

**BOROUGH OF BERLIN  
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES  
November 12th, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Vice Chairman, D. Pomponio called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

**FLAG SALUTE:**

Vice Chairman, D. Pomponio called for everyone to rise and recite the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT:**

Vice Chairman, D. Pomponio announced that this meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act and has been duly noticed and published by law.

**ROLL CALL:**

The following members answered present to roll call: Mayor Rick Miller, Councilman Millard Wilkinson, Ken Ryker, Dan Pomponio, Wayne Hans, Jeannie Schumacher, Harry Earle

D. Pomponio asked if there were any questions or comments on the minutes for September 9th, 2024, none heard.

**MINUTES:**

A motion to approve September 9th, 2024, minutes was made by M. Wilkinson and seconded by D. Pomponio.

Roll Call:

Mayor R. Miller -ABSTAINED  
Councilman M. Wilkinson-AYE  
K. Ryker-ABSTAINED  
D Pomponio -AYE  
W. Hans -ABSTAINED  
J. Schumacher-ABSTAINED  
H. Earle-ABSTAINED

**RESOLUTIONS:**

**Case 24-02  
Berlin Holdings LLC  
Preliminary Major Site Plan, Final Major Site Plan, Minor Subdivision &  
Bulk "C"-Variance  
White Horse Pike & Pine Ave  
Block 1502 Lot 1, 2, and 3**

A motion to approve the resolution for case 24-02 was made by Mayor R. Miller and seconded by K. Ryker.

Roll Call:

Mayor R. Miller -ABSTAINED  
Councilman M. Wilkinson-AYE  
K. Ryker-ABSTAINED  
D Pomponio -AYE  
W. Hans -ABSTAINED  
J. Schumacher-ABSTAINED  
H. Earle-ABSTAINED

**ZONING OFFICERS REPORT:**

September 2024 reports

D. Pomponio asked if there were any questions or comments on the zoning report for September 2024, none heard.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

**FOR DISCUSSION:**

**The following was forwarded to the Planning Board by the Berlin Borough Board of Education to review for consistency with the Master Plan:**

**1. Plans for the 2025 New Modular Classroom Units at Berlin Community School**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio stated that there are drawings that everyone received in their packets on the 2025 Modular Classroom units along with comments from our professionals. Adam Warburton from Colliers Engineering & Design was at the meeting for any questions on the consistency of the Master Plan for the 2025 Modular Classrooms.**

**Mayor R. Miller also stated that Superintendent Dr. Brenda Harring is here for any questions on the 2025 Modular classrooms.**

**Mayor R. Miller stated that this is basically just an acknowledgement and Berlin Borough's attorney Chris Norman stated, that is correct, it's a capital project and is more along the lines of a courtesy review and determining on what is being proposed, is consistent with the master plan along with any recommendations the board may have but it would be up to the school board if they want to implement on it.**

Vice Chairman D. Pomponio stated that Adam Warburton is acting as Berlin Borough's planner and there is no engineer needed tonight. Mr. Warburton stated that he is here tonight to answer any questions. Mr. Norman went over the legality of what the planning board is to recommend with consistency relevant to the master plan.

Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked Mr. Warburton if he had any concerns regarding the master plan and modular classrooms. Mr. Warburton stated he did not have any concerns, after reading through the master plan and everything that's contained within the goals and objectives of the master plan of the Borough, it is consistent.

Mr. Warburton stated, this can be looked at as a form of infill development, you're not searching for a new location to add more students, it's just adding to an existing. Infill development is one of the goals and objectives within the master plan.

W. Hans asked if this is temporary, Mr. Warburton stated that is correct. W. Hans then asked how long the modular were going stay there and Councilman M. Wilkinson asked if they were buying them, and Dr. Brenda Haring stated they were purchased.

Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked since this is just for discussion purposes, if the superintendent can come up to the podium for discussion.

Mr. Norman stated that there is no need to be sworn in but if there was any information that she would like to provide the board substantively.

Dr. Brenda Haring stepped up to the podium and introduced herself. Dr. Brenda Haring stated that she is serving as the interim superintendent at Berlin Community School. She started in August of 2023 with a two-year contract. In January, we decided that we wanted to look into preschool funding. The state has made significant contributions to allocating a significant amount of money for preschool funding, 120 million across the state, and they allocated an additional 20 million for a competitive preschool program. We had conversations at the board level and I, along with my elementary principal and Camden County Ed Commission did participate in a competitive process and we earned \$1.66 million for the district for three- and four-year-old programs. There will be a full day preschool. We have set up local funds, for us to start with three classrooms to open in September and then opening an additional eight classrooms and this unit is allowing us to expand because now that we've received the funding, we are no longer competitive. We are now funded for preschool based on the number of students that we project, which we project each November. When you're going through that process, you must identify how many students are in your universe, which is our first grade, that number times two and we must have a five-year plan to be able to house 90% of our universe, which is about 149 students. In our school, we will be able to house eight and we'll continue to look at other options, community resources that I think there's dynamic minds, inquiring minds, creative minds, coordinating with private vendors to participate. Eventually we would need 11 classrooms to be able to fulfill the universe by the end of five years. The modulares have four classrooms, and bathrooms as well as a staff bathroom. One of the things with preschool funding is that you are not allowed to place preschool students in them. I don't

know why; I've put these in many districts that I've been in and they're gorgeous, but for whatever reason, part of the preschool funding, you're not allowed to put the preschool students in there. So, we are shifting our kindergarten population because part of the regulations for kindergarten and preschool is you either have a bathroom in the classroom or you must walk outside of the classroom and be in eyesight of a bathroom. This would allow our kindergarten population to at least walk out and there would be a bathroom right there, we are planning on making that transition. It's a very aggressive plan. Dr. Brenda Harring stated that because she is an interim, and this is a massive undertaking for a superintendent and she doesn't know who's going to be the person that fills her shoes after she is gone, she wants to make sure that the district is set up and in good shape when she leaves. Dr. Brenda Harring then stated that is why this is moving as quickly as it's moving right now.

Councilman M. Wilkinson then asked if they have commitments to fill these classrooms?

Dr. Brenda Harring stated that they are currently serving 41 students in our classrooms. We have three classrooms that opened in September. We had 27 students on our wait list, which when we had our lottery in the spring, those students are automatically being enrolled. We had five teachers on the agenda in October and then we currently have 28 students. I have a third list going if that number does not exceed 42. I can take all those students in; we can have up to 109 students.

Councilman M. Wilkinson then asked if they are all Berlin Borough and Dr. Brenda Harring stated that they must be Berlin Borough residents.

Councilman M. Wilkinson asked if this is a one-time grant. Dr. Brenda Harring stated no, it's been around for over 20 years. Dr. Brenda Harring stated that when she was superintendent in Waterford, they applied for it and their residents had the same concern, Dr. Brenda Harring then went on to explain that this basically offers free daycare for three- and four-year-olds and is setting them up educationally because they're going to have the foundation. The funding, that is a big push in education right now, is early childhood. We must project for next year so, every November we project our numbers, and I guess they prepare their budget based on the numbers of all the preschool districts and create their budget and then you get your numbers like any funding in your state aid title. It has become part of our state aid funding.

Councilman M. Wilkinson asked if the employees are considered permanent, or are they paid through the grant.

Dr. Brenda Harring stated that they are funded for up to eight classrooms. There are eight preschool teachers as of right now, I'm anticipating opening four classrooms. So, I would still have one classroom, so that it could potentially open. I don't know if I'll have the numbers for that just yet. But I can have eight teachers, one floating teacher and eight power professionals and all their benefits. Everything is paid for, any supplies, furniture desks, tables, is all paid for through the funding. We created a budget and this year the

**budget was 1.66 million. Right now, we are projecting 109 students. So, then they'll give us our budget for next year and we'll have to create a budget aside from this.**

**Councilman M. Wilkinson asked if they must create a separate budget aside from this. Dr. Brenda Harring stated, yes and then she went on to say that it's very exciting, not only for the district educationally but for the community financially because young families that have three- and four-year-old children now have a place that their children go full time**

**H. Earle asked if it was full time, Monday through Friday, Dr. Brenda Harring stated yes.**

**W. Hans asked if they would eat lunch there and Dr. Brenda Harring stated they will have family-style lunch within their classroom.**

**Councilman M. Wilkinson asked if there will be busing for the kids. Dr. Brenda Harring stated yes.**

**Mayor R. Miller talked about the outsource to the other daycares, that will be for parents who can't get their kids on the bus or take them home. So, they would start in a daycare, preschool program inside the daycare and then go back to the daycare so the parents can drop them off in the morning and pick them up at night and they're still getting their preschool education in the middle.**

**Councilman M. Wilkinson then talked about the conflated problem between the preschool drop offs and the busing.**

**Dr. Brenda Harring stated that she is aware and that was one of the first things she was trying to fix, that dismissal because there's only the one way in and out. What they did is create a tiered system, so the preschoolers are starting at nine o'clock. The first round is at 7:40, our second round is about 8:20 then the third one is at 9:00am.**

**W. Hans stated that he worked on one of these projects before and people complained about the rain and the snow, so is there any concern about putting an overhead canopy going from the new modular classroom units into the school. Dr. Brenda Harring stated that part of the plan is to have a 20 to 30 ft canopy. It was discussed in October that potentially in the future, there will be a canopy and half walls for the kindergartners.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked when this would all start.**

**Dr. Brenda Harring stated that they are anticipating receiving the permits sometime this week, the 20<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we are getting ready with trenching, electrical, plumbing, and footers, then the paving is the 22<sup>nd</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup> and then the 25<sup>th</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup>, the mobile classrooms will be delivered. We must open these four classrooms by January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the state would not give us any forgiveness or leeway.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio confirmed that they must be ready operational by January, Dr. Brenda Harring stated yes, they are already built and ready to go, they just need to be**

**put together. We have to transition our kindergarten into the mobile classrooms and then welcome our new three and four year olds into our school. We are going to be very busy over the next couple of months.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio confirmed construction is going to start next week, Dr. Brenda Harring stated yes.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked Mr. Warburton if he had any thing to add and Mr. Warburton stated, no, as I said, earlier this could be viewed as a form of infill development for the site, which is a goal within the master plan. So, I would say that this is consistent with the master plan. That would be your recommendation back to the council and if there's any other recommendations you would like to make, you're free to do so, that's basically your task for tonight.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked Dr. Brenda Harring if she had anything to add and she replied, that was all she had and thanked them for their time.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio then asked if anyone else has anything, no other questions.**

**The board secretary stated that permits just needed to be signed off by the construction official, and he should be in tomorrow to sign off on them and once signed off they can be picked up.**

**Mr. Norman stated, a motion must be made, that this is substantially consistent with the master plan.**

**Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked about a letter from CME stating that the project conforms, Mr. Warburton stated that CME had a conflict since his firm represents the schools so his letter will be the letter that will be used instead of CME's.**

**A motion was made by Mayor R. Miller that the plan is in conformance with the master plan and seconded by K. Ryker**

Roll Call:

Mayor R. Miller -AYE

Councilman M. Wilkinson-AYE

K. Ryker-AYE

D Pomponio -AYE

W. Hans -AYE

J. Schumacher-AYE

H. Earle-AYE

**PUBLIC PORTION:**

None Heard

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Mayor R. Miller did let the planning board members know that Stuart Platt and Chris Dochney will be coming out to the council meeting on Thursday and the workshop meeting to discuss the fourth round of coah because the Borough needs to have their plan acknowledged sometime in January. The Borough is in pretty good shape based on the numbers. Vice Chairman D. Pomponio asked if the apartments, where the Dollar General is, does that affect us in terms to the coah, attorney Chris Norman stated that it would be the residential component of that project if they came in and wanted to put a couple of units there, then that would go towards the round. Vice Chairman D. Pomponio stated the proposed units on route 73 would also come in effect on the coah. Mayor R. Miller stated that if the Kmart added a couple of units, that could also offset it.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

None heard

**ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING:**

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30pm was made by J. Schumacher and seconded by W. Hans, all in favor.