

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

**REGULAR MEETING
October 19, 2022**

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 Michael Orsini, Chairman, at 7:30 p.m. The Sunshine Law was read, the Pledge of Allegiance said, and the roll was taken as follows:

PRESENT: Councilman Anbarasan, Theodore Chase, Jennifer Rangnow, Charles Brown, Robert Thomas, Sammy Shaban, and Chairman Orsini

ABSENT: Carl Hauck, Meher Rafiq, and Mustapha Mansaray,

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

MINUTES:

- **Regular Meeting – July 20, 2022**

Dr. Chase made a motion to approve the Minutes, as submitted. Vice Chair Brown seconded the motion, and the roll was called as follows:

FOR: Dr. Chase, Ms. Rangnow, Vice Chair Brown, and Mr. Thomas

AGAINST: None

RESOLUTIONS:

- **Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc / PLN-22-00012**

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

FOR: Dr. Chase, Ms. Rangnow, Vice Chair Brown, and Mr. Thomas

AGAINST: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chairman Orsini then made a motion to open the meeting to the public for General Planning discussion. He reminded the public that anything discussed during this portion of the meeting was strictly related to General Planning Comments and not related to the hearing for Macedonia Church of God in Christ International, to be held later in the meeting. Chairman Orsini indicated that each speaker would have 3 minutes to speak. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Ms. Shirley Tallman, 57 Tallman Lane, Canal Walk, Somerset, NJ, came forward. Ms. Tallman made reference to the last Planning Board hearing she attended and spoke at. She indicated that she was told by the Chairman at that meeting that her comments were silly, and she wanted the Board to know that at now time should a resident be ridiculed for comments made when coming forward with concerns. She indicated that the professionals who come before the Board to give their testimony were there to speak the truth, but she questioned whether they were there to represent the Township residents and the community or were they acting in the best interests of the people who pay for them to speak here. She then asked the Board to be on the side of the residents.

Seeing no one further coming forward, the Chairman then made a motion to close the general public portion of the meeting. The motion was seconded and all were in favor.

HEARINGS:

- **PULEO INTERNATIONAL INC. / PLN-22-00006**

Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan w/C Variances in which the Applicant wanted to construct a 92,115 sq. ft. warehouse at Atrium Drive Extension, Somerset; Block 468.01, Lot 21.13, in the Business & Industry (B-I) Zone. - CARRIED TO JANUARY 18, 2023 – with no further notification required.

DL - 09/30/2022

- **MACEDONIA CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST INTERNATIONAL / PLN-21-0002**

Mr. Peter U. Lanfrit, Esq., Attorney, appeared before the Board on behalf of the Applicant, Macedonia Church of God in Christ International. He explained they were there to obtain Site Plan approval w/C Variances in which the Applicant sought permission to demolish the existing church and construct a new 2-story church at 30 Booker Street, and 127, 131 & 133 Fuller Street, Somerset; Block 123, Lots 13-22, in the R-F Zone.

Mr. Lanfrit then gave the Board the benefit of the long history of the church. He explained that the Application started in 2007 and that they were looking into doing something like this in 1999. He indicated that they originally just owned the property that the church was on and the associated parking lot, but over time they acquired two (2) parcels on Fuller Street to the left of the church, which was the proposed location of the new church. He then spoke about the two houses on the property, and indicated that one of them has since been demolished. Mr. Lanfrit then explained that they owned a couple of lots across Booker St., which were ultimately sold to RPM for their redevelopment in Renaissance. Additionally, they also owned two (2) lots across the street on Fuller Street. Since the property was located in the Renaissance redevelopment area, and at the time the zoning did not permit churches in the zone, therefore they could not proceed until they could affectuate a change to the zoning ordinance to allow churches in that zone. He further stated that a Use Variance was not allowed in a redevelopment area. Mr. Lanfrit then told the Board that the two lots across the street were not included in the original property and they could not utilize the lots until there was a zoning change to allow it for additional parking. Mr. Lanfrit then indicated that the project was constrained as to height because the church was located in the redevelopment area.

Mr. Sadowski, Site Engineer, 10 Edward Avenue, Edison, NJ, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted his qualifications. Mr. Sadowski indicated that he was not originally involved with the project but was part of the plan changes that the Board would be seeing and discussing that evening. He first discussed the existing conditions, utilizing the Existing Conditions Plan, Sheet 2 of 8, in the plan submissions. He pointed out the existing church with an existing residential dwelling adjacent to it to the west. He then drew the Board's attention to the curb cuts on Fuller Street with some head-in parking on Booker Street to include approximately 10 spaces. Mr. Sadowski then showed the Landscaping and Lighting Plan, which was colorized on Sheet #4 in the plan set. He entered it into the Record as Exhibit A-1. Mr. Sadowski told the Board that the existing structures on the property would all be demolished, the site would be cleared with the main access to the church parking lot from Fuller Street. He noted that the main church would then be placed on the westerly portion of the property, with a 38-space parking lot and a fence enclosed dumpster/refuse area in the back of the property and accessed directly from the driveway on Fuller Street. Mr. Sadowski then pointed out the green areas, trees, shrubs, mulch areas. He then drew the Board's attention to the proposed sidewalks along Fuller and Booker streets with an ADA accessible

crosswalk on Booker Street. He then noted the square footage of the church as 4,880 sq. ft. (approximately 60 ft. x 80 ft.).

Mr. Sadowski then discussed the proposed storm water management system that was planned for the property with the use of porous asphalt, where the water was captured on the surface and permeated below into the soil. He testified that there was no storm water management system on the property currently. He then explained that they were planning to have pole-mounted lights around the perimeter of the parking lot and within the one (1) curbed island.

Mr. Sadowski then discussed the required variances for the project, to include:

1. Minimum Lot Area – Minimum of one (1) acre required (43,560 sq. ft.) – 0.57 acres proposed (25,000 sq. ft.). (Existing)
2. Minimum Building Setback (Front) – Minimum of 50 ft. required – 7 ft. proposed along Fuller Street.
3. Minimum Building Setback (Side-Rear) – Minimum of 30 ft. required – 5 ft. (north) and minimum of 10 ft. - 6 ft. (West) proposed.
4. Maximum Lot (Building) Coverage: - Maximum 30% permitted – 19.52% proposed.
5. Maximum Impervious Coverage – Maximum of 60% permitted – 72.6% proposed
6. Off-Street Parking – At least 131 spaces required – 38 spaces proposed.
7. Parking Location – Majority of parking required to be located behind the building – parking located between the building and Booker Street. Design Waiver required.
8. Parking Lot Setback – 15 ft. front setback required – 1 ft. (Fuller Street), 7.5 (Booker Street) and 5 ft. (residential buffer) proposed. Design Waiver required.
9. Parking Lot Buffering – Buffer 15.25 ft/6 ft. evergreen/fencing – proposed buffering does comply in width (at 5 ft.) or design. Design Waiver required.
10. Lighting – Max. 15 ft. permitted/Max. 0.0 footcandle at property line/light source shall be concealed. Complies with height limitation/design waiver for footcandle limitation/plan needs to demonstrate compliance with requirement that light source be concealed.
11. Drive Aisle Width – 26 ft. required – 24 ft. proposed. Design Waiver required.

Mr. Sadowski explained that some of the variances were created due to the fact that the property had two (2) frontages. He also explained that no matter where the church was constructed, they would not be able to place the parking lot to the rear of the property. Mr. Sadowski stated that the parking lot aisle width complied with the ordinance, but that the main driving aisle width was at 24 ft and was required to be 26 ft. in width. He explained that he designed the main drive aisle that way to be consistent with the other parking lot drive aisles for automobiles to follow to the parking lot. Only garbage trucks coming occasionally would deviate from that.

Mr. Sadowski then addressed the staff reports associated with the Application, including a Fire Prevention report, dated December 16, 2021, which he indicated that they could comply with. He added that they could comply with all the comments in the CME Engineering report. Additionally, he stated that the Police asked for the addition of a stop sign, which Mr. Sadowski indicated that they could comply with. He then stated that they could comply with the comment from the Sewerage Authority and that the Health Dept. had no comments. He then added that Mr. Healey's Planning report asked for the layout to address increasing the frontage along Fuller Street. Mr. Sadowski stated that currently along Fuller Street the curb line is setback 1 ft. behind the property line. He noted that Mr. Healey wanted to know if they could potentially increase that distance so that they could get a street tree off of the Township right-of-way and onto the subject property as well as the hedgerow. He indicated that if he slid the entire parking lot several ft. to the north, they could reduce the 5 ft. buffer that currently existed to 1 ft. and would gain 4 ft. along Fuller Street to be able to provide a 5 ft. buffer in the front. He explained that they would ask for a variance against Lots 23 and 24, Township owned lots, that had no frontage because Camner Street had been vacated and were deemed undevelopable. He asked that they be able to ask for a variance against those lots which would allow them to provide the additional landscaping in the front of the property. Mr. Sadowski then indicated that Mr. Healey spoke about some additional buffering in the areas that they already had buffering, and he stated that they could have a discussion with him to satisfy that request.

Mr. Thomas asked if anyone had any knowledge of the Township's intention for the use of Lots 23 and 24 in the future and whether they could be purchased to be used for additional parking. Mr. Lanfrit stated that there was a reason they could not purchase the property but could not remember the reason why. He stated that they could look into that situation.

Chairman Orsini stated that he was concerned that they had so many variances that were being requested. He was also concerned about any agreements they might have for the use of additional parking spaces and if they would/could be continued into the future. He suggested that they reduce the size of the project to accommodate the size of the site. A discussion ensued related to parking issues.

Dr. Chase opened a discussion regarding areas in the back of the property for additional parking. He also suggested that they have an exit to Booker Street from the rear of the parking lot to allow cars to get out of the parking lot should there be no more parking spots available. He then suggested that they might look into leasing parking on the Township Lots 23 and 24. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Thomas was concerned that if they moved the parking lot back, it would create an additional buffer variance. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Shaban then asked about the buffering needs on the western portion of the site. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Laurence Charles Johnson, Architect, 40 Camner Avenue, Somerset, NJ, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted his qualifications. Mr. Johnson described that the existing church, which was built in 1948, was in poor condition and had some age concerns including some rot. He indicated that the church was very small for the size of their congregation presently. He added that the church building consisted of a small sanctuary, but had no offices for the pastor, no fellowship hall or other amenities that were seen with houses of worship. Mr. Johnson utilized exhibit boards that were part of the plan set. He indicated that the sanctuary would be on the first floor, along with restrooms, with the basement to be utilized as a fellowship hall and offices as well as restrooms. He added that there would be a balcony in the sanctuary that would allow for about 100 additional seats. Mr. Johnson then described the building materials, including masonry with a stucco overlay, and what the church would look like. He indicated that the height of the building would be 38.5 ft. with the entrance to the church off of Booker Street. He described a vestibule, a small office and restrooms on the first floor, along with the sanctuary. He described the layout of the basement and noted that the entire building would be ADA accessible with the use of an elevator and full sprinklered. Mr. Johnson testified that the sanctuary would be used at different times than the fellowship hall, with the congregation moving from one space to the other after services were completed.

Mr. Johnson then drew the Board's attention to the first-floor layout, including 303 total seats, with 210 in the sanctuary level with the balance in the balcony area. He added that the lower level could accommodate approximately 80 people.

Dr. Chase wanted to know why there were so many offices needed within the church, and Mr. Lanfrit indicated that even though they were designated offices, there was Sunday School for the kids in the basement

Ms. Lora Payne, Church Representative, 127 Edpas Rd., New Brunswick, NJ, came forward and was sworn in. She testified that they had 120 families in the parish at the present time, but were limited to 99 people in the existing building. She added that they had to remove the kitchen to allow for the additional people per fire code. She indicated that they have a church service on Tuesday evenings that included 50-60 people, with the approximately the same number of people attending Bible Study meetings on Wednesday evenings. She added that they have a choir rehearsal (about 25 people) on Thursday evenings and pastoral service (about 60-70 people) on Friday evenings. She testified that their main church service was on Sunday (11 a.m. service) to include about 100 people, along with Sunday School for the children in the house next door to the church at 10:00 a.m. She noted that there was street parking available and used for the weekday activities of the church. She noted that they use their parking lot and street parking for Sunday services and stated that there was adequate parking on Sundays for the congregation numbers currently. She noted that all the people would go from the church to the fellowship hall in the new building and never occupy both spaces at the same time. She also noted that the activities and church services would stay the same should the new church building be approved. Ms. Johnson told the Board that they would host repasts after funerals in the fellowship hall and would not

rent out the space to anyone. She explained that the church had online services, so that people could participate in services even if they couldn't attend church physically due to occupancy concerns in the building. He indicated that if the Application were to be approved, they would be able to accommodate more people in the building so that some people wouldn't have to resort to watching the service online.

Ms. Rangnow asked if the church had a bus or shuttle van to pick up people who could not get themselves to church on their own. Ms. Johnson indicated that they had two (2) vans, each accommodating 14 people.

Dr. Chase opened a discussion of including more than one service on Sundays should the congregation grow out of being able to hold all congregants at one time. She indicated that services start at 11:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m., so she didn't think they would be able to accommodate that additional service, along with the 10:00 a.m. Sunday School classes. She noted that there might be time when they would be hosting Regional, State and local meetings at their church. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Healey asked what the current capacity of the church related to its size and number of seats. He also inquired about their ability to host larger conferences at their proposed building. Mr. Lanfrit stated that the size of the proposed church was directly linked to being able to host these other larger groups of people at their church, which he indicated was only once a year, at best.

Mr. Lanfrit then spoke about arranging for off-site parking for larger gatherings and shuttling people back and forth. He noted that the parking was adequate for the needs of day-to-day operations. A discussion ensued regarding weddings and funerals.

Vice Chair Brown asked if there was any anticipation of additional growth of the church. Mr. Lanfrit indicated that the area was walkable in the Renaissance Redevelopment Area.

Dr. Chase asked if Ms. Payne knew how many people walk to the church presently, and she indicated that she did not know. They discussed the ability to walk with the current sidewalk network in the area.

Mr. Jay Troutman, Traffic Engineer, Principal with McDonough & Rea Associates, 105 Elm Street, Westfield, NJ, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted his qualifications. He then spoke to the numbers of seating being made available in the church sanctuary (210 main seating and 60 balcony seating to equal 270 seats) which he believed was the number of people needed to be accommodated for parking on the site. He noted that the 33 choir seats come from the congregation and are not additional people/seating. Mr. Troutman added that using the ratio of 1:3 seats, the parking demand would be 90. With the current demand of 100 people coming to the Sunday service, the parking demand would be approximately 35 vehicles which could be accommodate in the on-site parking lot that was being proposed. He added that the number to people to be accommodated on the proposed plan was to allow for growth.

for currently. He then discussed the current situation related to parking, including the capacity of on-street parking, noting that the vans also pick up parishioners who don't drive, reducing some of the parking needs. Mr. Troutman stated that the improvements to the curbing around the site would provide additional on-street parking.

Mr. Troutman discussed the circulation plan for the site. He noted that the weekly activities would only demand about 33 or so parking spaces and there would be no issue with parishioners entering the site and having to leave for lack of parking. Mr. Troutman testified that the church agreed to have a parking lot monitor to alert parishioners coming to the site when the parking lot was full and to seek on-street parking so that they wouldn't have to enter the site. He then spoke to the fact that all spaces would not be occupied at the same time and that they would only have to accommodate for 270 people. He felt that the on-site parking and the street parking would be more than adequate to handle the larger Sunday services.

Mr. Healey then asked for clarification. A discussion ensued. Chairman Orsini stated that they can only assume the 38 on-site parking spaces is what is available for parking for the church. The discussion ensued among the Board regarding the gap that existed related to the amount of parking spaces being proposed and the number of parking spaces that were required.

Mr. Lanfrit asked if the matter could be carried so that they could investigate some other alternatives. Mr. Troutman testified that the parking availability on the redevelopment site on Sundays was wide open. Mr. Lanfrit asked if he got an easement agreement from RPM that was recordable, enforceable and permanent to get additional parking across the street, would that make the Board feel more comfortable. He also indicated he would look into whether the Township lots could be accessed for parking. A discussion ensued about parking, lot coverage and the ability for pervious pavement to accommodate for storm water runoff. The Board discussed the parking needs and their accommodation at Franklin Commons in the redevelopment area.

Chairman Orsini made a motion to open the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded and all were in favor.

Mr. Carl Wright, 139 Fuller Street, Somerset, NJ, came forward. Mr. Wright is fully on board with what the church wanted to do. He noted that the property has an easement for the water and sewer line. A discussion ensued related to the Applicant acquiring more land or reducing the size of the building. A discussion ensued regarding the Township owned properties and the ability to purchase that land.

Ms. Shirley Tallman, 57 Tallman Lane, Canal Walk, Somerset, NJ, came forward. She asked if there was concern for flooding in the area considering there was a basement. They discussed the possibility of wetlands on Lots 23 and 24.

Seeing no further public coming forward, Chairman Orsini made a motion to close the public portion. The motion was seconded and all were in favor.

Mr. Lanfrit agreed to carry the hearing - **CARRIED TO A DATE TO BE DETERMINED – with notification required.**

DL – March 31, 2022

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

No Committee reports discussed.

WORK SESSION / NEW BUSINESS:

There was no work session or new business discussed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The Board did not enter into Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Orsini made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m., and the motion was seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Murphy, Recording Secretary
December 15, 2022