

**WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP  
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEETING  
November 22, 2022 – 7:30 PM**

The West Amwell Township Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Rob Fulper.

The following statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act as listed on the meeting agenda was read into the record by Chairman Fulper: This meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. This meeting was included in a list of meetings transmitted to the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Times of Trenton on 2/10/22. Notice has been posted on the bulletin board at Town Hall and has remained continuously posted as to required notices under the Statute. A copy of this notice is available to the public and is on file in the office of the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Township Clerk.

Chairman Fulper led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**Attendance – Roll Call**

**Present:** John Ashton  
Mark Bowles  
John Cronic  
Brian Fitting  
Rob Fulper  
Joe Romano  
Attorney Kevin Van Hise  
Engineer Tom Decker  
Planner Joanna Slagle

**Absent:** Marvin “Tuck” Hartpence

**Presentation of Minutes**

A motion by Mark Bowles, seconded by John Ashton to approve the Board’s 10/25/22 minutes with no revisions noted was unanimously approved by voice vote.

**Resolutions of Approval**

It was noted for the record that there were no resolutions listed on the agenda for approval.

**Applications**

**Public Hearing (*Continued from the 10/25/22 Meeting*): 1872 River Road, LLC (*The Quarry House*): 1872 River Road – Block 26 Lot 17: Conditional Use Variance Approval and Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan Approval to Construct a Hotel and Restaurant with Associated Amenities**

Present for the public hearing was Attorney Guliet Hirsch, Engineer Ted Bayer, Traffic Engineer Ainoliis Tootsov and property owners Dr. Michael Ehrenreich and Rebecca Gelman who is also the Architect.

Chairman Fulper noted that Mr. Fitting was present at the meeting. It was noted that if the hearing is continued, Mr. Fitting will listen to the October meeting recording in order to be eligible to vote on the application. Attorney Hirsch stated she will provide the transcripts from the October meeting.

West Amwell Township Zoning Board Meeting Minutes – 11/22/22

Engineer Ted Bayer of Bayer-Risse Engineering came forward and continued his testimony on Phase II of the proposed project. He presented **Exhibit A-5**: An email between him and Fire Chief Ent. Engineer Bayer noted that all of Chief Ent's concerns regarding the project have been addressed.

Attorney Hirsch asked how special events will be dealt with on the property. Engineer Bayer explained that they are considering valet parking because Chief Ent will not allow on-site parking at the north end of the property. He also commented that the amount of people who can attend any special event is self-limiting due to the size of the existing septic system. He reiterated that he believes about 39 guests would need to be park off-site. Mr. Cronce expressed concern over any off-site parking. Chairman Fulper remarked they would need approval by the off-site property owner as well as from the Township Police Department. Attorney Hirsch stated she would like to maintain the same condition contained in the 2016 resolution of approval regarding the parking.

Mr. Cronce again expressed concern over putting the parking burden on other property owners and their neighbors. He also wanted to know where the applicant intended to secure such potential off-site parking.

Engineer Decker asked if the use of limos or shuttle buses would displace other parking on the subject site. Engineer Bayer indicated limos and buses would not remain parked on site. He said they would pick up, drop off and leave the property.

Engineer Bayer explained Phase II of the project is the 17 seat restaurant which entails the proposed widening of Old River Road to 24 feet and the installation of additional stormwater features. Mr. Ashton expressed concern with the improvements to Old River Road being part of Phase II of the project because of the simple fact that events could be occurring on site during Phase I.

Engineer Decker commented that he believes all access points for the property should be 24 feet wide since this is a commercial business. He remarked that if the restaurant never comes to fruition then Old River Road theoretically would never get widened, which is problematic.

Engineer Bayer outlined the following requested variances:

Minimum lot area of 7 acres where 10 acres is required

Front yard setback of 50.3 ft. from Route 29 where 100 ft. is required

Side yard setback of 23.6 ft. where 100 ft. is required

Buildable area of .93 acres where 1 acre is required

Engineer Bayer commented that the improvements will be in existing structures so they are minimizing lot disturbance. He also noted that they cannot disturb any area of the property with steep slopes over 25%.

Engineer Bayer provided the following details on other features of the project:

1. There will be 2 monument signs: 1 in the Northwest corner of the property and 1 on the South side of the property by Old River Road. He commented that one of the signs is within the front yard setback due to existing land constraints.
2. The 2 proposed generators adjacent to the emergency driveway by Old River Road need to be there in order for service technicians to be able to access them. Engineer Bayer stated sound enclosures will be installed to mitigate noise.

West Amwell Township Zoning Board Meeting Minutes – 11/22/22

3. The existing swimming pool will be abandoned and filled in.
4. Engineer Bayer explained they are seeking a design waiver from the lighting intensity noting the lights produce 0.9 footcandles where 0.5 footcandles are allowed. He stated they intend to use dimmer switches to meet the 0.5 footcandle requirement.
5. Engineer Bayer requested an exemption from the street tree requirement because he stated they are proposing to plant several shade trees instead.
6. The loading dock will be 12' x 40' and does not meet the 11' x 60' requirement because of the necessary setback from Old River Road.

Chairman Fulper asked about the height of the accessory structure. It was noted that the carriage barn is 25 feet high where 15 feet is allowed. Attorney Van Hise explained the height, as well as the floor area of the carriage barn, are existing conditions.

Chairman Fulper opened the floor to public comment.

Melissa Masset of 21 Old River Road came forward and expressed concern with the road improvements being part of Phase II and commented that the road is not wide enough to accommodate construction vehicles and heavy machinery coming to the site.

Architect Rebecca Gelman came forward and provided her credentials to the Board. She was accepted as an expert to provide testimony on this application.

Architect Gelman presented **Exhibit A-6**: Photos of existing structures on the property.

The Board took a break from 8:41 PM – 8:50 PM.

Upon returning from break, Attorney Hirsch stated the applicants have agreed to make the improvements to Old River Road part of Phase I of their project.

Architect Gelman explained each of the photos in Exhibit A-6. She noted the stairs on the outside of the carriage barn are needed for the future “hotel use” of the property.

Architect Gelman presented **Exhibit A-7**: Sheet 1.2-B, First Floor Plan Phase I & II. She noted that the sign on the carriage barn requires a height variance because even though it meets the 21 sq. ft. of permitted signage, it will be 3 ft. tall.

Architect Gelman then noted that Sheet A-1.7 in Exhibit A-6 has been superseded by A-1.7 in what is now **Exhibit A-8**: Signage details.

West Amwell Township Zoning Board Meeting Minutes – 11/22/22

Architect Gelman presented **Exhibit A-9**: Photos she took of lighting conditions she *doesn't* want at the Quarry House site. She explained the lantern lights selected for the carriage barn are “soft” and won’t impose on any residential properties. She also remarked that the signage on the property will be illuminated by “gooseneck” lights.

Engineer Decker asked who will have access to the meeting room depicted in the architectural. Ms. Gelman said the meeting room would be for use by hotel guests.

Chairman Fulper opened the floor to public comment.

James Cally of 201 Jackson Street came forward and asked Ms. Gelman to define soft lighting. She ultimately withdrew the use of the word “soft,” because LED lights will be used at the site.

Traffic Engineer Ainoliis Tootsov came forward and gave her credentials to the Board. She was accepted as an expert to provide testimony on this application.

Engineer Tootsov referred to the Traffic Impact & Analysis Study and explained she used the Route 29 volume counts from 2013 because they were higher than the 2019 and 2022 counts. She noted that based on a 10 room hotel occupancy at peak hours on a Sunday, there would be 4 vehicles entering the site and 3 exiting the site.

Engineer Decker asked if there had been a review of on-site vehicular movements. Engineer Bayer stated there are no concerns with vehicles being able to maneuver on the property. Ms. Tootsov added that there were no concerns with potential limos or shuttle buses maneuvering on the site either.

Engineer Decker asked about pedestrian safety on the pathway located on the property. Engineer Tootsov expressed confidence that the property was flat with good site lines and did not have any concern over pedestrian safety because she said, this is not a high turnover parking lot. She believes the site will function like a BnB with limited traffic.

Mr. Romano asked about the pathway to D&R across Route 29, specifically how they intended to prevent pedestrians from crossing. Engineer Tootsov commented that would be an issue for NJDOT to review and remarked that bicycles are currently being rented from the subject property so theoretically she believed people are crossing somewhere.

Engineer Decker asked if NJDOT provided a permit back in 2016. Engineer Bayer said yes.

Mr. Romano asked about the garbage trucks accessing the site and backing out onto Old River Road. Engineer Bayer noted they would provide a radius depiction detailing how trucks would be able to pull in and back out. Mr. Romano remarked that the road improvements must extend beyond the driveway in order for trucks to maneuver safely. Engineer Decker asked that the plans be revised to show the turning radius details. Engineer Bayer suggested that trucks could also back into the site and then drive straight out.

It was noted for the record that the proposed improvements to Old River Road stop at the culvert pipe and inlet per Engineer Bayer.

## West Amwell Township Zoning Board Meeting Minutes – 11/22/22

Mr. Ashton asked how traffic would be impacted when the site was fully up and running. Engineer Tootsov stated she could not make a guess on such details.

Chairman Fulper opened the floor to public comment.

James Cally of 201 Jackson Street came forward and asked how a traffic analysis could be done if special events were not taken into account. Engineer Tootsov explained that the property is limited to a total of 79 guests at any given time and she said traffic is specific to the type of transportation mode chosen for the event. Engineer Bayer commented that parking is what limits the size of any special event as well as the number of trips made to the site. Mr. Cally asked how the number of trips factors in with the traffic. No specific details were given but Dr. Ehrenreich remarked that there may be catering trucks accessing the site too.

Attorney Van Hise swore in Dr. Ehrenreich.

Dr. Ehrenreich went on to explain that caterers may utilize the outside kitchen as well. Chairman Fulper asked how many special events are anticipated. Dr. Ehrenreich indicated that he envisions special events to be mostly on the weekends, likely weddings, every weekend in the Fall probably 6 months out of the year.

Due to the late hour, Chairman Fulper suggested ending the meeting. Attorney Hirsch stated their Planner is not available for the Board's 12/27/22 meeting. She granted the Board an extension to continue the public hearing to their 1/24/23 meeting at 7:30 PM. Attorney Van Hise clarified that no further public notice will be required.

### **Approval of Vouchers**

It was noted for the record that there were no vouchers listed on the agenda for approval.

### **Comments from the Board Members**

It was noted for the record that no comments were made by any of the Board Members.

### **Open to the Public**

It was noted for the record that all members of the public had left the meeting at this time.

### **Adjournment**

A motion by John Crounce, seconded by John Ashton to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 PM.

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Maria Andrews, Zoning Board Secretary