

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MAY 24, 2016

Attendees: Peter Cornog, James Hoban, Sherri Patchen, Vince Manuele, Scott Quitel, Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning, Amy Grossman (BOS Liaison), Jim Sullivan, Township Engineer, T&M Associates

1. Call to order: 7:00 PM by Chair Patchen

2. Announcements & Correspondence:

- The Montgomery County Planning Commission review was received today for the Riverfront Plan.

3. Approval of Minutes:

- Mr. Cornog moved to approve the meeting minutes from April 26, 2016, seconded by Mr. Hoban. Vote 5-0. Mr. Hoban moved to approve the meeting minutes from May 10, 2016, seconded by Ms. Patchen. 2-0-3 Mr. Cornog, Mr. Manuele and Mr. Quitel - abstain (not present at that meeting)

4. Zoning Hearing Board Appeals:

- ZHB#2016-13 – 505A Germantown Pike Assoc, LP; 507 Germantown Pike Assoc, LP; Michael Nolen; 505 ½ & 507 Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, PA; Setbacks & Road Frontage. This application was discussed with the Conditional Use application (CU#04-16 below). At the end of the discussion of both applications, Mr. Cornog made a motion to the Zoning Hearing Board to look favorably and approve the requests for the three variances; seconded by Mr. Manuele. Vote 5-0.

5. Subdivision & Land Development Applications: None

6. Conditional Use Applications:

- CU#04-16 – 505A Germantown Pike Assoc, LP; 507 Germantown Pike Assoc, LP; Michael Nolen; 505 ½ & 507 Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, PA; Townhome Use. Mike Peters, Esq. with Eastburn and Gray, PC, was present along with Estelle Eberhart, Irick Eberhardt & Mentus, Inc., Jack Barbary, Vice President of Real Estate Services, Inc. (Mr. Nolen's corporate entity) and Guy DiMartino, Traffic Planning and Design. At the January 12, 2016 meeting, the Planning Commission recommended in favor of extending the VC-1 District on the site; that Zoning Map Amendment was approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 11, 2016. Now the applicant would like to move forward with the development of the property. Mr. Peters went over the background of the property and showed existing and proposed plans. There are currently two office buildings on the site and one of the buildings has an apartment in it. The applicant is proposing 9 townhomes and 4 single-family detached homes on the site. There is adequate parking for each use with additional overflow parking for the townhouses. In order to do so, several variances are needed as well as conditional use approval for townhomes in the VC-1 District. Mr. Barbary discussed the elevations and how they would meet the Village Commercial requirements. Ms. Eberhardt discussed that the walking path will go from Westaway Drive to Germantown Pike and that it will be used by pedestrians only (inadvertently omitted from plan rendering). Public Comment: Harry and Susan McCullough, 4023 Westaway Drive; Linda Doll, Fairway Road; Bob Sague, Kottler Drive; Joe Meo, 4122 Jackson Drive; and Ed Flocco, Woodruff Road, all spoke. The public's comments and concerns, in general, were as follows: Sight distance exiting onto Westaway Drive and the public not adhering to the speed limit; the style of the new houses will take away from the neighborhood and devalue the existing properties; property currently has a lot of trees, how many will be removed and why put in excess parking; too much building, would like it the vegetation to stay as it is; traffic and overdevelopment changes the

character of the Township; and stop the density increase. Planning Commission Comments: Mr. Cornog stated he has seen at least 26 plans since 1999 and feels this is the best use of the land; saves open space; and is less intense and would like to see the project move forward with the three variances. Ms. Patchen agrees with Mr. Cornog's comments and due to the irregular shape and unique attributes of this parcel it does warrant the grant of the variances. Mr. Quitel states there are a lot of valid comments from the public, but this goes back to the people elected and Montgomery County; there is no ecological overlay in Whitemarsh Township; the problem is more systemic because that is what happens over the years and it's why our Township is not nearly as green and not as enjoyable as other towns not far away. (After motion made as above for the Zoning Hearing Board), Mr. Manuele moved to recommend approval of the Conditional Use application; seconded by Mr. Hoban. Vote 5-0.

- CU#03-16 – Bradford Tiffany, 429 S. Bethlehem Pike, Fort Washington, PA; Restaurant and Bakery Use. Joseph Kuhls, Esquire was present on behalf of the applicant; applicant was also present. The applicant is proposing a week-day restaurant, primarily take away food, with a limited menu of sandwiches, salads, cookies and cake. There will be limited cooking and baking on the premises. No table service (3 high tables with 3 chairs at each table will be available for patrons). There is no proposed construction or change to the exterior of the building. A letter dated May 19, 2016 from Mr. Guttenplan, states the use and parking meets zoning requirements. Hours of operation will be from 5:30am – 4:00pm Monday through Friday. Public Comment: Lorraine Moore, owner of Sage Spa, is concerned about trash and the disposal of certain things; parking; and large delivery trucks. Ms. Moore would like to make sure the people in the back are protected. Ms. Moore also stated that she and Mr. Tiffany had a lengthy discussion and think this can be worked out and be beneficial for both businesses. Greg Harth, confirmed that the applicant reached out to them; they continue to have sewer backup due to grease being poured down the drain (by past user); he stated the use is ideal and couldn't think of a better use for the location. Mr. Harth also stated that there is a surplus of parking adjacent to the businesses (he leases to) and could work something out with the tenant if necessary. Planning Commission Comments: Mr. Hoban stated that it would be helpful to coordinate deliveries in the early hours to take pressure off the Spa. Mr. Quitel recommended approving the Conditional Use application for the operation being requested; seconded by Mr. Manuele. Vote 5-0.

7. Old Business:

- Review of *Riverfront Plan* as an amendment to the Township's 2003 Comprehensive Plan; recommendation for adoption to be considered. Mr. Guttenplan briefly stated Kent Baird, consultant from Carter van Dyke Associates, presented the *Plan* at the May 10th joint Planning Commission meeting. The point of the meeting tonight is for the Township Planning Commission to consider making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors on the adoption of this plan as an amendment to the Township's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Baird, acting as consultant for Whitemarsh Township, shared an abbreviated Power Point presentation of the Riverfront Plan and its Goals, Existing Conditions Findings, Recommendations and Plan Graphics. Please see attached memorandum outlining the meeting. Public Comment: Joe Meo, 4122 Jackson Drive, spoke. His comment and ultimate request was that the plan include improved information regarding riparian rights. He asked if the consultant team had analyzed the impact of the current development on the riparian area or floodplain. Mr. Baird responded that it was not part of the scope of work due to the necessity of detail for that type of analysis and that it could be recommended as a next-step opportunity. After a short additional presentation by the consultant and additional discussion, Mr. Cornog made a motion recommending that the Board consider the *Plan* for adoption, noting that additional work is needed, but recognizing that the *Plan* will provide a guide for development in the riverfront area and also that the Township look further at ecological and riparian rights issues; seconded by Mr. Manuele. Vote 4-1 (Mr. Quitel opposed)

8. New Business: None

9. Public Comment:

- Linda Doll, Fairway Road, asked about the upcoming public officials meeting (on May 31st) for the Ridge Pike Project.

10. Adjournment:

- There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 9:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning

The Planning Commission is appointed as an advisory group to the Board of Supervisors and the Zoning Hearing Board with respect to comprehensive land use planning, existing land use, and various land use and zoning applications in Whitemarsh Township. No formal decisions are rendered by the Planning Commission. Formal decisions are rendered by the Board of Supervisors or Zoning Hearing Board, as prescribed by law, based on the type of application.



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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 25, 2016
TO: Charlie L. Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning/Zoning Officer, Whitemarsh Township
FROM: Kent A. Baird, Community & Conservation Planner, CVDA
PROJECT: The Riverfront Plan
RE: May 24th Planning Commission Meeting-Old Business: Review of Riverfront Plan

ATTENDED: Peter Cornog, James Hoban, Vincent Manuele, Sherri Patchen, Scott Quitel, Amy Grossman (Board of Supervisors Liaison), Charlie Guttenplan, Kent Baird and Jim Sullivan, Township Engineer

Summary

An abbreviated presentation of the Riverfront Plan was shared with the Whitemarsh Township Planning Commission during the Old Business portion of a regularly scheduled meeting. The Goals, Findings and Recommendations of the plan were reiterated for members of the board unable to attend previously scheduled presentations and workshops. A Questions and Answers style discussion followed the presentation and included public comment.

Minutes of Old Business

Mr. Baird, acting as consultant for Whitemarsh Township, shared an abbreviated Power Point presentation of the Riverfront Plan and its Goals, Existing Conditions Findings, Recommendations and Plan Graphics. Emphasis was placed on the review and acknowledgement of public participation and municipal adoption of previous plans and reports leading to this document and the creation of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee's six goals represent the culmination of decades of community input and committee expertise relative to the riverfront study area. The Existing Conditions Findings reveal the sheer volume of current and pending residents who will share the riverfront experience, the volume of visitors and passers-by who might see the riverfront as a regional destination and near term challenge of promoting public and private partnerships with a mostly privately owned riverfront edge.

Peter Cornog—Mr. Cornog reminded the board of the dated nature of the existing Township comprehensive plan, last adopted in 2003, and sought clarity for this plan's relevance and/or impact on any update to the comprehensive plan. Mr. Guttenplan remarked the Board of Supervisors were on the same page and were in the process of reviewing the previously adopted plan and pointed out other more recent amendments—the open space, pedestrian and greenway plans—as well as the park and recreation plan. The strength of the Riverfront Plan lies in the near term impact on the vision of shared riverfront and the preparation of a comprehensive plan which celebrates the importance of the river to the community.

James Hoban & Peter Cornog—a shared request of Mr. Hoban and Mr. Cornog was that of making improvements to the draft Riverfront Plan to enhance the Action Plan and any steps needed to achieve the objectives or recommendations.

Sherri Patchen—the Chairperson of the Commission requested further information in the plan to address which financial tools are available for achieving the objectives/recommendations. A discussion continued for which local examples might be identified, which might have used business improvement districts and business owner special assessments, business improvement districts and government sponsored feasibility studies. Mr. Baird and Mr. Guttenplan reminded the Board their request was perfectly in line with previous planning initiatives and that this ‘Vision’ style plan necessarily leads to further analysis and subject specific reports and analyses.

Scott Quitel—Mr. Quitel prefaced his questions and comments with a remark that the plan seemed to meet the goals and intentions of the committee and the public input. His greater concern was for the importance or emphasis the plan did or did not place on the existing ecology or restoration opportunities along the riverfront. He asked to what extent the committee or the consultant sought to include a history of the ecology, floodplain restoration areas or stormwater solutions designed in an ecologically sensitive manner. Mr. Baird first shared his personal background relative to natural resource preservation and the background of his firm’s principals to remind the Board there exists great passion for the natural environment on the consultant team. Mr. Baird then offered that initial discussions included forest restoration and floodplain habitat for areas that were not yet developed or did not yet have proposed development plans. Only two main sites seemed still in a blank slate status relative to possible restoration; one lies upstream of Fayette St. Bridge and the other adjacent the 401 Washington St. approved development. In the moment, the site upstream from the bridge was drawn to accommodate habitat as well as outdoor recreation, seen in the form of athletic fields with solar panel covered parking. The second site was drawn to remind the reader that the property could be developed but that there was potentially ample room for yet more outdoor recreation to accommodate some of the nearly 1,300 new residents moving to the riverfront and others lacking outdoor recreation amenities. He further reiterated that extensive discussions had been had relative to Spring Mill County Park and the hope to offer improved access for individuals of all abilities. Mr. Baird added that an improvement to the plan could identify an option to use either or both of the developable sites for habitat restoration. The Board was encouraged by that offer. Mr. Hoban remarked that the riverfront had been in active industrial use and then in underutilized condition for well over 100 years. He was encouraged by the discussion and worried that if the plan did not include the subject there was a chance current redevelopment of the riverfront would continue unguided by the plan’s recommendation.

Joe Mayo—public comment was received from township resident Joe Mayo. Joe had earlier in the full meeting remarked he had been a resident for 63 years. His comment and ultimate request was that the plan include improved information regarding riparian rights. He asked if the consultant team had analyzed the impact of the current development on the riparian area or floodplain. Mr. Baird responded that it was not part of the scope of work due to the necessity of detail for that type of analysis and that it could be recommended as a next-step opportunity. Board members, Cornog, Patchen and Manuele requested that expanded analysis of the riparian rights be recommended in the plan.

James Hoban and Sherri Patchen—separately and together Mr. Hoban and Ms. Patchen shared concerns for the timing of the Riverfront Plan and its adoption as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Both worried for the negative impact of not adopting the vision of the riverfront which developers should address. Mr. Guttenplan confirmed that adoption was important both for establishing fair conversations with developers, and private property owners, as well as establishing the municipal role in achieving the recommendations; whether that be financial or administrative. He reminded the Board of the importance of grants and their need for community supported and adopted reports and plans. A discussion was had for the importance of grant timing and type.

Peter Cornog and Vincent Manuele—Mr. Cornog made a motion with second and additions provided by Mr. Manuele to recommend the Board of Supervisors adopt the Riverfront Plan with revisions to the plan expected in the categories of a) improved Action Plan, b) Next Steps Analyses for Ecological Issues, Riparian Rights, Park and Recreation Needs and Engineering and Economic Feasibility Studies. Attending members were in favor of the motion with the exception of Mr. Quitel who opposed the motion. The motion passed.