

New Castle City Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2019 – 6:30 p.m.
City of New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: **Jimmy Gambacorta – Mayor**
 Daniel Losco, Esq., City Solicitor
 David J. Athey, City Engineer

Mayor Gambacorta convened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

300 West Seventh Street – John Di Mondri Enterprises

An application has been filed by John Di Mondri Enterprises, P.O. Box 72, New Castle, DE 19720 for a property located at 300 West Seventh Street, New Castle, Delaware, parcel number 21-014.00-396, seeking a special exception to permit the expansion of an existing self-service storage facility use in the Downtown Gateway – DG zoning district.

Mr. Di Mondri came forward and was sworn in by Mr. Losco.

Mr. Di Mondri explained that he is seeking approval to construct three additional 6-unit storage buildings to expand an existing self-service storage facility. He stated that with the expansion of the apartment complexes within 1/2 mile of the existing facility, there is a need for additional storage units, and the existing and proposed storage units are not only well constructed, but are attractive as well. The three six-unit units will be the same as the existing units, will be 35%-40% over code, and will be built on a 12” concrete slab with double rebar, which puts them at least 1 foot above the flood line. The units will be all-metal construction. Mr. Di Mondri entered for the Record a letter from Mr. Benjamin Barnette, whose residence abuts the facility, indicating he is in favor of the proposed expansion. Mr. Di Mondri added there will be no water runoff issues to Mr. Barnette’s property.

Shielding will be an extension of the existing iron fencing. The existing entrance next to the Barnette property on West Seventh Street will be closed off, leaving the second existing entrance on the northeast side as the sole entrance to the facility, which will increase security within the facility. In addition, a license-plate camera will be installed at the entrance for additional security.

The same potted vegetative screening will be placed across the new iron fencing. Mr. Losco questioned the number and spacing of the potted plantings, and noted that the current screening does not seem sufficient to screen the buildings.

Mr. Losco asked Mr. Bergstrom if there are any requirements for the number of designated parking spaces for the facility, and Mr. Bergstrom advised that parking requirements for self-storage facilities are minimal. Mr. Di Mondri explained that there is space for parking in front of every unit within the facility.

Mayor Gambacorta confirmed that three new units are being proposed and asked for the dimensions of the units. Mr. Di Mondri advised each unit will be 20’ x 60’, consisting of six 10’ wide units.

Mr. Losco asked what the timeline for construction is, and Mr. Di Mondri advised construction would begin immediately, with all three units scheduled to be completed within one year.

Mr. Losco asked if Mr. Di Mondri had spoken with any neighbors in addition to Mr. Barnette, and Mr. Di Mondri advised that the other neighbors were all satisfied with the expansion. Mr. Di Mondri added that there is very little activity within the facility.

Mr. Athey asked Mr. Bergstrom if the Code had any additional guidelines for visual screening other than “The Board of Adjustment shall give primary consideration to the mandatory provision of visual screening in the form of walls or fencing in combination with suitable landscaping ...”, and Mr. Bergstrom stated it would be up to the Board of Adjustment how much screening is required. Mr. Losco stated that he is comfortable with the fencing; however, he did not feel the vegetative screening was adequate. After discussion, it was agreed that plantings on 5’ centers would be acceptable. Mr. Losco noted that according to the last decision, the plantings should be 4’ high. Mr. Di Mondì noted that he would install as many planters as the Board wanted. Mr. Di Mondì added that the evergreens he has planted don’t seem to last, and he has to replace them two times a year.

Mr. Athey asked if Mr. Di Mondì had ever considered removing some concrete and have a grass strip to facilitate plantings; however, that would be very costly.

Mr. Di Mondì asked Mayor Gambacorta if he would advise on what variety of plantings he should install, and the Mayor said he would be happy to stop by and give his opinion.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Athey made a Motion to close the hearing and go into the Business Meeting. The Motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Mayor Gambacorta stated he did not see any problem with appearance or space, and had no objection to Mr. Di Mondì’s request.

Mr. Losco stated that he agreed with Mayor Gambacorta’s comments; however he expressed his disappointment in the number of planters, and noted that Mr. Di Mondì had stated he would be agreeable to installing a planter every 5’. Mr. Di Mondì confirmed his agreement to install planters every 5’ across the 60’ opening. Mr. Athey asked if he would be installing planters to the east of the office building. Mr. Losco added he wanted to see planters across the entire frontage. Mr. Di Mondì noted that the fencing to the east of the building is adjacent to the sidewalk, and installing planters on that part of the property would obstruct pedestrian traffic. Mr. Athey restated that planters every 5’ would be installed up to the remaining entrance, excluding the one story building, which has flower beds, and as many planters as are practicable on the north side. He also noted that in accordance with the 2014 decision, the plantings will be evergreens of a minimum of 4’ high.

Mr. Athey made a Motion that the Special Exception be granted on the condition that the applicant provides (1) a continuation of the existing fence across the western entrance that is to be abandoned, and (2) landscape screening in the form of evergreen plantings on 5’ centers, the height of which shall be a minimum of 4’ high including the height of any pots, allowance for growing understood, on the western part of the property along the front property line from the existing one story building to the Barnette property, and in reasonable equivalence on the eastern part of the property toward the railroad tracks, with the exception of the existing entrance.

Mr. Losco recommended an amendment to the Motion: construction to commence within one year.

Mr. Di Mondì suggested that the word “abandoned” be replaced with the word “closed” with respect to the entrance.

Mayor Gambacorta asked how long the construction would take, and after discussion, Mr. Di Mondì agreed that construction of all three units would be completed within two years.

Mr. Losco recommended an amendment to the Motion: Construction of all three units to be completed within two years.

All amendments to the Motion were approved, and the Motion now reads:

Motion that the Special Exception be granted on the condition that the applicant provides (1) a continuation of the existing fence across the western entrance that is to be closed, and (2) landscape screening in the form of evergreen plantings on 5' centers, the height of which shall be a minimum of 4' high including the height of any pots, allowance for growing understood, on the western part of the property along the front property line from the existing one story building to the Barnette property, and in reasonable equivalence on the eastern part of the property toward the railroad tracks, with the exception of the existing entrance. Construction commence within one year and construction of all three units to be completed within two years.

Mr. Losco confirmed that the screening would be 4' evergreen plantings on 5' centers from the Barnette property line to the existing building, and on the other side of the building in approximate proportionality to the other side, to the extent practicable. Mr. Di Mondì noted that it was not possible to put pots on the sidewalk, and Mr. Losco stated that he understood that restriction, but that plantings would be added to the extent practical.

Mr. Losco seconded the Motion.

Mr. Losco restated the Motion for clarification.

On vote, the Motion was unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Mr. Athey made a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 pm. Mr. Losco seconded the Motion. On vote, the Motion was approved unanimously.

Kathy Weirich
Stenographer