Vice Chairman Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and read the opening statement that adequate notice of the meeting had been posted and sent to the officially designated newspapers.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Chairman Matthews; Ms. Davis; Mr. DeRochi; Mayor Madrid; Mr. Mani; Mr. Sarle; Mr. Smith; Mr. Wilson

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Linnus, Board Attorney; Mr. Cline, Board Engineer; Mr. Sullivan, Board Planner; Ms. Savron, Secretary

I. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

III. RESOLUTIONS

Case PB-02-15  Applicant: Empire Holdings, LRP, LLC
Block 35001 Lot 13
Submission Waivers and Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan with Variances

A motion to memorialize the resolution was made by Mr. Wilson, which was seconded by Mr. Sarle. This was carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes: DeRochi, Madrid, Mani, Matthews, Sarle, Smith and Wilson
Nays: None

IV. APPLICATION

Case PB-06-15  Applicant: Country Club Meadows, LLC
Block 4001 Lot 33
Block 6001 Lot 1
Block 5023 Lots 2 & 3
Preliminary Major Site Plan and Subdivision with Variance
Expiration Date – 10/17/15
Affidavit of Notification and Publication Required

Ronald Shimanowitz, Esquire, Joe Fleming, PE, David Delle Donne, AIA, Joe Staigar, PE and Art Bernard, PP, represented the applicant. Notice was in order.

Mr. Shimanowitz summarized the General Development Plan.

Michael Sullivan, Board Planner, was sworn in.

Joseph Fleming, 204 Rick Road, was sworn in. Mr. Fleming gave the Board his qualifications and was accepted as an expert in site planning as an engineer. Mr. Fleming gave an overview of the General Development Plan (GDP). The plan was approved December 2014 and was based upon the settlement agreement with the Township. The total project is 190-acres separated into four land areas within the Belle Mead Node on both sides of Route 206. Mr. Fleming referenced the exhibit that was the basis for the General Development Plan which was marked as Exhibit A-1. Area 1 is 125 acres and includes 148 market rate single family homes. Belle Mead Plaza mixed use is 5.5 acres and includes 31,000 square feet of commercial retail space with connectivity to Pike Run through Del Marvia Drive. It also includes an 8,000 square foot community operation center. Area 3 is the Continuing Care zone of roughly 20-23 acres. There will be 96 two bedroom senior apartments, 74 independent units, 74 assisted living units and 74 sub-acute care units. Area 4 is 14.8 acres and is the transit commercial site. It will have 22,000 square feet of retail.

Mr. Fleming referenced the Color Landscape Plan which was marked as Exhibit A-2. Infrastructure assumptions have been made for the Continuing Care facility impervious cover and wastewater management provisions have been made but it is not part of the application at this time. Country Club Meadows is consistent with the GDP. There will be 108 single family homes on lots that range from 19,112 square feet to 32,649 square feet. There are 40 patio homes on lots that range from 6,342 square feet to 6,998 square feet. The bulk zoning standards have been met with the exception of the gateway signage at the access points on Route 206. The roadway circulation meets the RSIS standards with a 30’ wide cartway and sidewalks on both sides. However, in some instances sidewalks could not be installed because of wetlands.
Country Club Meadows is served by gravity sewers. They will flow and connect to the sewer system infrastructure built for Pike Run. Wastewater flow values are in compliance with the wastewater management plan. Water will be provided by NJ American Water. The hydrant locations will be established by the Fire Marshal. Telephone, electric and gas will be distributed underground by the respective utility components. The applicant has sought a balance of lighting between a minimalist dark sky illumination strategy and a conventional suburban public safety oriented approach. The illumination of the signs has been modified and a waiver is no longer necessary. A minimum exception from the tree replacement for both sites is based on disturbed area. The areas that are wooded are not included in the calculation.

Mr. Fleming referenced the overall preliminary plat which was marked as Exhibit A-4. The map displays the overall landscape plan provides a distribution of deciduous trees, ornamental trees, evergreens and ground cover. The tree totals are 497 street trees, 463 open space trees, 283 buffer zone trees and 404 foundation trees. Mr. Fleming referenced a snapshot of the overall landscape plan on the southern portion of Country Club Meadows which was marked as Exhibit A-3. There will be a 30’ wide buffer along the southerly property line along with a 3 rail split rail fence to be installed on the property line. Beyond the 30 foot easement there will be a 10 foot conservation easement on the new Country Club Meadows lots. The planting mix is deciduous trees and evergreens. Landscaping within the properties along Southfield Drive will be supplemented as agreed between Country Club Meadows and those property owners. Mr. Fleming reference Exhibit A-2. Sidewalks, pathways, a neighborhood park and open space areas are provided within the development. A pedestrian bridge is required for the pathway that loops back to Belle Mead-Griggstown and Route 206 and is part of the application to NJDEP. The grades throughout Country Club Meadows are relatively moderate to flat. Berm have been incorporated for screening along the railroad and to shape the view along Route 206. The applicant will give thought to buffering within the area north of Road A.

Mr. Fleming referenced Belle Mead Plaza and referenced Exhibit A-2. Belle Mead Plaza yields a mixed use of retail/office. There are 27 non-age restricted affordable units and one market rate unit on the second floor. The retail/office space will be 31,800 with a portion of that dedicated to the vertical circulation to the residential community above. The building has a gross floor area of 66,402 square feet. The total lot coverage is 63%. Variances are needed for these items as well as for some parking setbacks. Access from Route 206 will be right in and right out. There will be two points of access from Covert Drive. Covert Drive will be extended by the applicant through the Township property to the termination point just beyond the salt dome. The Fire Company has concerns about conflicts with vehicular movements coming in and out of Covert Drive during responses to emergency events. In response, there will be emergency signalization to facilitate safe ingress and egress. Deliveries and trash management will be accommodated with smaller step vans. There is sufficient room for counter-clockwise movement around the back of the building. The number of trash enclosures have been reduced and positioned to the rear of the site. There are 229 parking spaces provided. Lighting will be with LED fixtures mounted at 20 feet. The 20 foot mounting height allows fewer fixtures and safer spreads through the parking lot. There are 79 trees proposed for the parcel including 41 deciduous shade trees, 9 ornamental shade trees and 29 evergreen trees. A recreation park will be constructed just east of Covert Drive as well as a pedestrian path that crosses Cruser Brook with a pedestrian bridge. Belle Mead Plaza will be served by sanitary sewers and NJ American Water. The telephone, electric and gas will be underground. There are three freestanding signs proposed that require variances.

Mr. Fleming referenced the first floor plan Sheet A-2. It indicates the first floor building area of approximately 20,000 square feet. The retail/office space will be 31,800 with a portion of that dedicated to the vertical circulation to the residential community above. The building has a gross floor area of 66,402 square feet. The total lot coverage is 63%. Variances are needed for these items as well as for some parking setbacks. Access from Route 206 will be right in and right out. There will be two points of access from Covert Drive. Covert Drive will be extended by the applicant through the Township property to the termination point just beyond the salt dome. The Fire Company has concerns about conflicts with vehicular movements coming in and out of Covert Drive during responses to emergency events. In response, there will be emergency signalization to facilitate safe ingress and egress. Deliveries and trash management will be accommodated with smaller step vans. There is sufficient room for counter-clockwise movement around the back of the building. The number of trash enclosures have been reduced and positioned to the rear of the site. There are 229 parking spaces provided. Lighting will be with LED fixtures mounted at 20 feet. The 20 foot mounting height allows fewer fixtures and safer spreads through the parking lot. There are 79 trees proposed for the parcel including 41 deciduous shade trees, 9 ornamental shade trees and 29 evergreen trees. A recreation park will be constructed just east of Covert Drive as well as a pedestrian path that crosses Cruser Brook with a pedestrian bridge. Belle Mead Plaza will be served by sanitary sewers and NJ American Water. The telephone, electric and gas will be underground. There are three freestanding signs proposed that require variances.

Mr. Fleming testified about the design waivers. The sidewalks along the right-of-way will be concrete. It is expected that the homeownes with sidewalk along their frontage will take care of the sidewalk. The pathways on the public open space that the Homeowners Association will own and maintain will be cinder or mulch. There are a few areas where street trees will be spaced more than 50’ when necessary to meet site conditions. The applicant will work with the Board Landscape Architect. The street lighting waiver was discussed earlier. The pillar height of the freestanding sign at Country Club Meadows is being exceeded. The design waiver for the parking lot lighting at Belle Mead Plaza is no longer needed. The retaining walls at Belle Mead Plaza are greater than 4’ to accommodate the changes in grade. The tree replacement for both sites is based on disturbed area. The areas that are wooded are not included in the calculation. The illumination of the signs has been modified and a waiver is no longer necessary. A minimum exception from the RSIS is being requested requiring sidewalk on both sides of the street. Road A near Route 206 has environmental constraints and Road B has a tight crossing which is restricted.

Mr. Delle Donne, 90 East Halsey Road, was sworn in. Mr. Delle Donne gave the Board his qualifications and was accepted as an expert in architecture. Mr. Delle Donne’s work for this project was for the commercial Belle Mead Plaza. Mr. Delle Donne referenced the first floor plan Sheet A-2. The two access locations on Route 206 have DOT major access approval. Country Club Meadows has four impoundments for stormwater management. The basins will have water in them at all times and they will all have aerators to help with the water quality attributes. The ponds fit in with DEP’s description of a best management practice tool. Belle Mead Plaza has one large impoundment that will be shared with the impoundment that will compliment Pike Run Plaza. They will be operating at the same level and will work in concert with each other. The stormwater management plan demonstrates regulatory compliance for peak flow attenuation. Mr. Fleming described the flows for the 2 year, 10 year, 25 year and 100 year storms. The management plan also demonstrates regulatory compliance for water quality. The water is held to achieve 90% removal of total suspended solids. Groundwater recharge and low impact development requirements are met.
Mr. Staigar, 245 Main Street, was sworn in. Mr. Staigar gave the Board his qualifications and was accepted as an expert in traffic engineering. Mr. Staigar summarized his traffic studies. An original study was prepared for Country Club Meadows and that study encompassed both the single family lots and the continuing care. A NJDOT access permit and a street intersection permit have been obtained for Country Club Meadows. The Belle Mead Plaza report encompasses the single family and continuing care. Traffic counts were taken during the 7-9 am and 4-6 pm peak periods on the weekdays as well as Saturday 12-3 pm peak hours. Count data from 2010 and 2011 were also used. The number of trips was then increased to accommodate for projects that have been approved but not yet built. They also made a 4 year projection and added the annual growth rates published by NJDOT. During the morning peak hours Belle Mead Plaza would generate 93 trips in and out during the morning peak hour, 300 trips in and out during the evening peak hours and 415 trips in and out during Saturday peak hours. The shopping center generates the majority of those trips. About 55% of the weekday pm peak traffic generated by a center of this size is pass by volume already driving by the center. Both the Pike Run and Belle Mead-Griggstown intersections currently run at a Level Service E or better. There is no degradation of service when the traffic is superimposed. The intersection of Belle Mead-Griggstown Road, Grayson Drive and Willow operates at a Level of Service A and B. The right turn in and right turn out driveway for both driveways operate at a Level of Service B. This commercial site is not designed to handle tractor trailer deliveries since a site this size usually does not have that type of delivery. A wheel base 50 tractor trailer can be accommodated but they would not be coming into the site when it is open. Fire trucks and ambulances can access the site. There will be a counterclockwise direction for the deliveries, garbage and recycling pick up. There is good site visibility for the ingress and egress into and out of the site. The proposed signage will provide proper identification of the site. The signs identify the driveway in advance of the site.

Mr. Staigar reviewed the Remington Vernick traffic engineer’s letter dated August 13, 2015. Many of the comments have been addressed. The additional information regarding the use of left turn lanes on Belle Mead-Griggstown Road will be provided. The application is being prepared for the NJDOT permits required for Belle Mead Plaza. Improvements will be made to the Pike Run Road intersection. There are no significant improvements to be made to the Belle Mead-Griggstown Road intersection. DOT may require the applicant to make sure the pedestrian access is up to the most current ADA regulations. The applicant will comply with whatever DOT requires at both intersections. The plans will be revised to indicate the anticipated route of all delivery vehicles and that emergency response vehicles can safely maneuver through the continuing care facility site and all retail sites. The rear driveway for Belle Mead Plaza will be revised to indicate a more traditional T-intersection and will be coordinated with the traffic engineer’s office. Contingent on DOT approval the plans will be revised to indicate concrete sidewalk along the frontage of Belle Mead.
Mr. Bernard testified about the history and the zoning of the property. All the variances are reasonable variances that can be granted. The height of the freestanding sign is limited to 8'. The freestanding sign at the corner of Belle Mead-Griggstown Road is 13' high. That sign is to be setback 20' from the road and is proposed to be setback 25' from Covert Drive.

Mr. Wilson questioned Mr. Staigar about how the numbers show that the situation improves when more traffic is added. Mr. Staigar said he will have to review the analysis again. It is anticipated there will be a dedicated left turn lane on Route 206 for movements onto Pike Run Road. Mr. Staigar will look at the timing of the lights further north of the site to see what causes the bottleneck between the light at Route 601/206 and the light at Mountain View Road/206. A preliminary plan has been developed that will be submitted to the County showing notification of the fire department being next door as well as the crosswalk. The applicant is looking at installing signage and beacons to flash when there is an emergency call. They are also looking at solar powered beacons for the pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Staigar clarified that the traffic report gives the peak hourly rates. There are 113 trips during the morning peak hour for the residential and 150 trips in the afternoon.

Vice Chairman Matthews opened the meeting to the public to ask questions of the applicant’s witnesses.

Rob Simon, Esquire on behalf of Montgomery Volunteer Fire Company No. 1, 35 Belle Mead-Griggstown Road, addressed the Board. The Fire Company has many concerns with this project but one of the most important concerns is the ingress and egress on Covert Drive.

There was discussion about Covert Drive. The applicant, Fire Company, Township and the County will meet to discuss Covert Drive prior to the next meeting.

Woojin Ho, 30 Muirhead Court, was sworn in. Mr. Ho said he hoped the Board will consider the potential impact of traffic when all the phases are built out. He is concerned with the possible backup of traffic on Belle Mead-Griggstown Road, especially on the weekends, and wondered if there were plans to install landscaping within the Pike Run development to buffer the existing houses.

Art Bernard, 77 North Union Street, was sworn in. Mr. Bernard gave the Board his qualifications and was accepted as a professional planner. The site is within the BMPUD zone. The settlement and ordinance provide for single family homes and a commercial area that will include affordable housing rentals. The uses proposed are all permitted by the ordinance but there is bulk relief required. Variances are needed for the size of the retail office space where the ordinance permits 31,000 square feet and the proposal is for 31,801 square feet. The gross floor area is limited to 61,000 square feet and the area provided is 66,402 square feet. The footprint and gross floor area were approximated during the settlement discussions. When laying out the building the applicant found that 61,000 square feet would provide very small livable spaces for the tenants when the common areas are factored in. A 1-bedroom apartment will be approximately 840 square feet, a 2-bedroom will be approximately 1,050 square feet and a 3-bedroom apartment will be approximately 1,250 square feet. Variances are also needed for the impervious coverage. The ordinance permits 60% and the proposal is 63%. The landscape coverage that is required to be 40% the applicant is providing 37%. There are variances needed for parking setbacks and for trash enclosure setbacks. The parking setback to the adjacent property to the south is 15' and the applicant is providing 8'. The parking setback to Covert Drive is 25' and the applicant is providing 8.83'. The parking setback to the northern property line along Belle Mead-Griggstown Road is 25' and the applicant is providing 20'. The trash enclosure setback to the rear of the property is 15' and the applicant is providing 2'. The setback for the wet basin is 25' and the applicant is providing 24'. One loading space is required and none are proposed. The facilities will be served by box trucks for deliveries. All sides of the building are required to have a similar finish and the first floor in the rear of the building does not have the visual breaks that are required by ordinance. There are a number of sign variances needed. For Country Club Meadows the northern entrance is permitted one community identification sign and the applicant is providing two. A variance may be needed for the size of the signs where 30' is permitted. The applicant calculated the size to include the entire area of the wall and fence and is therefore 640 square feet on the northern entrance and 183 square feet on the southern entrance. The sign itself that is set into the fence may comply with the 30' requirement. Belle Mead Plaza is permitted one freestanding sign and the applicant is proposing three. The height of the freestanding sign is limited to 8'. The freestanding sign at the corner of Belle Mead-Griggstown Road and Route 206 is 13' high. That sign is to be setback 20' from the road and is proposed to be setback 10'.

Mr. Bernard testified about the history and the zoning of the property. All the variances are reasonable variances that can be granted based on the C2 criteria. C2 variances can be granted when the proposal advances purposes of the Municipal Land Use Law and the benefits of the proposal substantially outweigh any detriments. Boards should consider the benefits of the entire proposal when it considers the benefits, not just the benefits of granting a specific C variance. The proposal specifically advances the land use plan for this property. The Master Plan proposes to address the Township’s housing obligation as part of a mixed use development. The Land Use Plan has endorsed commercial development and higher density residential development in the Belle Meadow Node for years. The proposal is consistent with the 2008 Master Plan goal of recognizing the physical characteristics of the Township. The joint efforts between the Township
Mr. Bernard referenced the Pike Run entry sign photo which was marked as Exhibit A-8. The signs for Country Club were three signs so all the signs would comply.

Ms. Davis wondered why the tenants had to be listed all on one sign and why they couldn’t be spread out amongst the applicant. Mr. Bernard suggested they bring an alternate.

Mr. DeRochi asked if the freestanding sign could be reduced in height if it was made wider. Mr. Bernard responded that the detriments associated with granting the relief.

Mr. Bernard testified the impact on the zone plan is positive because the proposal implements the long standing goal of promoting mixed use development in the Belle Mead Node. The benefits of the proposal substantially outweigh the burdens associated with granting the relief.

Landscaping coverage has a 3% deficit which is fairly de minimis and will not be noticeable from the street. The applicant’s landscaping plan will result in an attractive looking site. The northern most parking setback along Belle Mead-Griggstown Road is 20’ to the road which is fairly common. The applicant is landscaping the 20’ to soften the appearance of the parking area and address the issue of headlight glare. The applicant is also proposing landscaping to help screen the parking and trash enclosure area.

The application was continued to the September 21, 2015 Planning Board meeting. No further notice is required.

The adoption of the minutes was carried to the next meeting.

V. MINUTES

August 3, 2015 – Regular Meeting

The adoption of the minutes was carried to the next meeting.