

STRATFORD JOINT LAND USE BOARD  
MINUTES  
June 22, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Mancini at 6:30 pm and the public statement was read that the meeting was advertised in the Courier Post, the Collingswood Retrospect and a notice was posted on the bulletin board at the Borough Hall stating the time and place.

The Chairman led the board in the pledge of allegiance and a prayer.

ROLL CALL:

Present

M. Mancini, Chairman	Class IV
P. McGovern, Vice Chairman	Class IV
K. Campbell	Class IV
T. Hall	Class IV
T. Kozeniewski	Class IV
R. Morello	Class II
R. St. Maur	Class IV

Absent

J. Keenan, Mayor	Class I
T. Lomano	Class III
M. Chicalo	Alternate
Kim Berdine	Alternate II

A. Costa, Solicitor  
S. Bach, Engineer, Bach Associates  
S. McCart, Secretary

MINUTES: Motion by Mr. St. Maur and seconded by Mr. McGovern to approve minutes of March 23, 2023. All Ayes.

NEW BUSIESS:

Stratford Borough Council Resolution 23-76 authorizing the Stratford Joint Land Use Board to conduct a Redevelopment Study. East Laurel Road, Block 36, Lots 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16; Block 40, Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10; Block 41, Lots 2, 2.01, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8

Mr. Mancini stated this is a Resolution from Mayor and Council to authorize Bach Associates to do the redevelopment study on Laurel Road from Atlantic Avenue to Kirkwood.

Mr. Costa stated this will be a resolution appointing Bach Associates to do the study as requested by Mayor and Council. Mr. Bach stated this starts the process.

Motion by Mr. Morello and seconded by Mr. Hall to approve the authorization of Bach Associates to do the redevelopment study on Laurel Road. Roll call Mr. McGovern, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Kozeniewski, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Ms. Campbell, yes, Mr. Mancini, yes.

Laurel Manor, 18 W. Laurel Road, Block 69, Lots 4, 11.01, 11.02

Mr. Bach was sworn in by Mr. Costa.

Mr. Chris Berr from DelDuca Lewis & Berr Law Firm representing the applicant Laurel Manor Realty, LLC, 18 W. Laurel Road, Block 69, Lots 11.01 and 11.02 on the tax map. This facility operates as the existing Laurel Manor. They plan to expand the facility with two additions, 9 rooms, 18 beds taking the bed count to 124 to better serve the community. They will be adding a minor addition to the entrance This will enhance the amenities such as a larger lobby, larger

cafeteria and a therapy facility. The basin will be on Lot 4. Lot 4 is in the R1 zone. It is currently a vacant lot. The applicant intends to add a storm water improvement and a sign going on the corner of Laurel and Walnut. In order to permit these improvements, we request several improvements from the board. The applicant is seeking a D1 use variance to permit the proposed signage and stormwater improvements on lot 4; a D2 variance to permit the expansion of the applicant's facility on lots 11.01 and 11.02; and preliminary and final major site approval. The applicant is also seeking two bulk variances for parking stall dimensions. 10'x 20' is required and the applicant is proposing 9' x 18' and the dimension of the drive aisle in the parking lot.

We believe the D variance relief is amply justified here. To establish a D1 or D2 variance we need to establish negative and positive criteria. The applicant believes that its use is inherently beneficial satisfies the positive criteria and the use of these properties will promote the general welfare. The site is particularly suitable for the proposed use.

The deviation from the bulk ordinance requirements will advance purposes of zoning such as the promotion of a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques, good civic design and arrangement. The benefits of granting the variances outweighs any detriment. Granting the proposed variance relief will not change the nature and character of this neighborhood nor have adverse impact on any neighbors.

There are some exhibits. We have received the May 9, 2023 review letter from Mr. Bach and we are agreeable to complying to his review letter with the exception of one item.

Mr. Bach questioned the number of beds. Is it 124 beds as proposed and not 126? Mr. Berr stated the plans indicated 108 beds existing and it is 106, so with the proposed 18 beds it is 124 beds.

Mr. Mancini asked why a D variance is needed when the property is going to used for what it is already being used for? Mr. Berr stated the facility that currently sits on lots 11.01 and 11.02 predates zoning ordinance which made this use non-conforming. If you have a use that predate zoning ordinance, you can continue it but if you expand it, you are required to get a D2 variance. Mr. Bach stated the other variance is for the storm water basin which is going on Lot 4. It is a D1 variance which is zoned R1. Mr. Costa stated there is also a sign that is going to be put on that residential lot.

Mr. Mancini is there a drainage issue today? Mr. Bach stated it is to comply with our current storm water regulation with the borough which mirrors the NJDep regulations. They are adding additional impervious with the additions and the parking lot.

Mr. Berr reviewed the Exhibits. Exhibit A1 is an arial view of Laurel Manor and surrounding areas. Exhibit A2 is a rendering of the site plan. Exhibit A3 is a mark up of the floor plan. Exhibit A4 is a rendering of sign. Exhibit A5 is the original footprint of the building. Exhibit A6 is an architectural rendering of proposed façade.

Naftali Eisen, Senior Director for facilities, Mr. Halpert, engineer, Mr. Feranda, traffic consultant, Mr. Miller, planner, Naftoli Gut, architect were all sworn in by Mr. Costa.

Mr. Berr asked Mr. Eisen for a general description of the Laurel Manor. Mr. Eisen stated currently it is a 104-bed skilled nursing facility. Mr. Berr asked what is the purpose for the addition. Mr. Eisen stated it is to better serve the community. The facility is almost always full. We are looking to expand that by adding 18 beds. In addition, we are looking to expand and enhance the physical therapy, expand cafeteria, expand and update lobby, as well as, expand and

update exterior of building. Mr. Berr asked if they would be increasing parking? Mr. Eisen stated they would be adding 26 parking spots. Mr. Berr asked how many employees do you currently have. Mr. Eisen stated 43 during the largest shift. Mr. Berr asked how many would you be adding. Mr. Eisen stated 2 CNAs bringing the total to 45. Mr. Berr asked how frequently do you receive deliveries on the site. Mr. Eisen stated we receive large deliveries on Thursday, with smaller deliveries on Monday and Wednesday. There would be no change in deliveries. Mr. Berr asked when trash pick-up currently take place. Mr. Eisen stated trash pick-up takes place by the kitchen and it is three times per week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Recycling is Friday. There will be no changes to trash pick-up.

Mr. Berr asked since 1965 are you aware of any problems or concerns that the facility has caused. Mr. Eisen stated we have a very nice relationship with the community. Holiday time they come out and see the decorations. We are hosting the Senior group while the Senior Center is undergoing renovations.

Mr. Berr asked do you anticipate continuing this type of relationship. Mr. Eisen stated yes. Mr. Berr stated the comment Mr. Bach's review letter recommending the consolidation of lots 4, 11.01 and 11.02 as part of the improvements. The applicant is agreeable to consolidating Lots 11.01 and 11.02 but Lot 4 because it is affiliated but under separate ownership. Mr. Eisen stated that is correct. Mr. Berr stated we agree to record an easement to Lot 4. Lot 4 cannot be sold off and will stay affiliated. Mr. Bach stated if you are successful in getting the use variance, Lot 4, Use variance cannot operate separately from other two lots, must be part of the easement.

Mr. Berr called up Mr. Halpert, Engineer. Mr. Halpert reviewed his credentials and Mr. Costa accepted him as an expert witness.

Mr. Berr asked Mr. Halpert if his office prepared the plans? Is he familiar with the site and has he visited the site? Mr. Halpert stated yes. Mr. Berr asked Mr. Halpert what is on the lot today. Mr. Halpert stated the property is situated along the border of Stratford and Laurel Springs. Currently the property that the nursing facility is situated on is lots 11.01 and 11.02. It was built in 1965 and currently has 106 beds. There are improvements proposed for the front and rear of the building. It has gravel parking area for overflow parking in the rear. There are improvements for trash facility, loading area, and the drainage for the facility is all directed towards adjacent stream which runs under the roadway along the frontage of the site.

Mr. Berr stated in reference to exhibit A2 what is proposed for this application. There are 2 distinct additions, is that correct. Mr. Halpert stated yes. Mr. Berr asked the front addition is largely in the foot print of the existing building. Mr. Halpert stated that is correct. Mr. Berr stated there is a rear addition at the back of the property. Mr. Halpert stated yes. Mr. Berr stated that front addition will include some of the enhanced amenities such as the therapy gym, lobby and dining area. Mr. Halpert stated the applicant is proposing to enclose the porch and that is where those amenities would go. The vestibule is going to be extending approximately eight feet more toward the parking lot for a total of about an additional 90 square feet. It is away from the stream and towards the parking lot and would not impact and of the relief being sought. Mr. Berr asked if we do receive approval, the plans would be updated to include that. Mr. Halpert stated yes. Mr. Berr stated the rear addition will be the extra beds. Mr. Halpert agreed. Mr. Berr can you confirm that the building with these two proposed additions will comply with all bulk requirements. Mr. Halpert stated as depicted on the site plan, all the bulk requirements are met. There are no set back variances needed. The bulk relief is associated with parking. Mr. Berr stated to comply with comments from Mr. Bach's office, we are going to agree to put a new six-

foot vinyl fence and arborvitae as approved by board engineer. Mr. Halpert stated as park of the resolution compliance we will be putting additional fencing, additional arborvitae and everything will be as per the recommendation of the borough engineer.

Mr. Berr stated the applicant will be adding 26 parking spaces. Mr. Halpert stated the new parking in rear will bring the parking into compliance. The new parking is proposed in the rear of the building. It will be curbing it, paving it and stripping it. It will be 9'x18' parking stalls with a 24-foot drive aisle. Mr. Berr stated the parking stalls are 9'x 18'. Mr. Halpert stated 10'x20' are required by ordinance. Mr. Berr asked is 9'x18' sufficient for parking. Mr. Halpert stated the 10'x20' is a little bit old when cars were larger. Mr. Berr stated the applicant is proposing a 24' wide aisle although the ordinance requires 25 feet. Mr. Halpert stated 24 feet will be sufficient for circulation. Mr. Berr stated by making smaller spaces and slightly narrow drive aisle, you are able to meet parking and buffering requirements. Mr. Halpert stated the plan is designed so that we do meet the buffering requirements.

Mr. Berr discussed the storm water improvements on Lot 4. Mr. Halpert stated any major development per NJDep certain reductions are required to comply with storm water management rules. Whenever impervious coverage is being added, reductions are required. The has to be a net improvement from the runoff. As part of the improvement to comply with the rules, storm water management facilities are comprised of several pieces. There are two underground basins, that you will not be seeing, that collect from the roof. There is a surface basin on lot 4.

There is a surface basin on lot 4. Mr. Berr asked if there were currently any drainage problems? Mr. Halpert stated he did not see any problems. We are required to provide drainage facilities as part of any improvement. Mr. Berr asked about lot 4. He stated the sign is proposed for the facility on lot 4. Is that correct? Mr. Halbert stated yes. It would be a monument sign being proposed. A site triangle will be required so the sign will be outside of the site triangle. Mr. Berr stated the sign is depicted in Exhibit A4. Mr. Halbert stated the ordinance allows for 150 square feet and the proposed sign is well under. The applicant is not seeking any variance relief for that. Mr. Berr clarified that they were seeking a D Relief variance on Lot 4 for a sign on residential lot.

Mr. Berr stated there were a number of comments on Mr. Bach's review letter. Mr. Berr stated other than the lot consolidation comment, have you agreed to comply with all the comments. Mr. Halpert stated we are able to agree to all comments. Mr. Halpert stated there need to be testimony for the ground water mounding. Mr. Halpert reviewed the ground water mounding. Mr. Bach stated ground water mounding will be shown in the revised plans.

Mr. Halpert stated we are in receipt of both LOI and the flood hazard verification. The site has no wet lands. This is already approved by the NJDEP. There is a 50-foot repairing buffer with the stream. The flood hazard elevation is at 68.4. He had a letter dated April 24, 2023 from NJDEP. It has not been finalized and recorded but we do have approval from NJDEP. There is a small portion of the existing concrete pad that is within the repairing zone; however, repairing zone relief should not be needed because the only improvements at that spot are to enclose an existing area. The concrete pad existing in 1965 prior to the ruling from NJDEP and is my opinion we are not consist as a regulated activity.

Naftoli Gut, Architect, gave his qualifications. Mr. Costa approved.

Mr. Berr asked Mr. Gut if his office prepared the drawings. Mr. Gut stated yes. Mr. Gut reviewed the site plans. He stated they would be enclosing and enlarging the dining area, lobby and therapy gym. The other main is the 9-room addition and a new lounge. There are minor

interior renovations. The exterior is going to be updated and bring up to a more contemporary look, white brick with contrasting color.

Mr. Berr asked does the rendition depict the appearance of the building. Mr. Naftoli stated the new style of building.

Mr. Bach asked if the extra 90 square feet will be reflected in the updated calculations? Mr. Naftoli stated yes.

A. Andrew Feranda, Traffic Engineer, reviewed his qualifications. Mr. Costa accepted.

Mr. Berr asked Mr. Feranda if his office prepared a traffic assessment. Mr. Feranda stated that is correct.

Mr. Feranda stated for our traffic study we did counts at the driveways, during commuter peaks, both morning and evening. We find the highest hour of traffic on the roadway. We use that traffic along with traffic volume from the driveway as well as signalized traffic at intersection. We then evaluate the traffic and give it a grade a through f. The intersection received a D or better, a D is satisfactory. It means there is some delay and the traffic signal. The driveways received a B or better. The future, when beds are built, and found no change in grading.

The parking currently has 50 parking spots which is a deficient. It should be 64. With the additional parking it will be 76 so complies with ordinance. There are four handicap parking spaces which meets ADA requirements. All perimeter parking is 9'x18' which is justifiable. The driveway aisle is 24 feet wide. This is sufficient for two-way traffic.

There is a drop off area for pick up and drop off of patients. This reduces demand for parking spaces.

Mr. Berr asked in your opinion there is no impact. Mr. Feranda stated none. Mr. Berr stated is there the parking stall size variance and drive aisle is justified. It is safe and efficient and better than what is there now.

Mr. Morello asked about snow removal for parking lot. Mr. Feranda stated that is more operational. Pushing snow at the end of road or bend of parking area. Mr. Morello asked without piling up rear residents? Mr. Feranda stated it may end up in parking spaces. Mr. Morello asked about fire truck access. Mr. Feranda stated it is a sharp bend and a dead end. If they pull behind the building they would have to go straight in and have to back out. Mr. Bach stated access is somewhat consistent with what they have now. Certain areas emergency vehicles would not enter especially if it is not readily retrievable. They have more access now than they did before.

Mr. Morello asked where does the fence start and end. Mr. Eisen stated the entire rear of property. Mr. Bach stated along residents, six-foot-high PVC fence and arborvitae. Mr. Bach stated it will step down as it approaches to side walk. Mr. Eisen stated we will need to comply with site triangle rules. Shrubbery in the site triangle will have to be under 30 inches. We will comply with the recommendation of the Board Engineer. Mr. Bach stated there will be site triangle easements recorded. Mr. Bach asked will you also have the PVC fence and the shrubbery in that area as well? Mr. Eisen stated correct. Mr. Mancini asked will there be fencing along Walnut Avenue. Mr. Eisen stated it would be shrubbery but if the board would like fencing, we can do fencing. Mr. Bach stated should be a four-foot fence split rail with black wire around the basin. Mr. McGovern asked will that have standing water? Mr. Eisen stated the intent of the basin is to infiltrate and is not intended to have any standing water. It should drain within 72 hours. Mr. Bach stated the basin should be maintained so that is always works that way.

Mr. Jim Miller, Planner, gave his credentials. Mr. Acosta accepted his credentials.

Mr. Berr asked are you familiar with the application. Mr. Miller stated yes. Mr. Berr asked have you reviewed application from a planning perspective? Mr. Miller stated this is an application where a D

variance is required. The property that is in the residential district required a D1 variance. The property in the commercial district requires a D2 variance.

There is a four-step process. First is the beneficial use. The second is the detrimental impact. The third is mitigation and the fourth the benefits outweigh the detriment. This use will advance the purpose of the municipal land use law. It is in an appropriate use for location. It encourages senior community housing construction. This is a senior facility. The balance of the benefits has to do with this specific location. Currently it provides 106 beds for skilled nursing. The proposal is to add 18 beds. There are also additional enhancements. There is going to be a therapy gym, better dining facility, additional parking and additional drainage. The suitable for use is already existing established use within the community. The need is function of demographic change. People live longer. There is a growing need for these types of facilities. Parking will now meet the current standard. Most of the impacts already been in community since 1965. There really is not a significant additional impact. There will be two additional employees. The improvements are contained within the site. Most of the improvements are beneficial and more than offset the detriment.

Without exception any impact of the improvements is going to be offset by design. The benefits are the extra beds, compliant parking, significant improvements to drainage, appearance of building, all are significant benefits to the community and facility. The zoning easily satisfies requirements of the case law. The conventional negative criteria we have to show that there is no substantial detriment to the public welfare. The addition has little impact to surrounding neighborhood. You have an existing use. They basically satisfy the negative criteria. The facility is already present in the community. It is a use that provides for senior care. Traffic is off peak. The intensity of the use is much quieter. There is no potential impairment.

Mr. Bach stated the applicant has agreed to comply with all comments in Bach's review. On page 13 and 14 do you agree to get all outside approvals. They agreed.

Mr. Mancini asked if there were any questions from the Board. Hearing none.

Motion by Mr. McGovern and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to open to the public.

Russ Conrad, 17 W. Laurel Road, was sworn in by Mr. Costa. He stated the pond and sign are going to impact my property. It will lower the value of my property. He was worried about mosquitos He would like to see improvement to the side of the building that faces his house. The delivery times are between 4:30 and 6:00 am and the trash is pick up at 3:30 am. I also worry about where the water will go. He was a previous employee. When it rains, the roofs pitch to back and there is four inches of water that runs into stream.

Mr. Bach stated there will be arborvitaes across from you. He asked would a double row staggered with other vegetation help with the visual enhance the landscaping. Mr. Conrad asked will that help with my property value. Mr. Bach stated it will help with visual. Mr. Conrad stated I am more concerned with my property value. Mr. Bach asked applicant if he would be willing to enhance the vegetation. Applicant agreed. Mr. Bach stated the plantings for the evergreens can come in at 12 to 14 feet. Mr. Mancini we are ensuring that there are different tiers of bushes that go all across on three sides with exception of where the sign is.

Mr. Bach stated there is a combination of things that can be done to that basin. The shape of basin can be changed as long as the volume is there. We want to make sure there is a complete perimeter buffer around that lot.

Mr. Conrad asked where is water going? Mr. Bach asked Mr. Halpert where the water is going in the existing court yard? Mr. Halpert stated all rooves are going to be collected and there will be a drain running beneath the slab. The water will go to an underground basin.

Patrick Lord, 13 W. Laurel Road, was sworn in by Mr. Costa. He stated he lives across from the loading dock. He would like more fence along loading dock. He is worried about mosquitos and geese. Also worried about retention pond. Mr. Bach asked applicant is they would be willing to install PVC fencing where chain link fence to a point that is appropriate before the sidewalk. There will be a PVC gate in

there to access basin for maintenance. The applicant agreed. Mr. Lord asked what kind of lighting will there be for the sign. Mr. Bach asked will it be illuminated by spot light or interior lights. Mr. Berr stated it is not proposed to be internally lite. It will be spot light. Mr. Bach stated it cannot be directed or have any glare on any residents. This should be on plans and added to the resolution. Mr. Bach stated in regards to storm water manual, it is required by our ordinance as well as NJDEP that this manual is recorded in the County Clerk's Office. This is an enforceable storm water maintenance plan by the Borough. They are required to provide proof of there maintenance schedule to the Borough. Mr. Keenan asked if the owner could talk about the trash operation. He asked if trash were being picked up at 3:00 in the morning. The applicant stated they would reach out to trash company and have time changed to 7:00 or ordinance standards. Mr. Bach stated that should apply to deliveries as well. Motion by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to close public portion. All ayes. Motion by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to approve two use variances and Preliminary and Final Site Plan, also the two bulk variances that were requested.

1. Lot 4 can only be used in conjunction lots 11.01 and 11.02. There will be a deed restriction for Lot 4 but not be part of the consolidation of lots 11.01 and 11.02
2. The applicant will submit revised plans addressing Mr. Bach's comments.
3. There will be a four-foot split rail black wire fence around the basin.
4. There will be a triple row of vegetation and applicant will work with Mr. Bach's office
5. The six-foot PVC fence will be extended along Laurel Road
6. The spot lights will not be directed towards any neighbors
7. No trash pick ups or deliveries before 7:00 am.

Roll call vote: Mr. McGovern, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Kozeniewski, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Ms. Campbell, yes, Mr. Mancini, yes.

OLD BUSINESS: none

#### MEMORIALIZATION OF RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2023:09 Stratford Development Associates, LLC, Block 53, Lots 2, 3 & 6  
Administrative change and review to be ADA compliant for accessibility for the properties located at Block 53, Lots 2, 3 & 6

Motion by Mr. McGovern and seconded by Mr. Hall. Roll call: Mr. McGovern, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Ms. Campbell, yes, Mr. Mancini, abstain.

BOARD ACTION: none

PUBLIC COMMENT: Motion by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to open up the public portion. Hearing none. Motion by Ms. Campbell and seconded by Mr. Hall to close the public portion.

BOARD COMMENT: None

COMMUNICATION/ORGANIZATION: Next meeting is July 27, 2023 at 6:30 pm

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Mr. McGovern and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to adjourn. All ayes.

