

**TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE  
PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES  
December 4, 2013**

The Township of West Orange Planning Board held a regular meeting on December 4, 2013 at 7:30 P.M. in Council Chambers, 66 Main Street, West Orange, New Jersey.

Chairman Heller called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 P.M. It was announced that notification of this meeting was given to the Township Clerk, and posted on the Township Bulletin Board on December 6 2012, in accordance with the requirements of the "Open Public Meetings Act".

**PRESENT:** Chairman Ben Heller, Robert Bagoff, Jerome Eben, Tekeste Ghebremicael, Gerald Gurland, Jason Lester, Council President Susan McCartney, Vice Chairman Ron Weston

**ABSENT:** Joanne Carlucci, Lee Klein, William Wilkes II

**ALSO PRESENT:** Robin Miller, Board Secretary; Debbie Dillon, Audio-Digital Transcription Service

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Heller requested all persons stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Robert Bagoff, Joanne Carlucci, Jerome Eben, Tekeste Ghebremicael, Gerald Gurland, Chairman Ben Heller, Lee Klein, Jason Lester, Council President Susan McCartney, Vice Chairman Ron Weston, Williams Wilkes II.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next regular Planning Board meeting will be held on **Wednesday January 8, 2014** at 7:30 P.M. in Council Chambers.

**ADOPT MINUTES**

The minutes of the November 6, 2013 Planning Board meeting were unanimously adopted.

**APPLICATION(S)**

**PB-13-22C/County of Essex-South Mountain Recreation Complex**

Block(s): 162, 163; Lot(s): 2, 1 & 13; Zone: R-1

1 Cherry Lane

Courtesy Review Application to install two prefabricate bridges; rehabilitate reservoir pathway; install benches, trash receptacles and planters.

**EXHIBITS**

**A-1:** Preliminary Conceptual Plan of the Orange Reservoir Improvements Photo Simulation - prepared by French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated September 5, 2013;

- A-2:** Photo Enlargement of Orange Reservoir Dam Area – prepared by French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated September 5, 2013;
- A-3:** Prospective Drawing of Area Improvements – prepared by French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated September 5, 2013;
- A-4:** Conceptual drawing of close up details of bridge elements – prepared by French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated September 5, 2013;
- A-5:** Reduced sized copy of Preliminary Conceptual Plan of the Orange Reservoir Improvements – prepared by French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated September 5, 2013;
- A-6:** General Plan & Elevation Details for the Construction of Two Prefabricated Bridges (70'0" Span) – prepared by William C. Pyontek, PE, PP, French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated October 8, 2013;
- A-7:** General Plan & Elevation Details for the Construction of Two Prefabricated Bridges (84'0" Length) – prepared by William C. Pyontek, PE, PP, French & Parrello Associates, P.A., dated October 8, 2013;

## **DISCUSSION**

Mitchell W. Taraschi, Esq., Connell Foley LLP, Attorney for Applicant, appeared before the Board. Mr. Taraschi advised the Board that his partner, Mark Fleder, Esq., who usually presented the Courtesy Review Applications for the County was at a Conference. Mr. Taraschi said the Application was for improvements around the perimeter of the Orange Reservoir.

Michael J. Piga, C.L.A., R.L.A, French & Parrello Associates, P.A. Consulting Engineers was sworn in; stated his credentials; and was accepted by the Board to be an expert witness in landscape architecture. Mr. Taraschi asked Mr. Piga to describe some of the elements going in to the project including the new walkway around the reservoir, new lighting, and a rope-enclosed barrier. Referring to Exhibit A-1, (Preliminary Conceptual Plan of the Orange Reservoir Improvements Photo Simulation), Mr. Piga gave a description of the current conditions of the site. There was currently a path extending from Northfield Avenue in a southwest direction and ended at the reservoir dam. The County was proposing to take the existing path, milling it and taking it all the way down to the spillway at the end of the reservoir, at the reservoir dam itself the plan was to provide two new prefabricated bridges. Additionally, new lighting would be continued around the reservoir; the installation of new benches, trash receptacles, and new landscaping along the pathway system and the area of disturbance near the spillway and on the far west of the area.

Referring to Exhibit A-2, (Photo Enlargement of Orange Reservoir Dam Area), the main item was a new 85-foot footbridge across the spillway; there would be a new ADA compliant pathway. In order to make the pathway ADA compliant, it would be necessary to construct a retaining wall along the first 75 to 100 feet of pathway, it would then transition back to the pathway that leads back to the Zoo area. There would be another 70-foot low-key bridge; at the dam itself there would be three areas for seating. To soften up the area of the slope, there would be landscaping including irrigated planters continuously fed by the reservoir.

Referring to Exhibit A-3, (Prospective Drawing of Area Improvements), Mr. Piga said the drawing showed the seating areas, light fixtures and planters to hold grasses and perennials. The arch-shaped bridge would have stone pillars on either side and gates

with the County logo; the bridges would be ten-feet wide, strictly for pedestrian use; the bridges could possibly fit a golf cart.

Referring to Exhibit A-4, (Conceptual drawing of close up details of bridge elements), Mr. Piga said the drawing depicted the elements in greater detail; it included the (85-ft) arch bridge, the redwood planters, the elements of the low-key 70-ft bridge (that) would pick up the nautical-theme of the paddleboat amusement, and the pathway handrail details. Mr. Piga said the handrail was for delineating the pathway; it would help restrict pedestrians from straying off-path. The bridges would have lighting.

Referring to Exhibits A-6 and A-7, (General Plan & Elevation Details for the Construction of Two Prefabricated Bridges - 70'0" Span & 84'0" Length), Mr. Piga said that both pre-fabricated bridges were aluminum. The first bridge was 68-ft., 10-in., with a 10-ft. wide path; the handrails were 42-inches in height with horizontal bars. The second bridge was an overall 85-ft. bridge elevation; the elements would include cultured-stone columns, the County logo; and the circles on the arch indicated lights that would illuminate the bridge. The elements would pick up in the design of the smaller bridge. There would be actual lighting on the pathway, and gates and columns on each end. The truss would be the same as the handrails.

Mr. Piga concluded his testimony; he said there was currently a pathway around the reservoir. The plan would be an improvement of the existing conditions.

The Board asked Mr. Piga questions regarding his testimony.

Council President McCartney referred to Exhibit A-5; she inquired if there would be a fence on the waterside of the pathway. Mr. Piga said the fence was strictly to delineate the pathway; the rest of the path did not have fencing on the waterside, it was not necessary to fence the waterside of the pathway.

Mr. Ghebremicael commented that the plan was a great improvement.

Mr. Lester wanted to know the height of the (85 ft. bridge) arch. Mr. Piga said the overall maximum height was about 13 feet.

Mr. Weston inquired if the new lighting would be the same as the blue-hued ones currently installed; he said that as the path went further into the Reservation away from the main Complex could consideration be given for installing lighting that is more low-key to create a more dark-sky effect. Mr. Piga said the lights were not full cut-offs, they were semi-cutoffs; he noted that the whole thing was about the issue of security. Mr. Weston reiterated that going forward there should be some consideration to more natural lighting as the project expanded deeper in to the more natural areas of the Reservation.

Mr. Weston asked if there would be a fence in the area of the train tracks. Mr. Piga said that there would be a 4-ft high split-rail fence with a mesh barrier between it and the tracks from the beginning to end of tracks; it would be far enough away from the train so that pedestrians would be unable to reach over to touch or gain access to the train. Mr. Weston asked about the steep drop off near the gabion, was there any concern about the steepness of the area; was there any plan to install a true guardrail type fence. Mr. Piga said he was not concerned about the area; although people could walk down the slope; the plan was to keep people focused on the path; if people really wanted access, they would be able to gain it; the area had to be kept accessible to the water company. Mr. Weston asked if the whole surface pathway around the reservoir would be paved, he

asked if any consideration of something softer like a track. Mr. Piga said the surface would be paved; bicycles would be using the path. Mr. Weston said that it was a good plan, but said he was concerned with how the plan interfaced with the more natural areas of the Complex as it moved away from the Zoo area.

Mr. Gurland asked if there would be lighting around the perimeter of the path, and if the railing would be around the entire perimeter of the path. Mr. Piga said that whatever lighting was already in place would be continued all around the pathway; he said the only railing would be along the dam and the bridge facing the landside of the bridge. Mr. Gurland asked if the railing had to be ADA compliant. Mr. Piga said it did not because the pathway did not meet the criteria for a handrail; the area was flat.

Mr. Gurland asked if draining the reservoir was that part of the project. Mr. Piga said the reservoir was not being drained; it was a natural occurrence due to current drought conditions.

Mr. Eben inquired if Mr. Piga knew how many additional people would be attracted to the project. Mr. Piga said the project was not so much a new attraction; he did not believe it would increase usage to more than just those persons currently using the pathway. The purpose of the project was to make safety improvements to the area. Currently people were going down the 70-ft ditch in to the spillway area. Mr. Eben opined that the improvements would attract a greater number of people than just those currently using the area; he asked where people would be parking to use the area because parking was already an issue. Mr. Piga said the existing parking would be utilized; there was parking near the Zoo, Mc Loone's parking lot, plus the area across the street from the paddleboat attraction. Referring to the (Acting Township) Planner's Report dated November 22, 2013, Mr. Eben said that it appeared that parking was not being considered; he opined that he loved the project but was concerned about parking issues.

Mr. Taraschi advised the Board that the County Executive was present and could answer questions regarding parking concerns.

Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., Essex County Executive was sworn in and accepted as an expert witness. Mr. DiVincenzo said that the County wanted to bring thousands of people to the area, not just to the Zoo and the Arena. He said the County was currently in the midst of building a new Education Center for young people; the buses dropping off those students would be parking in the parking lot in the area of the paddleboat attraction; a new 600-car parking deck was planned to be built behind the Codey Arena. An architect was currently preparing the plans and the project would be presented to the Board in the near future. The Education Center would be completed in June 2014; the garage would be built in September 2014.

Mr. Eben said he had a question about soil erosion control; he said there was no reference on the plans. Mr. Piga said the Applicant had already gotten approval (from the State), for the soil erosion control; he said the plans that Mr. Eben had were just conceptual. Mr. Eben asked if there were going to be any emergency call boxes; Mr. Piga said there were currently no plans for call boxes. Referring to the railing on the bridge, Mr. Eben wanted to know what the spacing was between the two-by-two horizontal rail. Mr. Piga said he believed the spacing was in the three (3) inch range. Mr. Eben asked if the proposed County Logo signage on the bridges would be the only signage; he asked if there would be a whole lot of banners on the bridges. He opined that the current banners on the fences were excessive and uncalled for; he questioned whether the County applied for sign permits before banners were installed.

Chairman Heller inquired as to the linear footage of the path. Mr. Piga said the overall pathway was almost 1.75 miles; nautical themed distance markers were to be installed.

Mr. Gurland asked Mr. DiVincenzo if there was consideration for extending the train ride around the entire reservoir. Mr. DiVincenzo said that there had been discussions, but no current plan was being considered; it would be something for the future.

The Public Advocate had no questions for Mr. Piga.

Dennis Percher, Chair of the Board of Trustees, South Mountain Conservancy, 1 Hubert Place, Maplewood. Addressing Mr. Piga, Mr. Percher stated that from a visibility point, the fence should be as minimally obtrusive as possible; he said he was concerned that a 4-ft high fence would block the view. He inquired if a 3-ft fence would be better. Mr. Piga said it was a split-rail fence and would not be at all obtrusive. Mr. Percher opined that the project was great; it would allow access close to the forest for those persons not usually able to get close to the area including people in wheelchairs and parents with strollers.

Robert Rashkes, 35 Oakcrest Road, West Orange. Mr. Rashkes inquired as to the exact coloring of the light poles, were they nautical blue or black, were the poles paintable, and what was the color of the bridges. Mr. Piga said the bridges were black with silver; there was no plan to paint the poles a color other than shown on the plans.

Mr. Taraschi introduced Daniel Salvante, Director Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. Mr. Salvante was sworn in and accepted to be an expert witness. Mr. Taraschi said that Mr. Salvante could answer any questions regarding the project operation(s).

Council President McCartney inquired as to the hours of operation. Mr. Salvante said that the Park closed at 10:00 P.M., as per County Ordinance; it opened at sunrise.

Mr. Taraschi stated that there were currently a number of entranceways in to the Complex; he asked Mr. Salvante if all areas were gated and patrolled. Mr. Salvante said that all areas were gated; the Essex County Sheriff's Department was stationed at the Complex and patrolled the Complex twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week.

Mr. Eben asked there was access from the east side of the Reservation; he inquired if someone could have access to the area after hours. Mr. Piga said that the current conditions had a fire trail with a fence in disrepair; someone might be able to gain access after hours, but they would be considered trespassing.

Mr. Weston said that since the hours of operation were set; was there any way to have the lighting in the area set. Mr. Salvante said the lighting would be on timers; they would not be on during the middle of the night.

The Public Advocate and the Public had no questions for Mr. Salvante.

The Board deliberated on the Application.

Council President McCartney said that although this was a Courtesy Review Application and the Board did not usually make conditions, she thought that Mr. Eben's suggestion

of the installation of emergency call boxes was an excellent recommendation. Mr. Piga said that was an item that could be reviewed.

Mr. Weston said he recommended, the Board draft a Resolution acknowledging the Courtesy Review and approving the Application.

Mr. Eben said the call boxes should be considered; additionally he voiced concern that while the County plan for the area was to bring thousands of visitors, he hoped that the facilities would be properly maintained.

Chairman Heller said he was someone who grew up in West Orange and had run through every path in the Reservation; he said that every improvement was welcome; the County was making a great effort and it would be a fantastic project

Council President McCartney said that with all due respect to the residents of the area; she requested the County please inform (area) residents of any road closures or detours when work was being done on projects.

Chairman Heller asked if any members of the Public had comments on the Application.

Robert Rashkes, 35 Oakcrest Road, West Orange; said he would like to see call boxes, he did not have a cell phone and felt isolated when he was walking in the area. He said he would also like to see cameras installed. He asked that the County make robo-calls to the residents of the area if there were to be road closures during construction. Mr. Taraschi said that installing call boxes and cameras were not part of the current project, but the County would look at the issue for future projects.

Mr. DiVincenzo said that the call boxes and cameras were good suggestions that the County would consider.

The Board voted on the Application as follows:

Motion: Chairman Heller

Second: Dr. Bagoff

Bagoff:	Yes	Carlucci:	Absent	Eben:	Yes
Ghebremicael:	Yes	Gurland:	Yes	Klein:	Absent
Lester:	Yes	McCartney:	Yes	Weston:	Yes
Wilkes:	Absent	Heller:	Yes		

MEETING ADJOURNED at approximately 8:19 P.M.

Minutes adopted January 8, 2014



Robin Miller, Planning Board Secretary  
Township of West Orange

**\*\*THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING BOARD WILL BE  
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 5, 2014 AT 7:30 P.M. IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS\*\***