

MEDFORD TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MEETING

April 26, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

Public Safety Building-91 Union Street

Chairman Hartwig called the Planning Board Meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and read the Statement of Conformance with the Open Public Meetings Act and the Municipal Land Use Law.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL:

Present: Bielec, Czekay, Hartwig, Juliano, Kornick, Perks, Watson
Absent: Braatz, Ross, Devlin, Anepete
Professional Staff: Attorney Anthony Drollas, Engineer Christopher Noll, Planner Scott Taylor, Secretary Kimberly Moore, Recording Secretary Beth Portocalis

MINUTES:

March 22, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes – Mr. Perks made a motion to adopt the Regular Meeting minutes. Vice Chairman Juliano seconded the motion. Ms. Bielec, Ms. Kornick, Councilman Czekay and Mayor Watson abstained. A voice vote of the other Board members in favor of adoption was unanimous.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REPORTS: Chairman Hartwig reported that insufficient escrow balances over 6 months will continue to be listed on the monthly agenda. He acknowledged the five escrow balances might never be collected, which is unfair to the professionals who are not compensated for services rendered. He thanked Ms. Moore for her continued efforts to collect the arrears.

MEMORIALIZATIONS: None

APPLICATIONS/OFFICIAL ACTIONS:

Chabad in Medford, 1705/8, 74 S. Main St, ZVE-1135

Applicant is seeking major site plan approval to construct an addition to the existing synagogue; and parking variance relief and a design waiver for the existing driveway. **Zone: HVC**

SWORN: Daryl Kipness, Esq.
Daniel Nichols, Architect-Regan Design Group
Brian Peterman, Engineer-Peterman Maxcy Associates
Rabbi Yitzchok Kahan, Owner & Director

Mr. Kipness' testimony began with a review of the requested submission waivers. A total of twenty-four (24) waivers were requested as delineated in Mr. Noll's April 17, 2023 review letter. Mr. Noll explained being this property is a place of worship, and thus a Conditional Use, a Major Site Plan application is required. If the use had been permitted, a Minor Site Plan would have been required for the proposed expansion. Mr. Noll recommended approval of the submission waivers due to the application classification.

Vice Chairman Juliano made a motion to approve the submission waiver requests. Ms. Kornick seconded.

Recorded Vote:

Ayes:	Bielec, Czekay, Hartwig, Juliano, Kornick, Perks, Watson
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Motion carried:	7 - 0 - 0

Mr. Peterman was next to testify. He explained that the proposed improvements are less than 1,000 square feet in total, including a 372 square foot addition, a 627 square foot three-season room, and an 810 square foot deck. These improvements are proposed partially where an existing deck is located. The lot totals 35,552 square feet. As Mr. Noll explained, the application would be seeking a minor site plan except for the conditional use as a religious center/place of worship. No bulk variances are required. The front yard setback is pre-existing, non-conforming.

Mr. Peterman next detailed the parking. Seventeen parking spaces are required to be provided based upon a calculation of one parking space for every three seats. A total of twenty-six (26) spaces are provided. There are six parking spaces on this parcel, which will likely be reduced to five when a handicapped parking space is installed. There are six street parking spaces and fifteen spaces available via a mutual agreement with the neighboring property (Lot 9) to share parking spaces (and a joint driveway).

Operationally, Mr. Peterman explained the proposed improvements are to enhance the operations and provide better flow inside of the worship center. There has not been an incremental increase in participation, but rather the experience of moving worship activities outdoors during the COVID pandemic prompted the need for a larger deck and interior modifications to provide easier access for the handicapped.

Discussion ensued after Chairman Hartwig questioned what would happen if the parking agreement with the adjoining property were vacated. Mr. Peterman agreed to accept a condition that the applicant would come back to the Planning Board to amend any site plan approvals if that were to occur.

Mr. Peterman went on to discuss the lighting in the rear yard area that is not developed. Security lighting in the rear yard that is eight (8) feet in height was administratively approved as it meets the Ordinance requirements. Rabbi Kahan explained that a federal grant was secured to install the lighting for added security. Mr. Taylor's review letter contained some comments about the lighting and the possibility for the lights to be on a timer and turned off at midnight, but being that there have been no complaints from adjoining property owners about the lighting, no further Board comments were made.

Mr. Nichols was next to testify. He detailed the proposed addition at the rear of the former dwelling. A 3-season porch is also proposed for the side of the building, which includes a new handicapped entrance that provides better access to the service and activity areas. These additions, plus the new deck area, will expand the choices of uses for the Chabad. He continued that the historic character of the building has been maintained, and none of the three proposed improvements will be visible from Main Street. Lastly, he confirmed that no changes to the existing signage are proposed.

Mr. Nichols added that the driveway is shared with the owners of adjoining Lot 9. He acknowledged that it is undersized, but no changes are proposed. He added that there have been no conflicts in the shared driveway to date.

Rabbi Kahan was the next to testify. He has led the Chabad at this property since 2013. He acknowledged that his congregation is aging, and because of the COVID pandemic, he has lost members while growth in new members is slow across all faiths. He stated that the proposed additions are not changing the functionality of the building, and confirmed there is no conflict with the driveway and the neighboring property owner.

Mr. Taylor addressed the contents in his February 9, 2023 review letter. He opined that the applicant has met the conditional use requirements, and the property is appropriate as a place of worship. He also confirmed that the Historic Village Commercial (HVC) Zone District permits off premises parking to count towards parking requirements.

Mr. Noll addressed comments in his April 17, 2023 review letter, specifically in regards to any added parking lot lighting that may be added should require a night light test as a conditional of approval. He also noted a design waiver is required for the driveway width, and recommended approval.

Mr. Peterman confirmed the applicant has no objections to Mr. Noll's or Mr. Taylor's comments and will comply with their recommendations.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No one was present from the public.

Mayor Watson made a motion to close the Public Portion. Vice Chairman Juliano seconded. The voice vote was unanimous in favor.

Mayor Watson made a motion to approve the application as submitted, and to grant the parking variance and design waiver for the driveway, with the condition to (1) comply with the recommendations of the Board Engineer & Planner in their review letters; and (2) return to the Board for amended final site plan approval should the parking agreement with the neighboring property be vacated. Vice Chairman Juliano second.

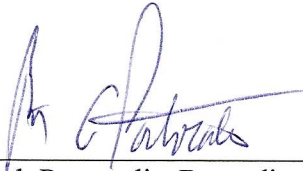
Recorded Vote:

Ayes: Bielec, Czekay, Hartwig, Juliano, Kornick, Perks, Watson
Nays: None
Abstentions: None
Motion carried: 7 - 0 - 0

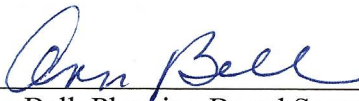
GENERAL PUBLIC: No one was present from the public.
Mayor Watson made a motion to close the Public Portion. Vice Chairman Juliano seconded. The voice vote was unanimous in favor.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilman Czekay made a motion to adjourn the April 26, 2023 Planning Board Meeting at 7:47 pm. Mayor Watson seconded. A unanimous voice vote in favor carried the motion.



Beth Portocalis, Recording Secretary



Ann Bell, Planning Board Secretary