

**TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN
PLANNING BOARD
COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY**

**VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING
November 3, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Township of Franklin Planning Board was held at 475 DeMott Lane, Somerset, New Jersey and was called to order by Chairman Orsini, at 7:30 p.m. The Sunshine Law was read, the Pledge of Allegiance said, and the roll was taken as follows:

PRESENT: Councilman Chase, Carl Hauck, Meher Rafiq, Carol Schmidt, Jennifer Rangnow, Mustapha Mansaray, Robert Thomas, Sami Shaban, and Chairman Orsini

ABSENT: Charles Brown

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. James Clarkin, Board Attorney, Mark Healey, Planning Director, and Christine Woodbury, Planning & Zoning Secretary

RESOLUTIONS:

- **SAFStor Real Estate Co., LLC / PLN-21-00010**

Mr. Thomas made a motion to approve the Resolution, as submitted. Chairman Orsini seconded the motion, and the roll was called as follows:

FOR: Councilman Chase, Mr. Hauck, Ms. Rafiq, Ms. Schmidt, Mr. Thomas, and Chairman Orsini

AGAINST: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chairman Orsini then made a motion to open the meeting to the public for general Planning comments. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Seeing no one coming forward, Chairman Orsini made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting. Councilman Chase seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

HEARINGS:

- **SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, INC. / PLN-21-00016**

Relief of condition and a parking variance is requested by the Applicant from the original approval that prohibited medical office use on the premises at 562 Easton Avenue, Somerset; Block 262, Lot 1.01, in the OP Zone - **CARRIED TO DECEMBER 1, 2021 – with no further notification required.**

DL - 1/29/2022

- **CANAL ROAD SOLAR PARTNERS, LLC / PLN-21-00017**

Mr. Peter U. Lanfrit, Esq., Attorney, appeared before the Board on behalf of the Applicant, Canal Road Solar Partners, LLC. Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan for proposed development which consists of placement of ground-mounted, roof-mounted and carport solar panels at 701 Randolph Road, Somerset; Block 516.01, Lot 6.02, in the B-I Zone.

Mr. Lanfrit indicated that they were proposing to construct nine (9) solar arrays on property that was currently known as New Jersey American Water. He told the Board that the property was about 98 acres in size and fronts both on Randolph Road and Weston Canal Road. Mr. Lanfrit then noted that there were no variances being sought in conjunction with the Application.

Mr. Craig Stires, Engineer and President of Stires Associates, 43 West High Street, Somerville, NJ, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted his qualifications. Mr. Stires testified that he prepared the plans for subject Application, and placed into evidence Exhibit A-1, which was an aerial of the subject property. He then went on to describe the subject property, along with the associated land uses surrounding the subject property, including residential, farmland and the new Amazon distribution facility. Mr. Stires stated that the access to the current property, which included a water treatment plant and some ancillary buildings, was off of Randolph Road. Additionally, he noted that there were some existing solar arrays on the property, south of the plan, as well as some to the east and some to the north. He noted that the original plant was built in 1993 and expanded in 2007, with a number of smaller applications that included the original solar on the site in 2006 and a 2020 approval adjacent to the plan itself. As part of the 2020 approval, he showed Randolph Brook, a tributary to the Raritan River, where NJ American Water granted a stream corridor easement pursuant to approval from the Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission (DRCC). Mr. Stires noted that the brook was delineated using the approximation method in which the easement was based upon and included a 100 ft. buffer above and beyond the 100-year flood plain. He then discussed some wetlands delineated in the area that he believed were still encompassed within the stream corridor buffer that was granted.

Mr. Stires then pointed out the nine (9) solar arrays that were being proposed for the property. He told the Board that #4, #6, #7, #8, and #9 were ground-mounted arrays, Mr. Stires then indicated that #1 and #3 were roof-mounted arrays, with #5 mounted on top of the existing plant, and #2 was carport mounted arrays over the top of the existing parking lot. Mr. Stires then told the Board that there was mostly existing brush/high grass on the property where the proposed ground-mounted arrays were proposed and would be cut and maintained once the panels were installed. He then indicated that an area of two (2) acres of trees would have to be removed to accommodate the #9 section of ground-mounted arrays. Mr. Stires then discussed the related impervious coverage, stating that the property under the solar panels was not considered in that calculation; however, the posts that hold them were. He then told the Board that there would be 1,705 posts holding the arrays, with essentially 1,005 sq. ft. of new impervious coverage on the property. He then told the Board that the ground-mounted arrays, since they were angled, would be 6 ft. 7 inches off the ground at their highest. Mr. Stires added that the maximum height of the arrays mounted on carports over the parking lots would be 21 ft. 3 inches high. He described the roof-mounted arrays as being thirteen (13) inches off the level of the roofline

Mr. Stires then discussed the comments made in the reports generated by the Township staff. He first talked about Mr. Healey's Planning report of October 13, 2021, stating that they would be either replacing the trees being removed or make a contribution to the Tree Replacement Fund in lieu of replacement. He stated that 80 trees would be placed along the northern property line to add to any buffering to the canal and Weston Canal Rd.

Mr. Stires then addressed the report from CME, dated October 21, 2021, and indicated that they could comply and/or work with CME and Township staff to their satisfaction. He noted that any changes made to the plan as a result of comments were minor in nature and would not significantly alter the plan.

Chairman Orsini pointed out the consideration of including car charging stations, utilizing the solar power that would come from the proposed arrays. Mr. Lanfrit indicated he would have to speak with his client to see if they could include those within the confines of the parking area. The Chairman also pointed out another comment asking that storm water runoff be diverted back to the water treatment facility. A discussion ensued, suggesting that the storm water continue to be diverted to the canal to be utilized later for water treatment use. Additionally, Mr. Lanfrit indicated that all solar power generated by the panels were to be utilized for the operations of the power plant.

Chairman Orsini then made a motion to open the meeting to the public. Councilman Chase seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Seeing no one coming forward for questions/comments, Chairman Orsini made a motion to close the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded, and all were in favor.

Mr. Lanfrit then indicated that they would comply with the conditions from the CME report as well as Mr. Healey's report. He then asked that the Board not make it a condition of approval to include car charging stations on the property, as suggested by the Environmental Commission since they did not receive a copy of their report prior to the hearing. He did add, however, that they would look into the possibility of including them after consultation with his client.

Councilman Chase then inquired as to what type of trees were located along the western border and northern border of the property. Mr. Stires indicated that there were some existing trees in the area being discussed and the rest of the area had brush. He also told the Board that there was already planted landscaping along the residential side of the property.

Councilman Chase made a motion to approve the Application in compliance with all staff reports, to exclude the car chargers discussed. The motion was seconded, and the roll was called as follows:

FOR: Councilman Chase, Mr. Hauck, Ms. Rafiq, Ms. Schmidt, Ms. Rangnow, Mr. Mansaray, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Shaban, and Chairman Orsini

AGAINST: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports were discussed.

WORKSESSION/NEW BUSINESS:

No worksession items or new business was discussed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The Board did not enter into an Executive Session that evening.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Orsini made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:03 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Murphy, Recording Secretary
December 10, 2021