

**MINUTES  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
ZOOM MEETING  
MAY 26, 2020**

**Attendees/Participants:** Dave Shula, Sherri Glantz Patchen, Patrick Doran, Bob Dambman, Peter Cornog, Elizabeth Shaw-Fink, Scott Quitel, Charlie Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning and Zoning, Jim Hersh & Krista Heinrich (Township Engineer's office), Vince Manuele (BOS Liaison), and Dave Sander, Esq. (Township Solicitor's office)

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** 7:06 PM by Chair Dambman

**2. ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE**

**Announcements:**

- Act 15 requires advertising meetings 5 days in advance. This meeting was published in the Times Herald on May 21, 2020.
- The revised draft of the Comprehensive Plan was received and reviewed by Mr. Guttenplan and is now in the Township Manager's office for review. If there are no changes this will be sent to the Planning Commission for review. If no changes are made it will be sent to the County for review and then to the Board of Supervisors for action (after a PC Public Meeting).

**Correspondence:**

- E-mail from Roy Wilson regarding the March 10, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
- E-mail from Peter Blood, Fort Washington Rescape, regarding ZHB#2020-10 Whitemarsh Hotel Associates, LP.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- On a motion by Mr. Cornog seconded by Ms. Patchen, the Planning Commission moved to approve the February 25, 2020 meeting minutes. Vote 7-0
- On a motion by Mr. Shula, seconded by Mr. Cornog, the Planning Commission moved to approve the February 29, 2020 special meeting minutes. Vote 7-0
- On a motion by Mr. Doran, seconded by Mr. Shula, the Planning Commission moved to approve the March 10, 2020 meeting minutes as amended by Ms. Patchen. Vote 7-0

**4. ZONING HEARING BOARD APPEALS:**

- Review ZHB#2020-10 Whitemarsh Hotel Associates, L.P./432 Pennsylvania Avenue  
*Request for modification of prior approval related to restaurant*

Mr. Guttenplan briefly explained the application was last seen by the Planning Commission in May/June of 2018 for a different, larger freestanding restaurant. The Zoning Hearing Board approved the relief but it was never acted on and has now expired.

Attendees: Ameer Farrell, Esquire, attorney for the applicant, Bill McNamara, General Manager Charlie Houder, Developer/Applicant, Sandra Koza, Traffic Consultant and Michael Bowker, Applicant's Engineer.

The applicant is proposing to add a 2600-square foot (+/-) free-standing, drive-through Starbucks coffee shop restaurant/café with outdoor seating immediately adjacent to the existing Holiday Inn Express and Suites. Similar to previous applications for a freestanding restaurant on this site (none previously built), the applicant requires a special exception for the restaurant use, a variance

for reduced parking, and a variance to permit development within the Floodplain Conservation Overlay District. In addition, the applicant is seeking some signage variances as well as a variance to permit outdoor seating, not permitted in the CR-L Commercial Retail District. A brief background via PowerPoint was presented by Ms. Farrell on the property along with a site plan, elevations and a sign package with 5 options that consisted of different types of exterior building panels and signage.

Planning Commission Members Comments & Concerns: what is the total square foot of signage (110 square feet maximum; includes signage on all four sides of the building and the monument sign); will it be the standard interior layout (yes, they are making it more disperse inside and will match recent stores though also considering COVID-19 issues; Starbucks is becoming more of a mobile ordering or fast-in fast-out establishment); are the extra parking spaces necessary, less hardscape more green and more infiltration the better since it's in a floodplain (still less impervious ground coverage with this proposal, not much room to work with, will see what else can be done); what are the hours of operation (6:00 AM – 8:00 PM, may go an hour earlier/later due to location); what are the differences between Dunkin Donuts and Starbucks since special exception requires a showing of need in the market area (different menu offerings, different approach, and different clients)

On a motion by Ms. Patchen, seconded by Mr. Shula (Vote 7-0), the Planning Commission recommends the Zoning Hearing Board grant the special exception and requested variances conditioned upon the applicant taking an ecosystem approach with respect to greenspace.

A brief conversation then took place on the 5 alternative sign packages and exterior color schemes. The members felt that it was hard to tell from the pictures and that they were hesitant to make a recommendation but agreed that options #1 & #5 blended in with the existing structures.

On a motion by Mr. Quitel, seconded by Mr. Cornog (Vote 7-0), the Planning Commission made a motion to recommend options #1 & #5 above the other choices.

**5. CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS:** None

**6. SUBDIVISION &/OR LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS:**

- Review (continued) SLD #05-14; 901 Washington Partners, LP/901 Washington Street  
*Revised Preliminary Plan; 62 Townhomes*

Mr. Guttenplan briefly explained this is a proposal for a 62-unit townhome development on the old Finneran & Haley site. A new plan package was received based on comments from the Township.

Attendees: Jim Vesey, one of the owners of the property at 901 Washington Street Partners; his partner Gary Toll; Jim Bannon, Engineer from Nave Newell; Sarah Peck, developer/partner from Progressive New Homes and her associate Justin Moody.

Ms. Peck stated the plan was adjusted slightly to address the comments received and if acceptable would like a vote of approval. A PowerPoint was presented showing the overall site plan with 46 front to back and 16 conventional townhomes all having access to river views. Changes consisted of renumbering as a way of finding the units easier; parking was amended so that all front to back townhomes have their own individual driveways and the conventional townhomes will have their own parallel spot in front of the unit (though these are extra spaces, they are not included in the parking count since they may not meet the ordinance definition of a 'parking space'); the street will be widened to 25' with parking on 1 side only which will help with traffic calming; there will be adequate pedestrian circulation with sidewalks and access to trails; a second gate will be added to block Driveway B so the public can park and get access to the trail; they raised the elevations of

all homes 1'; the parking court design was changed to accommodate the trash cans and condensing units; an elongated retaining wall was added so pedestrians can walk from court to court; the boat launch was moved west to save a heritage tree; changes to landscaping which will require a few extra waivers; added a landscape berm adjacent to SEPTA tracks for visual and sound purposes; added more vegetation; beefed up the riparian corridor with plants and added trees to the courts; the intersection at Lee Street/Washington Street was revised to make safer and more realistic adding stop signs; and a protected ADA pedestrian path was built (they needed permission from David's Bridal to remove a set of stairs protruding into the parking lot, which they received).

Planning Commission Members Comments & Concerns: will fire trucks still be able to access on 25' roads with parking on one side (yes it still works); what is the width of the sidewalks on Washington Street and adjacent to Driveway A (5' wide for both); there will be public access on the western perimeter of the property but will parking be dedicated to the public (no but there is plenty of parking); the public will not have access to the boat ramp (this is for emergency access only); handicap parking is not indicated on the plan (they can add it); the Commission wants to see public amenities but none are shown on the plan only trails (they will put seating along the river. There is a conflict in the zoning ordinance with some of the optional public amenities in one section being required features in another section); not in favor of substituting smaller caliper trees with larger caliper trees; feels the smaller trees won't work long term; visually would like to keep the riverfront consistent with what is there now (they are following the arborist's direction as to what is being removed); the Shade Tree Commission is walking the site this weekend; concerned the footers are being put into unstable material; a lot of concerns on environmental issues and how are these issues being mitigated (the majority of the issues meet the state wide health standards); this could be a liability issue to potential homeowners; would like a summary of what is on the site that is being remediated (will put together a synopsis for the Planning Commission and the public; full disclosure will be provided to the homebuyers).

Public Comment: Steve Kaufman, Harts Ridge Road, Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road and Roy Wilson, 4006 Butler Pike. Their comments and concerns consisted of: it is not the case that the Shade Tree Ordinance allows a developer to swap out hardwood shade trees up to the limits specified in the ordinance, the swapping is subject to approval of the Shade Tree Commission; the landscape plan as proposed does not comply with the ordinance unless the Shade Tree Commission grants a waiver; Section 105-53.(D) dedication of park/recreation space should not be waived (clarification that the waiver was to allow a fee in lieu of dedication); the notion of allowing parking on a 25' street is alarming, all parking and other waivers that result in increased density should be rejected; regarding the environmental remediation, the approval plan predates this townhouse plan and it was advised that the slab would be removed in its entirety and replaced, need to hear from Township experts on adequacy of environmental remediation, etc.; one-inch trees won't survive; 144 lots on a brownfield site with a floodplain is not appropriate (it was clarified that 144 is based on the allowable 30 units/acre but only 62 units are proposed); this should not be voted on tonight, would like the Planning Commission to take more time on this; waivers #11 & 13 cry out for an in depth discussion; a request to clarify the site data regarding residential density.

The Planning Commission would like the applicant to provide additional information (environmental summary); have time to review the 14 requested waivers; and would like to hear the Shade Tree Commission's recommendations before the Planning Commission makes their recommendation. The applicant will address comments and come back with revised plans.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS:**

- Mr. Cornog asked if Whitemarsh Station was submitted to the County for the 2020 Montgomery Awards Program, in response Mr. Guttenplan stated that it will be and the deadline for submissions was extended to June 1, 2020.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS:** None

## **9. PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS COMMENTS:**

- It was agreed that the next meeting (via Zoom) would start at 6 PM.

## **10. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON AGENDA ITEMS**

- Mr. Wilson objects to his comments (submitted this date via e-mail) not being entered into the March 10, 2020 meeting minutes. It was explained by Mr. Sander that the Planning Commission has taken action to approve the minutes and his objection is noted. Mr. Sander also explained that the minutes are not a verbatim record of what is said and it is not a requirement to do so.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

- On a motion by Mr. Doran seconded by Mr. Cornog, the meeting was adjourned at 9:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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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.