

LUZERNE COUNTY ZONING HEARING BOARD MINUTES

April 5, 2022

ATTENDANCE

Present were Leon Schuster, Chairman, Bill Harris and Dave Williams, members, Michael Butera, Solicitor, Angela Sallemi, Standing Commissioner, Kathy Wood, Recording Secretary and Interested Parties.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Harris and carried, to approve the minutes of March 8, 2022.

Mr. Schuster asked if the cases were properly advertised and posted, and if the contiguous property owners had been notified. Mrs. Wood answered that they were.

Case #1

John Romanowski, Safety Director, IBEW Local 1319 OSHE, 225 Division St., Kingston, PA, request a Height Variance – required 40 ft., requested 54 ft. to construct a new indoor training facility at that address, Pringle Borough, located in a (LI) Light Industrial District.

John Romanowski, Attorney John Lisman and Jude Cooney, P.E., A+E Group, Inc. was present.

Attorney Lisman stated that the IBEW Local 1319 would like to build a new training center on their property. He stated they need a height of 54 ft. to be able to train on the utility poles that will be installed inside the building.

John Romanowski, Safety Director for the IBEW Local 1319, stated he is responsible for all the training at the facility. He stated that because of weather there are many times when the training can't be done outside. Mr. Romanowski stated that the people who climb the poles need certification every two years. He also stated that pole top rescue needs certification every year.

Mr. Romanowski stated that there are 900 to 1,200 members in their local.

Michael Berish, Pringle Borough Council President stated the Borough does not oppose this project and that they are happy that the IBEW Local 1319 is in town.

No objectors were present.

A motion was made by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Harris and unanimously carried, to approve a Height Variance of 54 ft., to construct a new indoor training facility in a (LI) Light Industrial District in Pringle Borough.

Case #2

Patrick Hogan, 115 Blueberry Hill Road, Shavertown, PA, request a Use Variance to re-open a former commercial tavern and Size of Sign (3 ft. x 3 ft. hanging sign) at 35 Orchard St., Newport Township, located in a (R-2) Two-Family Residence District.

Patrick Hogan was present along with Attorney Thomas Hogan.

Attorney Hogan stated that Patrick Hogan has owned the property since 2013 and had operated the business until 2018 when he closed and put his liquor license in safe-keeping with the PA Liquor Control.

Attorney Hogan stated that Patrick Hogan would like to re-open the business and he will have a bar manager overseeing the operations of the business.

Attorney Hogan stated there is seating for 40 and 18 plus parking spaces on an existing adjoining lot.

Attorney Hogan also stated that they would like to replace the hanging sign.

Thomas Kashatus, 55 Newport St., Glen Lyon, brought to the Boards attention that address of the tavern property is 34 Orchard St. not 35 Orchard. This was noted by the Board.

Mr. Kashatus also stated he supports the re-opening of the tavern and wished Mr. Hogan success with the business.

A motion was made by Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Williams and unanimously carried, to approve the request for a Use Variance to re-open a former commercial tavern and a Sign Variance (3 ft. x 3 ft. hanging sign) at 34 Orchard St., Newport Township, located in a (R-2) Two-Family Residence District.

Case #3

Alexander McNitt, McNitt/MacNaughtan/HPM, 118 S. Market St., Nanticoke, PA request Use Variance for Phase 1: Convert a former school into (29) Luxury Lofts & Apartment units and a Special Exception for Phase 2: Construction of 100 storage units with a proposed small office space/structure in Newport Township, located in a (GB) General Business District.

Alexander McNitt and Attorney Joe Terrana was present.

Attorney Terrana stated Mr. McNitt has been buying and renovating homes in the area for around 10 years.

Attorney Terrana stated that Mr. McNitt has owned the Pulaski School since 2015. He stated Mr. McNitt would like to convert the school into (29) twenty-nine luxury loft and apartment units and there would be ample parking for all tenants. Attorney Terrana stated that at a later date, Mr. McNitt would like to construct (100) one-hundred storage units with a small office space on the property.

Attorney Terrana stated the property is located in a (GB) General Business District.

Chairman Schuster asked what the square footage of the building is.

Mr. McNitt stated there would be space added to about 50,000 sq. ft. The living space will be around 30,000 sq. ft.

Mr. McNitt stated the apartment units will range from 445 sq. ft. (lofts) to 1,600 sq. ft.

Mr. McNitt stated there would be a part time manager at the site and that he has a full time office in Nanticoke.

Mr. McNitt also stated that he has around the clock maintenance contracts for his properties and he will have the same for this property.

Mr. McNitt stated the property would be gated for tenant parking and there is room for around 50 vehicles.

Mr. McNitt stated there is an existing easement in the rear of the property that will be the entrance to the apartments.

Mary Kennedy, 13 S. Market St., adjoining property owner stated she is against this project. She stated her privacy would be invaded from people looking out their apartment windows looking directly into her yard and house.

Ms. Kennedy also stated the access road is used for access for (3) houses and the school and she feels Mr. McNitt cannot block or gate the road.

Ms. Kennedy stated if the project is approved, she would be dealing with dirt, construction noise and increased traffic.

Ms. Kennedy stated that with all the new development taking place in Newport Township there would be many transients coming into the area. She feels when these businesses close and leave the area who will rent these apartments.

Joe Hillan, Newport Township Manager stated that the access alleyway is a paper street and not owned by the township. He stated the township does take care of the alleyway as a curiosity to the three houses that use it.

Attorney Terrana stated that Mr. McNitt does not intend to block the alleyway.

Eric Kennedy stated the alleyway is too narrow to handle an influx of cars from the proposed apartment units.

Carman Whitmire, a renter at 21 S. Chestnut St. stated there is no parking in front of the three (3) houses on Market Street and that is why they use the alleyway for their access. He stated the neighborhood could not handle extra traffic.

Chairman Schuster told McNitt that if he wishes to continue to receive approval for the project he will need to present a clearer and precise site plan.

Joe Hillan, Newport Township Manager, stated that there was never any traffic problems when the school was in operation.

Attorney Terrana addressed the request to construct 100 storage units with a proposed small office space. He stated a Special Exception request in a (GB) General Business District allows the units and this use would be a least invasive use in that zoning district. He also stated that ingress and egress will be the same entrance as the apartment units.

The Board entered into Executive Session at 8:06 P.M. and resumed at 8:12 P.M.

A motion was made by Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Williams, and unanimously carried to DENY WITHOUT PREJUDICE a Use Variance for Phase 1: Convert a former school into (29) Luxury Lofts & Apartments units and a Special Exception for the construction of 100 storage units with a proposed small office space/structure in a (GB) General District in Newport Township.

Board member Bill Harris stated that the Board was not satisfied with the site plan for the Use Variance for Phase 1 and no presentation was given on Section 806 Variances - regarding the 5 criteria that would justify making a decision.

A site plan for the Special Exception and a presentation regarding the criteria in Section 805 - Special Exceptions will also be needed.

ADJOURNMENT.

A motion was made by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Williams and carried to adjourn the meeting.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Kathy Wood

**KATHY WOOD, RECORDING SECRETARY
LUZERNE COUNTY ZONING HEARING BOARD**