

## Egg Harbor Township Planning Board approves a four-story hotel near Atlantic City airport

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EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP — The Atlantic City International Airport will have a four-story, 111-room hotel built near it as part of four-phase, multi-million commercial development, which will include restaurants, a convention center and light industrial buildings.

The Planning Board unanimously Monday gave final major site plan approval for the construction of the hotel with parking for 111 vehicles for a project called the Airport Business Center at the northern part of the township at Delilah Road and Westcoat Road and Aifam Avenue.

The hotel is phase one of the development.

The Planning Board also gave preliminary approval for phase two of the project, which consists of one sit-down 126-seat restaurant and two 42-seat fast food restaurants and 146 parking spaces.

The Planning Board also signed off on the general development plan for phases three and four of the project. Phase three calls for two four-story, 100-room hotels with a 24,200-square-foot convention center and 355 off-street parking spaces.

Phase four consists of four light industrial buildings totaling 78,900-square-foot and 200 off-street parking spaces.

"We can't wait. It's long overdue. We've been waiting for someone like you to get in and make things happen," Planning Board member Victoria Schiffler said.

A minor subdivision was required to create four lots. The project is planned in a general commercial zone, Jack Plackter, the developer's attorney, said. The construction was a permitted use. No variance was needed to move forward.

Schoffer Enterprises, LLC, who is headquartered here, plans to shepherd the project into reality. The company has a 60-year history in the township developing industrial and commercial space. Schoffer built his first commercial park, Offshore Commercial Park, on the other side of Delilah Road.

The area is fully wooded, never been developed, 26-acre site, Schoffer said. Leo Schoffer said he received all the approvals for an airport hotel back in 1990, but the project never happened. The idea also never came to fruition in 2008, he said.

"I'm hoping the third time in the charm," Schoffer said.

The hotel chain being looked at for the project is Choice Hotels, Schoffer said. It would be a dual-brand hotel. Under one roof, one side of the building would feature a Sleep Inn operation for overnight stays. The other side

of the building would be a MainStay Suites, which is an extended-stay operation. There will be signs for each business on the one building.

"My goal is to move as quickly as possible to get the first hotel going," Schoffer said as he mentioned that he hoped his hotel would be considered the unofficial airport hotel.

For phase two, there will be pads on the site, but Schoffer said he did not know who the franchises would be.

The general development plan for phases three and four is a place holder for what would be Schoffer's best guess for now. Currently, the plans calls for two more hotels and a conference center.

Plans for phases three and four were developed before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, so Schoffer said he did not know what the future of a conference center would be in a post-COVID world. The conference center may turn into an athletic center instead, he said.

The four light industrial buildings for phase four would be built hoping that the airport and the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center would attract other businesses to the area, Schoffer said.

Lauren Moore, president of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, spoke on behalf of the project.

"We need an airport hotel for scientists and technicians, who are coming from all over the world," Moore said.

Moore would like to see the conference center move forward because he receives requests for conferences for 250 people that can't be accommodated in the airport area.

"The demand is for there for a proposed convention center," Michael Dipple, principal, L2A Land Design, LLC, Englewood, Bergen County, said as he spoke as the engineer on behalf of the developer.

A demand is there for smaller warehouse space, Dipple said.

Delilah Road and Westcoat Roads are county roads, Schoffer said. In the future, there will be discussions with county about when to install a traffic light for the road entering the property, he said.