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RICHLAND TOWNSHIP
ZONING HEARING BOARD

----- X
Case No. :
#3-09 :
----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
ZONING HEARING BOARD MEETING

JUNE 2009
7:00 p.m.

Before: MARGO JOCHIMS, Chairperson
BETSY KANE, Vice Chairperson
C. DONALD GATES, Secretary

Date: June 16, 2009

Place: Richland Township
Municipal Building
4019 Dickey Road
Gibsonia, Pennsylvania 15044

By: Karen L. Cross
Court Reporter - Notary Public

ALSO PRESENT:
JEFFREY WALZER
CHRISTOPHER OPALINSKI

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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MS. JOCHIMS: We're going to call the June 16th, 2009, meeting to order. If anyone intends to give testimony tonight would you please stand and raise your right hand.

ALL PROSPECTIVE WITNESSES,
having been first duly sworn,
were examined and testified as follows:

MS. JOCHIMS: We'll call Hearing No. 3-09, Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church, if you're ready to present.

MR. FINNEY: My name is John Finney. I'm a member of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church. We have submitted for special exception for the opportunity to renovate an existing just under 6,000 square foot garage that is behind the building that we're actually using right now.

The garage is in pretty good disrepair looking at it from the outside. We've had about 80 people attending on average, 80/85 people attending each week, in the sanctuary which we are currently in, which was a three-car garage originally and office, one house.

we'd like to have the opportunity to

1 renovate this building and turn it from an eyesore into
2 something that we can use, and the idea was, the plan we
3 give you is just the block plan, increasing the sanctuary
4 to just under 2,000 square feet of that building and then
5 enlarging that and putting a nursery in. The other half of
6 it would be for a meeting/fellowship hall type of place
7 where we'd have fellowship dinners for the church members
8 and so forth.

9 Basically we would never have both things
10 being used at the same time. If the church was using the
11 church then they would use the church part of it and then
12 they would go to use the other portion of it.

13 So we have gone through all of the different
14 criteria for the code sections as Jeff has helped me go
15 through them and addressed all the issues as best we could.
16 I don't think I ever told Jeff that there's a total of 28
17 trees planted last year across the front of the property.

18 In our deal with the school we gave them
19 part of our property for a turning lane and allowed them to
20 set up their exit from their property actually to the
21 corner of our property so it can line up with the light at
22 Meridian Road.

23 We're just seeking the opportunity to be
24 able to renovate that and use the building, and the
25 existing sanctuary we'll just use for Sunday school

1 classrooms and so forth.

2 MS. KANE: I do have something to say
3 because I wanted to compliment whoever put together this
4 two-page point-by-point explanation. There are a lot of
5 people that come in here that don't know what to say. Even
6 lawyers that come in here don't lay things out as nicely as
7 you have to let us, you know, because we don't know the
8 code frontwards and backwards.

9 But you've laid out exactly what you want to
10 do and how it meets all of the requirements of the code.
11 So thank you very much for doing that.

12 MR. FINNEY: I work for a general
13 contractor. I have to follow every plan, whatever they
14 want.

15 MS. JOCHIMS: Any questions?

16 MR. GATES: As I understand, this is going
17 to be a two-phase project, that you're going to do the
18 social hall later. Is that correct?

19 MR. FINNEY: Depending on the amount of
20 money we can put together with the limited number of
21 families we have. We'd like to renovate, do the building
22 and all the outside, get all the windows replaced, so that
23 it's all feasible to use and do the sanctuary.

24 We have to do the nursery and we have to do
25 the new toilets to bring it all up to code and everything.

1 Fellowship hall maybe we can just drywall it all, leave it
2 a concrete floor until we have money to do other things
3 with it.

4 MR. GATES: You gained, from the school, the
5 right to use their parking lot?

6 MR. FINNEY: Yes.

7 MR. GATES: With that little access road?

8 MR. FINNEY: Yes, that's from behind. We
9 were hoping not to get into that just yet. But if we're
10 able to grow and fill up the sanctuary that we're going to
11 use, yeah, then we'll come back to you to put a road in and
12 parking lot and other things to make sure that everything
13 is proper.

14 MR. GATES: You're not asking for any other
15 variances tonight?

16 MR. FINNEY: I don't believe so.

17 MR. GATES: That's all I have.

18 MR. FINNEY. The building is all on one
19 grade. The most work we have to do out front is maybe put
20 a sidewalk across in front of it.

21 MS. KANE: Is it currently heated?

22 MR. FINNEY: It has gas service. It had
23 unit heaters. There are two furnaces in the one end of it
24 that we'll probably be able to salvage and use. But it's
25 basically a block building, and there's not much in there.

1 MR. GATES: Here where our file is, the
2 Pine-Richland School District did say that during a meeting
3 held on June 2 the board did approve overflow parking just
4 for our file. Could you get us a certified copy of the
5 minutes of that meeting?

6 MR. FINNEY: You want a copy of the minutes?
7 I gave the letter.

8 MR. GATES: We have a letter. But that way
9 we'll have it there's any conditions to it and the like.

10 MS. KANE: I hate to bring this up, but I'm
11 not sure they publish minutes anymore other than on-line.
12 The fact that Carolyn Boyce, the school board secretary,
13 signed this means that it did happen at a meeting. I mean,
14 she is the official board secretary.

15 MR. FINNEY: It actually went through a
16 couple meetings because the school superintendent retired.
17 We had an agreement with him, and then it went back through
18 with the new one.

19 MS. KANE: So I'm not certain that you're
20 going to get what you'd like.

21 MR. FINNEY: We'll request it.

22 MS. KANE: Do you have any questions?

23 MS. JOCHIMS: It was supposed to buffer the
24 parking areas?

25 MR. FINNEY: Well, yeah, that's one of the

1 things in your code. I gave the planning commission an
2 aerial view showing how the property in the back of it is
3 all forested and the two sides have existing trees that are
4 at least 20 feet high that are very dense. The only
5 question was the area in the front where we have just put
6 28 new trees and there's, oh, probably six big old trees in
7 front right now that are right next to the drive mostly.

8 MS. JOCHIMS: On this 33 dogwoods--

9 MR. FINNEY: That's an old plan.

10 MS. JOCHIMS: That's an old plan? Okay.

11 MR. FINNEY: I sort of marked it up a little
12 bit.

13 MS. JOCHIMS: Those are the six on it. Got
14 it. I think at the time past as long as the front has been
15 screened, right. Didn't we have the same issue come up
16 with Chatham?

17 MS. KANE: Yes.

18 MS. JOCHIMS: It didn't need to be
19 immediately in front. It just needed to be in the vantage
20 point of whatever the neighboring property there was.

21 MR. FINNEY: I don't know, Jeff, did we
22 include all those pictures that I took?

23 MR. WALZER: I think you want to-- It says
24 buffer from residential districts, beside them in the
25 school, across the street to the barns, all those houses, I

1 believe.

2 MS. KANE: I think there are homes directly
3 across.

4 MR. FINNEY: Couple little homes across the
5 street. They're actually below the street. So there's a
6 little road that comes up to the street.

7 MS. KANE: Your property rises to a plateau.

8 MR. FINNEY: Right.

9 MR. WALZER: Just one thing, on your parking
10 calculations you calculated to me 26 spaces. Am I correct?

11 MR. FINNEY: Based on the code.

12 MR. WALZER: You're saying you have 23
13 asphalt?

14 MR. FINNEY: Asphalt.

15 MR. WALZER: You showed a bunch of parking
16 spaces in the gravel.

17 MR. FINNEY: We have that entire lot. I
18 believe it's 137 feet.

19 MR. WALZER: Really the school district gave
20 it out you're not even really needing it.

21 MR. FINNEY: We don't anticipate needing it
22 for a while. If the sanctuary grows-- Probably until we
23 hold -- the architect would know exactly -- but at least
24 175 seats. So it's almost doubling what we have now. If
25 we double what we have, well, be pretty close with that

1 gravel lot to cover your 75 per square foot, I mean, even
2 more than that. Basically we're going to have more than
3 the area required.

4 MR. WALZER: So there's a good chance you'll
5 never use that school district parking anyways.

6 MR. FINNEY: It's nice to have it in your
7 back pocket to use it if you need it.

8 MS. KANE: If you had a festival there or
9 you had a particularly popular wedding, something like
10 that, I could see, you know, using it if you needed it.

11 MR. FINNEY: Yes.

12 MS. KANE: Well, I think I'd be in favor of
13 granting this special exception but perhaps with the caveat
14 that directly in front of the parking areas that face
15 Bakerstown Road, say here, where you used to have some
16 trees--

17 MR. FINNEY: Well, there's trees--

18 MS. KANE: I think there's some Xs on these
19 trees.

20 MR. FINNEY: Yes. Those aren't there, and
21 there's a bunch. Two rows coming down here.

22 MS. KANE: Here you have some flowers in
23 here, maybe some shrubs, you know, something there so that
24 whenever someone turns on their headlights, for instance,
25 it's not going to hit somebody's bedroom window. That

1 would be my suggestion, really, my only suggestion, because
2 other than that I think you meet all the intents of the
3 ordinance.

4 MR. WALZER: Do you think there might be a
5 certain number of trees they should have?

6 MS. KANE: I'm thinking more in terms of a
7 hedge instead of the trees, something that can just be
8 trimmed waist-high or whatever.

9 MR. FINNEY: Okay.

10 MS. KANE: So the driver could, they could
11 see them here, but, as I said, when the headlights come on
12 you're not running the risk of disturbing people in homes
13 across the street.

14 MR. FINNEY: Okay. That's certainly doable.

15 MS. KANE: I would need-- I'm not the type
16 of person who would mandate size because I know you can
17 start little and they all grow.

18 MR. FINNEY: Yes.

19 MS. JOCHIMS: Anything else?

20 MR. GATES: No.

21 MS. JOCHIMS: I'm assuming there's no one
22 else in the audience.

23 MS. KANE: I move we grant a special
24 exception to Grace Presbyterian Church, Grace Reformed
25 Presbyterian Church, per their application with the

1 additional caveat that they plant shrubbery to the parking
2 area to screen the parking areas from the street.

3 MR. GATES: Second that motion.

4 MS. JOCHIMS: All in favor.

5 (All said aye.)

6 MS. JOCHIMS: That's it. It's been
7 approved.

8 Anything else?

9 (All said no.)

10 MS. JOCHIMS: Motion to adjourn?

11 MR. GATES: Motion to adjourn.

12 MS. KANE: I'll second.

13 (All said aye.)

14 (Whereupon, at 7:21 p.m., the proceedings
15 adjourned.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the written proceedings and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Dated at Penn Hills Township, Pennsylvania, this 22nd day of July 2009.

Karen L. Cross
Reporter - Notary Public

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