

Planning Commission Meeting

March 27, 2018

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, March 27, 2018 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Chairperson Lucy Strackhouse presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: DiCELLO, COOPER, ROBINSON, RUSSELL, BOFF, ROSEN, STRACKHOUSE
Excused: GAUTHIER, BAKER

Also Present: Planning & Zoning Official PENECALE
Director of Engineering/Code
MONTGOMERY
County Planner NARCOWICH
Office Manager WYRSTA

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES:

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Boff to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2018 Planning Commission meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Item PC1 – Application of Abington Friends School:

Ms. Strackhouse read agenda Item PC1 into the record and asked the applicant to present their plan.

David Haas, Attorney with Duane Morris LLP, 30 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA., 19103, representing the applicant, introduced Rich Nourie, Head of Abington Friends School and Michael Rufo, President, Anchor Management Group, 1000 Conshohocken Road, Suite 201, Conshohocken, PA, 19428.

Mr. Rich Nourie said we are located in Jenkintown and one of the oldest schools in the country. Our campus is in constant use by not only our school program, but many community groups and we share our outdoor campus with the community as well. We began this project by holding four community meetings with the neighborhood to share our plans and to address any concerns or questions and we also had a number of meetings with Township staff.

We also met with officials of Jenkintown Borough in which Jenkintown Borough Council is in support of this project, and last week, the plan received approval by the Township's Zoning Hearing Board.

Presented was a power point of proposed project to renovate existing playing fields by creating multipurpose playing field; a new synthetic playing surface will be installed with a six-lane track, lighting, safety netting and additional landscaping, and in addition, the plan of a new gymnasium is proposed to be added to existing building. Rendering of the new building as well as the floor plan was also presented.

Mr. Rosen asked about the baseball field.

Mr. Nourie replied this is a two-phase project and hope to break ground on the building in late May or early June and money was raised for that project. We need to raise another \$3 million for the track and field project, so until we actually build the track and field, we will need to re-site the baseball diamond most likely off-campus.

Mr. Michael Rufo, Project Manager, said we have been in discussion with officials of Public Works Department as there are a series of public works projects that will take place in the next few years. There will be stormwater management improvements along Washington Lane and Greenwood Avenue and a nature trail that intertwines with our project, which is actually an alternative transportation trail that will interconnect with other trails completing the trail along Washington Lane down along Greenwood.

Ms. Strackhouse asked what trails would this connect to?

Mr. Nourie replied this project seeks to connect Jenkintown Borough with Pennypack.

Mr. Rufo continued that the third piece is potential road upgrades at the triangle building to widen the road and upgrade the turning lane, so potentially take the road out of service. There will be collaboration between the Township and school to "land swap" to make sure the area is wide enough for turning lanes to be possible and the road will be closed making the triangle building portion of the campus contiguous with the campus.

Ms. Strackhouse asked is there any long term plan for turning lanes at the intersection of Washington Lane and Greenwood Avenue?

Mr. Penecale replied he is not sure at this time.

Mr. Rufo said regarding onsite stormwater management; we are aware there is concern about the corner of Washington Lane and Greenwood Avenue and the site we are developing is well-below that, so we will not be discharging any water to that area. However, once the entire facility is in place, we propose that all stormwater will be managed in a retention basin under the field that will result in reduction of runoff by 75%.

Mr. Nourie said the area at Washington and Greenwood does tend to flood, but has nothing to do with our campus, although we would love to see it improved as our entire community experiences that when it happens. Our water runs away from that intersection rather than toward it.

Mr. Rosen clarified that after this project is completed the area will continue to flood. Is that correct?

Mr. Nourie replied yes, because it is completely out of our control.

Mr. Rufo added there is a grant for work to be done to address that stormwater problem on Washington and Greenwood, so it will be addressed, but not by this project. Any stormwater runoff from our site will be reduced by 75%.

Also, the applicant received Township staff review letter dated, March 9, 2018 and there was a question about the track and field proximity to the road. There are safety rails at the back exterior of the track for runners/pedestrian safety and safety netting at each end of the field and up the sides of the field approximately 40 feet for the athletes as well as to stop balls from going out onto the roadway.

Ms. Strackhouse questioned whether the safety netting will remain in place year-round.

Mr. Rufo replied safety netting is a removable system and the net will probably be taken down to prevent it from deteriorating due to inclement weather and posts will come out depending on the season.

Mr. Russell asked about a fence or barrier.

Mr. Rufo replied the perimeter of the track has a three-foot high safety railing for walkers/runners and there is netting for balls on the outside of the field in the back. We want to welcome the neighborhood and do not want to “fence” it off.

Mr. Russell asked has the applicant met with reps of PennDOT about this project?

Mr. Rufo replied no. This project will not go into the roadway and stormwater management system will be on the campus, so there is no need for PennDOT approval.

Planning Commission Meeting

March 27, 2018

Referring to Township staff review letter, there are rain garden details that will be incorporated in final submission of the plan and the fire lanes are there. Also, Fire Marshal Rohrer approved the fire lanes as well as width of cartways and access.

And, there is an addition that was put on the back of the building that will be demolished and will be part green area between the upper school building and renovated portion of the gym. There is no need for netting for the entire side of the field as 40 feet is more than enough, which was part of the zoning variance approval.

Mr. DiCello asked will the field be sectioned off during practice so balls are not thrown out onto Greenwood Avenue.

Mr. Nourie replied we do not have that issue as there is no shooting side-to-side.

Mr. Rufo said the applicant is in receipt of MCPC review letter dated, March 19, 2018 and we have taken those review comments into consideration in our design that exceeds requirements.

Ms. Strackhouse noted that one of the comments of the MCPC review letter was that the applicant must submit its Master Facilities Plan to the Planning Commission; has that been submitted?

Mr. Penecale replied yes, the Township is possession of the updated Master Facilities Plan that includes expansion of the gym as well as renovated sports field.

Mr. Rufo referring to the MCPC review letter regarding landscape and buffer areas along the roadway; we have plantings of 54 trees and meet all requirements. Landscaping plan is being reviewed by the Shade Tree Commission.

Mr. Narcowich asked about parking areas within 150' of the property line shall be planted with a medium intensity buffer.

Mr. Rufo replied it is all existing facilities and nothing new is being proposed.

Mr. Penecale added that the applicant asked about credits for the over-300 plantings along property line within riparian buffer, so plantings will be along the property line that buffer the school from residential homes in-lieu-of a perimeter buffer along the front side to keep the front façade visible from the street. Also, there is an existing parking lot and no changes are being proposed to the parking layout.

Mr. Rosen asked about sidewalk situation on Greenwood Avenue and Washington Lane.

Mr. Penecale replied Greenwood has sidewalks currently that will be replaced as part of stormwater management and trails program.

Mr. Nourie added there is sidewalk on Washington Lane from the corner of the intersection of Greenwood and Washington to our driveway.

Mr. Rosen asked will there be a sidewalk system on Greenwood?

Mr. Nourie replied there is one now that will be converted to an asphalt trail.

Mr. Russell said in regards to improvements of stormwater management; this site is a “swale” for the road because every time it rains the spread on Greenwood goes all the way up to the middle of the road and across the sidewalk into the swale on this site, and until that stormwater management project is completed, he sees the flooding on Greenwood getting worse.

Chad Brensinger, P.E. with Charles E. Shoemaker, Inc., 1007 Edge Hill Road, Abington, PA 19001, replied the existing lawn area drains into the depression toward the crossing at Greenwood Avenue and we are converting existing turf grass into synthetic turf that will be pervious so as to reduce flows from that lawn area.

Daryl Baker, Planning Commission member who was absent during this meeting, sent via email the following questions and requested they were included in the minutes as follows:

1. Will there be bleachers or stands to watch outdoor track and field meets or soccer games, and if so, what do these look like?
2. The number of parking spaces is being reduced slightly, and he questioned that the provided number of spaces is sufficient, especially if exterior and interior events are happening at the same time. He does not know overall student count of Abington Friends School, but the provided parking spaces seem low. There seems to be available space for additional parking near the proposed gym and are there plans to use this area for future parking. He advised a more in-depth parking study. Other than that, he feels this is a very nice project.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments. There were none.

Waiver Requests -

Waivers requested by the applicant were voted on separately as follows:

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146-11.A – Property Identification Plan – The plan is required to supply the tax parcel information, owner’s names & lot area for all properties within 400 feet of the site involved in this application.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.B – Existing Features Plan – the plan is required to plot the location of all utilities onsite and within 400 feet of the property involved in this application.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.C – Proposed Layout Plan – the applicant is required to provide detail on the type, size, depth and location of all utilities.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.G. – Utility Plan – the applicant is required to provide detail on the type, size, depth and location of all utilities.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.L – Architectural Plan – The applicant is required to submit tentative architectural plan of the proposed new building. These plans are required to ensure compliance with the requirements of Section 1007 of the Zoning Ordinance. Applicant submitted renderings as well as floor plans for both of the use of the new gym and renovation to existing gym.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146.9 A. - Plan Stages – requirement to file a plan in two stages as Preliminary Plan and again as Final Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146.10.A 1. – Drafting Scale – requirement to plan horizontal scale not be smaller than one inch equals fifty (50) feet.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146.33.7 – Drainage – requirement to specify City No. 1 inlets.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Planning Commission Meeting

March 27, 2018

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to approve the application of the Abington Friends School as presented including approval of waivers requested by the applicant.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary