

Pocomoke City  
Board of Appeals Meeting  
March 21, 2024

A meeting was held before the Pocomoke City Board of Zoning Appeals on Thursday, March 21, 2024 in the Council Chambers at City Hall The meeting was called to order at 5:15PM.

Attendance included:

Board Members: Kelly Miller, CL Marshall, CD Hall and David Strauss

Planning Director: Dan Brandewie

Attorney for Board of Appeals: Erica Witz, City Attorney

Meeting was called to order by CL Marshall, Chairman.

Erica Witz asked if there were anyone wishing to testify, that they should be sworn in. Ms. Witz gave the oath to those in attendance.

Planning Director, Dan Brandewie provided his staff report. Copies were delivered to the Board members. A site plan was shown on the exhibit board and basic elevation drawings were further provided to the members. These were entered into the record as exhibits. He also gave copies of two emails received by his office. One email was from Chip Choquette and another from Adam Leonard.

Hardwire is proposing to expand its existing manufacturing operation with the construction of an 80,000 square foot building on its present site located on Clarke Avenue fronting the Pocomoke River. It is likely to be built in two phases according to the owners. The manufacturing process appears to involve heating metal/steel products and bending them to provide improved armor plating for the military. It is estimated that 20 new jobs could be created. This is at the very early design stage but time is of the essence according to the owners.

The site consists of 9.46 acres containing an existing 62,000 sq. ft. manufacturing building with offices. The property is zoned M-1 Industrial. The property is adjacent to a cemetery to the west (outside of City limits) and an active City groundwater well housed within a small building (inside City limits). There are residential uses to the south across the street on Clarke Avenue. Industrial land uses, including an additional Hardwire building and a former transformer site owned by Delmarva Power are located to the east of the property.

Truck traffic and deliveries enter the property off Clarke Avenue with one or two loading dock facilities serving the existing building. Parking consists of approximately 52 spaces onsite. Truck traffic circulation patterns are not expected to change. The building appears to be served by a 6" water line and an 8" sanitary sewer line. Fire hydrants appear to be present along Clarke Avenue. The proposed building is partially located within a regulated flood plain (Zone AE, Elevation 5) and must meet flood plain development standards. The area where the proposed building is to be situated is presently used for storage. The site is secured with a fencing. There appears to be some storm water management ponds or filter strips on site; however final stormwater plans have not been finalized.

The proposed use of the new building appears to be consistent with permitted uses. The proposed building would be located approximately 15 ft. from the City's groundwater pump station property



located off William Street. A 30 ft. setback is required as the City's property is also zoned M-1. The front yard setback is required to be 50' from the property line fronting Clarke Avenue. The site plan shows a 25 ft. setback from Clarke Avenue. Therefore, a 15 and a 25-foot variance is requested of the Board of Appeals.

Mr. Brandewie stated there appeared to be sufficient parking and loading docks on site but the applicant will need to clarify how the expansion will address these issues. He stated that the overall site is constrained from development due to the presence of a cemetery to the west, the Pocomoke River fronting the property to the north and a utility owned property to the east. These conditions present unusual conditions that limits expansion of the buildings.

George Tunis and Tim Keller with Hardwire were attendance. Mr. Tunis, owner of the company, stated that this new building, consisting of 80,000 square feet will likely be built in two phases but they need variance relief from the setbacks to the front and side property lines in order to better accommodate truck turning movements and stormwater design. They are being considered for major defense contracts for their product involving armor plates for the military. The grant awards would help with equipment inside the building. They are committed to improving the site conditions of the site with landscaping in the front of the building, and removal or relocation of the fencing that was on the site when they purchased it. Areas that are used for storage will be cleaned up. There will be no external impacts such as noise, light pollution or odors from the industrial process. There will be a small increase in truck traffic with traffic entering the site at the east entrance. They have adequate parking on-site to accommodate potentially 20 new positions over time. They will not need new loading docks as flatbed trucks will be able to pull in the building to deliver products. There are concerns with stormwater run-off entering the site at the southeast corner of the property and their stormwater design has to take that into consideration. He expressed hope that there will be improvements to housing conditions along this corridor and for better trash removal along McMichael Avenue. This is the route that is used by the majority of visitors to the company. The building's appearance will be similar to the current building and incorporate light into the structure, which will also be a secure facility. They have had opportunities to move the operation but they are committed to staying in Pocomoke City.

Dave Straus asked if moving the building back could be considered.

Mr. Tunis responded that shifting it back was considered but this additional distance of 25 feet will help with truck turning movements that will be between buildings.

Diane Yaffe, a resident along Clarke Avenue expressed concern over setbacks, fencing and landscaping.

Paula Marshall, property owner along Clarke Avenue brought up similar concerns but believed many of her questions were answered. Concern over corner visibility was discussed due to the fence.

George Tunis agreed that corner visibility was a concern and will be evaluated for improvement. Mr. Tunis stated that the fence could be eliminated altogether, because there would be no need for a fence because the building would act as such.

Discussion followed. The Board members concurred that it appeared that variances as requested are reasonable given site conditions and many of the issues that came up will be addressed by the final site plan review process.

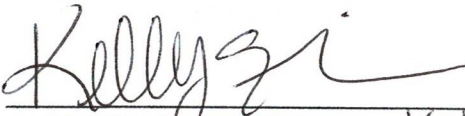
CD Hall made a motion to approve the variance requests for the front and side yards as requested. Second by David Strauss. Motion carried, 4-0 in favor. No one spoke in opposition.

CD Hall made a motion to nominate Kelly Miller as Chairwoman. Seconded by David Strauss. Motion carried.

Mr. Brandewie noted that the City Clerk has provided no minutes from past meetings.

Respectfully Submitted:

Daniel L. Brandewie

Approved:   
~~-GL Marshall, Chairman~~ Kelly Miller

Date: May 08, 2024