

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, October 23, 2018 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Chairperson Lucy Strackhouse presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

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

Also Present: Planning & Zoning Official PENECALE
Office Manager WYRSTA
County Planner NARCOWICH
Commissioner SPIEGELMAN

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES:

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of September 25, 2018 as submitted.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

Agenda Item PC1 – Presentation by Mediplex Property Group, LLC:

Ms. Strackhouse read agenda item PC1 into the record and noted this is just a presentation and no formal action will be taken on the part of the Planning Commission, and she called on the applicant to present their plan.

Marcel Groen, Esquire, Fox Rothschild, LLP, 10 Sentry Parkway, Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA, 19422, on behalf of the applicants, Steve Carpey and Jeffrey Goldstein, owners of Mediplex Property Group, 500 Office Center Drive, Suite 400, Fort Washington, PA. 19034. Robert Linn, Principal and Adam Powell, Project Engineer of Linn Architects, 1140 N. Providence Road, Media, PA, 19063 and Christopher Williams PE, McMahon Associates, Inc., 835 Springdale Drive, Suite 200, Exton, PA., 19341.

Mr. Groen stated the plan is to build a 20,000 sq. ft. medical office building and special exception was granted by the ZHB as well as to allow vehicle parking within a portion of the property zoned within the R-4 Residential District and balance of the property is zoned within the Main Street Village Center District of Ward 7 of the Township of Abington.

Mr. Linn presented the plan along with photos of existing structures onsite. It is a 1.75 acre site located on Old York Road, Eckard and Guernsey Avenues. Eight separate parcels of land will be consolidated into one reverse subdivision for the purpose of merging into one deed. Land development approval is required for construction of proposed two-story medical office building totaling 20,000 sq. ft. and proposed development will have access drives on Guernsey and Eckard Avenues. Applicant proposes 100 onsite parking stalls, onsite stormwater management system and 20-foot wide residential buffer.

A suggestion was made by Township staff to install a “pork-chop” configuration island that will force all traffic to turn right onto Eckard Avenue. Property is located in the MS-Village Center District and we are working with a street wall of a series of pillars along the front with a fence in between. Rendering showed a version in stone as well as brick and Township staff feels stone is more indicative of the character of the street, so we will use stone pillars. There will also be a small plaza area in the front outside of the building, and all curb cuts will be closed, which will be an asset to the site.

Ms. Gauthier asked for more detail on the plaza area to be presented by the applicant at the next meeting.

Mr. Linn continued that there will be a significant buffer on Eckard surrounding the entire property and we met with Shade Tree Commission who was satisfied about the significant shrubs and trees proposed for the site.

Ms. Strackhouse questioned whether the applicant considered using some of the existing buildings onsite.

Mr. Linn replied our project is to introduce a legitimate medical office building and to do that we need all of the property. There was very little in scale and size of those buildings that seemed to match the way Old York Road is changing, so we did not make any attempt to use those buildings.

Ms. Strackhouse questioned whether there will be less impervious surface with proposed project than what is currently onsite.

Mr. Linn replied yes. There is a nine percent reduction in impervious surface overall, and currently there is no stormwater management system, so as part of this project we will install a full stormwater management system onsite.

Ms. Gauthier questioned whether the two existing buildings could be incorporated into the plan even though it would cause the footprint to be pushed back.

Mr. Linn replied the new zoning ordinance requires a build-to line moving the building forward to the street corner whereas in the past he might have been able to tuck something in at the rear. The zoning ordinance requires the building to be within five feet of the line on the side and front.

Ms. Gauthier clarified that there is a provision in the zoning ordinance that allows the building to be pushed back.

Mr. Narcowich agreed that if there is a street wall then the building can be pushed back to approximately 70 feet.

Mr. Linn said each tenant will occupy 10,000 sq. ft., which is in compliance.

Ms. Gauthier questioned whether the two existing buildings can be incorporated into the overall 10,000 sq. ft.

Mr. Linn replied he does think that would be a modern-day medical office building that would attract tenants.

Mr. Narcowich said previously discussed was holding parking spaces in reserve.

Mr. Groen replied the tenants need the amount of parking spaces proposed and we do not want parking spilling onto the streets.

Mr. Narcowich commented that he would like to see a rendering of the façade of all four sides of proposed building.

Mr. Linn provided a copy of waivers requested by the applicant to the Planning Commission.

Christopher Williams, McMahon Associates, Traffic Engineer representing the applicant, indicated a draft traffic study was prepared for this project. Four intersections were studied; Susquehanna and Old York Roads; Guernsey Avenue and Old York Road (two intersections) and Eckard Avenue and Old York Road. Traffic was studied during peak conditions and how the intersections operate today, and then added traffic volume that would be created from this development. The site is 20,000 sq. ft. medical office building with 16 employees and estimated traffic generated from the development based on data accepted by PennDOT during peak hours will be 39 trips in the morning and 59 trips in the evening.

There is access proposed on Eckard Avenue, which is a one way, so it would be a right in/right out scenario with a “pork chop” island to restrict any other turning movements. Guernsey access is a full movement. New driveways meet PennDOT’s safe sight distance criteria. Intersections were studied as to level of service pre/post- development. Traffic from new development will not have a negative impact or degrade level of service at those intersections.

Ms. Gauthier said in regards to access on Eckard Avenue; she asked about moving it further down so traffic from Old York Road making a right in would then turn left and then right into the parking lot.

Mr. Williams replied currently there are a series of driveways along Eckard Avenue, so we will close those driveways and limit it to just one. The issue with moving it further down would cause a cut-thru.

Mr. Penecale commented that the applicant’s traffic study has been forwarded to Township’s traffic consultant TPD (Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.) and TPD’s review will be included in the Planning Commission’s packet for next month.

Mt. Baker asked will there be sufficient signage to exit onto Guernsey?

Mr. Williams replied we will work with Township’s traffic engineer to come up with a plan to direct onsite traffic out to Old York Road and Guernsey.

Adam Powell, Project Engineer, Linn Architects, said the applicant will comply with comments made by Boucher & James, Inc. in its review letter dated, October 16, 2018. Waiver request is to provide property owner’s information within 400 ft; however, we identified all adjacent property owners as well as identified all utilities on the plan.

Also a waiver is requested to allow landscape/lawn areas to be graded at a slope in excess of 15% and there are two sections onsite; one along Guernsey that will be cut down to 4:1, so it will not be as steep, and along Eckard there is a section of lawn that will be will be graded 4:1.

There was a question as to whether we need to request a waiver from providing a profile street plan as we are not proposing any new streets, which can be resolved prior to the next meeting. Also, there is no phasing plan. All existing cartways and right-of-ways are shown on the plan as well as existing curb cuts that will be closed. Also, provided will be a 20-ft. perimeter residential buffer as shown on the plan with 30-40 deciduous trees.

Ms. Strackhouse said the applicant met with Shade Tree Commission who made recommendations, so will the applicant incorporate that into the plan?

Mr. Powell replied we have not received those recommendations yet; however, we will work with the Township.

Mr. Penecale commented that staff is waiting for all review letters to be received and then forward everything to the applicant as one package.

Mr. Powell continued that there will be a stormwater management system proposed under a section of the parking lot that was shown on the plan.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments.

Robert Dedow, 1865 Guernsey Avenue, expressed concern about traffic making a right turn onto the site from Old York Road and questioned whether the driveway should be moved a few feet.

Mr. Williams replied that was discussed with Township staff and we agreed to look at the radius of that turn to make it safer.

Peg Connors, 1835 Guernsey Avenue, commented every home on her block has a car parked on the street and she expressed concern about two cars traveling down Guernsey Avenue simultaneously.

Mr. Williams agreed that parking on one side of the road does not leave enough room for two lanes of traffic on Guernsey as one vehicle needs to pull over for other to pass, so what is being proposed for this project will not change what occurs there today.

A resident who resides at 1835 Guernsey Avenue commented that Guernsey is used as a shortcut to get to Old York Road, and this project where entrances/exits will be onto Guernsey and Eckard will compound the problem at the intersection of Old York Road. Also, no one in his neighborhood wants speed humps.

Greg Phayre, 1863 Eckard Avenue, questioned whether it is possible that traffic feed into the new building from Eckard and then exit onto Guernsey by making a right from the "pork chop."

A resident who resides at 1817 Eckard Avenue expressed concern about additional traffic from this project coming onto Eckard because he is concerned about the safety of his young children as well as the other children playing on the sidewalk.

Sharon Phayre, 1863 Eckard Avenue, expressed concern about additional traffic impacting Township services on her street such as trash trucks, emergency vehicles, etc., and also about pedestrian safety.

Ms. Gauthier asked about loading/unloading area as well as location for trash containers.

Mr. Penecale replied there does need to be some drop-off area for deliveries of medical supplies.

Mr. Linn added that there is a full enclosure for trash containers as shown on the plan. Also, we can designate one or two parking spaces as delivery drop-off area with signage.

Ms. Gauthier asked about exemption proposed for planning module.

Mr. Penecale replied that will go through Mr. Wrigley's Office.

Ms. Gauthier said she would like to see more details on the plaza proposed for the site.

Mr. Narcowich questioned whether the applicant could use the same type of stone from the stone walls for a street wall and also about a vegetative strip between curb/sidewalk.

Mr. Linn replied we will look into it. Regarding the vegetative strip; we found there are issues with plants dying due to plowing, salting of the road. We would rather see green vegetation on our side of the sidewalk where it can be maintained.

Ms. Strackhouse announced that a letter was forwarded to the Planning Commission from a resident who is concerned about the buildings being demolished and questioned whether there is any protection for those buildings, and Abington Township does not have a Historic Preservation Ordinance, so there is no protection for those buildings. Historic Survey is currently being conducted with approximately 600 buildings catalogued and we hope to have an ordinance in place in the future.

Mr. Narcowich thanked the applicant for incorporating crosswalks as it will significantly improve the safety for pedestrians to get around the parking area.

Mr. Penecale announced that the next scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission will be held on Thursday, November 15, 2018 due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Planning Commission Meeting

October 23, 2018

ADJOURNMENT: 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Recording Secretary