

SPECIAL PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

June 26, 2024

The pre-meeting of the Planning Board was called to order by Chairman Mr. David Manders at 6:00 PM in the Second Floor Caucus Room of City Hall.

Members Present:

John Casadia
David Catalana
Michael Pantalone
Thomas Tobolski
Nilsa Rosario
Robert Odorizzi
David Manders

Also present were:

Michael Malinsky, Planning Board Solicitor
Yasmin Perez, Planning Board Secretary
Kathleen Hicks, Supervising Planner
Ryan Headley, Planning Board Planner/Engineer

PRE-MEETING

NEP Real Estate – Data Center– located on the southeasterly corner of Lincoln Avenue and Sheridan Avenue, Block 7503, Lots 1.01 & 35.01, Tax Map Sheet #75, Project No. PBA-24-00022. Preliminary/final major site plan approval for the construction of 2,647,628 square feet of data centers, 169,348 square feet of office building, a 4-story parking garage along with associated site plan improvements constructed over four (4) phases.

Mr. Headley explained that this is a four phase data center project. Primarily with office space and four story parking garage. There is a total of just over 2.6 million square feet of data center with two stories in each building. Each building has a footprint of approximately 220,000 square feet. There will be 169,000 square feet of office building with four stories and the parking garage. Phase one are buildings five and six data buildings consisting of a total of 880,000 square feet. Phase two is data center buildings two, three and four totaling 1.3 million square feet. Phase three is the front building and the parking garage totaling 7,447 thousand square feet of data center. Phase four is the office building at the corner. The phase lines in the plan are in red and it includes the circulation around the building, the necessary stormwater management, and then the entrance drive going up to Lincoln Avenue. All the phases do the same. The applicant will comply with the two variances that are noted on the Planning Report. There are a lot of items in number 7 of the report, but it is not as lengthy as it seems. The applicant will be providing basin access drives. There are new stormwater regulations, so they have to separate it to do water quality. Instead of having one large basin, there are 8 infiltration areas. There are two main areas with the bigger base and a couple smaller ones that are dual. Each one has a setback because they are all the same distance from the property line. There is an existing wall around a portion of the facility and the entire site will be walled or fenced in some fashion. The redevelopment plan allows them to go up to 16 feet. They have stipulated that that buildings will be less than 70 feet. The applicant is still working out final details for end users, so that will determine the height of the buildings. They indicated that they will be complaint with the ordinance. They are also some waivers requested for setbacks for fencing and screening each individual basin because the entire property will be fenced.

FLAG SALUTE

Public notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act was given on June 15, 2024 by posting written notice on the Official Bulletin Board in City Hall, and mailing written notices to the Daily Journal, City Clerk, and the Board members.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NEP Real Estate – Data Center– located on the southeasterly corner of Lincoln Avenue and Sheridan Avenue, Block 7503, Lots 1.01 & 35.01, Tax Map Sheet #75, Project No. PBA-24-00022. Preliminary/final major site plan approval for the construction of 2,647,628 square feet of data centers, 169,348 square feet of office building, a 4-story parking garage along with associated site plan improvements constructed over four (4) phases.

The applicant was represented by Michael Fralinger, Esq. This property is immediately adjacent to the Northeast Precast Facility. The applicant sought out potentially be less intense uses for this particular property which is a data center. It is a four phase project with three of the phases dealing with data centers. Each building is 220,000 square feet. Each building will sit in a complex and face each other. Phase four will be an office building on the corner on Sheridan Avenue. There will be different uses for the data center administration, potentially operations for Northeast Precast and offices for other companies. Data centers control all the data that transmits around the world. Data centers are throughout the country and throughout the world. They are filled with racks of servers that handle tremendous amounts of data. That data gets processed every day with the advent of AI, and it is necessary in order to keep the progression moving forward. Data centers almost have no noise to them at all. Northeast Precast makes

a lot more noise making concrete than this thing would ever make. There are servers running inside a concrete building. He is unaware if anyone will hear the generators when the power goes out. The property sets up very well for it along Lincoln Avenue with the county road. The office building location for that is actually a good location, because they can utilize the dual access that exists off of Sheridan Avenue. The parking garage is shown on the plan, but they do not know if they need four levels, or if they just need a parking lot. They will know more as development moves forward. The parking garage is shown as a placeholder and it can take place there for the office use. The application seeks just that preliminary and final major site plan. There is a colored rendering of the overall site plan and the phasing plan for the property. There is a very complex stormwater solution with the combination of the water quality basins, the recharge basins and the underground infiltration. The piping network underground for this is unimaginable but it all works in accordance with the regulations. There is a lot of landscaping in the bio retention basins. He believes that this will be the norm going forward in the future.

Timothy Ruga, Professional Engineer, testified on behalf of the applicant. Planning Report, item 6, applicant will comply with the two variances listed and are no longer requested. Item 7, waivers from the Stormwater Control standards of the ordinance (Code Chapter 425-72). They are requested for the structure of the basin and the large recharge basins. It is the same waiver for each little section of the basins. If there was one large basin, there would be one comment instead of multiple comments. The State of New Jersey requires that we look at peak runoff from the site, recharge and water quality. This design like all designs have to address all three of those elements for storm water. The water quality all of the drive surfaces on which an automobile can access have to be treated for water quality storm. There are little basins around this site whereas in the past we used to have much larger basins located in the back area of the site. Now it is distributed all over the place according to the regulations. That was done with bio retention basins, which are on the plan with all the little circles and symbols representing trees, shrubs and bushes. That water will go down through a filter medium, collected and discharged. The bio retention basins are designed to be low maintenance so the water is treated and comes out very clean. There are four recharged facilities overall. They are further subdivided into smaller little basins. Those facilities along with other facilities provide the recharge for this site. There are chambers made out of concrete that can handle the loads. The bottoms would be open, water would be filtered down to those chambers, and then recharge down through the bottom to the groundwater. The recharge basins essentially used roof runoff for recharge, because it is clean. There are also some cases used the discharge from bio retention basins because that has been cleaned. The basins are expected to work very well in long term, because they are only putting clean water into them. They will work together as a system with the bio retention basins. The third type of basin is for rate control. Their purpose is simply to handle the peak runoff rate so that the water that goes towards the Lincoln Avenue or towards the NEP site will meet the New Jersey standards for the peak runoff. They also receive water from bio retention basins and work together as a system. All four of those types of basins work together to control that stormwater and meet all the requirements. There is an enormous pipe network supporting that. There is no impact on the wetlands maintained and the buffers are maintained. Item 7, stormwater management basin access drive width, All Basins (0 feet provided vs. 10 feet required). Presence of a stormwater management basin drive, All Basins. They will be provided by the applicant. There are two groupings of basins with lines in that basin, and that functions as one basin with the floor segmented according to NJ DEP's rules for a maximum of 2 1/2 acres of contributory drainage area. It meets the requirements of the state for the small storms, and the large storms will overflow those lines which are all going to be a foot high. Above that elevation it will operate as one single basin, so we will only need one access into the basin. There can be means of getting over those weirs and getting to the whole facility from inside. They will provide access drive to the basins, but if the basins are connected it will be one drive for the connection. Item 7c, waiver for stormwater management basin fence height, All Basins (0 feet provided vs. 6 feet required). The site is going to be surrounded by security fencing, so they do not need the fencing for the individual basins. There will be only employees in the interior of the site except for the two up front. There are two basins located in the front. Those basins would be surrounded by a decorative 4 foot fence. One basin is about four feet deep and the other is about six feet deep. The depth is controlled by the need to get pipe inverts down to the bottom of the basin, and then maintaining cover on the pipes out in the parking and drive areas. The water depth would be typically around 4 feet. They will be fully landscaped with trees and shrubs. There are some setback variances associated with those basins. The basins have to take water to Lincoln Avenue. It was necessary to locate some of the basins in that area to do final rate control, and most importantly to get the water quality requirements for parking areas. That takes care of items 7 c, d, e and f. Item 7g-n, basins are in the same location. Items g-o, is the larger basin that is adjacent to the packing house for a farm and some fields. There is a wall between the packing house and the basin. There is no impact on anything on the other side of this basin. That basin will not discharge in that direction. Item 7p and q, the applicant will comply. The waivers that are left are stormwater management basin side setback, WQ Basin 1 (10 feet provided vs. 35 feet required). Stormwater management basin side setback, RCH Basin 3 (5 feet provided vs. 35 feet required). Stormwater management basin side slope, All Basins (0:1 provided vs. 3:1 slope required). Item 8a, applicant will comply. Item 8b, waiver for fencing and screening around the perimeter of the proposed stormwater management basins. (The proposed stormwater basins are all greater than 2 feet deep, and the ordinance requires fencing and screening for basins that are greater than 2 feet in depth). This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Ms. Hicks wanted to know about the view from Lincoln Avenue. Mr. Fralinger explained that view will depend on the end user. These site have to secure so there will be fencing and security. Landscaping will be added to the fencing along Lincoln Avenue to block the monotony of a fence that would be going out there. Ms. Hicks indicated that Mr. Ruga had once talked about putting decorative artwork on the wall of a structure. She suggested that something like that could be done on the Lincoln Avenue frontage, and then have a metal type fence that you could see through.

Mr. Fralinger explained that the applicant would like a nice road frontage. Item 8c, waiver for screening materials along the residential zone located on the adjacent property to the northeast of the site. Item 9a, waiver for building front entrance is not oriented towards the street Item 9d, waiver for pathways shall connect all primary building entrances to one another. Item 9e, waiver for sidewalks are not proposed along the street frontage of the site. Sidewalks do not exist on abutting properties, therefore sidewalks are not required unless the Board finds that by reason of the particular conditions of the site, its location or surroundings, sidewalks are required to protect the public safety. The applicant is not proposing sidewalks. Item 9g, waiver for location of stormwater management basin which requires a fence (front yard provided vs. side or rear yard required). Item 9h, waiver for shape of a stormwater management basin in a front yard (Curvilinear edge required). Item 10, applicant is proposing fencing that will be complaint. Signs are not proposed at this time but they will also be complaint. Item 13, pursuant to P.L. 2021, c.171, which Governor Murphy signed into law on July 9, 2021 regarding Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment (EVSE) & Make-Ready Parking Spaces, the Applicant shall comply with the Model EV Ordinance published by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on September 1, 2021. Applicant will comply with the EV mandate. Item 14, applicant will comply with the handicapped parking standard. Item 15f and g, waiver for showing storm sewer, existing and proposed, in profile. Provide preliminary architectural plans and elevations in designated redevelopment areas. The applicant will comply with items 16a and b, plans shall delineate the extent of heavy duty asphalt paving and regular duty asphalt paving. The Site Plans, Grading Plans, and Utility Plans do not show the existing features of the roadway and surrounding area. The Applicant shall review and revise as necessary. The remainder of the Planning Report is acceptable. Engineering Report dated June 19, 2024, items 1-4, applicant will comply. Item 5, waiver for basin access drives shall be provided for all above-ground basins to allow for routine maintenance and inspection of the basin bottom, outfall structures, vegetation, etc. Items 6-8, applicant will comply. Items 9-10, the applicant will provide more clarification to Mr. Headley. Items 11 and 12, applicant will comply. Item 13, waiver for location of the one-foot freeboard elevation of all Stormwater basins shall meet the minimum yard requirements of the zone. The applicant will comply with the remaining items in the Engineering Report.

Mr. Ruga explained that the maintenance schedule for each basin will be separated out according to type. As part of the requirements they also made estimates as to the annual cost.

Mr. Pantalone stated that the City has a problem with overgrown basins. Mr. Fralinger explained that the bio retention basins is are made to be overgrown with landscaping, but they all the basins will be maintained.

Mr. Fralinger explained that the cooling towers are an older type design that AI has actually helped to develop. They are built differently now, and all of the water that was utilized in the past is no longer needed. They have an air cooling system with a water component and a loop system, and it has no discharge into the municipal sanitary sewer system. The water that is blown out goes into the sewer system, but they do not use any chemicals. Most of the larger companies have gone with the air cooling system. Water is no longer an issue if it is not available. He could not speak or the end user.

The Chairman entertained a motion to approve the application. Mr. Pantalone so moved, Mr. Odorizzi seconded.

Roll Call:

John Casadia: Yes
David Catalana: Yes
Michael Pantalone: Yes
Thomas Tobolski: Yes
Nilsa Rosario: Yes
Robert Odorizzi: Yes
David Manders: Yes

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman entertained a motion to adjourn.

Roll call:

John Casadia: Yes
David Catalana: Yes
Michael Pantalone: Yes
Thomas Tobolski: Yes
Nilsa Rosario: Yes
Robert Odorizzi: Yes
David Manders: Yes

TIME: 7:33 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Yasmin Perez
Planning Board Secretary