MINUTES

CRESSKILL PLANNING BOARD

JUNE 28, 2016

Mr. Morgan opened the meeting at 7:33 PM and announced the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act had been fulfilled.

Members present at roll call: Mayor Romeo, Councilwoman Tsigounis, Mr. Morgan, Ms. Bauer, Mr. Moss, Mrs. Schultz, Mr. Ulshoefer, Mr. Durakis and Mr. Mandelbaum. Also present were Mr. Paul Azzolina, Borough Engineer, and Mr. Steven Schuster, Board Attorney.

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Mr. Ulshoefer made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2016, meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Durakis. All present were in favor of the motion. Motion approved.

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Correspondence

Resolution for Application #1479, 32 Chestnut Street, Frank DeCarlo.

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Subdivision Committee

Councilwoman Tsigounis noted that revised plans for Application #1481, 142 Heather Hill Road, were received for the Public Hearing tonight.

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Report from the Borough Engineer's Office

Mr. Azzolina noted that Application #1483, 5 Emerson Street, James Goett/Scuta Construction One LLC has been deemed incomplete. He prepared a memo dated June 24, 2016, which sets forth the required plan revisions. The primary issue with that project is that the plan as presented has the FAR calculated incorrectly based on the width of the lot which was understated. It actually fans out so you use the larger width of the lot at the front of the house and the back of the house and take the average and as the lots get larger the FAR percentage goes down so they have to adjust the size of the dwelling accordingly. He understands that that is in progress.

Mr. Azzolina stated that he received revised plans for 39 Chestnut Street, Application #1479. The plan has been revised in accordance with the comments in his report to the Board dated June 13, 2016. He recommends that the plans be signed at this time. Two plans were signed, with an approval memo. One copy to the Building Department, one to the file.

Mr. Azzolina has prepared a report for tonight's Public Hearing for 142 Heather Hill Road, Application #1481.

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Old Business

None.

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Mr. Ulshoefer made a motion to approve the resolution for Application #1479, 39 Chestnut Street, seconded by Mr. Durakis. On Roll Call: Mayor Romeo, Councilwoman Tsigounis, Mr. Morgan, Ms. Bauer, Mr. Moss, Mr. Ulshoefer, Mr. Durakis, and Mr. Mandelbaum all voted yes. Mr. Calder was absent. Motion approved. The original resolution shall become a permanent part of these minutes.

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Public Hearing – Application #1471 – 142 Heather Hill Road

Public Hearing for Application #1471, 142 Heather Hill Road, Lumaj Builders. Mr. Mark Ruffolo, 145 N. Franklin Turnpike, Ramsey, was present to represent Lumaj Builders. Mr. Raul Maderos, the architect, and Mr. Sean McCullen, from the engineering company, were also present. Lumaj Builders have submitted site plan application and preliminary architectural drawings related to the premises at 142 Heather Hill Road. The proposed construction is a two-story, 2,567 square foot, single-family home with a two-car garage with a front entrance. The site plan approval requires variances as follows: minimal lot area, minimal lot frontage, combined side-yard, maximum building coverage and maximum impervious coverage. The existing home that is on the lot right now is not conforming to all five of these variances that they are requesting. It is presently non-conforming as it exists right now.

As to the minimal lot area, it requires 10,000 square feet and it is 7,500 square feet. It is a 75 x 100-foot lot. The lot frontage required is 100 feet and they have 75 feet. That is a pre-existing non-conformity. The combined side yards required is 35 feet and existing is 21.9 and they are proposing a significant improvement to that, albeit not 35 feet, of 31.7 feet. The maximum building coverage permitted is 20%, existing is 21.4% and they are proposing 23.3%, and as was mentioned earlier, they are only seeking 1.25% increase in that. The final variance is the maximum impervious coverage where permitted is 32.4%, existing is 36.3 and they are proposing 35.1%. As to the maximum building coverage, he has the architect here today to testify.

Mr. Raul Maderos, 24 West Railroad Avenue, Tenafly, NJ, was sworn in by Mr. Schuster. He has appeared before this Board many times. He is a licensed architect in the State of New Jersey and his license is currently in good standing. His license number is 18571. He was accepted as an expert in architecture for tonight's hearing. Mr. Maderos noted that this is an undersized lot. Where 100 feet is required, they only have 75 feet and that is what starts them off at a bit of a disadvantage. The house that is there right now was built originally in about 1950. It currently has a one-car attached garage. The house and property currently have seven variances that exist today. The two first ones have to do with the lot shape and size. They are supposed to have 10,000 square feet and they have 7,500 square feet and the width is also undersized. Those are the first two variances and they won't change. The lot is what it is.

Mr. Maderos noted that the current house on the left side is 12.5 feet, and on the right side it is 9.4 feet and the combined ends up being 21.9 currently. The current building coverage is 1,607 square feet. That is the footprint and that is 21.4% where 20% is required in this R-10 zone. Currently the impervious coverage is 2,720 square feet, which amounts to 36.3%, where 32.4% is required for this particular lot on Cresskill sliding scale. What they are proposing to do on this property is demolish the current house and build a new single-family residence that will be 43 feet wide compared to the current house which is 53 feet wide, so approximately 10 feet narrower. Although what they are proposing still exceeds the width in terms of the combined side-yard requirement, they are improving the current conditions by 10 feet and

additionally, they now conform to both of the individual side yards. Where 15 feet is required for each individual side yard, they exceed that requirement, meaning that they are better than code.

What they are proposing on the first floor is fairly typical these days with a single-family residence, with an entry foyer, a living room, a dining room behind, and at the back of the house a family room open to the kitchen and between the kitchen and the two-car attached garage is a mudroom. At the rear of the property they are proposing to have a 14-foot square paved patio or stone or concrete surface patio, with a few steps down from the family room so the first floor has a connection to the rear yard. Additionally, they have steps coming out of the cellar out to the backyard so that the playroom downstairs has a connection to the rear yard.

On the second floor, it is also a very typical layout where they have a total of four bedrooms and a laundry room being proposed. Regarding the combined side-yard variance they are seeking, Mr. Maderos wanted to point out that if they were to conform to that combined side yard with the 75-foot-wide lot, the house would have to be less than 40 feet wide, which would ultimately mean that with the two-car garage, which is slightly over 20 feet, the remainder would mostly be foyer and there wouldn't be room left over alongside of that to have a living room. From the street you would see mostly garage and some entry foyer but nothing else and it would look rather narrow in the context of the neighborhood. All of the houses to the immediate surrounding area of this house have not been developed recently but they are all wider because of that. The house that exists now is 53 feet wide. All of the neighbors are pretty wide. He thinks building a brand new house that would be unusually narrower in the neighborhood would be odd in context here. Regarding the building coverage variance that they are seeking, it is currently a slight non-conformity of 1.4% over code, but they are requesting a little bit more. They are requesting 2% more than that and, additionally, based on today's expected amenities of the modern house these days and in this part of town, he thinks what they prepared packages everything rather neatly into that current footprint.

In terms of the impervious coverage, they are improving the current existing non-conformance of impervious coverage on the lot. To speak to the impervious surfaces that they are proposing, starting from the front, they have a 20-foot-wide driveway. In his experiences, he has testified previously here that anything narrower than 20 feet he has received negative comments from past clients who have had narrower driveways than that, so he thinks a 20-foot-wide driveway is appropriate. Additionally, the house is positioned so it is as close to the front setback as possible, so they are minimizing the area of the overall driveway in that sense. The mechanical units on the right side are as tight or as small as they can be. The areaway is a little larger because it just so happens that the way that the cellar is laid out, they have the bedroom adjacent to the bathroom and rather than just having the areaway service the egress window of the bedroom, since the bathroom is right next door, they figured to run the areaway straight along the side so it can also serve to provide some natural light into the bathroom downstairs as well. At the rear, again, he thinks that the 14 x 14 patio is rather modest for a house of this scale or a lot of this size. The steps that they are proposing down to the cellar are immediately adjacent to the patio. The entire composition back there is rather tight in that sense.

Mr. Maderos stated that they are currently seeking three variances which relate to the proposed house. The other two relate to the existing non-conformances of the current lot, where five variances currently exist on this lot. The other two are the individual side yards of the current house. This house is designed to conform to the FAR requirements in Cresskill for this property. They are just at 2,567 square feet. He thinks that everything has been designed rather tight and concise here. He just wanted to mention that about two or three years ago, he worked with Lumaj Builders on a property four doors to the south. That lot was obviously a little bit bigger because the house there, in terms of FAR, was over 2,800 square feet. He thinks a house like this wouldn't be completely new to this part of the neighborhood. There is a house down the street that was new construction built two to three years ago and was 300 square feet larger than this one. Although they are starting with a smaller foot print, the grand scheme and the area he doesn't think this is out of place. He understands that every application here is judged by its own merit, and independent of its neighbors that way, but he is just trying to put it in the overall context.

Mr. Maderos noted that he received a letter from Mr. Azzolina's office with some comments that related to the architecture and he has six updated copies of the plan. The comments were typographical number errors on the chart and adding a handrail around the areaway for safety and also fixing other errors. He handed out the six copies that he had.

Mr. Morgan opened the meeting to the public. Ms. Laura Watson, 337 Brookside Avenue, wished to be heard and was sworn in by Mr. Schuster. Ms. Watson noted that one of the concerns that she had was that most of the houses on her block are ranch houses, so this is one of the few that is going to be two stories. They understand that it is an older neighborhood and a lot of the houses are being redesigned and people are looking for larger homes, but a big concern they have is the blending in with the community. They would like it very much that it appears to be more in the same sync with the other houses and not make it look like a castle. They understand that they don't have much say in this, but that is one of the concerns in neighborhood is that it blends.

Mr. Maderos agreed that most of the neighbors are single-story ranches. Ms. Watson stated that the houses don't have two garages and some don't even have a garage. They have noticed that some houses that have been built look extremely awkward and they don't look like they fit. Mr. Maderos said that the best gauge of knowing what the house was going to look like is the house at 128 Heather Hill, which is the house he referred to before. It is the same team, same builder and same architect on that one. Typically, the houses he does with this builder are what is being called a transitional style. It is a mixture of traditional elements because they understand that the majority of the public thinks of the house in a certain way, a certain style and tries to hold you to that common impression of what a house should be, but at the same time they are introducing, mostly inside, more modern elements. These days, a two-car garage is expected in this part of town if it is going to be new construction. The house down the street will give you a good sense of what this one will ultimately look like except that house is 300 square feet larger than what this one is.

Mr. Morgan closed the meeting to the public.

Mayor Romeo explained to Ms. Watson that the ranch she lived in is now going to change. Ms. Watson stated that they are aware of that and actually they look forward to that because you need to be modernizing. The concern she had is that there still are houses in that neighborhood which are very awkward looking and the concern is that there are people in that neighborhood who are not going to be moving out, they want to stay there, but they want to make it feel like it is still their home.

Mayor Romeo noted that the houses on Heather Hill are just a little bit higher than the houses on Brookside. What are they doing in the back for privacy for the people on Brookside as far as bushes or something? Mr. Lumaj noted that there is some slope but he will take care of it.

Mr. Morgan asked if they talked to the engineer about his report. Mr. Maderos noted that the plans he just passed out addressed the comments from the engineer. He also noted that there is a house on the corner across the street from them that is very large. Mayor Romeo stated that that house is in Demarest. Mr. Maderos noted that their house is nowhere that big. Ms. Watson asked about drainage and if there were any concerns with that because of the slight hill. Mr. Morgan stated that they are putting in a seepage pit to take care of that.

Mr. Azzolina recommended that the applicant's engineer testify regarding the proposed drainage improvements to address the resident's concern. Mr. Sean McClellan, 84 Gettysburg Way, Lincoln Park, NJ, was sworn in by Mr. Schuster. He is a licensed engineer in the State of New Jersey. He has testified before Boards in Wyckoff, Tenafly, Franklin Lakes, Ridgewood, Saddle River and others, but has not testified in Cresskill. His license is presently in good standing and was accepted as an expert engineer. Mr. McClellan noted that the impervious coverage as it currently exists now is greater than what they are proposing. Right now all that water from the roof, patio and driveway all just runs off the property. Some of it to the right and left, but the majority from the front and back. What they are proposing is they are going to store the entire house into seepage pits and they will also be storing the water from window wells in what is called a storm pit chamber and because this property is sloped from front to back, what they

are proposing to do is put two lawn inlets in the rear of the property in front of the wall to catch any extra water and everything will be stored in the two 1,000-gallon seepage pits and percolate into the ground. Right now, the water that is hitting the roof is going down the drains and sheet-flowing down the property. That won't happen anymore.

Ms. Bauer asked, in calculating the back setback, when you measure, do the steps count. Mr. Azzolina stated that you measure to the foundation, or if there were an overhang, you would measure to the overhang.

Mr. Schuster asked if Mr. Lumaj is the contract purchaser or the owner in fee. Mr. Ruffolo stated that he is the owner in fee.

Mrs. Schultz made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Moss. On Roll Call: Mayor Romeo, Councilwoman Tsigounis, Mr. Morgan, Ms. Bauer, Mr. Moss, Mrs. Schultz, Mr. Ulshoefer, Mr. Durakis, and Mr. Mandelbaum all voted yes. Motion approved.

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New Business

None.

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Other Business

None.

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Mr. Morgan opened the meeting to the public. No public wished to be heard.

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Motion was made by Mr. Moss to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 PM, seconded by Mr. Durakis. All present were in favor. Motion approved.

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The next four regular Planning Board meetings are scheduled for July 12, July 26, August 9, and August 23, 2016, at 7:30 PM in the Borough Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn M. Petillo
Recording Secretary