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Open Space & Stewardship
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MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Board
From: Lauren A. Wasilauski, Open Space & Stewardship Director
Date: November 15, 2023
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 8/14/2023 (21 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 6/29/2023 (6 sheets)
- Application package

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) 3-story building, comprised of 123,295 square feet, and one (1) smaller 1-story building comprised of 9,907 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: 42.5' and 3 stories proposed where 30' and 2.5 stories are permitted
 - b. FAR variance: 1.02 proposed where 0.2 is permitted
 - c. Minimum rear yard setback: 49.9' proposed where 50' is required

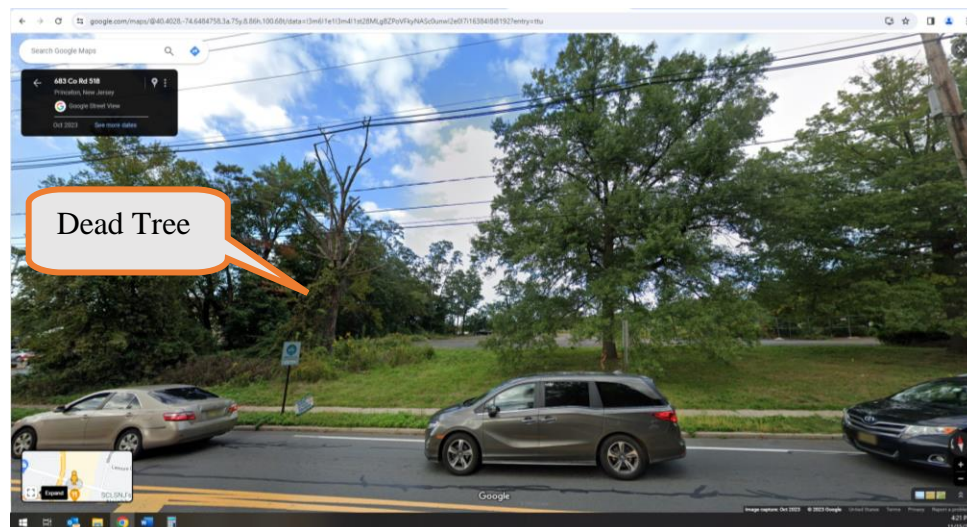
- d. Maximum lot coverage: 58.8% proposed where 55% is permitted
- e. Building square footage: 130,158 square feet proposed where 50,000 square feet is permitted
- f. Façade sign: 75 square feet proposed where 50 square feet is permitted

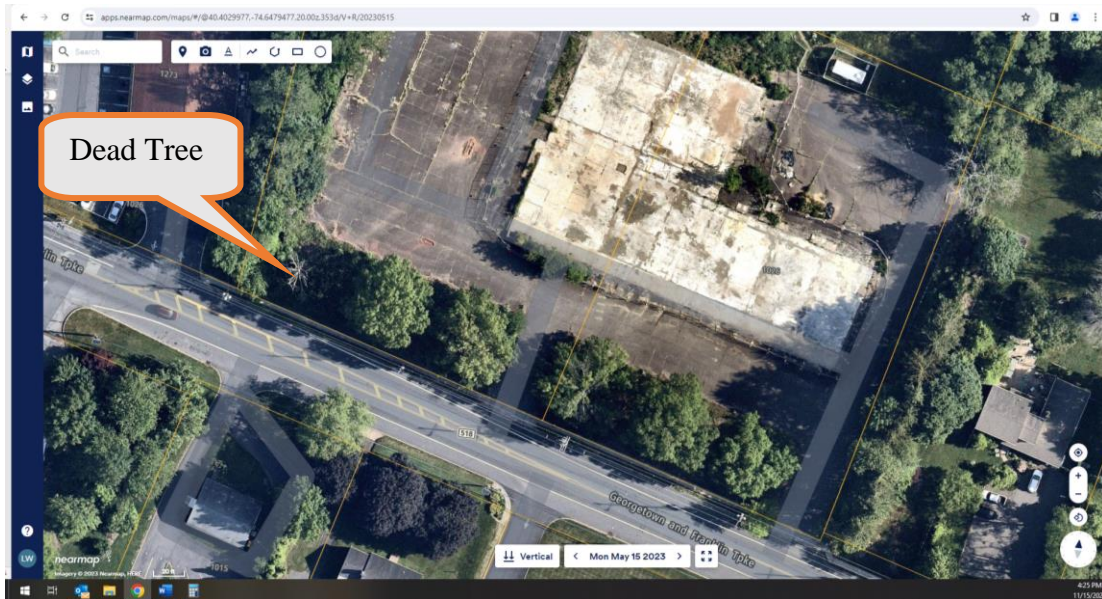
B. Sidewalks & Pedestrian Safety

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.

C. Tree Planting and Landscaping

1. **Tree Removal:** Based upon the provided survey, 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).





- a. These very large trees (30-36" DBH) are proposed for removal per sheet 3.
 - i. **This office strongly suggests that every effort should be made to preserve the live 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 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. 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.

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

² "Water & Forests – the role trees play in water quality." Georgia Pacific. August 1999.

https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5269813.pdf

- b. The Applicant appears to propose seven (7) shade trees along the road frontage. Ordinance requirement not satisfied.
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 13 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 not satisfied.
 - c. 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.
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 planting notes on sheet 10 should be revised to comply with this requirement.
7. This office recommends deer protection be installed around new plantings in order to prevent browsing and deer rub. The Open Space and Shade Tree Committees have had the most success with 4’ tall wire mesh fencing and wooden stakes. After the trees mature, the fence and stakes can be removed.

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.

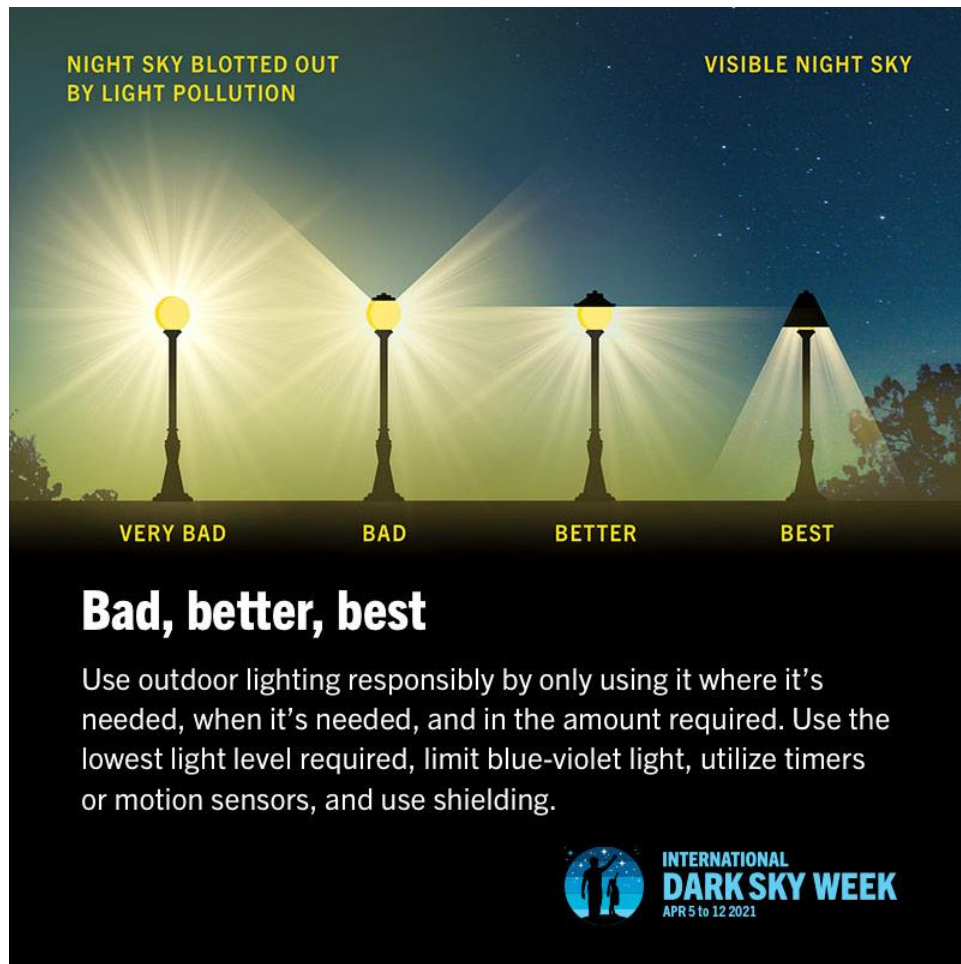
2. Township Code Section 16-5.6e requires conservation easement or conservation easement deed restrictions on all critical areas (e.g. steep slopes, stream corridor, wetlands).
3. The Environmental Impact Assessment does not mention the steep slopes, but indicates the existing site topography is a result of previous development of the lot and others in the vicinity. 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 58.8% of the lot with impervious surfaces, where 55% is permitted.
2. As discussed in detail in Section C1 above, the Applicant proposes to remove five very large live trees 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 these trees.

F. Lighting

1. The Applicant proposes to use the "Miranda wall sconce", 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.
4. The site plan indicates a building mounted sign on the larger building's south façade. No detail of the sign could be located on the architectural drawings. The Applicant should provide details on the proposed sign and any proposals for lighting.
5. The Board, should approval be granted, should condition their approval that any site lighting be directed downward, shielded when possible, and use a color temperature no greater than 3000K.



6. 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.