

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES FEBRUARY 14TH, 2024

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, Mayor Brian Gallagher Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair, Arthur Akins, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Lisa Werner

Board Members Absent: Christopher Adickes

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

Approval of Regular Minutes

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Councilman Roger Vroom, the regular minutes of January 24th, 2024, were approved upon a roll call vote.

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

Nay: None

Abstain:

See transcript.

Approval of Executive Minutes

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Al Kerestes, the executive minutes of January 24th, 2024, were approved upon a roll call vote.

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

Nay: None

Abstain:

See transcript.

Resolutions

PB 2401-0111-005

Authorizing the Award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract to CHA Consulting, Inc. to Serve as 2024 Conflict Planning Board Engineer & Planner

Upon a motion by Lisa Werner, seconded by Jason Kraska, resolution PB 2401-0111-005 Authorizing the Award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract to CHA Consulting, Inc. was approved upon a roll call vote.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

23-012P

134 East Main LLC

134-136 East Main Street

B64 L11.01

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Al Kerestes, resolution 23-012P 134 East Main LLC was approved upon a roll call vote.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

See transcript.

Hearing

2023-008P

NJ Elixir Company, LLC

20-30 East Main Street

B62 L20

Attorney for the applicant David Singer, Esq addressed the board expressing that he was presenting the application NJ Elixir Company, LLC located at 20-30 East Main Street Block 62, Lot 201 seeking a minor site plan approval to enhance the property by renovating the existing restaurant into a meadery which is consistent with the allowable uses in the B-1 Zone District. David Singer, Esq added that the proposed renovations would not alter the existing footprint of the currently vacant property.

At this time David Singer, Esq called upon his first witness Caleb Ahles who was sworn in by planning board attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq.

At this time Planning Board Attorney, Kara Kaczynski, Esq. marked in the following exhibits.

Exhibit A-1 - application submitted and the supporting documentation

Exhibit A-2 - Notice and publication of tonight's hearing

Exhibit PB-1 – letter from board's engineer and planner, Michael Cole dated January 31st, 2024

Exhibit PB-2 – letter from the Borough of Somerville fire official dated February 5th, 2024

Under direct examination by Mr. David Singer, Esq. Mr. Ahles testified to his connection with the application explaining that he is a founding member of the NJ Elixir company, specifically handling the assistance with real estate development, land use review and lease negotiation as his background is in real estate development, logistics and supply chain management. Mr. Ahles then provided background information on production and operations of the site.

Chairman Navatto opened up to questions from members of the board and public – hearing none David Singer, Esq called upon his second witness architect for the project, John Mannino. At this time Mr. Mannino was sworn in by planning board attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq.

Under direct examination by Mr. Singer, Esq Mr. Mannino provided his educational and professional background to the board and was accepted as an expert by the board.

Mr. Mannino then presented the architectural drawings as part of exhibit A-1 to the board, specifically the interior work that is being proposed. Mr. Mannino additionally addressed outstanding architectural items in Mr. Coles' report. At this time Mr. Mannino also entered A-3 into the record as a floor plans similar to the original submission dated February 14th, 2024 as a way to give the board a better visual understanding of what currently exists and what is being proposed. Additional conversation was had regarding Mr. Coles report including elevations, ingress and egress, façade, roof top equipment, the Fire Marshalls report dated February 5th as well as refuse and recyclables.

Chairman Navatto opened up to questions from members of the board and public – hearing none David Singer, Esq called upon his next witness the planner and engineer for the project, Joe Vince. At this time Mr. Vince was sworn in by planning board attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq.

Under direct examination by Mr. Singer, Esq Mr. Vince provided his educational and professional background to the board and was accepted as an expert by the board.

Mr. Vince then turned his attention to Mr. Coles report to address stormwater drainage, lighting, solid waste management, sanitary sewer.

Various items of Mr. Vince’s testimony was discussed by the board and additional questions were responded to. Mr. Ahles was also addressed the board at this time and responded to questions surrounding canning, assembly, storage, and distribution plans for the proposed use.

Chairman Navatto asked for any additional questions from the board and questions from the public for the testimony given by Mr. Vince. Hearing no additional questions Mr. Singer Esq addressed the general comment items that have yet to responded to including the loading dock, outside agency approvals, and state/federal licensing. At this time Mr. Singer Esq concluded his presentation for the application.

Chairman Navatto then opened up to the public for comment and questions. Hearing none the public session was closed.

Attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq. then provided a recap of the conditions of approval.

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Mayor Brian Gallagher, the application 2023-008P NJ Elixir Company, LLC, was approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Mayor Brian Gallagher Councilman Roger Vroom, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Lisa Werner, and Art Akins

Nay: None

Abstain: None

See transcript.

Adjourn

Upon a motion by Deirdre Rosinski, seconded by Al Kerestes, the adjournment of the planning board meeting of February 14th, 2024, was unanimously approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Bernard Navatto, Deidre Rosinski, Mayor Brian Gallagher Councilman Roger Vroom, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Lisa Werner, and Art Akins

Nay: None

Abstain: None

The planning board meeting of February 14th, 2024 was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.