

**MINUTES
TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
July 5, 2023 7:30 P.M.**

The Township of West Orange Planning Board held its regular meeting on July 5, 2023 at 7:30 P.M. via virtual ZOOM videoconference.

Chairman Bagoff called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 P.M. He announced that notification of the meeting was given to the Township Clerk, and posted on the Township Bulletin Board, sent to the West Orange Chronicle and the Star Ledger, and posted on the Township's website calendar. This meeting has been properly noticed to the public in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. No new matters will start after 10:30 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- *Chairman Bagoff* requested all persons stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next Planning Board regular meeting will be held **Wednesday August 2, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.**

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Dr. Robert Bagoff; Mr. Ken Alper; Mr. Jerry Guarino; Mayor Susan McCartney; Mr. Peter Smeraldo; Councilwoman Tammy Williams; Mr. Sal Jensen; Mr. Cardoza; Mr. Lee Klein

ABSENT: Mr. Christopher Morgan, Sr.; Mr. William Wilkes;

ALSO PRESENT: Diana P. McGovern, Esq., Planning Board Attorney;
Liz Leheny, Town Planner;
Mr. John Hess, Board Engineer;
Jamilet Baquerizo Vite, Acting Planning Board Secretary

MINUTES & RESOLUTIONS

(Adopted 7/5/2023)

- [PB-23-04 Redwood LLC - 200 Pleasant Valley Way Draft Resolution](#)

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Mr. Guarino

Alper:	Y	Morgan:	---
Bagoff:	Y	Smeraldo:	Y
Cardoza (Alt.2):	Y	Wilkes:	---
Guarino:	Y	Williams:	Y
Jensen (Alt. 1):	---		
Klein:	---		
Mayor Susan McCartney:	Y		

- [5-3-2023 WO PB Draft Minutes](#)

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Council president Williams

Alper:	Y	Morgan:	---
Bagoff:	Y	Smeraldo:	Y
Cardoza (Alt.2):	Y	Wilkes:	---
Guarino:	Y	Williams:	Y
Jensen (Alt. 1):	---		
Klein:	Y		
Mayor Susan McCartney:	Y		

- [PB-23-07 - 470 Prospect Ave \(Pure Natural Vibes LLC\) - Draft Resolution](#)

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Council president Williams

Alper:	Y	Morgan:	---
Bagoff:	Y	Smeraldo:	Y
Cardoza (Alt.2):	Y	Wilkes:	----
Guarino:	Y	Williams:	Y

Jensen (Alt. 1):	---	
Klein:	Y	
Mayor Susan McCartney:	Y	

SWEARING IN

- The Township Professionals *Ms. Liz Leheny, Township Planner* and *Mr. Joh Hess* were sworn in.

APPLICATIONS

- **PB-23-05/County of Essex/Turtle Back Zoo/Animal Wellness Center**
560 Northfield Avenue
Block: 163; Lot: 1; Zone: R-1

The applicant is proposing to replace the existing Wolf Exhibit at the Turtle back Zoo with a new Animal Wellness Center.

PRESENTATION

- The attorney Mr. Mark L Fleder entered on the record. He is on behalf of the Essex County and with respect to facilities at the Turtleback Zoo as courtesy review application.
- The concept of the project is to replace the old wolf exhibit with a new facility, which will be called Animal Wellness Center.
- Mr. Fleder introduced Mr. Michael Piga a licensed landscaping architect, he entered on the record, he was sworn under oath and his credentials were accepted by the board.
- Mr. Piga started his testimony by showing aerial pictures. The first one showed turtleback zoo along Northfield Ave. Northfield Avenue is located on the left side as you enter, then it goes to the zoo main entrance and then going to the north there the exhibits and at the top next to the black bear exhibit there is the existing wolf exhibit which is being renovated into the Wellness Center.
- The conceptual site plan which Mr. Piga worked on shows the exterior of the Animal Wellness building. The corridor on the South side or the bottom of the plan is the existing walkway. It has three entryways, one is a gentle slope or ramp coming in on the left side, there is a staircase in the center and then we have an existing ramp system from where the pony trail is in which allows people to come from the pony trail or they can go back up into the Animal Wellness area.
- The idea of this current project is to go for a wilderness feel. They are looking to use like stamp concrete as a basis of their design. They want to make it look very earthy with fractured earth forms. There are some boardwalk stamps that are going into that area in which have this heart in the center that that's made of a rubberized surface that allows the kids to come through and give a feel of like a heart beating.
- They have some other seating areas throughout. There is a bank system and then underneath a major canopy with bleacher system this would be like a small outdoor classroom, so the staff can go and teach kids about different things that happen in the in the animal Wellness Center.

- The main entrance is on the right side, it follows that line that takes you into the building. Along the backside of the building, they will have a driveway and the driveway brings down maintenance vehicles to the back of the facility. There is an outdoor off exhibit area for the animals, so they can have some quiet time. Otherwise, this is mainly to the staff members, they'll be coming in and out and doing their daily tasks. This is all connected to the existing driveway to the backside.
- The landscaping that they have out there is mainly native, they try to do some unique plantings. The architect is looking for a wilderness feel for people to come up there and see a very cool serene area using ferns and plants of that nature. And just allowing the kids to have a good time as they walk through this area.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Council president Williams asked about the number of people the outside sitting will accommodate. Mr. Piga said that about 13 to 15 people.
- Mr. Smeralo asked about if there will be any impact on the accessibility to emergency equipment or emergency access through the driveway. Mr. Piga said that the maintenance driveway it's going to remain, so it'll give access through the zoo.
- Mr. Smeraldo asked where the standpipe will be located. Mr. Piga said in the backside they are putting standpipe.

NO PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC QUESTION

- Robert Rashkes at 35 Oak Crest Road asked if the building will have a sound system for the education for the people who are going to be sitting in the bleachers. Mr. Piga said that it's not intended to have such a system. If there was anything, it would be a low volume that will be meant for the 15 people that are sitting.
- Mr. Rashkes asked how high the seats will be off the ground. Mr. Piga said that the sittings will be about 36 inches and the seats surrounding the site will be 2 feet high.

PUBLIC COMMENT*

PRESENTATION

- Mr. Fleder introduced the architect Ms. Lorrie Sciabarasi from Comito Associates Architecture Firm, she entered on the record, she was sworn under oath and her credentials were accepted by the board.
- Ms. Sciabarasi started her testimony by describing the project in which the design of the project is to have a natural wilderness theme to fit into the North American area of the zoo. The exterior of the building they are trying to use natural elements such as some faux wood grills along the facade as a screen wall. On the right is the public entrance, which is the entry lobby which is made of glass and it also has a solid side to it and we have these abstracted trees as well sort of floating in front of the facade.
- The public will enter through the lobby on the right through the double-sided doors. The lobby will be open to the public. There will also be some public restrooms right off the lobby area and there's also a meeting room off the lobby which the public will have access to with personnel from the zoo.
- Beyond the double-sided doors it will be restricted to the public because it's all private area for zoo personnel.
- All the aspects of the building including its mechanical, electrical systems & ventilating systems meet all current code requirements.

- Ms. Sciabarasi gave a brief overview of the different zones. The first set of doors will lead to the administrative zone of the building which is going to be offices for the veterinarian technician, zoo director and the staff area. As you come down the hall through the second set of doors there's this wing, which we're calling the Wellness wing. At the front of the building there will be a treatment zone and then the zone at the end the blocks that are going to overlap it is the quarantine wing.
- The architect worked closely with the zoo director and the staff to make the facility have everything they need to run the animal Wellness Center.
- The entire building is a one-story building. The circulation of the public will be that they enter through the front and the back area which our landscape architect had described is the private side is the entrance of the employees. So, these are the only points of access in and out of the building.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Chairman Bagoff asked if the roof will be a white or a light color to decrease the heat island effect. Mr. Sciabarasi answer in the affirmative.
- Chairman Bagoff asked if there will be any bathroom in the new building. Ms. Sciabarasi said that there will be bathroom for the public which will be located off the lobby and there will be staff bathroom in the private zones. And all bathrooms will be ADA compliance.

NO PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC QUESTION

PUBLIC COMMENT*

PRESENTATION

- Mr. Fleder introduced the Zoo director Jilian Fazio entered on the record and was sworn under oath.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Mr. Alpert asked where the wolf will be relocated. Ms. Fazio said that the wolves will be moved to another habitat within the zoo.
- Mr. Guarino asked what is going to happen with the current Wellness Center for the animals. Ms. Fazio said that part of the reason and the impetus for this design and build is because they are outgrowing their space and with the contingency planning that's required by USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and the increasing standards of AZA (Association of Zoo and Aquariums) they are repurposing that building for more animal care space. So, they'll be using it for offices for animal care staff laboratories for students that come in, they will be moving most likely their water quality lab there, so they have more appropriate space and housing and then they'll maintain the animal holding areas there, where they currently move animals to for potential hurricanes or when the air quality is bad, they have to move animals inside.

NO PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

NO PUBLIC QUESTION

PUBLIC COMMENT*

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Alper: Y	Morgan: ---
Bagoff: Y	Smeraldo: Y
Cardoza (Alt.2): Y	Wilkes: ---
Guarino: Y	Williams: Y
Jensen (Alt. 1): Y	
Klein: Y	
Mayor Susan McCartney: Y	

- PB-23-06 Crestmont Country Club, Inc**
750 Eagle Rock Avenue
Block: 174 Lot: 1.01 Zone: R-2

The applicant is requesting minor site plan approval for a proposal to construct three pickleball courts adjacent to its tennis courts covered a portion of the year by a seasonal air-supported “bubble” enclosure in the northeastern corner of the Crestmont Country Club’s property.

PRESENTATION

- The attorney Gary Forshner on behalf of the applicant entered on the record and stated in his testimony that the applicant is proposing 3 pickleball courts and he wanted to clarify that the tennis courts that have a bubble will be seasonal, but the bubble has nothing to do with these pickleball courts that's existing as two tennis courts that are not part of this application. This application is for three additional pickleball courts fully conforming.
- The attorney introduced the engineer Mr. Daniel Fryer. Mr. Fryer entered on the record; he was sworn under oath and his credentials were accepted by the board.
- The project site is located within the Crestmont Country Club the street address is 750 Eagle Rock Ave. block 174 lot 1.01, which is in R2 zone. The aerial plan of the Country Club amenities near this project are a pool, there's a playground, there's two existing pickleball courts, there is the tennis court with the seasonal bubble as we talked about this is put up for a portion of the year and there's some accessory structures.
- Ingress from the parking lot is a one-way driveway from Laurel Avenue and egress from the parking lot is a one way out to Eagle Rock Avenue. The parking area for the rec center will remain the same and there's sufficient parking with the addition of the new ports. There's no additional parking required by ordinance.
- This project proposed the construction of three equip able courts with the full perimeter fence which is consistent with the current usage of the site usage in this area. As previously mentioned, there's no variance is required, it's in full compliance and in full compliance with the Township ordinances and the review provided.
- The three new courts are shown in green from on the site plans provided to the board. It shows the three proposed courts with the sidewalk to connect the three.
- The setback requirements for this project will be that the new pickleball courts would be situated adjacent to the existing tennis courts and are going to be placed further back from the side yard property line than the existing tennis courts and pickleball courts. There is a 72.2 side yard setback where the town requires a 25 foot, and the existing port is a 52.1 foot to the

same side yard property. As noted in the Township report this project does not qualify as a major development and is not required to meet stormwater requirements. The majority of the existing area where the proposed picket ball courts would be installed consist of an impervious gravel surface.

- The proposed courts and walkways have a total surface area of 0.13 acres when accounting for the existing impervious surface the improvements will only increase the impervious coverage by 0.045 acres. We provided the board an analysis which shows the conditions are the largest design storm event which is the 100 years, and this will result in an increase in 0.1 cubic feet per second which we consider this to be the minimum with no negative effect to the surrounding properties or storm water infrastructure.
- Based on the revised plans from March 17th, 2023, there are some minor storm water drainages being done, there is two inlets with associated piping and those are being installed to help the convey water from the low spots between the various ports.
- This project also proposed the removal of four trees in which a tree removal permit application was submitted to the Township as part of the review. The Township planning board engineer asked that the applicant replaces these trees. So, two minor trees and two major trees will be planted as part of the construction project to replace those being removed.
- This project proposes no lighting or utility connections and because of this the pickleball courts will only be available during daylight hours.
- Permits required were the soil conservation district permit and this project has already received certification from the Hudson Essex Passaic soil conservation district. No additional signage.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Chairman Bagoff asked if the applicant will have an 8 feet height fence or a 6 feet height fence. The attorney said that they have agreed to comply with all the recommendations about the fencing, in which it was originally proposed an 8-foot fence, but it was reduced to a 6-foot fence and it's going to be around the entire court.
- Council President Williams asked why the applicant did not consider putting any lighting in at this time. Mr. Fryer said there's no lighting proposed because they intend to use these pickleball courts only during the daylight hours.

PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

- Miss Leheny asked if Mr. Fryer could provide some testimony as to what impacts noise these courts might have that would impact nearby residents. Mr. Fryer said that these courts will be further away from the existing courts to the property line. As part of resolution compliant they intend to conform to all noise ordinances and ensure that the properties that are near to the site will not be impacted. The existing pickleball courts have a distance of 66.5 feet from the property line and then across the wooded area which is owned by the Township it is a total distance of 284.6 feet. The closest point of the proposed pickleball court is 72.2 feet to the nearest property line and a total distance of 345.4 feet to this residential property line, so the proposed pickleball courts are better than a football field way to the closest residential property line not even the residential homes just the residential property line. So, to their knowledge there have been no issues about any noise or concerns with regards to the use of the existing pickleball courts.

NO PUBLIC QUESTION

PUBLIC COMMENT*

PRESENTATION

- The attorney introduced the general Manager and COO Dana Cancellaro she entered on the record and was sworn under oath. She stated that the main entrance will be to the left. But then if you go to the right of the 3rd court all the way on the right there is a pathway, in which it will likely be use by the members to come and go. So, there are two different forms of pedestrian access to these courts. These pickleball courts will be used by the club members only, it is not open to the public.

NO BOARD QUESTIONS

NOPROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

NOPUBLIC QUESTION

PUBLIC COMMENT*

CONDITIONS:

- The four trees which are two minor and two majors will be replanted on sites agreeable to the Township Director of Planning.
- No lighting and courts will be use during daylight hours.
- The entire court will have a 6-foot height fence.
- The applicant will comply with state and local noise levels.

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Council president Williams

Alper: Y	Morgan: ---
Bagoff: Y	Smeraldo: ---
Cardoza (Alt.2): Y	Wilkes: ---
Guarino: Y	Williams: Y
Jensen (Alt. 1): ----	
Klein: Y	
Mayor Susan McCartney: Y	

Meeting adjourned at 8:33PM.

ADOPTED:

Jamilet Baquerizo Vite
Acting Planning Board Secretary