

**MINUTES OF A MEETING
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF
THE BOROUGH OF MOUNTAIN LAKES
December 1, 2022**

James Murphy called the remote meeting to order and announced: Adequate notice of this remote meeting has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by publishing the remote meeting notice in The Citizen and The Morris County Daily Record on January 12, 2022 and by filing the same with the Borough Clerk and posting it on the Front Door on January 10, 2022 and was made available to all those requesting individual notice and paying the required fee.

Start: 7: 31PM

ROLL CALL:

Present: Murphy, De Nooyer, Leininger, Caputo, Paddock, Vecchione and McCormick

Absent: Peters and Astrup

Also, Present: Attorney, Michael Sullivan, Engineer, William Ryden, Environmental Engineer, Peter Black, Joseph Fishinger, Traffic Engineer, Paul Phillips, Planner

REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Stephen Vecchione made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 3, 2022 meeting. Kelly McCormick provided the second; the minutes were approved by voice vote by all eligible members present.

Mark Caputo made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2022 meeting. Meghan Leininger provided the second; the minutes were approved by voice vote by all eligible members present.

RESOLUTION:

Highview Commercial, LLC Appl. # 22-277

Brett Paddock made a motion to memorialize the resolution of approval; Jake DeNooyer seconded the motion. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 5 – 0 with members Murphy, Caputo, Paddock, DeNooyer and Leininger voting in favor.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

New Application:

The Craig School	App # 22-739
10 & 15 Tower Hill Road	Blk 54, Lot 14 Blk 55, Lot 1 & 4
Major Site Plan	R-A Zone
Lot 14: Improved Lot Coverage, Parking Stall Size	
Lot 1 & 4; Front Yard Setback (2), Floor Area Ratio	
Improved Lot Coverage, Number of Stories, Sign	
Parking Stall Size, Parking Aisle Width	

Simone Calli was the attorney representing the Craig School. The school operates the school located at 15 Towerhill Road and the administrative offices located at 10 Towerhill Road.

Both properties in the R-A zone are owned by the school. They would like to expand the school an additional 3800sqft. This would allow them to move their high school students into this building. They are also adding a greenhouse, patio, and parking.

Kara Loftin, the school's director for the last three years, would testify about the operations of the school. They are a grade 2 – 12 language-based school focusing on learning disabilities, specifically dyslexia. They serve students who have difficulty with reading and writing. Currently there are 115 students on this campus. They house their high school students at a leased site in Montville. They are open M – F 7:45am to 3:05pm with after school activities running until 4 – 4:30pm. Some of the students are driven to school by their parents or come in small school vans. They have an 11am food delivery service for lunch. Their after-school programs are intermural sports and art club. The school has a staff of 30 teachers and 2 administrators. An additional 8 administrators can be found at the “Blue House”. Teachers work from 7:45am – 3:15pm and the administrators work from 8am to 4pm. The teachers park at Henderson Hall and the administrators park in the gravel lot next to the administrative building. Their garbage pickup happens at 12 noon 2 x per week with recycling happening 1 x per week. They also have two school safety specialists and one janitor/grounds person on site. She felt they had a positive relationship with the neighborhood.

The school would like to have the additional space for their 35 high school students. These students have been taught in three leased spaces over the last several years. They wish to add the greenhouse because the gardening club is their most popular after school activity. They wish to add a new literacy program joining reading and gardening. The school hours would remain the same and they will be adding 11 faculty members and 2 administrators. Their high school students do their extracurricular activities during the day. They would still have back to school night and the prom in the evening.

Brett Paddock asked why they had to relocate the high school so many times. Ms. Loftin responded their lease ran out in Lincoln Park and moved to Boonton High School. When Boonton expanded their own programs and needed the space the Craig School moved to the Montville location. Will the high school ever be expanded? They do not anticipate enrolling any more student than they have now. Kelly McCormick questioned, how the high school student would get there? It would be the same procedures as the lower grades with an addition of a few drivers. Mr. Caputo asked about their evening events. Kara Loftin said they would be adding two additional evening events. K. McCormick asked who was using the pool. Besides themselves they have a partnership with the YMCA who uses the pool on Sunday afternoons. Meghan Leininger asked about the parking arrangement with the masonic lodge. They do have an arrangement with the lodge, but it is not used much. Steve Vecchione asked if they ever coordinate their events with the town. Ms. Loftin said they coordinated with the police. J. Murphy asked if they always have 150 students? Yes, they do. Their students are from 60 districts, 50% of them come by bus and 50% are in carpools. Do the children change classrooms? Yes, all the students change classrooms like middle and high school students usually do. Students move between Henderson Hall and Wilson Hall. They do not move to the administration building. Jake DeNooyer asked if the school was independent. Yes, 50% of our students are private pay and 50% are partially paid for by their school districts. S. Vecchione asked if the school charter limited the number of students. No, it does not but they were willing to do so.

Chairman Murphy asked if our professionals had any questions? Joseph Fishinger, of Brightview Engineering, asked, how drop-off and pick up occurred? Ms. Loftin answered, in the morning vehicles drop off on school property. They enter on Laurel Hill and drive between the two buildings and out on to Towerhill Road. This setup is for all buses and cars. In the afternoon the buses are staged at Island Beach. The children cross the Boulevard to get their cars or vans.

The Chairman opened the meeting to the public. Dr. Suzanne Platt, of 210 Laurel Hill Road, asked, if the plans had been shared with the Borough committees or neighbors? Ms. Loftin said to her knowledge they had not. How do you know the relationship with the neighbors has been positive? We speak with the police regularly and have not received any complaints from them or directly from the neighbors. Simone Cali asked if there had been any complaints from the neighbors in writing, by emails or phone? There have been none. Robert Von Schalscha, of 289 Boulevard, asked, where the students who drove would park? The 1 to 3 students would park at the administration building. How do they use the Masonic Lodge? The lodge is used for overflow event parking. Island beach is used for van and car parking at the end of the day. He confirmed that transportation vans and individual cars would increase if they added 30-40 students. Dr Abram Kirschenbaum, of 170 Laurel Hill Road, asked, if the by-laws limited the number students? The by-laws do not but they are open to a limit of 150 students. What are the number of cars that line up on Laurel Hill Road in the morning? Ms. Loftin didn't know the number. Simone Calli added another witness will answer the traffic questions. Adam Kalbermatten, of 174 Laurel Hill Road, stated a lot of cars block his driveway between 2 & 4pm. Will this new lot help this situation? M. Sullivan stated this would be handled later by the traffic experts. Dr. Platt asked about additional maintenance staff needed for the new students. This would not change they would still have 1 building grounds manager and they outsource the janitorial staff. They come in 2 vehicles at 6pm in the evening. Mr. Kirschenbaum asked, if there were any type of summer or weekend programs planned? There are no weekend events except for one Saturday in the spring. They do extend the school year into July. Their summer academy has an afternoon summer enrichment camp. There are no programs in the month of August. They do lease to outside groups like the YMCA on Sunday afternoon and a travel basketball league a few nights a week. Bill Reilly, 165 Laurel Hill, asked does the school plan to buy any neighboring property to expand its facility. No, they do not.

Paul Tiajolloff the project architect was licensed in state of NJ. He referenced Sheet A-3. The Wilson School was built in 1978. In 2016 they renovated the 3rd floor to add science rooms, an art room, and a math room. On the lower level they added the Orton rooms. The middle level is the main entry level. No other renovations have been done other than the gym, removing an old kitchen and adding a classroom. They wish to add a new greenhouse to the lower level. The basement pool lockers will be renovated later along with the middle floor bathrooms. They wish to add space to the Henderson Building. They plan to place the high school students in the upper level and the annex on the 1st floor. The annex will be a small media center and gathering space. The 2nd floor will have science labs. The balance of the classrooms on the lower level will house the 6 – 8th grade. The brick on the Wilson School will be matched as closely as possible on the new addition of Henderson Hall. Mr. Tiajolloff reviewed the elevations of the buildings. The greenhouse is a standard model with ventilating glass windows and steel. Exhibit A-1 was the exterior elevation of the Henderson Hall entrance colorized and exhibit A-2 was an example of a white greenhouse off the

internet. They would most likely have one that will be anodized aluminum. Exhibit A-3 was a color rendering of the Tower Hill Rd side of the building and plaza. The roof will house 5ft tall A/C units. Exhibit A-4 was a colorized view of the interior gathering space and A-5 was a view of the reading room. They proposed installing the Craig School sign on the brick wall of the annex facing Tower Hill. The sign will be 10.4ft x 5.6ft. and back lit. There are no other new signs proposed.

Chairmen Murphy asked if the Board had questions for the architect. Kelly McCormick asked for clarification on the square footage being added. Mr. Tiajolloff said the existing annex is 1988sqft per floor. They propose 3533sqft per floor or an increase of about 3200sq ft in total. Mr. Sullivan pointed out the Ryden memo stated they were adding 3,828sqft. What was the correct number? Jake DeNooyer confirmed the lit sign faced the administrative building on Tower Hill Road. Meghan Leininger asked the height of the elevations. The building is approximately 27ft 2in tall based on the average grade plan and the A/C units are estimated to be an additional 5ft more. J. Murphy asked about the expansion of Henderson Hall. Are they building an addition or are they take down the existing annex and replacing it with a new annex that is larger in the same location? It is the later. He asked about the proposed sign. Mr. Sullivan pointed out signs are not permitted in the zone, so they were asking for a variance.

Bill Ryden, the Borough Engineer, was concerned about the greenhouse finishes. The Board needs the final selection for all colors and materials to be used. Paul Tiajolloff answered, what was presented was the correct size and scale. The brick on the building would match the Wilson School and the window frames and glass will match the existing. Mr. Ryden repeated the Board should have specific building materials, include those proposed for the greenhouse, before the hearing is over. He was also concerned about the A/C units. What is the view for the neighbors? The Board needed to know what they were going to install. Simone Calli offered to do screening for the A/C units. The architect presented exhibit A-6 potential screening for the A/C units. Mr. Tiajolloff said he would provide some type of material board for the next hearing. Jim Murphy added they should provide more information on the A/C location and sizing.

The Chairman opened the hearing for public questions of the architect. Robert Von Schalscha questioned the size of the greenhouse was it 12' x 18' as per the site plan or 21' x 12'. It is 12' x 18'. How long will the project take? Mr. Tiajolloff said it would take about 18 months to build. They plan to open the high school in September 2024. The resident felt the illuminated sign facing Tower Hill and the A/C units on the roof would be seen from his backyard. Abram Kirschenbaum asked if an effort could be made to have the building match the homes in the neighborhood. No, they were matching the buildings on the site. Suzanne Platt asked, if the units on the roof were for heat and A/C and what their noise level was? The architect said new units were recently installed and they have not had any complaints about the sound. What hours would the sign be lit? The hours it will be lit will be addresses by the civil engineer. During the demolition of the building what happens to the students. The students will be there, but we will try to do a lot of the work when the children are not in school. Mr. Sullivan confirmed if approved Mr. Ryden would have a pre-construction meeting with the contractor. Simone Calli asked if Mt. Lakes had a demolition notice requirement. William Ryden did not believe there was one. James Ferguson, of 50 Tower Hill Rd, asked the architect if he had been asked by the school to look at Pope Pius High School in Montville? No, he was not. Would the blue building still be for administrative

use? Yes, it would be. Did the architect think this was the most this building could be expanded? Paul Tiajolloff answered this building is maxed out. Due to the late hour James Murphy made a motion to carry the application to January 5th with no further public notice. A second was provided by Brett Paddock. All members agreed to carry the application by voice vote.

Other Matters / Public Comment:

Public Comment – No one wished to make a public comment.

Ordinance Subcommittee – Chairman Murphy shared the Ordinance Committee started their discussions on updating our Zoning Ordinance.

Stephen Vecchione made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Kelly McCormick provided the second. The meeting was adjourned at 10:18PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Shaw