

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2023

The meeting of the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville was called to order by Chairman Bernard Navatto at 7:00 PM and stated that adequate notice of this meeting had been provided in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act”.

Board Members Present: Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Lisa Werner

Board Members Absent: Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Arthur Akins and Christopher Adickes

Professional Present: Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney and Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer

Executive Session

Chairman Navatto addressed the board and explained that he was going to move the Executive Session to the end of the meeting.

Approval Minutes

Upon a motion by Deidre Rosinski, seconded by Jason Kraska, the minutes of September 13th, 2023, were approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Aye: Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Lisa Werner

Nay: None

Abstain: None

See transcript.

Hearing

2023-007P

Foundry Holdings, LLC

50 James Street & 82 Fairview Ave

B50 L 1, 2, & 2.01

Chairman Navatto made an announcement that the application for Foundry Holdings, LLC has been postponed to October 25th without further notice.

See transcript.

Courtesy Review

2023-009P

Pre-K Renovation at Van Derveer Elementary School

51 Union Ave

B83.01 L1

Attorney for the Board Kara Kaczynski, Esq. swore in Daniel Schittone of SVHD Architects. Mr. Schittone addressed the board and explained that on behalf of Somerville School District FVHS submitted an application along with Edwards Engineering Group in May of 2023 for a pre-k for the Van Derveer Elementary School, and the playground. He also explained that they will speak about a grant application for a local recreation improvement grant.

Mr. Schittone then went on to address comments from Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer's report and introduced 3 sheets. The first exhibit is A-2, a floor plan dated 9/27/2023 prepared by FVHD Architects. Mr. Schittone reviewed the exhibit with the board and noted that the work is being localized to the west end of the building. The horseshoe shape with a courtyard is already existing and the addition is going to enclose the courtyard. Mr. Schittone then went on to explain that they are renovating two large rooms into four pre-k rooms on the interior, then attaching three additional pre-k onto that.

Mr. Schittone then presented his next exhibit A-3 Exterior Elevations dated 9/27/2023, to address some of the comments that were in the letter from Cole & Associates. Mr. Schittone addressed comment number 8 of the report regarding architectural plans not being provided - Mr. Schittone then reviewed such details as the materials, elevations and façade.

Mr. Schittone then moved on to his next Exhibit, marked A-4 dated 9/27/2023 entitled Room Layout, Prekindergarten Classrooms, explaining that it was an enlarged floor plan of the rooms with the horseshoe shape with the courtyard in the middle that will be enclosed. All the proper fire egress will be created and maintained in the courtyard so that it is accessible in two directions. The existing lobby where the pre-k students will enter will house four compliant pre-k bathrooms, stating that the Department of Education wants bathrooms in those rooms, so they are enhancing. Mr. Schittone went on to explain that they are looking to increase the school district's ability to serve what they call their pre-k universe by introducing 3-year-old into the district.

Mr. Schittone also spoke to the square footage of the classrooms as well as the furniture layouts of 15 maximum students with a teacher and teacher's aid.

Board member Deirdre Rosinski questions if the courtyard is open to the sky or if it would be roofed. Mr. Schittone responded that it would be open to the sky and that the proper drainage would be in the middle.

Lastly, Mr. Schittone addressed an additional item on the list including a note from their previous courtesy review of a shed that was supposed to be built. Mr. Schittone stated that the project to build the shed was bid out, however was ultimately not awarded due to budgeting concerns at the time and increased prices.

Mr. Schittone then introduced Beth Kenderdine from Edwards Engineering Group that prepared the site plan and who can address some other comments that the planning board had.

At this time Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney swore in Beth Kenderdine.

Mrs. Kenderdine addressed the board and presented the submitted site plan titled SK-1 reviewing existing conditions and the addition that was just presented by Mr. Schittone including the courtyard, walkway, ADA curb ramp, new access and new equipment. Mrs. Kenderdine also discussed the retaining wall and fence surrounding the playground.

Mrs. Kenderdine then addressed the major concern from the Cole & Associates review letter regarding the existing trees that were being taken out. Mrs. Kenderdine stated that the school district had obtained a grant to plant trees around the campus therefore they can certainly address that by planting additional trees for any that have been taken out by construction.

The second comment that Mrs. Kenderdine addressed was concerning storm water management. She explained that they are increasing impervious coverage by about 5,000 SQ FT and that they will need to reroute the storm sewer around the addition based on the utility being under the addition and that they can proposal overside the pipes to provide some detention to mitigate.

Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer noted that the only thing that he did not see on the plans was parking - it was testified that there will be more teacher and teacher's assistants per classroom therefore will there be adequate parking for the additional staff. Mr. Schittone addressed Mr. Coles' question and stated that that the adjacent parking lot is not fully used during the day right now so he believes that the extra staff can be accommodated in that parking lot.

The last comment that Mr. Schittone offered about the playground was that they were improving accessibility to the playgrounds and ADA accessibility, which is critical for the grant that they submitted for. There was additional conversation between Mr. Schittone and Mr. Cole concerning the existing mulch being changed to a rubber surface as well as the new equipment being installed. Mr. Schittone added that the new equipment being added will be age appropriate for pre-k.

At this time Chairman Navatto opened up to questions from the board.

Board member Larry Cleveland questioned if the grant that the school was being awarded was for the construction of the new classrooms as well as the parkland. Mr. Schittone responded that there are two grants at play in three parts. The actual pre-k construction and renovation, the renovation is one grant application, and the additions is a second grant application to the Department of Education and the School Development Authority. The separate playground was a local recreation improvement grant that was state funds at state level for \$70,000 for playground equipment.

Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney then asked the board if there were any recommendation that the board would like to make. Board member Deirdre Rosinski stated a recommendation would be to replace the trees that they are taking down. Board member Lisa Werner added that they additionally recommend that they make best efforts on stormwater management.

Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney added that for the record, Michael Cole's letter dated 9/25/2023 will be marked as PB-1.

See Transcript.

MISC

Site Plan Waiver Committee
Somerville Urban Renewal Phase II, LLC
Wolfgang's Dining Enclosure Project

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Lisa Werner, approval of the site plan waiver request for Wolfgang's Dining Enclosure, was approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Aye: Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Lisa Werner

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Items not on the Agenda

Director of Economic Development, Colin Driver distributed parking passes to the new Civic Center and gave an overview to the board on new procedures. He added that if anyone had questions that they could reach out to him directly.

Meeting Open to the Public

No comments.

Executive Session

Upon a motion by Deidre Rosinski, seconded by Jason Kraska, the planning board will be going into executive session.

the adjournment of the planning board meeting of September 27th, 2023, was unanimously approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes, Lisa Werner

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney stated that we will now go into executive session to discuss potential litigation, the board will not be returning to public session or taking any votes

or making any decisions. When the board closes executive session, they will be adjourning and going home.

See Transcript.

Adjourn

Upon a motion by Deidre Rosinski, seconded by Jason Kraska, the adjournment of the planning board meeting of September 27th, 2023, was unanimously approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair,
Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes, Lisa Werner

Nay: None

Abstain: None

The public session portion of the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.