Road

Pete Tavino- engineer. A number of items need to be fixed (nothing specific mentioned). Came before Board six months ago on different buildings due to code violations. This is a newer and modified site plan. Site plan approval will be needed. Mr. Armstrong felt that the project was confusing and needed a narrative. The applicant said they would comply.

New Business:

Home Depot was discussed. Mr. Tessmer felt that the parking lot was a mess. And asked if the Board could ask for better landscaping. The truck 'restrictor' above Marshalls was discussed with Chairman Rohrman commenting that it looked like 'there was going to be a hanging in the middle of town'.

Orchard Hill (proposed conference center/golf course in North Salem) was discussed as the board has heard nothing since one original presentation. The concern is that most of the traffic will be routed through Southeast.

Dan Armstrong brought up the possibility of all larger projects having to present a Power Point presentation.

It was asked if Senior Housing had to pay recreation fees. No one knew the answer.

COMMENTS:

1. Home Depot:

In the spirit of full disclosure please note that my shop 'competes' (ha, ha) with Home Depot in nursery sales and garden supplies. That said... a final a quick word of caution. Rant follows:

Apparently it's not enough for 'The Highlands' (Home Depot et al) to be the least attractive shopping center on the eastern seaboard. It seems we now have to take it to a whole new level of schlockiness. Home Depot wants to add the cachet and that ever-so-chic 'Flea Market' look by adding parking lot 'showrooms'. Perhaps the Home Depot can figure a way

to add area carpets and shrink-wrapped Barc-O-Loungers to the gym sets, sheds and other assorted 'seasonal items' (and since when did gym sets and sheds become seasonal) that they wish to push. Jeese guys... pass me the rope.

What I adore about this little scheme is that Home Depot gets to move more 'merch' without adding a structure that they'd have to pay more property and school taxes on. It's diabolically clever! It's positively brilliant! In fact, selling swill outside may even diminish the store's assessment as it will look like absolute hell. It also helps them to keep costs down making it more difficult for local merchants to compete.

By the way- if Home Depot doesn't have fire lanes clearly marked then how on earth are they in compliance with local codes and, in turn, how are they able to have any project before the Planning Board.

This may well be an all new low from any applicant. And hey, please, please tell me they'll have to go before the ZBA where the voice of sanity may prevail.

1. Unilock, Geneva Road

I don't have a ton to say on this...shocking. But if the intent is truly to clean up the site with landscaping, better traffic patterns, a facelift and no additional impervious surface then sign me up. I would say that Mr. Armstrong's point on night lighting is a point well taken and if by holding a Public Hearing this could be better accomplished then I'm all for holding for a Public Hearing. If the Planning Board can make this a condition (along with the others mentioned) to permit the addition then that's fine too.

By the way, has anyone else has noticed Ace Endico at night? (How could you not). It's positively ablaze. Gosh, between that and 'The Highlands' I'm not even sure a full moon would be visible from the site.

3. Triple J Subdivision

If this wasn't so sad I'd be able to give high marks for the ingenuity of the latest in legal justifications. However 'Field Changes' as I read them, are not an appropriate justification for this tear down. Again the applicant had the property for 5 years, left the barns on the final plat (this way there is less chance that the neighbors might oppose the project as losing a neighborhood landmark might have disturbed more than a few). The project is approved and almost overnight the barns become 'dangerous' and have to be torn down. Oh, and torn down quickly so that a Stop Work Order is nothing more than an empty gesture.

Sorry, but this one really irks me. I have to think that sometimes in Southeast it's who you know and in this case follow those darn 'J's'

5 JP International, Old Milltown Road

Once again nothing international about it. I believe owned by John Petrillo- at least he's the guy ghosting around when Harry Nichol's does his thing. We'll see how the Conservation Commission likes this one.

6. Vails Grove Gold Course, Peach Lake Road

I can't make head nor tails of this- even the Planning Board seems to have trouble with what's really going on here. And this always makes me suspicious. I look forward to the 'narrative' which Mr. Armstrong wisely asked for. Who knows- it may even read like a fairy tale.

New Business:

Home Depot:

I loved this discussion because the Board pretty much agreed that the traffic, landscaping and other items are a mess. I'm hopeful this means an approval for the all new 'Flea Market' concept will not be in the offing.

Orchard Hill: I've heard through the grapevine that this project may have been sold to another developer. I'm trying to confirm but probably won't have much luck. If it is to remain a Conference Center/Golf Course I am hopeful that Southeast won't be left holding the 'traffic bag'. Ugh, and more swill for Fields Lane. Super...

Power Point:

I think that Mr. Armstrong has a good idea here. I would love to see side elevations on projects rather than just the 'bird's eye' view. I know, I know I can always go the ARB but I just can't bear the thought of one more meeting...

Recreation Fees:

Does Senior Housing have to pay a fee? They should- but I'm betting not as Mr. Lepler presently holds the monopoly on all sites senior in Southeast. Now say that really fast three times and hope it all goes away...

That's it from my desk- As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments that you might have-

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt



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