

Multi-million dollar assisted-living, apartment and hotel project coming to Smithville

VINCENT JACKSON Staff Writer

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — A more than 18-acre parcel of land used for parking close to Route 9 and across from the Smithville Inn will house an assisted-living facility and apartments in the near future.

The Planning Board voted unanimously Thursday to approve the final major site plan for a 139-room assisted living facility, a building with 62 market-rate apartments and eight single-family cottages.

Preliminary site approval was given to a 80-room hotel and a convenience store and gas store that would be on a subdivided piece of the same property.

The applicant behind this project, which is estimated to cost more than \$20 million in total, is the Towne of Historic Smithville and a new business to South Jersey, Windsor Healthcare, which is based Norwood, Bergen County.

Michael Jacobs, the CEO of Windsor Healthcare, was there as the head of a team of people to talk to the Planning Board and the public.

A big problem in the health care field is families that don't live near mom and dad, which is why they want to have a hotel, market-rate apartments and an assisted living facility on their site, Jacobs said.

A family that comes into town to see their parents for Christmas or Thanksgiving could stay in the hotel for a few days, Jacobs said.

“Land is expensive in New Jersey. A lot of properties are landlocked,” he said.

Companies are not building assisted-living facilities, Jacobs said. There isn't much out there that is new because they are hard to finance, Jacobs said.

“We are super excited about the project,” Jacobs said. “It is a fantastic opportunity.”

Windsor Healthcare has nine facilities throughout New Jersey: two each in Middlesex, Essex and Union counties; and one each in Somerset, Bergen and Passaic counties.

Chris Metternich, the COO of Windsor Healthcare, also attended the meeting. In total, 75 employees will work for the assisted-living facility, but not during any one shift, Metternich said.

The project's architect detailed that the cottages would be single floor with two bedrooms and a garage. The apartments would be one or two bedrooms.

There will be 88 parking spaces for the hotel, 74 parking spaces for assisted living, 131 parking spaces for the residential component and 62 retail parking spaces.

The three-story hotel would be something on the scale of a Hilton or a Holiday Inn Express. The first floor will house a gym. The second and third floors will only have rooms. A decision has not been made yet whether there will be a pool or a conference room.

Most of the time of the more-than-three-hour meeting was spent discussing one issue — the age of the people who would live in the apartments.

Nick Russo and Anna Jezycki were among the township residents who expressed concerns about a lack of age restriction for the market-rate apartments. They wanted a 55-and-older age restriction.

“Housing that is not age restricted will not fit with seniors. I don’t want Stockton College in there. ... Let’s try to get the housing restricted. That’s all we are asking for,” said Jezycki, who comments were greeted with applause.

Jacobs said Windsor Healthcare has never built apartments previously, and it was there to be good neighbors.

Before the public session closed, Jacobs agreed to have 40% of the residential apartments allotted for those age 55 and older.

“I think it’s a great project,” said Planning Board member Don Purdy, who was the Galloway Township mayor from 2012 through 2017.