TRANSCRIPT OF
TOWN OF EASTCHESTER PLANNING BOARD MEETING
JANUARY 23, 2020

HELD AT: Eastchester Town Hall
40 Mill Road
Eastchester, New York 10709
7:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

CHAIRMAN JAMES BONANNO
MARK CUNNINGHAM, MEMBER
PHILIP NEMECEK, MEMBER
LOUIS CAMPANA, MEMBER

EASTCHESTER EMPLOYEES IN ATTENDANCE:

MARGARET UHLE, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
ROBERT TOBOLCO, DEPUTY TOWN ATTORNEY
JAY EISEN, BUILDING INSPECTOR
CAROL PIETRO, SECRETARY

Dina M. Morgan, Reporter
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Dina M. Morgan, Reporter

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THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening. This is the town of Eastchester Planning Board meeting of January 23, 2020. If everyone would rise for the Pledge of Allegiance, please.

(Whereupon the Pledge of Allegiance was said.)

THE CHAIRMAN: So we're going to take attendance first. We have a new board member I would like to welcome, Mr. Louis Campana. Mark has been here forever, so Mark Cunningham is present.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: Present.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm the new second most junior person, and I'm starting my 11th year now.

THE CHAIRMAN: We appreciate your presence. Jim Bonanno is here.

The first application of the year, and the only one for the evening, is Application 20-10, 118 Brook Street, Wood and Fire. If the architect would come up and run us through.

MS. UHLE: Grab the microphone. If

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you could bring the microphone because we have a stenographer.

MR. PIETRO SANTI: Good evening.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD, MR. CHAIRMAN, MS. UHLE,
MR. KING, AND WELCOME TO THE NEW BOARD MEMBER.

My name is Bruno Pietro Santi. I'm the architect representing Wood and Fire. The restaurant that we're speaking of is on Brook Street.

It's formally known as the Mezza Luna

Restaurant. It has been re-branded to Wood and Fire, which is part of the partnership of the Wood and Fire that's in Pleasantville, New York. It's part of a restaurant group.

Back in October of 2018, we came before this board to have an approval of an outdoor terrace area, which we have some slight modifications on. In addition to that, we also are looking to expand the restaurant at the second floor, which previously had offices there many years ago legally. So we're looking to expand the dining area up there because the terrace area is kind of seasonal, and it seems that their business is doing much better and it looks like they could use the added space, so

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1. bar mainly for service but someone could sit there and wait for a table or just go for a drink, things of that nature. We also have a small, little lounge area for people who are waiting or someone who wants to do a very informal kind of, you know, sit down, have a drink and maybe some appetizers type of thing rather than require a table. So those are the changes that we made that.

Internally, we are making some modifications to the staircase which leads to the second floor which opens directly onto the dining room. The upstairs has been opened up so that we have our seating. We also added some outdoor seating on a little terrace up top, which is really right now a flat roof over a part of the restaurant, the lower level.

It's one story of the two story. There will be some tables there and patio doors that lead out to that. For the most part, they're looking for that more for looks, but it's also a good spot for expansion. The railing that's going to go around that will match the railing of the lower level terrace. We also have a terrace.

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1. we did the front terrace. This railing will match the new railing on the upper floor. This way you get a sense of what that is going to look like. It's kind of a traditional picket with a top rail, double rail top, and the little spindles with decorative elements on it.

These are the tables and chairs which we're going to be using internally. The exterior chairs are the same that we came in with the first time. That hasn't changed.

This is the seating of the interior. I'm not sure that's in purview of the board, but we figured we'll show you what the idea is. We're trying to make it kind of a hip, you know, very upscale kind of interesting place for a young crowd to come in. So a lot of the theme in here is kind of like a red, you know, red tops, you know, a lot of enhancements, rustic wood, red tile, things of that nature, kind of give it a real kind of neat look. That's that.

This is the side staircase that we spoke about. Everything else is basically the same. I haven't really done much more.

So the reason why we're here, I guess...

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it's an improvement or a modification of a
special permit.

MS. UHLE: Yes. One thing that I did
not include in my notes and I need to clarify,
a response that I gave to Louis a few minutes
ago, it was noticed as a public hearing, but
this is considered preliminary review because
they also need to go to the Architectural
Review Board before they come back to you.

What you're getting is an amended special
permit for the outdoor dining, an amendment for
the special permit for the restaurant as a
whole, and then Architectural Review approval
and site plan approval for the outdoor dining
and the staircase.

MR. PIETROSIANTI: I leave that up to
you. You're the expert on that.

Other than the board making
recommendations for us to go to the
Architectural Review Board, which I guess is
one of the options, I'm not sure whether the
approval of the special use permit needs to be
done now or afterwards.

MS. UHLE: They actually can't approve

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the special permit until it goes to the
Architectural Review Board and then comes back,
but they can certainly give you any comments if
they would like to see changes, or if you're
satisfied with everything, then it --

MR. PIETROSIANTI: We present that to
the Architectural Review Board that you made
those comments and come back to your board.

THE CHAIRMAN: For now we're just
making comments?

MS. UHLE: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is our opportunity
to ask questions about the application.

There's one here maybe you could just point out
to me. There's a 15 by 40 foot off-street
loading area on the right side of the building;
do you have that on the site plan?

MR. PIETROSIANTI: That's the site plan
right here. This is kind of the existing area
that we have now. I just pointed it out.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's existing, you're
just marking it as such.

MR. TUDISCO: Mr. Chairman, I had a
question. Margaret, because of the added

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up the record. If you want to come up, you're
welcome to make a comment on the microphone.

MR. NEMECEK: We also need to know
who's commenting so that we can later take you
to task.

MR. PIETROSAINTI: These are
photographs and there's a radius map here.

MR. NEMECEK: I am a little concerned
with the parking. I have not been to the
restaurant since it changed from Mezza Luna,
but I was a frequent diner at Mezza Luna, and I
remember it was challenging to get parking
particularly on the site. It wasn't that long
ago that you came before us with the proposal
for outdoor dining, and I remember I asked you
same fairly pointed questions about, you know,
Isn't this going to increase -- I think the
suggestion was the outdoor dining was to give
people options. I said, isn't your goal to
fill every seat you have, and you admitted,
yes, on a good day that's what we want to do.
It sounds like you succeeded beyond, perhaps,
even your wildest expectations, and that's with
reconfiguration of the outdoor seating to

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maximize, as you said, what was approved on the
plan back in October 2018, which I believe it
was six seater, and I understand
completely that idea that if you break it into
two seats, you don't have the party of three
that has an empty seat, or even worse yet a
party of two that's using that. I would think
that's a very effective way of potentially
increasing the number of diners at any given
point. It's as many as 32 people, if you hit
it perfectly, are eating outside right now.
You're talking about adding another six
upstairs, you're talking -- I don't know the
exact number in the indoor second floor dining
area, but as Mr. Campana said, we're talking
about a 70 percent increase. My concern is
that, yes, we know that there's other parking
in the vicinity, and the good news is I'm
thinking the restaurant is principally most
likely to have, you know, diners in the evening
hours when there probably is less of a demand
for that parking than there is during the
day -- bear with me -- I want to make sure that
I understand the legal conformity with the 19

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spaces, that takes into account the square
footage of the building and that hasn't
changed; right?

MS. UHLE: That's correct, and it does
not take into account any of the outdoor
dining. You have the authority to either
require that they provide additional parking,
which obviously they can't on this site, or to
limit the number of seats for the outdoor
dining.

MR. NEMECEK: Okay. That was my
understanding of what we had the ability to do
when this applicant was previously before us
and we chose not to. But now because of the
success of the restaurant and an understandable
desire to maximize the amount of seating, this
is a pretty big step forward.

MR. PIETROSAINTI: I just have one
comment, if I may. You also have to understand
that this is a seasonal element. So any time
I've been here -- and pretty typical for most
of these restaurants that have outdoor seats --
people tend to want to sit outside when it's
that season, and you really have hardly anybody

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factors here that we have to consider. Also,
some of this outdoor seating which we've
counted that are on the balconies, most likely
they're not going to be used all the time
either. They're really more for appearance.
That you have to take into account. If they do
have a situation where they have a party,
they're willing to do valet, have an attendant
out there to valet.

THE CHAIRMAN: With valet you still
need the parking.

MR. TUDISCO: I think your client
wants to address the board. Come on up to the
microphone and just introduce yourself.

MR. CARENZO: How are you? Umberto
Carenza from Wood and Fire.

We currently do valet now. We valet
Wednesday through Sunday. We have two valet
guys out there that are there every night.
They're double lining up the cars. We're
sometimes getting up to somewhere up to 30 to
34 cars in the lot. So they're accommodating
the parking.

THE CHAIRMAN: Valet keeps the cars in
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there, especially across the street at the
meters, they're all empty.

THE CHAIRMAN: You put them in
Cermelo's lot if you have that?

MR. CARENZO: Cermele let's us use his
lot sometimes. He says, if you have overflow,
park them across the street in my lot. We have
a good relationship. We've been neighbors for
years. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. So last
time you were here you -- you could put the
radius of the available parking up. Could you
put it up there so Gary could zoom in on it? I
think when you were here last, you probably
convinced us there was enough parking nearby.

MR. PIETROSANTI: This circle here
represents the area, and I have calculations
for the 300 here that shows what we have, and
this is in addition to the --

MR. NEMECZK: 19/34.

MR. PIETROSANTI: We have about 68
public parking spaces close by. Obviously, the
handicapped is farther away, it won't help you,
but it's just in the calculations. You do have
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68 parking spaces between the public lot out
here, which I think for the most part is used
for -- you may have some residents in this
area, and then we have all these parking spaces
here on the street. Those are all public
spots.

THE CHAIRMAN: At the time you were
here and we talked about that, we didn't talk
about valet. I imagine they were not valeting
at the time?

MR. PIETROSANTI: We may have
mentioned it, but I don't think we anticipated
our parking. It's something that
entered the equation.

MR. PIETROSANTI: Yes. I wasn't aware
a hundred percent. I know that he had the
option to do so. He may have done it now and
again for a party.

MR. CAMPANA: In the back part of the
lot, there's a buffer area around the perimeter
in the side yard and year yard.

MR. PIETROSANTI: Yes.

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MR. CAMPANA: You're proposing a steel trellis with some planting on it. I like the idea. How is that going to be maintained?

MR. PIETROSANTI: That's going to change. I forgot to mention that. They actually put a solid fence back there to match the fence that they had already up on the other end of the site, but we do have plantings in front of it on the inside part, but the white fence is on the other side. I think they had plantings on that end too. There was planting there already.

MR. CAMPANA: I thought it was a great idea. It looks like there's up lighting too that's going to highlight that when you're in that garden area.

MR. PIETROSANTI: I think the positive end of the solid fence is it helps to buffer any sounds going across and visual a little better than with the planting. I think in hindsight it might work better as a solid because it respects the neighbors' visual and maybe sound impacts.

MR. NEMECEK: Have there been any complaints from the neighbors about the outdoor seating?

MR. PIETROSANTI: I don't think about --

MS. UHLE: We received one complaint, I believe, about noise. Was it a noise complaint? Yes, we received a noise complaint, one.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's not so bad.

MS. UHLE: I believe it was just one complaint from the neighbor.

MR. PIETROSANTI: Before he comes up, there's also about 30, 40 feet distance from that fence to the house.

MR. CARENZO: There was a noise complaint at one time that was from the neighbor behind us. He thought it was coming from us. We don't have no music outside, nothing like that. There was a private party that was going on on the side of us, and they had a tent and they had a DJ out there and they were playing music and he thought it was. He call me complaining. I said, listen, it's not us. It wasn't something that we had going on.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's why I'm bringing...
it up now, so we can discuss it before they come back.

MS. UHLE: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: To make sure that you could accommodate the cars.

MR. PIETROSANTI: That would be the only question you would have? Other than that, is there any other --

MR. CAMPANA: I would just say it may work to your benefit to have the Fire Department just review the drawings for the outdoor seating just to make sure, you know, they feel it's a safe condition just considering the number of seats out there.

MS. UHLE: Did you do that yet? Did you meet with the Fire Department at all?

MR. PIETROSANTI: We haven't. I was under the impression that that just goes through the normal review process.

MS. UHLE: Between now and when it gets back to you, we'll make sure that the Fire Department reviews it because they do go out and inspect these and they do look to see how far apart tables are spaced and that kind of thing.

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thing. So we'll make sure that we do that prior to the next meeting and that you're involved in it.

MR. PIETROSANTI: They may want to look at it too because of the stair exit.

MR. NEMECHEK: One thing that they may want to factor in as well, although there are only 19 spaces, it seems that due to the doubling up and the valet, that that area outside may be a lot more congested.

THE CHAIRMAN: What I'm going to ask is maybe since we're going to talk about valet again, you could do a layout of parking valet to show us how many cars you could put in there so we could see what it looks like.

MR. PIETROSANTI: A plan that shows what a valet plan would look like.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, because I think when you come back we're going to talk about it.

MS. UHLE: I also think it sounds to me to a large extent they're valeting as a courtesy to their customers, but if they were to exceed the capacity, there sounds like

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there's plenty of metered parking people could use as well.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: It's just a safety thing really.

MR. PIETROSANTI: It's not like they're going for approval for a lack of parking that you require a valet plan, it's just for convenience purposes, and I don't think they have a problem showing you a plan.

THE CHAIRMAN: You could see how it fits with everything else on the site.

MR. NEMECHEK: It does strike me, though, that -- and the reason that I think many of us are so focused on the parking is because generally almost any commercial establishment in the town of Eastchester parking is an issue, especially on the north, especially in that area we've had this issue come up, and just the sheer percentage of the potential increase in diners that would be afforded by approving this application as is, it seems counterintuitive that there's no increase -- that the town's requirements don't call for any increase in the amount of parking.

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So we realize that it's a sensitive issue to begin with, and we want to make sure that we fully explored it because we have the opportunity to do so because you're coming before us and asking us to approve something.

MR. PIETROSANTI: We understand your concerns, and we'll try to address them as best we can.

MR. TUDISCO: Chairman, do we need to open up the public hearing?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry.

MR. TUDISCO: Do we need to open the public hearing?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, you're right, we do. I forgot how to do this.

I make a motion to open the public hearing on Application 20-01, 118 Brook Street.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: Second.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favor.

(All aye.)

THE CHAIRMAN: We will leave it open until we meet again. Thank you.

I'll make a motion to refer this application to the Architectural Review Board.

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MR. NEMECEK: Second.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favor.

(All aye.)

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: Good luck, guys.

THE COURT: We'll see you in a couple

of months. Thanks, guys, have a good night.

Can we do any meeting minutes?

MS. UHLE: You need to vote on all of

these minutes, and legally you are permitted to

vote on the minutes even if you did not attend

the meeting. That would make life easier since

a couple of the members are no longer here.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want an

opportunity to review?

MR. NEMECEK: I think I sent in May

and June, right, way back when?

MS. UHLE: I would believe so, yes.

MR. NEMECEK: I'm pretty positive I

did. I have September, but I haven't reduced

it to an e-mail.

MS. UHLE: Do you want to just vote on

the May and the June?

MR. NEMECEK: December, by the way,

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was so short, no corrections to that.

MS. UHLE: Oh, May, June, and

December.

MR. NEMECEK: If you want, I can --

we'll hold off on September. I have the

revisions. They're pretty minor. I'll send an

e-mail around, this way everyone gets to see

it.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have to review your

revisions.

MS. UHLE: You guys could sometimes

just defer to his --

MR. NEMECEK: I like your idea,

Margaret, they should start deferring to me on

the little things first and then the bigger

things last.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we should

review your revisions, so you have to show your

revisions. Can we just go through this all at

once?

MS. UHLE: I think you're going to

make a motion to approve the May, June, and

December minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good. So I make a

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CERTIFICATION

STATE OF NEW YORK

COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER)

I, DINA M. MORGAN, Court Reporter and

Notary Public within and for the County of

Westchester, State of New York, do hereby
certify:

That the above transcript was taken from

a videotape of the actual hearing. I was not

present for such hearing. The videotape was

taken and transcribed by me to the best of my

ability.

And, I further certify that I am not

related to any of the parties to this action by

blood or marriage, and that I am in no way

interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set

my hand this 12th day of February, 2020.

DINA M. MORGAN

Court Reporter

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