

HARTLAND TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

August 24, 2023– 7:00 PM

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Fox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance:**

3. **Roll Call and Recognition of Visitors:**

Present – Commissioners Eckman, Fox, Grissim, Mayer, McMullen, Mitchell

Absent – Commissioner Murphy

4. **Approval of the Meeting Agenda:**

A Motion to approve the August 24, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Agenda was made by Commissioner Mitchell and seconded by Commissioner Grissim. Motion carried unanimously.

5. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

a. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of July 27, 2023

A Motion to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of July 27, 2023 was made by Commissioner Grissim and seconded by Commissioner Eckman. Motion carried unanimously.

6. **Call to the Public:**

None

7. **Old and New Business**

a. Site Plan #23-009 Climate controlled self-storage facility Planned Development (PD) Concept Plan

Director Langer gave an overview of the scope and location of the request stating the following:

- Located west of US 23, east of Old US 23, north of M-59; between Best Western and Arby's.
- Requesting a Planned Development (PD) to construct a climate controlled self-storage facility.
- PD process involves three steps; Conceptual, Preliminary, and Final at both the Planning Commission and the Township Board.
- This is a Conceptual review; no decisions will be made but comments are encouraged.

Reid Cooksey, P.E. of Stonefield Engineering and Design, and Ron Jona of the Ron Jona Collaborative, representing Joe Qonja, the Applicant, stated the following:

- PD requested as self-storage is not a permitted use in the GC General Commercial zoning district.
- Felt the PD process would be less cumbersome than the Rezoning process and better fits the scope of the project.
- Proposing a 64,200 square foot, three-story, climate controlled self-storage which will meet a need in the Township as there are none at this time.
- Parcel does not have frontage on M-59, only an access drive; other uses would not be viable.
- Planning a nice product with high quality materials that will be aesthetically pleasing.

- Meets a need in Hartland, will be visually appealing in a great location near US 23, and a good use for this parcel.

Chair Fox referred to the staff memorandum dated August 17, 2023. On page 3, the Planning Commission should evaluate the proposed use and determine if the standards in Section 4.35 (Mini Warehouses) would apply.

Director Langer stated the following:

Most mini-warehouses have a row of units accessed by a vehicle via individual garage doors; this is a little different. There is also an indoor drive aisle with interior access to some units. Mini-warehouse is the closest use to what is being proposed but does not fit entirely. Typically screening is required for the mini garages which would not fit this project. The Director stated he is unsure if a resident manager on site is part of the proposal.

The Applicant stated there will be an employee on site to assist customers. Mini warehouse is close to what is being proposed but this is a new use to the community. Since everything is located within the building, he does not think some of the screening requirements will apply.

The Applicant stated the following:

- There are outside doors for access, but they intend to mask them architecturally using color and materials.
- A greenbelt will add screening.
- Traditional mini storage facilities are butler buildings that are not climate controlled, the owners do not spend the money to heat or cool them thus limiting what can be stored in them. Some items of value, without heating and cooling, will not remain intact.
- This concept of climate controlled storage is becoming more important to people in the community and society at large. Climate controlled simply means it is heated and cooled.
- Some units are accessed from the outside, others are only accessible from the inside via an interior drive aisle on the first floor; and by elevators and corridors on the second and third floors.

[The Applicant displayed a visual layout of the structure to while explaining the access.]

- The building will meet all Fire Codes and will be sprinkled.
- Customers cannot work out of the building, they can only store items.
- The office will include a restroom.
- Parking is located at the back of the building near the office.
- Used curtain wall glass for the staircases in the corners for visual appeal.
- Fully secured access with one attendant and cameras.
- No fences are needed as everything is inside.
- Security is taken seriously.
- Will be able to do some nice landscaping around the facility.

Chair Fox asked if Section 4.35 (Mini Warehouses) would apply. Commissioner Eckman responded he imagines it would be precedent setting if the Planning Commission said it would. He said it seems like a totally different scenario. The Planning Commission agreed.

PD Size Requirement

Chair Fox stated the following:

- The proposed PD site is 1.2 acres.
- The Planning Commission has approved other sites that were smaller than the 20-acre minimum for unique circumstances such as Walgreens and the bank.
- Those opportunities do exist upon recommendation to the Township Board.

Layout

Director Langer explained the vehicular traffic plan stating it is generally one way beginning at the southernmost access, wrapping around the building with two options; one is to turn left and enter the interior drive aisle which exits on the west side of the building with a driveway to the access road; the other is to follow the drive around the building to access the units on the north side, and exit the site using the northernmost exit.

Fire Department Access

Director Langer continued the Fire Department expressed concerns due to the height of the building and their ability to access the interior of the structure. The Applicant has addressed these concerns by adding a wider drive aisle access, a mountable curb and a proposed two-foot grass paver system for fire access.

Building Height

Director Langer stated the following:

- Building height is 43'-0" for the 3-story building.
- This height exceeds the maximum allowed height of thirty-five (35) feet in a Planned Development. A waiver request to exceed the maximum building height is required from the applicant at the Preliminary review.

Commissioner Mitchell asked about the height of Hartland High School and estimated it to be approximately the same height.

Commissioner Eckert commented he would not consider this a significant deviation as it would not be blocking the view of anything.

The Applicant stated he was aware of the limitation when designing the building and explained the first floor ceiling height is 16 feet as access is needed for taller vehicles. The 12 feet from floor to floor allows for a 10-foot ceiling height which is also desired. There is some play with the three (3) foot parapet wall on top of the structure, but their intent is to use that to screen rooftop equipment as required.

Chair Fox stated the height limit was originally driven by the fire equipment available and the community now has a ladder truck; also, the height at the interchange is already there so taller buildings should be located near the interchange area and not at other locations. He would not give up the screening from the parapet wall.

Director Langer stated this drawing is a concept drawing. If the project moves forward, they will need to show the HVAC units and how well they are screened by that parapet wall. Additionally,

he mentioned the Emagine Theater exceeds the PD height limitation which is also near the intersection of M-59 and US 23.

Chair Fox commented that a taller building makes screening the rooftop units easier due to the angles and line of sight.

Commissioner Mayer requested that the Applicant show on the next submittal a roof plan showing the locations of the HVAC units with dimensions.

Setbacks

Director Langer stated the PD process essentially eliminates all of the zoning ordinance regulations and establishes new ones. This is not typically discussed in detail at the Conceptual review, but it is very important at the Preliminary review level. The plans list building setbacks as required for GC (General Commercial) zoning, and parking setbacks per the Zoning Ordinance. Obviously, this building would not comply with the GC setbacks. He wanted to ensure the Planning Commission is aware the setbacks will need to be varied for this project to move forward. If the Planning Commission has concerns about setbacks, this would be the time to share them before the Applicant invests further resources into the project.

Chair Fox stated one example of a PD with smaller setbacks is Hartland Towne Square by Meijer. When it is fully developed it will be more apparent. When the Township allows for a variation of this sort, there is typically something offered in exchange such as excellent architecture.

The Applicant reiterated this parcel is unique; the site fronts on an access drive. It is behind Arby's. The only people driving on the access drive are going to Best Western. It will not be a hazard having the building a little closer to the access drive or property lines. They have been working with the Planning Director and Chair Fox on upscale architecture with a beefed up landscape plan; a 30-foot greenbelt is proposed where 10 feet is required.

Commissioner Eckert stated with the open space and the height, there are many variances from the standard, but it is a beautiful building on a difficult site. It is better than what is there now. He has a positive view of this proposal.

Director Langer clarified the following:

- The Applicant has been working with staff and the Site Plan Review Committee to prepare to come before the Planning Commission, as they do with many applicants.
- They met initially with just the idea and were encouraged to provide more information.
- When the first drawings came in, the Director explained what is being given up for this project on such a small parcel so the architecture will have to be stepped up.
- This plan is the result of those early meetings and conversations; it is not their first attempt.

The Applicant agreed stating that is why the early design meetings are there to get to this point. They do not want to keep coming back with revisions either. The Applicant stated they are working with the Township and desire to provide all they can. They want to be in Hartland where there is a need for this product.

Chair Fox stated at the next level there will be a traffic report required. The Applicant stated this project is a very low traffic generator, maybe nine (9) cars at the peak.

Public Road Access

Commissioner McMullen asked if the one-way portion of the access drive will be changed. She has no desire to make a left turn at that location. The Applicant stated it is a private access in not under the jurisdiction of Livingston County Road Commission; it can be altered. Access is intended to be two-way for this project.

Commissioner Mayer asked about the width of the access drive. The Applicant was unsure but stated it is adequate for two-way traffic with the rolled curbs and grass pavers. Chair Fox suggested improving that access could be one of their Recognizable Benefits to the community.

Director Langer stated one item that has not been addressed is an easement agreement. The Applicant currently owns three of the four properties that use the access road. He does not know if there is a recorded easement agreement that outlines how that private road is properly maintained or repaired in the future if the Applicant no longer owns all of these properties. The Applicant did contact staff after the memorandum was distributed with a document, but he has not had the opportunity to thoroughly review it. What was provided is not to the level he is looking for.

Chair Fox stated that would be beneficial in the future, if there were three different property owners, to have that all spelled out in advance. The Applicant stated they would provide one for the Final PD and add any language that needs to be included.

Design Details

Chair Fox asked the Planning Commission for their thoughts.

Commissioner Eckman stated he thinks it has the feel of a beautiful building in Detroit that has been restored. The Applicant commented masonry is timeless.

Commissioner Mayer asked if the composite panels were aluminum on the east and west elevations. The Applicant stated they are a pressboard product that is painted called Hardieboard.

Chair Fox stated the building is beautiful, a home run. It will be critical when the samples are presented that they are not smooth brick but rather new brick that looks like “old” brick. The Applicant concurred.

Open Space

Director Langer stated typically the open space requirement is twenty-five percent (25%). He does not have any calculations at this time, but it looks like they will not meet that goal; that will be a waiver they will be seeking as part of the PD.

Landscaping

The Applicant stated they are proposing a nice mix of native species, shrubbery, flowering grasses as well as evergreens for screening purposes. They also are providing good screening to the south and a few trees to break up the masonry in the perimeter landscaping. Chair Fox asked about the vegetation to the north coming off of the US 23 ramp. The Applicant stated most of that vegetation

is located within the MDOT right of way. They intend to provide additional trees and shrubs along the property line to beef up the view from the highway.

Recognizable Benefits

Director Langer stated the following:

- a Recognizable Benefit is a requirement of the Planned Development process as the Township is forgoing all of its regular regulations to allow for a specific project.
- They will need to be stated in writing.
- A couple of items have been mentioned this evening such as the quality architecture and possibly improving the access road.
- Ultimately, the Planning Commission and the Township Board will need to decide if the Recognizable Benefits are enough to warrant the Township surrendering the existing zoning regulations and approving this Planned Development.
- Often it seems the Planning Commission and Township Board wrestle with this issue and desire objective standards; but as it stands, it is more subjective. Does this project and what is being proposed, in your eyes, warrant moving forward? There is no definitive criteria; each member must decide internally how they feel about the benefits being proposed and if they are sufficient to approve this PD.

The Applicant asked about the Lighting Plan; a preliminary one was included. They intend to light the building with wall sconces. A more detailed lighting plan will be provided at the Preliminary review.

Commissioner Mayer asked about the plan date referenced on the Spaulding DeDecker review. Director Langer stated he believes the date is an error as they would not have had those plans over one year ago.

Commissioner Mayer also asked for the turning radius for fire vehicles to be shown in the next set of plans. The Applicant stated they will put together a whole plan for the fire department. Commissioner Mayer asked if they could make that turn on the north side. The Applicant stated he believes with the additional grass paver area they can.

The Planning Commission briefly discussed the proposed landscaping on the north side.

Commissioner Mayer asked if there will be sidewalks. The Applicant state they do not anticipate much pedestrian traffic to a storage facility and there is no connectivity to M-59. Commissioner Mayer stated that maybe the patrons of the hotel might like access to the businesses along M-59. The Applicant stated if a stub had been provided, they might have been able to connect but it is not there. Until it gets redeveloped it would be a sidewalk to nowhere.

Planning Commission Comments

Commissioner Mayer stated it is a beautiful building, it fits that piece of property perfectly, it is a great place for it, it is a great looking building.

Commissioner Mitchell stated he agrees it is a very attractive building on a unique parcel, the two fit very nicely together. He asked about parking. The Applicant stated more information will be provided at the next level of review.

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Commissioner Grissim stated she appreciates the effort on the architecture, there is no real visibility so some of it does not make sense with the commercial use. They are working the best they can with the site. She is looking forward to seeing more information on the underground storm drain detention. The Applicant stated they are working with Livingston County Drain Commission and the Township Engineer; more information will be provided at the next level of review.

Commissioner Eckman stated if you are going to put something there, this is a really nice looking building; it looks nice from all sides. He has a very positive view of the project.

Commissioner McMullen concurred.

Chair Fox also agreed and stated they have done a great job with the project.

The Applicant stated they appreciate the feedback, are excited to be here and fill the need locally in the Hartland community.

8. Call to the Public:

None

9. Planner Report:

None

10. Committee Reports:

None

11. Adjournment:

A Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mitchell and seconded by Commissioner Mayer. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:02 PM.

Submitted by.



Tom Murphy
Planning Commission Secretary