

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, June 25, 2019 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Chairperson Lucy Strackhouse presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: BROWN, GAUTHIER, COOPER.
DiCELLO, RUSSELL, ROSEN (7:52 P.M.), ROBINSON,
STRACKHOUSE
Excused: BAKER

Also Present: Planning & Zoning Officer PENECALE
Office Manager WYRSTA
County Planner NARCOWICH
Commissioners WINEGRAD,
SPIEGELMAN

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES:

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting of May 28, 2019.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Agenda Item PC1 – Duke Real Estate Partners, LLC:

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

Brian Regli, Owner of Duke Real Estate Partners, LLC, said this project has been before the Planning Commission previously where sketch plan was presented and comments were received. Changes were made to the plan based on that feedback and a response letter detailing some of the improvements was sent to the Township. We also went before the ZHB to address the issue of plantings, buffering and landscape variances in which they were granted. Presentation this evening reflects compliance of all recommended changes with the exception of requested waivers. Also, in attendance was Steven Freeman, AIA, New Century Architects & Builders; Jim Faber, Landscape Designer, McCloskey & Faber and Gary Tilford, Engineer, Charles E. Shoemaker & Co.

Changes since the last Planning Commission review; grading plan was revised to reduce slope; addition of plants of ornamental and columnar trees to increase buffers and modifications of sidewalks to further enhance pedestrian access. Presented was existing location of the site; proposed site map; photograph key; Wyncote Substation existing conditions; proposed landscape plan and list of waivers requested.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any comments from members of the Planning Commission.

Ms. Gauthier asked for a copy of the Zoning Hearing Board's decision of May 22, 2019 on approved landscaping and buffer variances to make sure what is proposed will be done per their decision.

Mr. Regli provided the ZHB's decision and read it into the record: "The Zoning Hearing Board offered relief from Section 2402A.5 and Section 2403 E.4- variance granted to permit one parking lot tree or canopy trees, 20 shrubs instead of two canopy trees, four under-story trees and four Evergreens along the northern property line and under Section 2402 B.2 variance granted to permit one deciduous or ornamental tree and 16 shrubs to serve as minimum groundcover required by Section 2403 E."

Presented to the ZHB were four specific areas and images demonstrated the hardship specifically related to underground utilities and also the overhead wires that exist onsite. Along the frontage are a number of vaults that contain high-tension wires underground, so we moved the sidewalk slightly from what was originally proposed to avoid the vaults in the street; added trees to avoid overhead wires and shifted some of the buffer around to maximize the use of plantings.

Ms. Gauthier clarified that existing shrubs and trees at the entrance from Highland Avenue will be removed/replaced. Is that correct?

Mr. Regli replied that is correct. Also, pedestrians can walk the entire site using a number of different routes. Five waivers are requested from Section 146-11.B 7 – Utilities; Section 146.11. J – Recreational Facilities Plan; Section 146 I1. L – Architectural Plan; Section 146-27 A. Sidewalks - Kenmore Avenue and Section 146-28.A. - Parking Stall Size. Regarding sidewalks on Kenmore; there are loading docks used by SPS and we have been told that any interruption will dramatically affect their ability to do business. Also, the entire site currently has 9 X 18 parking stalls and it would be awkward to go with 10 X 20 and slope has been reduced to almost 5%.

Ms. Strackhouse agreed with the waiver from installation of sidewalks on Kenmore as we do not want to encourage pedestrians to walk down that road for safety reasons.

Ms. Gauthier asked about sidewalk connection for the area coming in off of Highland.

Mr. Regli pointed out on the plan the most sufficient and safest passageway for pedestrians including a signalized passageway that is ADA compliant and there are two entryways to the building; one from Highland Avenue and one from the rear.

Ms. Gauthier referred to Township staff review letter dated February 25, 2019, Items 2 and 5 regarding parking and questioned whether that has been addressed.

Mr. Penecale replied with the cross easements in place it is treated like a shopping center, so it is the overall square footage of the building v. individual tenants.

Ms. Gauthier noted some of the letters are falling off of the sign of Wyncote Station.

Mr. Regli replied we will try to match new lettering as best as possible.

Ms. Gauthier continued that she agrees with the MCPC's comments regarding zebra striping and it was addressed by the applicant.

Mr. Faber said a letter was received from the Shade Tree Commission who requested additional street trees along Highland, which is a waiver request due to utilities, so we cannot add more trees. STC asked for another tree to be added along Kenmore and we cannot comply with that due to turning movements into the green space. They also asked about use of native plants and trees along Kenmore are native species and also about the trees along the main drive coming off of Highland, and those trees were changed to native plants. They also asked to increase the size of native plants in the rain garden area in the central portion of the site and we will comply.

Mr. Brown referring to the tree directly across from the SPS loading docks; was maneuvering analyzed to alleviate any concern regarding clipping that tree?

Mr. Regli replied space for maneuvering will work in that location.

Mr. Narcowich asked about plan for bike lane accommodations.

Mr. Regli replied we have no objection to expanding the size of the bike lanes.

Mr. Tilford added that there are no objections to any comments made in review letter of Boucher & James dated June 18, 2019.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked for "these things to be on a single page" and she is opposed to 9 X 18 parking spaces.

Waiver requests were voted on separately as follows:

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.B.7 – Utilities Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.L. – Recreational Facilities Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.I. – Architectural Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to approve waiver request from Section 146-27.A. – Sidewalks (along Kenmore Avenue frontage).

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to approve waiver request from Section 146-28.A. – Parking Stall Size.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Russell made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to recommend approval of Duke Real Estate Partners, LLC – land development application for property located at 357 Highland Avenue, Jenkintown, PA, subject to compliance with items as stated by the applicant and to approve all waiver requests as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Item PC2 – Crest Commons, LLC:

Ms. Strackhouse read agenda Item PC2 into the record and asked the applicant to present their plan.

Mr. Penecale noted that a letter dated May 3, 2019 was submitted by the applicant regarding waiver requests and they have all been addressed to the satisfaction of the Township.

Benjamin Barland, P.E. Engineer, 350 E. Butler Avenue, Suite 106, New Britain, PA, 18901, representing the applicant, Crest Commons, LLC, requested recommendation of approval for preliminary/final of minor subdivision application on parcel located at 2907 Jefferson Avenue, Ardsley, PA.

Site is a .405-acre property and proposed is to subdivide and construct a single-family, two story dwelling with a front load garage on each of the two 8,487 sq. ft. lots. Existing driveway/curb cuts will remain to serve one of proposed dwellings as well as existing utilities will remain to serve one of the two lots. Seepage bed is proposed for Lot 2 that will handle stormwater rate volume for both lots and inlets and piping will be added. The applicant obtained a letter from the Montgomery County Soil and Conservation District as well as review letter from Township's consultant Boucher & James dated May 24, 2019 and the applicant will comply, and revised copies of the plans were submitted. The applicant also received review letter dated June 17, 2019 from Mr. Penecale and there are no zoning issues that need to be addressed.

Also, six waivers are requested from Section 146-11.B. 7 – partial waiver from providing 400 ft. overlap of utilities; Section 146.11. I & J from providing Phasing Plan and Recreation Facilities Plan; Section 146-24 D from street cartway widening and sidewalk will remain and repaired during construction; Section 146-33.B. 1 from using C values where SWMO values are used; Section 146-33.D to provide less than a 15" pipe at 0.5% slope minimum; Section 14-33.G to provide smaller yard inlet than the city No. 1 inlet and Section 146-39 A. (1) from spacing street trees 50 feet, they are spaced per Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Penecale said the applicant's onsite stormwater management plan must be in compliance prior to any final approval of the plan. Also, why is there one joint stormwater management system making one property owner solely responsible for its maintenance as opposed to individual stormwater management systems where both property owners would be in control of each of their systems and why are they proposed to be in the rear yard, which is usually used for accessory uses v. a front yard.

Mr. Barland replied the site naturally drains back to the corner so that is why the seepage pit is located there and it reduces the amount of storm pipe and total area on both lots dedicated to stormwater management facilities. The reason why it is not proposed for the front yard is because there is not a robust drainage system on Jefferson Avenue, so we could not pipe it out there and we would rather pipe it over grass for higher chance of absorbing water and water drains to the rear.

Ms. Gauthier clarified that the stormwater management agreement will be on the plan. Is that correct?

Mr. Barland replied yes.

Ms. Gauthier asked about tree protection fencing for the Oak tree on Township's property.

Mr. Barland replied we can do that.

Mr. Narcowich questioned whether any consideration has been given to a buffer between the parking lot and homes such as a fence or shrubbery for screening of headlights.

Mr. Barland replied a buffer is not proposed because the park is not used too much at night, so there is not a concern about headlights and also a buffer is not required in the ordinance.

Ms. Gauthier asked that the proposed trees to be native species.

Mr. Barland replied we can change the species to what is recommended by the Planning Commission.

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

Waiver requests were voted on separately as follows:

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Brown to recommend approval of waiver request from Section 146.B.7 – Utilities Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to recommend approval of waiver request from Section 146-11.J – Recreational Facilities Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to recommend approval of waiver request from Section 146-11.I – Phasing Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to recommend approval of waiver request from Section 146-24 – Streets Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to recommend approval of waiver request from Section 146-33 - Drainage Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to recommend approval of waiver request from Section 146-39 - Landscaping Plan subject to changing species to natives.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Penecale noted that planning module was reviewed by Mr. Wrigley Director W.W.T.P. in a letter dated June 18, 2019 that was submitted to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to recommend approval of application of Crest Commons, LLC as well as approval of planning module subject to the applicant agreeing to place tree protection fencing around trees on Township's property as well as approval of waiver requests as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Item PC3 – Abington Terrace, LLC:

Ms. Strackhouse read agenda Item PC3 into the record and asked the applicant to present their plan.

Robert W. Gundlach, Jr., Attorney, Fox Rothschild, LLP, 2700 Kelly Road, Suite 300, Warrington, PA, 18976, representing the applicant, introduced Michael Markman, President of BET Investments; Peter Clelland and Matt Johnson, BET Investments, C.J. Bock, Bohler Engineering and Sandy Koza, Traffic Engineer, McMahon Associates, and stated that there was a previous process of proposed rezoning of these properties to A/O and text amendment to allow age-restricted housing in the A/O District subject to conditions, and following that process, applicant received favorable recommendation from the Planning Commission as well as from the governing body.

Mr. Markman began looking at the plan further and was contacted by CHOP and their proposal seemed to fit a lot of comments received previously as well as the opportunity to preserve part of the YMCA structure for continued use as a daycare. Plans were resubmitted in which review letters were received by the applicant.

Mr. Markman said 98% of the comments made on previous plans can be addressed by this plan. Shown on the plan was the portion of the YMCA that will be repurposed for a daycare as well as the portion that will be removed and 37,063 sq. ft. two-story building would be built for CHOP. Two buildings part of the funeral home will be demolished and repurposed for a detention basin and parking lots.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any comments from members of the Planning Commission.

Ms. Gauthier asked about the rezoning of the residential home back to R-3.

Mr. Markman replied that is part of this application. Architectural features were provided of proposed CHOP building and the portion of the YMCA that will remain. There will be no surgery just outpatient specialty for CHOP, so no overnight stays.

Mr. Clelland added that there are two access points; one from Susquehanna Road and the other is a right-in, right-out entrance on Old York Road. The parking lots are interconnected by access through the site and a surface rain garden is proposed in the southeastern corner and another rain garden proposed for southwestern corner on Old York Road and an underground detention basin to be located centrally between two sections of the development.

There will be a patient drop-off area from the CHOP facility with a widened driveway and the YMCA building will be renovated from its current use to a daycare; there will be a system of ramps to deal with the grade across the site to get up to the new entrance on the back of the building; a play area for the facility in the front and sides; existing driveway will be removed and heavily buffered from residential adjoining properties. The applicant provided a response to the zoning review and we will remove seven parking spaces from the portion of the site as shown to comply with interpretation that there is a 50- ft. parking setback required on Old York Road for the daycare; however, those seven parking spaces will be held in reserve.

Ms. Gauthier questioned whether the bus stop on Old York Road has been identified on the plan and if there will be any special treatment such as hardscaping.

Mr. Clelland replied that was not identified on the plan; however, there are several sections of the decorative wall that wrap back around onto the existing driveways, so when we remove the driveways, we will infill the wall so there will be a continuous wall from north to south but for where the new driveway location will be. Regarding the bus stop; there is a sidewalk connection and plenty of green space.

Ms. Robinson asked about fencing for the play area.

Mr. Clelland replied the play area will be surrounded by a 4 ft. fence. Not currently shown on the plan, but was suggested by the traffic study was a slight widening of Susquehanna Road along the property frontage to provide left turn into the site for westbound traffic that will also allow for left turn into Sunrise for eastbound traffic.

Mr. Russell asked for a copy of the traffic study.

Mr. Penecale replied the applicant's traffic study was forwarded to TPD (Traffic Planning & Design) for review and the applicant received TPD's review comments and that turn lane is a result of it.

Mr. Clelland said the turn lane was already suggested in the study, but it is not shown on the plan at this time.

Ms. Gauthier asked about pedestrian crossing and whether improvements to the cemetery will still be made.

Mr. Clelland replied we included a note indicating that our continued willingness to improve the sidewalk along the cemetery on Susquehanna Road as well as the curb, and there will not be a pedestrian crossing mid-block. The intention is to cross at the signal where it is safe. Also, there were comments made by TPD and MCPC's about aligning the driveway to Adams Avenue to allow left turns out of the site and we do not feel it is a great place to make left turns with the amount of traffic. The applicant has reviewed all of the letters point-by-point and will comply but for a few items.

There are four waivers requested and we need to add one more and that is from Section 146.B.7 – Utilities Plan.; parking size space, and the request is to have 9 X 18 parking spaces in the general parking lot and 9 X 17 where they overhang in landscaping areas; another waiver is to allow trash enclosure to be within five feet of the building and regarding the creation of cut fill slopes, they are currently not allowed to be 15% or 1:6, which is not a typical slope for maximum grade, and we are asking for 1:3, which would be maintainable.

Regarding review letter from Boucher & James dated June 19, 2019; we have no issue with any of the comments but for the cross reference to other letters, Item 67 in that the applicant would like each review letter to stand alone.

Mr. Narcowich recommended that proposed planting strip in the parking lot for CHOP be used as a bio-swale.

Mr. Clelland replied the zoning review letter points out that the landscape strip in the parking lot requires a five foot sidewalk within it, which only allows four feet of remaining area and that would be tight.

Regarding TPD review letter; there was a suggestion that we create a pedestrian crossing at Huntingdon Road across Susquehanna and the applicant will not comply.

Mr. Russell asked about traffic generation from this new plan.

Mr. Clelland replied it is lower in the peak hours, but higher overall.

Mr. Markman added that we will make contribution towards Old York/Susquehanna intersection improvements.

Mr. Clelland referring to TPD letter Item #3 that identifies the year 2024 as completed construction year and we hope to be well ahead of that. Regarding Item #5; suggested was providing a right turn deceleration lane into the site northbound on Old York Road and that would not allow for retention of existing wall in that location.

Regarding zoning ordinance comment letter dated June 17, 2019; the applicant responded to all comments and will comply with the exception of Item 2 regarding setback to parking spaces since we agreed to remove the seven parking spaces. Item #16 regarding high intensity site element screen around outdoor play area; this is not specific to a residential zone and proposed is a fence around it and we can enhance landscaping around the edge of it.

Mr. Rosen asked about the commitment towards the daycare center and what is the driving force for that use?

Mr. Markman replied when the YMCA decided to leave the Township, they made a commitment to leave the daycare in Abington and looked at a number of sites, but was unable to find one, so we offered that they could keep the daycare at this site and they were excited about that.

Mr. Clelland continued that TPD letter also indicated adding two outbound lanes at Susquehanna Road and we do not agree with that.

Mr. Russell noted that an HOP will be required by PennDOT and they will provide guidance.

Ms. Gauthier asked for the turning radius of the right-turn-in on Susquehanna.

Sandy Koza, Traffic Engineer, McMahon Associates, replied we propose a left turn in that is warranted and right turn lane from Susquehanna, which is not shown on the plan, but PennDOT will review layout and design.

Mr. Rosen asked what does the traffic study show as it relates to rush hour.

Ms. Koza replied 118 trips in the morning, 64 trips in the afternoon; slightly less when the YMCA was at peak.

Mr. Brown asked about pick up and drop-off for the daycare.

Mr. Clelland replied they require walk-in and there will be no drop-off.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments.

Don Marquardt, 1805 Brook Road, expressed concern that this is a prominent corner of town and materials such as brick v. stone, scale of the building and what it will look like from the neighboring area have not been addressed.

Stephen Lee, 1073 Huntingdon Road, asked for the plan for where the property ends.

Mr. Clelland replied there will be a fence around the rain garden and the rest of it will be open.

Cakky Evans, 1132 Lindsay Lane, commented that she appreciates the rain garden proposed on the plan and she asked that the suggestion of brick v. stone be considered.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that she feels the “process is completely broken and should be fixed.” Also, she questioned whether the “applicant will work with the cemetery on other things besides the sidewalk and also will the maintenance of the historic building be put in the deed?”

Ms. Strackhouse replied that the Planning Commission has no authority to do that as that would be up to the owner to place preservation easement on that building.

Mr. Markman said we continue to work with reps of the cemetery to help preserve it, and regarding the YMCA daycare, we are not in the position to say it will be there forever.

Joseph Dratch, business owner of 1150 Old York Road next to the site, suggested the Township needs to “straighten out the intersection of Susquehanna/Old York Road as trucks hit that corner four or five times a year, and traffic will be a major issue.”

Mr. Narcowich replied that the Township obtained a multi-modal transportation grant for improvements to that intersection.

Waiver requests were voted on separately as follows:

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Rosen to approve waiver request from Section 146-11.A – Property Identification Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.B – Existing Features Plan and Section 146-B.7- Utilities Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to approve waiver request from Section 146-28 A. – Parking Stall Size.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to approve waiver request from Section 146-41.B - Trash Enclosure.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to approve waiver request from Section 146-43 C - Steep Slopes at proposed rate of 3:1 inside detention basin area.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to recommend approval of application of Abington Terrace, LLC as well as approval of planning module subject to the conditions of identifying bus stop hardscaping; show seven parking spaces to be held in reserve; indicate whether or not turning radius for Old York Road should be 20 degree turning radius; traffic impact study especially Susquehanna Road improvements be complied with PennDOT and Township's standards; stormwater management plan meets all Township engineering requirements and recommended that the single family home be rezoned back to R-3 as well as approval of waiver requests as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary