Minutes of the Commercial Township Land Use Board meeting was held at the Municipal Hall in Port Norris on **July 27,2022**. The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. It was advised that the meeting was being electronically recorded in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act. All joined in the Flag Salute.

**SYNOPSIS:**

**Roll Call:**

Michael Vizzard, Mayor

Joe Klaudi, Committee Man

John Nardone, Environmental Commission

LaRae Smith, Class IV Board Member, Chairperson

Debra Karp, Class IV Board Member, Vice Chairperson

Edward Fox, Class IV Board Member

Dean Berry, Class IV Board Member

Heike Wheatly, Class IV Board Member

Matt Wheatly, Alternate I

Emmett Vandegrift, Alternate II

Steve Nardelli, Engineer

Nathan Van Embden, Solicitor

Stefanie Muessig, Board Secretary

**Absent:**

Dean Berry, Class IV Board Member (Absent)

Emmett Vandegrift, Alternate II (Late)

Steve Nardelli, Engineer (Absent)

**Minutes:**

July 27, 2022 (live meet)

A Motion was made by Mr. Vizzard and Seconded by Ms. Karp to approve the minutes from June 22, 2022.

Roll Call:

Joe Klaudi Yes

John Nardone Abstain

Michael Vizzard Yes

Edward Fox Abstain

Debra Karp Yes

Heike Wheatly Abstain

Matt Wheatly Abstain

Emmitt Vandegrift Abstain

LaRae Smith Abstain

**Resolutions:**

*None*

**NEW BUSINESS**

*None*

**CORRESPONDENCE**

* *Notice: NJDEP APPLICATION*

*Wetland Letter of Interpretation -Presence/Absence Determination*

*Block 183 Lot 14 (2007 Highland Street)*

* *Public Notice: Re: An Application for a NJ DEP -freshwater Wetland Protection Act Letter of Interpretation-Line Verification has been requested for Block 106 Lot 1.05*
* *The New Jersey Planner*, Vol. 83 No. 3

Mr. Van Embden read all the correspondence with explanations. Ms. LaRae Smith asked for a motion to except and file both correspondences.

A motion was made to except and file correspondences by Ms. Karp and seconded by Mr. Vizzard. All were in favor, none opposed.

**BOARD BUSINESS**

* *Informal presentation: Emmett Vandegrift (see attachment)*

Mr. Emmett Vandegrift was sworn in by Mr. Nathan Van Embden. Mr. Vandegrift emailed board secretary to be put on the agenda for his cannabis industry review. Mr. Van Embden let Mr. Vandegrift know that if he gets the proper paperwork in, he could get heard as soon as next months meeting. But he could give an informal presentation tonight.

We, Pigment Holdings LLC, have approval from the State (of NJ). Mr. Vandegrift is the CEO. They currently hold a conditional license for a Tier 6 cultivation & Tier 2 manufacturing cannabis license. Endorsed for zoning & preference letters from the State. Sockwell Rd. property will be obtained by Mr. Vandegrift through sale. Identified some “bottlenecks” in the industry regarding electrical switch gears, panels, etc. They can build the development but won’t be able to turn the lights on. They contacted the Cannabis Regulatory Commission to seek permission for a temporary facility, then will phase into the other location when available. Mr. Vandegrift contacted the Superintendent of the School Board (Commercial Township) to inquire about purchasing the decommissioned middle school for operations for his cannabis business. He was informed that the State will be holding an auction on Sept. 15th, 2022, and he will submit a bid contingent on the zoning being approved. If necessary, they may seek temporary zoning approval until a more permanent solution is obtained. They would like to utilize the facility to cultivate & manufacture cannabis products.

Mr. VanEmbden inquired about the length of a temporary location for the operation. Mr. Vandegrift informed Mr. VanEmbden that the manufacturer told him that the wait time for the switch gear that’s needed is 53 weeks. To operate a Tier 6 operation a total of 150,000 sq ft of canopy space for the facility as well as 35 megawatts is needed. Currently the available grid has 2 megawatts which would have powered the decommissioned school.

Mr. VanEmbden brought up the subject of the property on Sockwell Rd. & that it cannot accommodate the needs of the facility. Mr. Vandegrift stated that the Sockwell property will be able to accommodate those requirements. Mr. VanEmbden addressed the need for water source, electric, disposal, ability to secure & manage the facility & meet the compliance regulations. Mr. VanEmbden addressed the need for electric to operate which is a huge component for running these facilities. His concern is regarding the decommissioned school being centered in a residential area. He states that it may or may not comply with the current zoning ordinance(s) of the Township. He questioned the need for a temporary placement versus a permanent placement for the business and the length of time requested.

Mr. Vandergrift stated that he has been in contact with Atlantic City Electric (aka AC Electric) regarding the need for the higher wattage. He also mentions that his cannabis business will be the only one operating in the local area. Mr. VanEmbden addressed the other companies also searching for facilities that can accommodate the electrical needs. He states that industrial parks are being sought as possible venues for this requirement due to their locations. Mr. Vandegrift said that AC Electric agrees that southern New Jersey is underdeveloped in this area for the infrastructure that would benefit the needs of the local communities. Mr. VanEmbden states that Atlantic City Electric recently attended a meeting in Downe Township to seek approvals to upgrade the services in that area which also feeds electricity to Port Norris. Per Mr. Vandergrift, according to the Engineer for AC Electric, a new substation would have to be built between Port Norris & Millville to help supply the facility & community. Mr. Vandergrift’s company would then pay for half of the work needed & AC Electric will cover the other half of the cost. Mr. VanEmbden stated that he believes the electric company is working to begin this project. Mr. Vandegrift is hoping this will help improve the infrastructure of the town’s needs.

Mr. VanEmbden stated the approvals have also not passed in Lawrence Township due to the same argument regarding proper wattage from Atlantic City Electric. Mr. Vandegrift states that he’s had conversations with the electric company & they agree that we do not have the type of power grid that will be required, so they will either come up with a temporary solution or something permanent. Mr. Vandegrift has been aware from the start of this venture that the electricity would be an issue & is hoping to phase into production as the parts needed for the facility become available. He then addresses the possible ownership of the decommissioned school. His company would like to eventually pass along the school to another company for the same use so that it remains an active structure within the town. Mr. VanEmbden informed Mr. Vandegrift that all special zoning permits would stay with the property itself, not the owner(s) for further use.

Mr. VanEmbden instructs Mr. Vandergrift the formal application process to the Land Use Board. Further discussion was among the Board members regarding how the school is zoned & what type of permit would be needed. Also, concerns with the surrounding residents may be addressed when the application is submitted.

Mr. Vandegrift informed the Board that he is also seeking a license for a testing facility & retail license. Sockwell is zoned accordingly for those uses. Mr. VanEmbden questioned whether the Township has authorized the sale of cannabis, Mr. Vizzard confirmed that it has approved that measure. Mr. Vandegrift states that his company was looking to purchase property on Buckshutem for the retail side of the business.

Mr. VanEmbden advised Mr. Vandegrift to seek legal counsel to represent him & his company for the application. The attorney will be able to advise Mr. Vandegrift of variances & ordinances that will pertain to the application. Mr. Vandegrift states that he will have to get all the approvals by Nov. 5th, 2022, according to the conditional licensing guidelines. He is also aiming for the facility to be permanently placed on Sockwell, however, he is also making up back-up plans in the meantime.

Ms. Smith questioned the sale of the school. Mr. Vandegrift will be submitting a bid for auction; the Superintendent & School Board still reserves the right to approve the next tenant for the school. Ms. Smith also inquired about more details for the Sockwell property. Mr. Vandegrift addressed the physical description of the land. He also explained that they researched the area regarding places of worship, school children, & the neighbors. A member of the public asked about the odor of the operation. Mr. Vandegrift explained the ventilation system will dispel any cumbersome odors.

Another question was asked about possible demolition of parts of the decommissioned school. Mr. Vandergrift addressed those concerns stating that none would be necessary because the building provides the schematics that they need. He also detailed the growing process. He addressed the issue of lighting & security.

**BILL LIST**

*None*

**APPROVE BILL LIST**

*NO BILL LIST*

**OPEN TO PUBLIC**

A motion was made to open the meeting to the public by Mr. Wheatly and seconded by Mr. Nardone. All were in favor, none opposed.

A motion was made to close the meeting to the public by Mr. Wheatly seconded by Mr. Nardone. All were in favor, none opposed.

**ADJORN MEETING**

With no other business, a motion was made by the Chairperson to adjourn the meeting.

All were in favor, none opposed.

Stefanie Muessig

Board Secretary

Next meeting: August 24, 2022