

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

Heard: August 11, 2021
Case No: PB-21-07C
County of Essex/Turtle Back Zoo

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

SUBMISSION ITEM	SIGNED BY	DATE/REVISION
Aerial Map	Michael J. Piga, LLA, French & Parrello Associates	Aerial image dated 3/20/21
Conceptual Site Plan	French & Parrello Associates and Comito Associates PC (Unsigned)	6/15/21
Conceptual Floor Plan	French & Parrello Associates and Comito Associates PC (Unsigned)	6/15/21

Rendering	Comito Associates PC and French & Parrello Associates (Unsigned)	Not dated
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2. Michael Piga, L.A., of French & Parrello & Lorrie Sciabarsi, R.A., of Comito Associates PC introduced the application and testified that the applicant is proposing to renovate the existing Asia Exhibit at the Turtle Back Zoo adjacent to the Gibbons Exhibit. The renovations will include a plaza area, a new habitat building, two outdoor habitat areas and a seating area. The height of the new habitat areas will be up to 20 feet.

3. The applicant is proposing to renovate the existing Asia Exhibit located in the southeast portion of the zoo. The specific facilities included in this proposal are:

- A new clouded leopard exhibit
- Outdoor clouded leopard habitats
- Outdoor red panda habitats
- An ADA-compliant ramp to connect the clouded leopard and snow leopard exhibits
- A stamped concrete walkway and a stamped concrete zodiac wheel
- Concrete paver walkways
- Decorative concrete planters
- Decorative metal benches

4. The Planning Board's statutory duty pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law at N.J.S.A. 40:55D-31a for applications of this type is for "review and recommendation" in conjunction with the West Orange Master Plan.

5. The Township's 2019 Master Plan Update provides an overview of changes to the Zoo and adjacent County facilities since 2010, as well as notes its continued increases in annual attendance.

6. A concern was raised in the Master Plan Update about maintaining a balance between preservation and recreation in South Mountain Reservation. While acknowledging the benefits to West Orange of the County's investment in this facility, the following is noted on page 61 of the December 2019 draft Master Plan Update:

[T]here are concerns about the amount of development in the Reservation, and the transformation of formerly open areas into active recreation space and zoo facilities. The Township should continue to work with Essex County to allow for appropriate development without overwhelming what makes the South Mountain Reservation a special place.

7. The current proposal appears to be limited to redevelopment within already an already developed area of the Zoo.

8. The Board finds that the proposed projects 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 project and capital improvements are not inconsistent with the Township of West Orange Updated Master Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of West Orange that the following recommendations have been made to the County of Essex, via letter dated August 20, 2021, in connection with this application:

- The Board asks that the County submit a Final Site Plan;

- The Board asks that the County submit a Traffic Study by an independent Traffic Engineer licensed in the State of New Jersey;
- The Board asks that the County submit the Metes and Bounds of the area encompassing the Turtle Back Zoo;
- The Board asks that it be provided with a certified Hydrology Study focused on impacts to Cherry Lane; and
- The Board asks that it be provided with a Final Adopted Version of the Turtle Back Zoo Master Plan.

BOARD MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Bagoff (Ch.)		X	X			
Guarino			X			
Smeraldo	X		X			
Klein			X			
Trenk			X			
McCartney			X			
McNair						X
Wilkes (V.Ch)			X			

Vote on Memorialization on August 11, 2021:

BOARD MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Bagoff (Ch.)						
Guarino						
Smeraldo						
Klein						
McCartney						
McNair					X	
Morgan					X	

Wilkes (V.Ch)						
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Certified to be a true copy of the Resolution adopted on the 6th day of October 2021.

Diana L. Chandler, Acting
Secretary

