



MEMORANDUM

CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK - PLANNING OFFICE
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TO: Norman J. Wayte II, Chairman, Planning Board
FROM: Kenneth A. Mix, Planning and Community Development Coordinator
SUBJECT: Site Plan Approval – 901 Rail Drive, Renzi Foods
DATE: August 31, 2011

Request: Site Plan Approval for the construction of a 14,891 square foot freezer warehouse addition, a 4,368 square foot loading dock expansion, and a fire apparatus road at 901 Rail Drive, parcel 9-43-101.008

Applicant: John R. Walsh, PE of Paradigm Design, Inc.

Proposed Use: Freezer warehouse and Loading Dock.

Property Owner: MLR Realty LLC.

Submitted:

Property Survey: Yes	Preliminary Architectural Drawings: Yes
Site Plan: Yes	Preliminary Site Engineering Plans: Yes
Vehicle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan: Yes	Construction Time Schedule: Yes
Landscaping and Grading Plan: Yes	Description of Uses, Hours & Traffic Volume: No

SEQRA: Unlisted Action	County Planning Board Review Required: No
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Zoning Information:

District: Light Industry	Maximum Lot Coverage: N/A
Setback Requirements: N/A	Buffer Zone Required: No

Project Overview: The applicant is proposing a total of 19,259 square feet of additions to their freezer warehouse facility on Rail Drive, including a 14,891 square foot freezer and a 4,368 square foot loading dock. The proposed freezer will extend 174' southeasterly from the existing building, and the dock will extend 72' northeasterly from the existing. A 20' fire access drive will be constructed, looping from the parking lot around the rear of the building. A drainage swale will be constructed along the interior of the drive, and an 8' retaining wall along a portion of the exterior. The total disturbed area will be 2.44 acres. The nearest residential structure will be approximately 300 feet from the southeast wall of the addition.

General Comments: The submitted plans are in compliance with zoning statutes, and the proposed additions do not overlap the NYSDEC regulated wetlands in the area. The site has limited ingress and egress, but the wholesale nature of the business means that congestion is unlikely. The applicant estimates that the proposed addition will generate an additional 75 trips per day.

The applicant is providing a fire apparatus drive to allow access to the rear of the building, but the path of this access passes through parking lanes. The applicant must depict turn movements for the City Fire Department's ladder truck as it passes through the western end of the parking lot, ensuring that the path of access remains clear even when the parking lot is full. This may be especially troublesome in the winter, when parking aisles tend to become skewed due to snow coverage.

The fire apparatus road must be maintained and plowed year-round to provide access in case of emergency.

The proposed retaining wall reaches a height of 8 feet. The applicant should consider adding a fence or rail along the top for safety.

Water: There are currently three fire hydrants located on the property, all of which are on the north side of the building. The distance from the rear of the proposed addition to the nearest hydrant is about 500 feet—additional hydrants may be required to ensure adequate protection. It should be noted that the Master Site Plan approved in 2003 depicts additional fire hydrants on the south side of the warehouse. Comments from Code Enforcement and the Fire Department are forthcoming.

Drainage & Grading: The existing Infiltration Basins are intended to provide water quality treatment and detention by storing runoff and allowing it to drain into the soil, thereby keeping post-construction stormwater flows at or below pre-construction flows. Flooding at this property has been an ongoing issue over the years, particularly during spring snow melt and rainy seasons. The site is located at a low point adjacent to wetlands and consistently has a high water table. In addition, there are two drainage easements on the property that convey significant runoff flows to the wetlands area.

The owner's Engineer provided drainage calculations and back up documentation, showing that the existing basins are adequately sized for the existing build out as well as the proposed 19,259 square foot addition. The calculations assume two things: the percolation/infiltration rate of the soil's ability to drain the water (without field verification), and that the presence of the high water table is not impacting the basin's function. According to the NYS Stormwater Management Design Manual 2010, the minimum required depth to the seasonally high water table from the bottom elevation of the Infiltration Basin is 3 feet, a threshold which is not achieved on this site.

An inspection of the Infiltration Basins on August 29, 2011 revealed standing water 1 to 2 feet deep and large algae blooms throughout, suggesting the ponds retain water for extended periods of time. Infiltration Basins should be dry except during rain events. The inspection and past history of flooding in the area shows these basins are not functioning properly and that the high water table severely limits their performance.

Further development of the site will increase storm water flows to the basins and exacerbate their already poor performance. The owner should consider taking additional measures such as upland ponds or basins to mitigate flooding on the property, which could potentially hinder emergency access.

The applicant must provide a stamped and signed copy of the SWPPP sent to NYDEC for SPDES permit.

Landscaping: No new landscaping is proposed as part of the project. Current plantings consist of two rows of maple trees flanking a portion of the driveway entrance from Rail Drive. The perimeter of the developed site is primarily a natural wooded area. Because of the relatively rustic condition of surrounding lands, extensive landscaping around the building addition and fire access road is not needed.

The goal of the Planning Board's Landscaping and Buffer Zone Guidelines for existing sites is to gradually bring the sites into compliance with the guidelines. It states that the applicant should make every effort to include new landscaping and buffering as part of any alteration or expansion. One area where landscaping could be included for this site would be around the perimeter of the parking lot. The applicant could install shade trees 40' on center in strategically located areas outside of the traditional snow storage areas on site. Some of the proposed planting areas would likely be located near the stormwater management ponds and the plantings would also be beneficial in stormwater absorption as the trees grow. This would help to mitigate some of the stormwater problems noted above.

Summary:

1. The applicant shall depict turn movements for the City Fire Department's ladder truck as it passes through the western end of the parking lot, ensuring a clear path of access even when the parking lot is full or the aisles are skewed due to snow cover.
2. The fire apparatus road must be maintained and plowed all year.
3. The applicant shall install a fence or safety rail along the top of the retaining wall.
4. The applicant shall provide a stamped and signed copy of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan sent to NYSDEC for SPDES permit.
5. Further development of the site will increase storm water flows to the infiltration basins and exacerbate their already poor performance. The owner should consider taking additional measures such as upland ponds or basins to mitigate flooding on the property.
6. The applicant shall install shade trees 40' on center around the perimeter of the parking lot in strategically located areas outside of the traditional snow storage areas on site, as recommended by the Planning Board's Landscaping and Buffer Zone Guidelines.

cc: Planning Board Members
City Council Members
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