

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING JUNE 28, 2016

Attendees: Dave Shula, Vince Manuele, James Hoban, Sherri Patchen, Peter Cornog, Terry Lefco, 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:

- Reminder: The next meeting will be on July 26, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

3. Approval of Minutes:

- Mr. Shula moved to approve the meeting minutes from June 14, 2016, seconded by Mr. Cornog. Vote 6-0-1. Mr. Manuele abstained (not present at that meeting).

4. Zoning Hearing Board Appeals: None

5. Subdivision & Land Development Applications:

- SLD#04-16 – Whitemarsh Shopping Center, 10 Ridge Pike, Conshohocken, PA; 11,380 sq.ft. Retail Building. Mr. Guttenplan stated this is a Sketch Plan review so no formal recommendation is being requested, just comment and input to the applicant. Present were Brian Conlon, with Langan Engineering and Environmental Services and Mark Newman and Bill Grimmel, with Brixmor Property Group - Whitemarsh Shopping Center. Mr. Conlon gave a review of the site and discussed the concept plan. The applicant is proposing a new 11,380-square foot retail building near the Panera Bread end of the existing retail building; shopping center will increase from 64,476 SF to 75,856 SF. Parking currently 385 spaces or 5.71/1,000 SF; will have 362 spaces or 4.59/1,000 SF, still exceeding industry standards (generally approximately 4/1,000 SF, or less); parking utilization studies showed max usage at 57%. This building will be freestanding, not connected to the existing one. It is anticipated to be a multi-use tenant building. Engineer and Zoning reviews were received and they are in agreement with the comments. A number of variances will be needed for the project: number of parking spaces proposed, impervious coverage requirements and parking within the front yard setback. Comments from the Planning Commission Members: A number of issues was discussed at length: traffic flow and conflict points, parking lot congestion (especially at the Giant Supermarket end) and difficulty finding parking where needed; the utilization of the back of the building and parking in this area. Also comments that they are taking an existing plot of land and making it more dense by putting more use on it; questioned what the “improvement” is and improvement for who; what are potential uses for the new building/uses will affect its impact; what is ‘driving’ the size of the new building and its need; where/when will trash removal and deliveries occur. Applicant questioned about consideration of MCPC review comments; will evaluate. Public Comment: Denise Nowak, Barren Hill Road; Linda Doll, Fairway Road; Drew Borstein, 31 Corson Road; and Ross Lemon, Corson Road, all spoke. The public’s comments and concerns, in general, were as follows: No available parking; how can you improve green space that doesn’t exist; Green Drop is a good service in Whitemarsh Township but is proposed for removal; the public walking through private properties to get to the shopping center; rear lot not properly maintained; rear lot lighting is misdirected and excessive; tractor trailer deliveries between 9:00 pm and 1:00 am; dumpsters being emptied at different times; no buffer or fence between the shopping center and the residential properties; and removing parking spaces from an existing poorly designed parking lot doesn’t make sense. The applicant will share this feedback with the property manager regardless if they go forward or not and stated they do have budgets they develop for maintaining properties.

6. Conditional Use Applications:

- CU#05-16 – Shaun McLaughlin, 4015 Fairway Road, Lafayette Hill, PA; Front facing solar panels. Present were Kristen Robeo, representative from SolarCity, and Shaun McLaughlin, the Applicant.

The applicant is proposing roof-mounted solar panels that are front-facing, which are permitted only by conditional use as well as rear-facing (permitted use) on main portion of house. The solar array could not be installed on the remainder of the house (toward Marquis Road) because the applicant testified the roof structure could not accommodate the loading. The Township Engineer has reviewed the proposal and found it to be an effective use of solar energy for this property. A Public Hearing for this application will be held by the Board of Supervisors at their July 21st meeting. Comments from the Planning Commission: Mr. Manuele asked if the panels were fixed; in response they are fixed and will be 4” total height off the roof. Mr. Lefco asked about the life span of the panels; in response there is a minimum of 20 years and SolarCity maintains them. Ms. Patchen asked about history of SolarCity. Public Comment: Linda Doll, Fairway Road, needed confirmation that the panels will also be placed on the back of the house; concerned about glare from the panels; glare studies are an option due to concerns with older panels; if there is no glare then she has no problem; Ms. Robeo confirmed that the panels are non-glare. Mr. Hoban made a motion to recommend in favor of the conditional use; seconded by Mr. Lefco. Vote 7-0

- CU#06-16 – Thomas & Lisa Dunleavy, 107 E. Germantown Pike, Plymouth Meeting, PA; 2nd Dwelling unit. Mr. Guttenplan briefly explained the applicants proposal to convert an existing accessory building into an in-law suite. The property is in the VC-2 District; under Village Commercial standards, multiple buildings on the same property, meeting permitted use or conditional use standards, are permitted by conditional use. By converting the existing accessory building to a free-standing in-law suite, there will be two separate single-family detached residences; each single-family detached residence is a (separate) permitted use under VC standards. Therefore, conditional use approval is required. This proposal does not meet one of the conditional use criteria, which requires every conditional use to either have shared access or shared parking with an adjacent lot. The applicants obtained a variance from this requirement at the May 4th Zoning Hearing Board meeting. A Public Hearing for this application will be held by the Board of Supervisors at their July 21st meeting. Planning Commission members questioned future plans beyond the use of the in-law suite (it was pointed out that a condition of the Zoning Hearing Board approval is that it cannot become a rental unit); and whether there are historical artifacts on this property given its age of construction (root cellars and some other features were discussed). This property is also located in the Plymouth Meeting Historic District and will require a Certificate of Appropriateness. No Public Comment. Mr. Manuele moved to recommend approval of the conditional use application; seconded by Mr. Cornog. Vote 7-0.

7. Old Business: None

8. New Business: None

9. Public Comment:

- Linda Doll, Fairway Road, questioned if additions are monitored once completed to make sure it is properly being used. In response the Township monitors the construction at various points in the process, but once completed, unless notified, we assume the use is what was approved.

10. Adjournment:

- There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 8:48 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.