

**CITY OF ENGLEWOOD
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
October3, 2013 at 8:00PM**

Roll Call:

Present: Marvin Anhalt, Chairman
James Demetrakis, Vice Chairman
Lewis Baer
Timothy Dacey
David Maron
Adam Brown
Mayor Frank Huttle
Michael Kates, Esq., Planning Board Attorney
Lauren Vande Vaarst, City Clerk

Absent: Councilman Marc Forman
Curtis Caviness
Toni Fay
Emily Mann
Deborah Gallagher, Planning Board Secretary

Chairman Anhalt called the meeting to order and stated that adequate notice of this meeting was given by the posting, filing and distribution of the notice as required by the Open Public Meetings Act.

Item #1:

Case: 2013-8

Applicant: Smoke Chophouse/Sofia
Block: 1207 Lot: 11
Address: 36 Engle Street
Site Plan Approval

A duly noticed hearing was conducted on this application for site plan approval. Appearing for applicant, Brian Chewcaskie, Esq., Gittleman, Muhlstock & Chewcaskie LLP, 2200 Fletcher Avenue, 5th Floor, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024.

Michael Kates, Esq. said that the Affidavit of Publication and proof of notice are in order.

Mr. Chewcaskie explained that they have identified numerous existing variances on the property and the applicant is asking for a variance in regard to the rear yard. The rear yard will be encroached upon for a foyer and 6 feet is required but the applicant is proposing for 3 feet 6 inches. One witness will be testifying, Conrad Roncati, architect and there may be one signage variance proposed but he will allow Mr. Roncati to explain that.

Sworn to testify on behalf of the applicant is Conrad Roncati, R. A., Architectura, Two Executive Plaza, Suite 600, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024. Registered architect in NJ. Admitted by Chairman Marvin Anhalt as architect qualified to testify.

Two sets of drawings were submitted with the application, a site plan to be labeled as A1 and two architectural drawings to be collectively labeled as A2. Conrad Roncati explained that building had been approved previously for use as a restaurant and applied for a demolition permit for the building and once that was done they were better able to assess the structure. Building was always two stories and restaurant occupied both with the lower level located below grade. Restaurant will reopen as Sofia and will be modern in concept. Front façade as it has existed for years has been greatly deteriorated with

water infiltration and the rendering of the new façade will be labeled as A3. Height of new building will be actually 16 feet 5 inches tall while the old building was 26 feet tall. From the street you will not see second floor because the lower level is below grade nor will you see the proposed addition. Proposed addition will be comprised of a two story structure with a lower one story addition and it extends 49 feet from building and for most of the structure is 6 feet from property line in the rear but a small protrusion will be only 3 feet 6 inches from the rear property line and is the reason for the variance request.

Further reviewed plans and discussed outdoor seating, with a seating capacity of 28 that will be located on roof of lower level and will not be seen from the street.

Chairman Anhalt asked where rear door goes to. Mr. Roncati explained that there is an existing easement between this property and the Bell/Verizon building regarding deliveries and this door will be used for emergency access.

Mayor Huttle asked if the easement is in perpetuity and it is.

David Maron spoke about two doors on the lower elevation of the site plan (A1) but he does not see them reflected on the floor plans (A2). Mr. Roncati explained that these doors no longer exist and was pulled from the design. Asked if there are any parking requirements for the proposed plans and Mr. Roncati explained that the existing restaurant was granted parking approvals for 135 seats and the new restaurant will not exceed 135 seats (plans reflect 127 seats) so there are no additional parking requirements.

Lewis Baer asked if they will continue the valet parking service. The owner will make that determination once they have opened.

James Demetrakis asked what type of restaurant operation will they conduct, and Mr. Roncati explained that they will continue as a steakhouse which will also offer continental cuisine and will be a fine dining establishment. Also asked if applicant was the original purchaser of Smoke and he is.

Chairman Anhalt asked why they could not move the door over by 3 feet and then they could have easily complied and not needed a variance. Mr. Roncati explained that the vestibule could not be pulled back because it conflicts with the rear bar access.

Lewis Baer asked about stairs located near the vestibule. Mr. Roncati explained that these stairs are exterior only and for emergency access.

Mr. Roncati disseminated a signage hand out to the board members which was labeled A4 to explain the signage proposal. They are proposing non flashing 8" high red neon tube lettering located on the building façade that will be only 3 feet 6 inches in length; the City ordinance does not allow a neon sign unless it is a window sign and only white neon is allowed. A two-sided blade sign that will project out 36" from the building with 4" high lettering and not illuminated is also being proposed and will be mounted at 9 feet; City ordinance requires that a projecting sign cannot be mounted lower than 8 feet.

David Maron stated that this is why we need flexibility in design review. What can the City do to protect itself from inappropriate signs? Chairman Anhalt explained that all applications reviewed by the board stand on their own and the City can approve them based on their merits.

James Demetrakis also spoke about the size and quality of design of the sign being proposed and that it is more than acceptable.

Adam Brown spoke about parking on an informational basis and that in the future the owner may want to consult with the EEDC regarding shared parking.

Mayor Huttie asked if the applicant has any idea as to how they will be handling parking. Mr. Chewcaskie explained that it will be street parking and once they are open the owner will determine if valet parking needs to be reinstated.

The Board voted as follows:

PB Member	Motion	Second	Vote
Anhalt			Y
Demetrakis			Y
Baer			Y
Caviness			AB
Dacey			Y
Fay			AB
Maron			Y
Huttie	X		Y
Brown		X	Y
Mann			AB
Forman			AB

No public comments received.

Motion to approve minutes of August 22, 2013:

PB Member	Motion	Second	Vote
Anhalt			Y
Demetrakis			Y
Baer		X	Y
Caviness			AB
Dacey	X		Y
Fay			AB
Maron			Y
Brown			Y

Lewis Baer updated the board on the Master Plan. The subcommittee had a very substantive meeting and for the next board meeting is looking to provide a revised draft with specific bullet points, approximately 6-10, that need to be addressed. Mr. Maron is the only board member that has provided recommendations and Mr. Baer reminded the rest of the board that they need to get their recommendations in to him as soon as possible because we are in the final stages, and plan on discussing this at the October 24, 2013 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM. Motion to adjourn Chairman Anhalt, second Mr. Brown, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted

Lauren Vande Vaarst