



TOWN OF CLINTON

INCORPORATED APRIL 5, 1865

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PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the Town of Clinton Special Planning Board meeting held on December 16, 2013 at 7:00pm in the Municipal Building at 43 Leigh Street Clinton, New Jersey 08809

Chairman Gallagher called the meeting to order at 7:15pm and read the "Administrative Statement" and the "Statement of Adequate Notice":

"Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month. Applications must be filed at least 21 days prior to the meeting date. In order to ensure that all applications receive complete and thorough consideration of the board, all meetings will adjourn no later than 10:00pm with all items not concluded to be carried over to next month's agenda".

"Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided indicating the time and place of the meeting with the proposed agenda, which notice was posted, made available to the newspapers and filed with the clerk of the Town of Clinton in accordance with Section 3(d) of the Public Laws of 1975".

Due to conflicts with some members of the Planning Board the board has applied the MLUL which allows the board to cross-populate if there is a lack of eligible voters to make up a quorum.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Gallagher, Feldmann, Perez, Berson, Sailer, Smith, Recame

Absent:

Attorney William Caldwell and Planner Kendra Lelie on behalf of Carl Hintz were present.

Approval of Minutes for November 5, 2013:

A Motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Berson to approved the November 5, 2013 minutes:

All Ayes. Motion carried.

A Motion was made Mr. Sailer, seconded by Mr. Smith, to approve the November 25, 2013 minutes with the following change:

Page 4- under board deliberation Mr. Berson change the last sentence to read *feel the applicant did not make an effort to reduce the negative impact on parking and feel something better can be offered.*

All Ayes. Motion Carried.

Application for an Amended Preliminary & Final Site Plan – Block 9 Lot 1- The Hunterdon Art Museum. Attorney Robert Simon, Herold Law, Mr. Gary Dean, Traffic Engineer from Dolan & Dean and Marjorie Nathanson, Executive Director of the Hunterdon Art Museum were present.

Chairman Gallagher stated at the last two meetings of November 5, 2013 and November 25, 2013 we have heard testimony from the applicant, the applicant's professionals, the boards professionals, the public has had an opportunity for cross examination, testimony and comments and tonight the meeting is

now closed. We have a motion on the table, which has been seconded, to grant the parking variance and due to the time frame the board carried the meeting until tonight. Chairman Gallagher stated he would like to proceed tonight where the board left off at the last meeting and continue the board deliberation.

Attorney Simon stated his recollection from the last meeting is the board has several concerns with the validity of the Museum's parking study and since the last meeting the Museum hired Mr. Gary Dean from Dolan & Dean who is a professional Traffic Engineer. Mr. Dean conducted a professional study and tonight he would like to present the information to the board and the public so that everyone has as much information possible to be able to make an informed decision.

A Motion was made by Mr. Sailer, seconded by Mr. Feldmann, to withdraw the Motion that was made on November 25, 2013 to grant the Parking Variance and to reopen the meeting to hear expert testimony from Mr. Dean.

The following items were submitted into evidence:

- A9 Ariel photograph of Hunterdon Art Museum map area.
- A10 Series of charts prepared by Dolan & Dean.
- A11 Enlarged copy of December 13, 2013 chart prepared by Dolan & Dean.
- A12 Traffic survey sheet prepared by staff at Dolan & Dean.
- A13 Parking count study prepared by the Museum.
- A14 Town of Clinton Circulation Study prepared by NJ DOT completed in 2007.

Mr. Gary Dean Traffic Engineer from Dolan & Dean was sworn in. Mr. Dean advised the board he has had an opportunity to review the parking data compiled by the museum and with that information he made his own independent parking lot study count last Friday December 6, 2013 from noon to 6pm. The area in focus was the Water Street parking lot, Lower Center Street parking lot, portions of the Fire Company parking lot, Lower Center Street, Easterly side of Center street up to about 15 spaces, Leigh Street, and Main Street. My staff walked the area continuously for six hours from 12pm to 6pm, each loop took a half hour. In terms of his study and the museum's study December 6, 2013 had the highest parking demand, the peak retail traffic time occurred between 1pm-2pm the result of the study at the peak hour reflected a 92% occupancy rate and 22 available spaces.

Mr. Dean stated in terms of the site plan presented the displaced eight parking spaces proposed will be head in spaces which run in a westerly direction from Lower Center Street. The entire apron was constructed with a depressed curb which at the time of construction it was anticipated that the museum would have onsite parking. The spaces as proposed will conflict with the sidewalk in terms of vehicles having to back out over the sidewalk to exit the site. Mr. Dean stated downtown Clinton is a pedestrian oriented town and in keeping with pedestrian safety it is his professional opinion the elimination of the parking spaces makes this corner of downtown significantly safer.

Mr. Dean testified there is ample capacity to park in the system, the museum employees will be directed to park in the Water Street lot which will leave prime parking spaces available to customers of the Museum and the downtown stores. In addition, the offsite parking will give museum customers exposure to other amenities in Clinton, which is an important component to crafting a vital downtown area, it gives an opportunity for a cross marketing benefit.

Mr. Dean referred to exhibit A14 which was a 2007 study funded by The State of New Jersey to quantify the Towns traffic count, page 22 includes an analysis of parking occupancy and capacity. The conclusion of the 2007 study reflected a 89% peak occupancy rate and in 2013 the peak occupancy was 92%, the findings are similar Mr. Dean testified in his professional opinion the permanent removal of the museum parking spaces will not compromise the ability of the site to function properly and safely. Mr. Dean stated we can already see the results of not having parking on site and it has not impacted the area. The pedestrian safety would be enhanced significantly, and anything that enhances pedestrian safety is worthy of consideration. Mr. Dean concluded that it based on his findings there is adequate parking in town.

Chairman Gallagher commented that it seems at the last meeting the board was struggling with the numbers and the safety issues. Mr. Dean stated in terms of standards and design you try to have parking facing forward so you can see traffic and pedestrians and if there is an opportunity to improve safety you should always find favor in improvement.

Mr. Berson stated he felt that some of his answers from last the meeting have been answered.

Mr. Feldman inquired if the study completed by Mr. Dean was similar to the museums study and how accurate was the study. Mr. Dean responded his study was similar to the museum's study but his was longer in duration, the study was every ½ an hour. Mr. Dean stated his study is 100% accurate in that it tells you exactly what happened on that day, the day the study was done was during the peak holiday season, before a storm was expected to arrive, statistics show December is generally 40% higher for parking demand than the average month. The day the study was done gives you a good portrait of what exists in Clinton.

Mr. Smith inquired during the peak hour where were the available parking spaces, Mr. Dean responded out of the twenty two spots 10 were available at the Water Street lot, a few at the Lower Center Street lot, Center street, East Main and Main Street.

Mr. Berson inquired compared to other towns is the town clear in regard to signage, Mr. Dean responded educating the public about the availability of the remote lots would help without question, one area Mr. Dean noticed under-utilized was the fire company lot which has reserved parking spaces and during the peak times only four spaces were used. Mr. Feldman questioned if the hard numbers show ample parking, how do you reconcile that with the merchants, Mr. Dean responded it is all about perception the belief is there is a shortage of parking when it is intertwined with convenience, the town should explore ways to direct and educate.

The board opened up the meeting for cross-examination:

CJ Gaylor, merchant at 26 Main Street, resident of High Bridge, stated based upon your snap shot study is it your determination that there is no parking problem; Mr. Dean stated he presented the findings of his study and he does not have anything to categorize the town has a problem.

The Board opened up the meeting to the public for testimony and comments:

CJ Gaylor, Main Street was sworn in. Ms. Gaylor stated she has been a merchant here for many years and has never had a time when someone hasn't advised her of a parking problem. Ms. Gaylor stated the issue with parking benefits the museum and is opposed to eliminating parking.

Mr. Jonathon Wall, Center Street was sworn in. Mr. Wall stated he can see the town is aesthetically enhanced by the views the museum has afforded, he believes better signage for the town would be helpful. Mr. Wall stated adding parking onsite aesthetically would be a great loss to the town.

Mr. Patrick Bower, 7 Haver Farm Road was sworn in. He advised the board he has been a resident of Clinton for many years, and tonight he is here to support the museum's request. He stated he choose to live in Clinton because of its charm and cultural center of the county, the beautiful patio and the views are a great economical engine for businesses in town, it draws people into the community. Mr. Bower added that we should think carefully about the Town's critical asset and there are a lot of creative options available to increase parking such as angled parking on Main Street and better signage. I would encourage the board to do the right thing and keep the patio car free.

Mr. Dennis Ferrere, 24 Chestnut Street High Bridge was sworn in stated he comes into town on Saturdays, which is a prime day for the merchants and he usually has to park at the way end of Center Street, he feels there is a significant parking problem and feels more consideration to the merchants should be given.

Ms. Kathy Ahart, Enrichment Coordinator for the museum, was sworn in. Ms. Ahart stated a lot of visitors come to the museum which also benefit the town.

Mr. William Thompson, 32 West Main Street was sworn in. Mr. Thompson advised the board he was a merchant in town and he surveyed other merchants, out of 37 merchants he found 18 were in favor of the Museums request for no parking, 3 merchants were in favor of parking, 4 remained neutral and 10 were unknown. Mr. Thomson added the vast majority were in favor of the museum. The patio is a beautiful addition to the town it is the Town's Rockefeller Center.

Mr. Michael Ametti, Center Street was sworn in, he commented that he has a hard time believing the parking spaces as proposed present a safety issue.

The board closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Recame questioned the placement of the planters, per the Town Planner's recommendations the applicant agreed to space the planters eight feet apart.

A Motion was made by Mr. Sailer, seconded by Mr. Berson, to approve the Parking Variance to eliminate eight parking spaces with the following conditions:

- 1). A no parking sign to be installed after the on street handicap space to indicate no parking after the handicap space to the bridge;
- 2). The concrete planters to be spaced eight feet apart;
- 3). Employee parking in the Water Street Parking lot;

Board deliberation:

Mr. Smith commented that it was interesting what the board planner said at the last meeting in that we have a unique situation, the museum is a landmark building which we should pay special attention to, he feels it is worthy of relief.

Mr. Feldmann stated the safety issue is a concern and it has really helped to have the hard numbers on parking he believes the negative criteria has been satisfied.

Mr. Berson seconded the safety concern, he stated that a lot of things have changed over the last few years and there is a lot of traffic in that area. The safety argument is very telling and it is nice to have the hard numbers. Mr. Berson added there is a parking problem, it is beyond this particular case but he would like to see the town and the merchants look into what can be done to make parking less of a mystery in town.

Mr. Recame agrees with Mr. Berson, however he would of liked to have seen a compromise between the museum and the town..

Mr. Perez agreed with Mr. Sailer's recommendations regarding installing signage and based on preserving the historic view and the safety issues he is in favor of providing relief.

Mr. Gallagher stated he thinks the board did an excellent job in asking the appropriate questions and if the board had looked at the site plan from the beginning it may have been planned differently, this is an opportunity to make the downtown pop. Mr. Gallagher added this is the time to get our Master Plan Subcommittee together with some of the ideas presented tonight to look at how to make parking better in the town.

The Art Center and the Red Mill are two strong lots in downtown and we are fortunate to have them, he is in support of the Motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Gallagher, Feldmann, Perez, Berson, Sailer, Smith , Recame

Nays:

All Ayes. Motion Passed.

Voucher approval:

A Motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Berson, to approve the following voucher:

Van Cleef Engineering	Hunterdon Art Museum	\$1,788.25
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All Ayes. Motion carried.

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Feldman, seconded by Mr. Berson to adjourn the meeting at 9:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Witt
Land Use Administrator