

**RESOLUTION
of the
PLANNING BOARD OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE**

Heard: September 5, 2018
Case Nos.: PB-18-06C and 18-07C
County of Essex/Turtle Back Zoo

WHEREAS, pursuant to Municipal Land Use Law §40:55D-31 the Board has heard proposed capital improvement projects by the County of Essex for construction of certain improvements at the Turtle Back Zoo which is located on County owned property at 560 Northfield Avenue, West Orange, NJ, said premises being designated on the municipal tax map as Block 163, Lot 1; and

WHEREAS, the Board having heard the presentation and having performed its review pursuant to MLUL 40:55D-31 hereby makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

1. The Board accepted into evidence the following Exhibits:
 - A-1 Site Plan by Comito & Associates
 - A-2 Colorized Site Plan by Comito & Associates
 - A-3 Rendering of Train Station
 - A-4 Color rendering of parking garage
 - A-5 Color rendering of parking garage from across the reservoir
 - A-6 Aerial View
 - A-7 Conceptual Elevation A
 - A-8 Site Plan of Otter Exhibit
 - A-9 Conceptual Elevation B
 - A-10 Conceptual Elevation C
 - A-11 Conceptual Access Layout for new parking deck

Renovations to the Otter Exhibit (PB-18-06C)

2. Michael Piga, L.A., of French & Parrello was sworn and qualified as a landscape architect. He testified that the proposed improvements to the Otter Exhibit included expanding the existing pool, adding trees and providing additional glass windows for public viewing. No new otters to be added and no new impervious surface.

New Parking Garage and Train Depot (PB-18-07C)

3. Darrell Alvarez, PE, RA, Comito Associates PC was sworn and qualified as an expert in engineering and architecture. Mr. Alvarez testified regarding the proposed new parking deck having 516 spaces to eliminate the need for off-site parking for Zoo visitors. He explained the need to move the train tracks to accommodate the deck. The train tracks would be reconfigured but not lengthened and a new decorative train depot would be built to store the trains when not in use.
4. Michael Piga, L.A. testified about the proposed new landscaping but did not have a landscaping plan or tree removal/tree replacement plan. He stated approximately 75 trees would be removed and approximately 125 new trees would be planted.
5. Andrew French, PE, French & Parrello Associates was sworn and qualified as an engineer. He described the proposed new entrance into the Zoo and traffic circulation, however, he did not present a traffic study or report which he said was still unfinished.
6. The Board and public expressed serious concerns about the need to have a traffic study first before designing a solution to the issues which occur on adjacent roads

when the Zoo is busy, the need to screen the garage, fire safety, stormwater, increasing expansion of the Zoo into the South Mountain Reservation and landscaping.

7. In particular the Board expressed concerns about the prior requests for a Master Plan and Traffic Study for the Turtle Back Zoo before further renovations or expansions.

WHEREAS, the Board having heard the presentation and having performed its review pursuant to MLUL 40:55D-31 hereby makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

1. The County of Essex proposes construction of renovations to the Otter Exhibit and construction of a new five story Parking Garage and new Train Station Depot with associated improvements on the premises in accordance with drawings by Comito Associates PC and French and Parrello Associates.

2. The Board finds that the proposed project and capital improvements are not contrary to the Master Plan of the Township of West Orange.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of West Orange that it finds that the proposed projects and capital improvements are not inconsistent with the West Orange Master Plan. However, the Board makes the following comments and recommendations to the Applicant:

1. Applicant should complete and submit a Master Plan for the Turtle Back Zoo before making any more capital improvements. Applicant should incorporate

Complete Streets Planning policy which has been adopted by both the County of Essex and by the Township of West Orange into the Turtle Back Zoo Master Plan and all future improvements;

2. Applicant should complete and submit a Traffic Study for the Turtle Back Zoo including appropriate signage before making any more capital improvements to the Zoo property.
3. Provide a Traffic Management Plan which explains how traffic will be managed on heavy use days.
4. The western façade of the new parking garage should be covered with a natural “green” wall or other sustainable screening to visually buffer the garage from the reservoir area, rather than the proposed mesh.
5. Repair the street traffic light at the Zoo entrance.
6. Provide a Landscaping Plan which should include a tree removal/tree replacement plan. Tree replacement should be with trees having similar or greater DBH than trees being removed.
7. Comply with all of the comments of the West Orange Fire Department in its memo by Deputy Chief Fred Kingston dated August 10, 2018.
8. Install blue-light emergency station in or near the new parking deck.
9. Work with the West Orange Police Department in handling traffic issues along the Northfield Avenue corridor.
10. Utilize pervious pavers or other approaches to reducing stormwater drainage for all improvements on the Zoo property.

Certified to be a true copy of the Resolution adopted on the 3rd day of October
2018.



Robin Miller, Secretary

Vote on the Action Taken by the Board

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Cardoza			*			
Keigher			*			
Klein			*			
McCartney			*			
McPherson (1 st Alt.)			*			
Trenk			*			
Wegner						*
Weston (Vice Chair)	*		*			
Wilkes			*			
Bagoff (Chair)		*	*			

Vote on the Memorializing Resolution

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Cardoza	*		*			
Keigher			*			
Klein						
McCartney			*			
McPherson (1 st Alt.)			*			
Trenk		*	*			
Wegner						
Weston (Vice Chair)						*
Wilkes			*			
Bagoff (Chair)			*			