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Open Space & Stewardship
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MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Board
From: Lauren A. Wasilauski, Open Space & Stewardship Director
Date: March 20, 2024
Re: BA-04-23 Renard Management, LLC
Block 29002 Lots 49 & 50 (1026 County Route 518)
Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan with Use and Bulk Variances

This office has reviewed the following materials and offers the comments below:

- Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan with Use & Bulk Variances, prepared by Dynamic Engineering, last revised 3/4/2024 (23 sheets)
- Land Survey, prepared by Dynamic Survey, last revised 8/11/2022 (1 sheet)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report prepared by Dynamic Engineering, dated June 2023
- Architectural plans prepared by Arco Murray, dated 3/12/2024 (6 sheets)
- Response letter from Lisa Lomelo, Esq. with revised application package pages and revised variance chart, date stamped 3/14/2024
- Response letter from Dynamic Engineering, dated 12/21/2023 (11 pages)
- D&R Canal Commission staff report dated 10/16/2023 (7 pages)

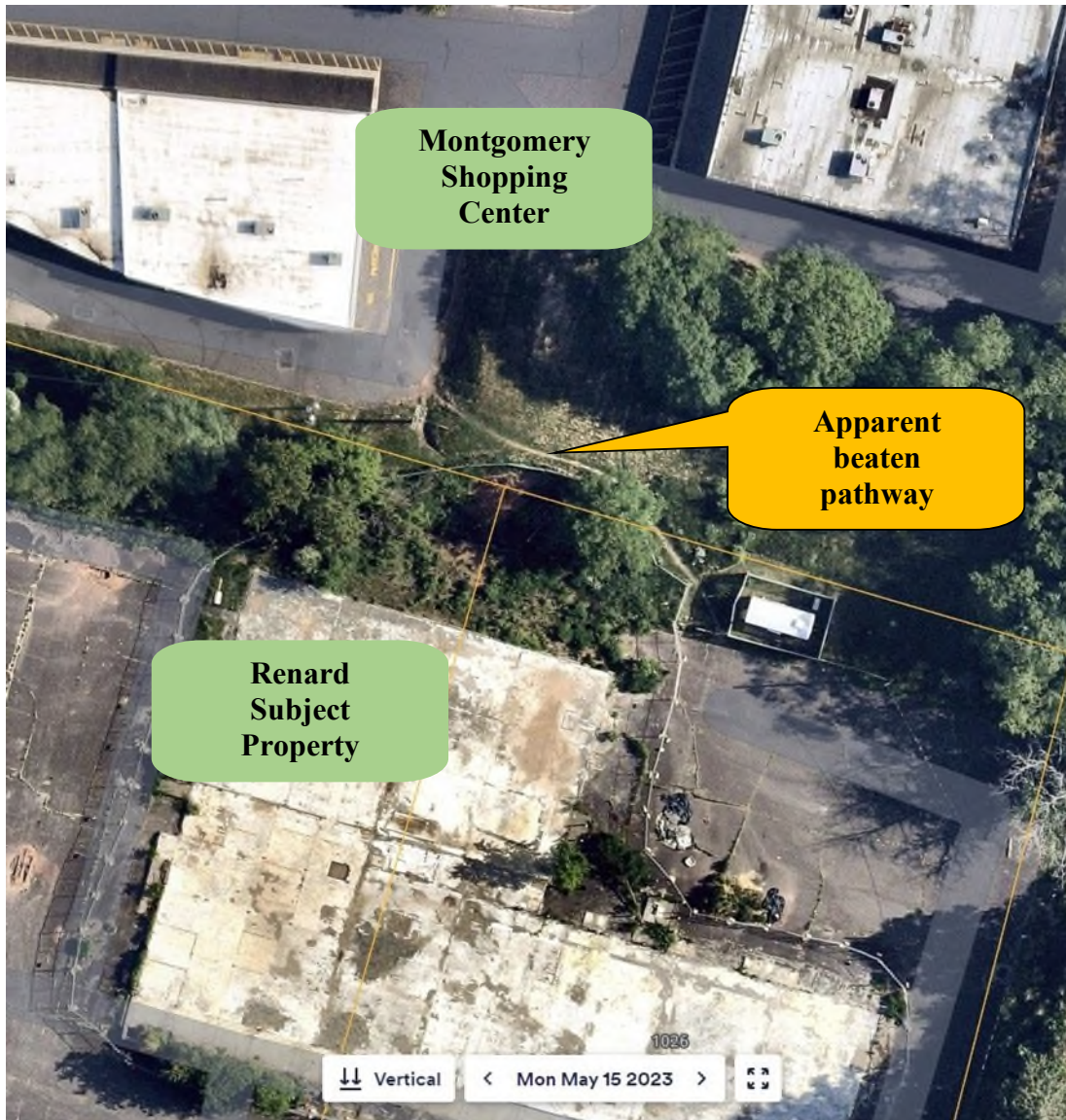
A. Application overview

1. The Applicant's property is located on Somerset County Route 518 (aka Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike), consisting of 2.99 acres.
2. The property is located in the HC (Highway Commercial) zoning district.
3. The Applicant is applying to the Board for a self-storage facility consisting of one (1) 2-story building, comprised of 84,904 square feet, and one (1) smaller 2-story building comprised of 22,846 square feet.
4. The Applicant is requesting a use variance as self-storage is not a permitted use in the HC zone.
5. The Applicant is also requesting variances for the following:

- a. Maximum building height: 32.99' and 2 stories proposed where 30' and 2.5 stories are permitted (per letter from Ms. Lomelo).
Maximum building height: 29.67' and 2 stories proposed where 30' and 2.5 stories are permitted (per zoning chart on sheet 4)
 - i. The zoning chart on sheet 4 does not match the revised variance chart submitted with the application sheets and letter from Ms. Lomelo. The Applicant should provide testimony regarding which proposed height figure is correct.
- b. FAR variance: 0.83 proposed where 0.2 is permitted
- c. Minimum rear yard setback: 49.9' proposed where 50' is required
- d. Maximum lot coverage: 58.3% proposed where 55% is permitted
- e. Building square footage: 107,750 square feet proposed where 50,000 square feet is permitted
- f. Façade sign: 75.38 square feet proposed where 50 square feet is permitted

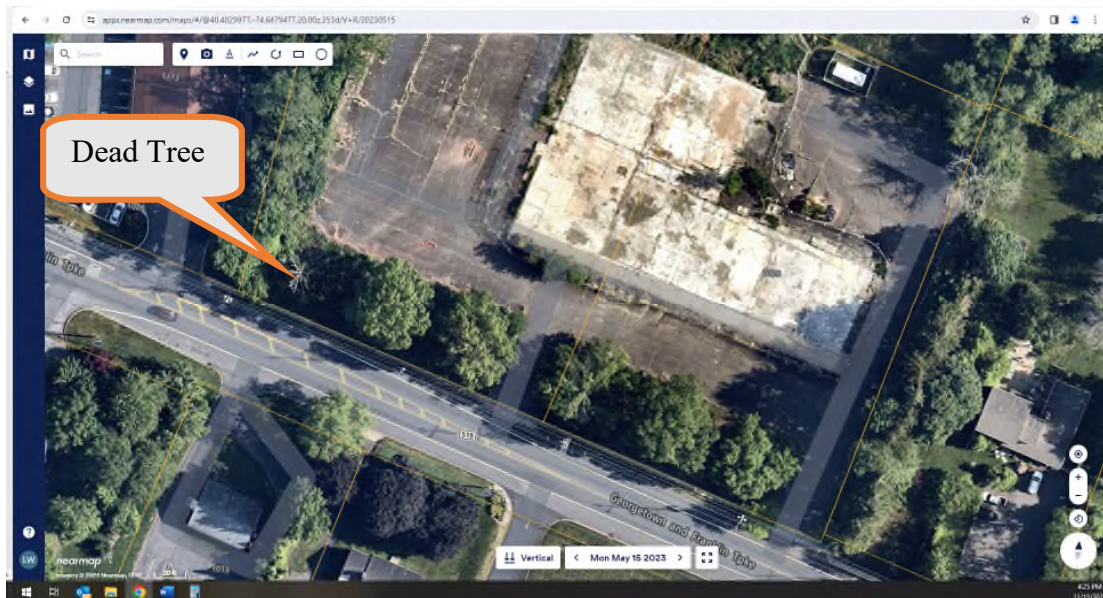
B. Sidewalks & Pedestrian Safety

- 1. Township Code Section 16-5.14C requires sidewalks on all public streets. The Applicant appears to satisfy this requirement.
- 2. If the existing sidewalk is damaged during the course of construction, it should be repaired to the satisfaction of the Township Engineer or their designee, per Code Section 11-5.2.c.3.
 - a. A note has been added to sheet 4 to reflect this Code provision.
- 3. In looking at recent NearMap imagery, it appears that pedestrians (and possibly cyclists) are cutting through the subject property to access the Montgomery Shopping Center (see screen grab from May 15, 2023 on the following page).
 - a. This office suggests the Applicant explore adding pedestrian accommodations through their property, and working with Hilton Realty of Montgomery Shopping Center to formalize this pedestrian access.
 - b. The Township has been focused on pedestrian safety throughout the Township as residents are increasingly walking to their desired destinations. This is particularly the case in the vicinity of the Route 206/Route 518 intersection.



C. Tree Planting and Landscaping

1. **Tree Removal:** Based upon the plans, 6 street trees are existing, although one at the northwest corner of the property appears to be dead based upon the Google street view (capture date October 2023) and NearMap images (capture date 5/15/2023) – see images on following page.



- a. One of these very large live trees (30" DBH) is proposed for removal per sheet 3.
 - i. **This office strongly suggests that every effort should be made to preserve the mature row of live street trees.** They are located within the front yard setback and don't interfere with any proposed improvements, with the possible exception of the proposed driveways, which could be reconfigured.
 - ii. These mature trees are very effective at storing stormwater, with estimates ranging from 4,000 gallons¹ to 10,000 gallons+ per tree per year². This is

¹ "Is all your rain going down the drain?" USDA Center for Urban and Forest Research. August 2003.
https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/topics/urban_forestry/products/cufr_392_rain_down_the_drain.pdf

particularly important given the Applicant's requested variance to exceed the allowable lot coverage, and given the increasing frequency of severe rainfall events and flooding in the community.

- iii. Keeping these mature trees on-site, at the interface of stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces helps to manage stormwater on-site, and decrease runoff.
 - iv. In addition, mature landscaping serves a multitude of ecological functions (carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, etc.) and also adds aesthetic appeal to the property and viewshed from the roadway.
- 2. **Street trees** are required at fifty foot (50') intervals per Township Code Section 16-5.6.d.15.
 - a. The Applicant's property has 427.2' of frontage on Route 518, thus nine (9) street trees are required.
 - b. The Applicant appears to propose nine (9) shade trees along the road frontage. This office defers to the Board Landscape Architect to review the proposed locations and species for compliance with Township ordinance requirements.
- 3. **Shade Trees:** 14 trees per acre are required for residential and non-residential development per Township Code Section 16-5.6d.3. The required shade trees are in addition to the number of required street trees and any buffering.
 - a. The Landscape Schedule on sheet 10 indicates a total of 54 shade trees.
 - b. Based upon the property size, 42 shade trees are required, plus the required nine street trees for an overall total of 51 required trees. Ordinance requirement satisfied.
 - c. As an alternative, if the applicant is unable or unwilling to plant the required number of trees on-site, they may make a contribution to the Township Tree Bank as is permitted by Code Section 16-5.6.d.3.b in lieu of planting on-site.
- 4. **Buffering:** This office defers review of the adequacy of the proposed buffer plantings to the Township Landscape Architect.
- 5. This office defers review of the proposed species to the Township Landscape Architect.

² "Water & Forests – the role trees play in water quality." Georgia Pacific. August 1999.
https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5269813.pdf

6. All plant materials should include a two (2) year guarantee as required by Township Code Section 16-5.6.d.10:

“All plant material shall be guaranteed for at least two (2) years from the date of landscape inspection for approval and any plant material that does not survive within that time period or is in poor condition based upon the opinion of the Township Landscape Architect shall be replaced by plant material of the same size and species at the expense of the developer.”

The “Township Landscaping Notes”, “Planting Notes” and “Planting Specifications” on sheet 10 all include this provision. Ordinance requirement satisfied

7. Per previous comments from this office, the Applicant has included a note to include deer protection around new plantings in order to prevent browsing and deer rub. This office appreciates the revision.

D. Conservation Deed Restrictions

1. The Township’s mapping indicates steep slopes (in excess of 15%) along the western boundary and a portion of the northern boundary.
2. Township Code Section 16-5.6e requires conservation easement or conservation easement deed restrictions on all critical areas (e.g. steep slopes, stream corridor, wetlands).
3. The Environmental Impact Assessment does not mention the steep slopes, but indicates the existing site topography is a result of previous development of the lot and others in the vicinity. The Applicant should provide testimony regarding this matter. If the steep slopes are not naturally occurring, this office will not request a conservation deed restriction.

E. Lot Coverage

1. The Applicant’s proposal will cover 58.3% of the lot with impervious surfaces, where 55% is permitted.
2. As discussed in detail in Section C1 above, the Applicant proposes to remove one very large live tree along the property frontage, which this office wholly objects to. The Applicant can reconfigure their driveway access so as not to require the removal of this trees.

F. Lighting

1. The Applicant proposes to use the “Mirada wall sconce” (XWM) and “Mirada small area” (MRS), detailed on sheet 17. The lighting appears to be directed in a downward direction, which this office appreciates. Shields should be added where possible to prevent glare and light spillover into unwanted areas and into adjacent properties.
2. The proposed lighting has a variety of options for color temperature. The Applicant should select a model that is 3000K or less (preferably less than 2700K).
3. The “generic freestanding sign” depicted on sheet 16 does not include any lighting. The Applicant should provide testimony on whether any lighting is proposed. If the sign is to be illuminated, this office recommends a light mounted on the top of the sign, pointed downward and shielded. An internally lit sign is not preferred.
 - a. Any proposed lighting should be on a timer.
4. The site plan indicates a building mounted sign on the larger building’s south façade. The previous architectural drawings submitted by the Applicant indicated the sign will be in the form of faded paint. There does not appear to be any lighting associated with this sign. The Applicant should provide testimony regarding any proposals for lighting.
 - a. If lighting is proposed, it should be directed downward, shielded, and on a timer.
5. The Board, should approval be granted, should condition their approval that any site lighting be directed downward, shielded when possible, be operated on a timer, and use a color temperature no greater than 3000K.



6. The “Township Lighting Requirements” notes on sheet 11 indicate that exterior lighting will be on a timer, and turned off after business hours. This office appreciates inclusion of this provision.
7. The impacts of too much light at night (particularly “blue” or short wavelength lighting) have been documented to negatively impact human health, as well as wildlife and insects.
 - a. Princeton University’s Office of Sustainability recently released a short documentary detailing these negative impacts:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FW0WZX75Nmo>

G. Electric Vehicles

1. The Applicant proposes sixteen parking spaces and one (1) make-ready space for electric vehicle charging. Ordinance requirement satisfied.