

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MEETING
Monday, October 2, 2017

Present: Maria Connolly
Philip Duran
James Kownacki, Councilman
Kevin P. Nerwinski, Municipal Manager
David Maffei, Mayor
Stephanie Pangaldi
Kim Y. Taylor
Doris Weisberg
Edward Wiznitzer, Chairperson

Absent: Diego Samuel

Excused Absence: Terrence Leggett, Vice Chairperson

Also Present: Philip Caton, Planning Consultant
James Kochenour, Traffic Consultant
James F. Parvesse, Municipal Engineer
Edwin Schmierer, Planning Board Attorney
Susan Snook, Recording Secretary

Statement of Adequate Notice:

Adequate notice of this meeting of the Lawrence Township Planning Board has been provided by filing the annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk as required by law; by filing the agenda and notice with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building and mailing to the Trenton Times and the Trentonian newspapers.

Public Participation (for items not on agenda):

None

Minutes for Approval:

The September 18, 2017 minutes were approved per unanimous vote.

Resolutions:

None

Applications:

Major Site Plan – Preliminary & Final Site Plan Application No. SP-1/17; **Mercedes Benz of Princeton;**
2915 Brunswick Pike; Tax Map Page 35.03, Block 3507, Lots 13, 14.0 and 16 – 18

Robert Casey, Esquire represented the applicant and stated it is the former Kawasaki property, which the applicant obtained a year ago.

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Witness #1: Doug Pelikan, PE testified that the property is on a 3.2 acres site and that Kawasaki is no longer there; there is also a no named road which will be vacated by the Township as a part of this application. He continued explaining the surrounding area which consists of three homes which will be raised and eliminated to create an inventory parking lot. The north side, where Kawasaki was, which has existing parking in the back and that will remain for customer and staff parking for the remaining facility of 12,800 square feet. The south side, where the unnamed road is will be the driveway and will be turned into a parking lot. The remaining roadway, now becoming a driveway, will be a dedicated easement access to the Township to provide access to the wooded area in the back, if necessary. The entire site will be provided with fencing, aluminum in the front and part of the side yard and chain link fencing around the rear yard with a gate across the driveway, so when the facility is not operating and a gate in the back to get into the wooded area, if necessary to get back there. It will have a Knox box in case the police or fire need to get back there after hours.

There will be no changes to the footprint; however, there will be changes to the façade, cleaning it up too make it look more pleasant. The parking for the inventory will be off of Route 1 for vehicles for sale; the trucks that Mercedes has vary in length, parking stalls will be 24' to the normal 18' and some of the sprinters are 24'1". The car carriers can maneuver and vehicles are delivered on a two-car units towed by a pick-up truck and can maneuver in the parking lot. There will be no off-loading on Route 1, it will be in the off isles in the parking lot. Two new handicap parking spaces will be added closer to the show room entrance door in the front.

There is currently only a sidewalk on the north side in front of the Kawasaki dealer and sidewalk will be added down the remainder of the south side to adjoin to the strip mall, which is located next door. New curbing and islands will be added and a new curb delineating the driveway and at present there is no curb only on the north side of the driveway. The islands are landscaped with trees and small bushes; trees across the front and there are existing bushes along the front of the building and existing trees along-side the building. There is screening along the retail area side and screening was added between the apartment units on the west side and existing parking lot. Additional screening will be added to the front of the building and the fence along the back should add more screening, privacy added to it.

Mr. Casey stated chain link is proposed across the back, but the comment was to try to make it opaque in some manner to provide even more screening for those who might view the property. It was suggested vinyl fencing; however, it does not provide security to the back of the facility, so the applicant would rather keep the cyclone fence and put some vision slats in in so you can't see through the chain link fence to accomplish the same thing. Mr. Pelikan stated it was suggested that a 6' fence be provided along the sides and back and the comment was to have it be 8', which would be better for a security standpoint.

A comment about the decorative fence be extended on the side lot back to the front of the building next door and there will be no objection to that and to the north side. The applicant is in accordance with the professionals comments; however, regarding the variance for the floodplain buffer, which is 31' from the property line and does not require to have that variance requested.

The site plan exhibits were marked: Exhibit A1 – Site Plan; Exhibit A2 is the photograph and Exhibit A3 is the rendering. Councilman Kownacki questioned the back gate that is for the Township property, if it is going to be locked and if the residences want to walk to get to that property. Mr. Pelikan stated there is no provisions for the residents to go walking through the property, no provisions have been made for people to walk through there at any point or time because they want security for the vehicles. Councilman Kownacki suggested moving the fence because there is a trail back there. Mr. Pelikan stated that no provisions were made at this point and the vehicles could be subject to damage and residents could walk outside the fence. Mr. Nerwinski stated that there is an open plan in place for the trail systems. Mr. Parvesse stated that the Township agreed to the vacation of the right-of-way, it also

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provided for an easement to be placed along there and the intent of that was to create, but currently there is no trail connection, but sometime in the future, the Township wants to develop that and there was an understanding that we would work together to develop a way to get people to get from Route 1 to that trail system.

Mr. Pelikan stated there is a pedestrian gate up front to access the sidewalk. Mr. Parvesse continued when that occurs we have to come up with a way to get through there is the Township developed that trail. Mr. Caton stated that the applicant would want that on the outside of the fence. Mr. Parvesse stated the access is through the right-of-way and would have to find a way to provide that access. Mr. Nerwinski stated that is the entire purpose of vacating that unnamed road is to make sure the trail system is preserved. Mr. Casey stated the terms of the easement will have to be worked on.

Mr. Parvesse stated some thought has to be made on how to fence that property. Mr. Pelikan stated there could be an access down through the two different store areas. Mr. Parvesse stated it has been agreed to; and another options is to have a fence that runs along the edge of the access roadway and not across with a gate. Mr. Nerwinski stated as long as the intent is preserved. Ms. Taylor asked what the applicant's liability is; Mr. Schmierer responded if the easement is given to the Township, then the Township will ensure it and the applicant will have no responsibility.

Mr. Kockenour, Traffic Consultant asked about the on-site parking and to indicate the breakdown of the different types of parking (inventory, service, employee and customer). Mr. Pelikan stated there is 155 inventory vehicles; 20 general parking spaces for customers and employees; 10 for customers and 10 for employees and at this point it is projected to have four or five for employees over there, with a total of 175 total spaces. Mr. Kockenour continued that there is no spaces designated specifically for service. Mr. Pelikan commented they area brought into the building and then they leave the building. Mr. Kockenour continued with the delivery process for the sprinter vehicles and showed a picture that they are brought in basically two at a time on a trailer pulled by a pickup truck and what are the delivery times because there is a gate across the front and the concern if a truck is to show up during the time when the gate is closed, is there enough room for that vehicle to pull off the highway, is that gate going to be set back far enough that the truck can pull off the highway so it is not sticking out in the drive lane of Route 1. Mr. Pelikan stated there is enough room, the gate is about 50 to 60' back.

Mr. Caton stated it appears that if the ornamental fence would be extended straight across rather than diagonally across from the corner of the building, that would move it back more, about 10 or 15'. Mr. Greces, the owner of the property, stated that they are not to get there before or after operational hours because the employees have to physically check them in.

Ms. Connolly asked to discuss the signage. Mr. Pelikan testified that at the current time there is no signage and asked the Board that there is an existing upright pylon and thinking about putting plain white blank covers on them at this time and just have the street number on it. The structure is still there and the lightings still there. It will plain white inserts with 1915 which is the address of the building at this time.

The applicant does not know what the signage will be and will have to come to the Board with a signage package. Mr. Caton stated Mercedes is so particular about their signage packages and the idea that there would be a way of adapting the Mercedes signage to that pylon. Mr. Pelikan stated they do have some concepts for it and it is just simpler to say we do not want to put up any signs on the building. Mr. Casey stated it is given that Mercedes will have to come to the Board at that time. Mr. Caton stated it is non-conforming in height and type because the ordinance does not permit pylon signs.

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Mr. Casey spoke about the side yard which is pre-existing and 12.6' and if a variance is required for the wetland buffer and that is not necessary. The buffer width variance is an existing 25' up against an existing parking lot. Mr. Caton referred to his report, dated September 18, 2017, Page 4 (Comments 3.6 and 3.1), copy attached. Chairperson Wiznitzer questioned the proposed or replacement of trees. Mr. Pelikan stated there are existing trees in the area of the proposed parking and will remain. Some street trees are being added across the front and in the islands. The street trees that exists are further into the parking area and will be taken out and replaced with new trees.

Mr. Caton stated the placement of the trees between the curb and parking area make sense which will have a better chance of survival. It was suggested to plant a trees that has an upright shape to it and less likely to get into the wires and the Bradford Pear is not appropriate for this location. It was suggested to use a wooden fence instead of the chain link; however, chain link is less maintenance problems; where the vinyl breaks easier. It was agreed to run black slats through the chain link fence.

Witness #2: Robert Greces, owner of Mercedes Benz stated is leaning on new car dealers to increase their capacity. The service business is starting to grow and purchase the property for inventory and eventually be used for service within the existing footprint. Mr. Greces stated they are franchised to handle sprinters and a Demetrius which tops at 15'7" and not dealing with heavier duty trucks, strictly van franchise with a standard wheel base with a high top (sold six last year).

Mr. Casey stated for closing they are consolidating the varies lots into one; Township Council will be vacating the street; an easement will be prepared for the vacation of the street and will present and work with the Board Attorney and metes and bounds descriptions have been submitted to the Township Attorney. Mr. Kockenour asked if Mr. Casey approached New Jersey Department of Transportation to see if a new permit will be needed. Mr. Pelikan stated he has and they are still trying to decide whether a major or minor permit.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Caton summarized the conditions of approval and that the applicant will abide by the staff reviews.

Other Business:


Mr. Wiznitzer stated the January meeting is committed to training. Councilman Kownacki asked when the training is scheduled because Council is meeting on January 1st and no appointments will be made until January 16, 2018. The training session will have to be moved to the February meeting. Mr. Nerwinski stated have the dust settle and do it on February 5th.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

Respectfully submitted,


Susan J. Shook
Recording Secretary

Minutes approved: Nov. 20, 2017