

**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
ZOOM MEETING
JUNE 23, 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, Krista Heinrich (Township Engineer's office), Vince Manuele (BOS Liaison), and Dave Sander, Esq. (Township Solicitor's office)

1. CALL TO ORDER: 6:08 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 June 17, 2020.
- The revised draft of the Comprehensive Plan was received and posted on the website. On June 12, 2020 the document was sent out for review to agencies required by the Municipalities Planning Code and the state historic preservation office; by law the required review agencies have 45 days to review and comment. Once reviews are received it will be scheduled on a Planning Commission agenda to discuss, make final edits and come up with a recommendation for the Commission's required Public Meeting, tentatively in September and hopefully be scheduled on an October Board of Supervisors agenda for the required Public Hearing.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- The meeting minutes from May 26, 2020 were tabled until the next scheduled meeting to allow staff to make requested corrections.

4. ZONING HEARING BOARD APPEALS: None

5. CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS: None

6. SUBDIVISION &/OR LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS:

- Review SLD#02-19 Argos Associates/Adelphia Land Associates/Polergodom Group, Ltd
"Longfield Farms" Butler Pike, Ambler, PA;
Preliminary Plan Review; 58 Townhomes

Attendees: Robert Downs, Owner's Representative; Caroline Edwards, Esquire, Attorney; Richard Collier, FAICP, Planner; David Cavanaugh, RLA, Landscape Architect; Robert Irick, RLA, Landscape Architect, Estelle Eberhardt, P.E., Engineer and Brian Keaveney, P.E. Traffic/Transportation

Mr. Collier provided some background and described the plan with a PowerPoint presentation. The site is 15.24 acres located at the corner of Butler and Skippack Pikes with access/egress from both roads (right-in/right-out only on Skippack Pike). The applicant is proposing a townhouse community of 58 homes in 3 and 4 unit groups (density allows for 118 units). The project will retain nearly 44% private open space and stormwater will be managed within the tract and all within Whitemarsh Township.

Architectural renderings were shown of the 3 & 4 unit building groupings as well as the exterior unit side elevation. The 3 unit groupings will have 1 front loaded garage and 2 side garages, one on

each end unit; the 4 unit groupings will have 2 front loaded garages and 2 side garages, one on each end unit; they will be using high quality building materials.

The project received Conditional Use approval on November 21, 2019; revised Land Development Plans and documents were submitted for Township review on April 3, 2020; and review letters have been received from the Township staff/consultants and Montgomery County Planning Commission. All comments in the letters are 'will comply' with the exception of the requested waivers. Mr. Irick reviewed the waivers/partial waivers with the Commission.

The Land Development Plan is essentially the same as the granted Conditional Use Plan, with some improvements. The plan improvements consisted of expanding the sidewalk system; internal roads were widened to 26'; green area was provided for recreation. Plan for how the recreation area is to be used will be determined by the future homeowners.

Ms. Eberhardt described the revised stormwater management system. The project stormwater will be managed by a series of basins and metered out under Skippack Pike to existing systems on the CVS site; there will be no project flow under Butler Pike to Whippen Township as there had been previously.

Mr. Keaveney described the two access points proposed. Main access will be from Butler Pike with a full movement driveway designed as a boulevard; a left turn lane will be provided to turn into the site from the north; the shoulder will be widened to accommodate right turns in from the south. The access on Skippack Pike will be right-in, right-out with no lefts in or out. A PennDOT highway occupancy permit will be required for this access driveway and a County permit required for the main driveway on Butler Pike since that is a County road.

Mr. Irick described sidewalks proposed and pointed out that the applicant is providing an easement for extending a sidewalk along Skippack Pike to the east of the access driveway as no reason for it at this time; they will provide funds for putting it in at a future time. Also pointed out the two pedestrian connections to the adjacent Water Tower office building to the shared parking (required for conditional use approval). He also went through the waiver requests and the June 22nd amended waiver requests.

Planning Commission Members Comments & Concerns: street connection with the adjacent undeveloped parcel (zoned AD Attached Dwelling) should be made or accommodated via appropriate legal instruments (Mr. Sander to address this), but units on either side will need to be shifted to provide adequate space for the road; landscaping plan is far from being adequate—proposes only one tree species, doesn't reflect effort to sustain or help wildlife, would like to see a much richer landscape plan, and who is able to look at landscape issues aside from tree replacement that the Shade Tree Commission looks at (Mr. Guttenplan asked Ms. Heinrich if there is expertise in her firm to look at the broader landscape issues and she answered affirmatively; is there anything the developer can do to improve the traffic flow on the adjacent roadways (timing change post construction—base timing on real life not what is anticipated), Ms. Heinrich pointed out that PennDOT will address changes with the highway occupancy permit (Mr. Keaveney pointed out that that level of service can improve from 'E' to 'D' with timing improvements even with their additional traffic); how will design of Skippack Pike access really prevent people from making left turns (Mr. Keaveney explained geometry proposed and other measures that could be considered but this must ultimately be what PennDOT requires); concern about adequacy of sidewalks proposed, including why the one along Skippack Pike east of the access driveway shouldn't be constructed with the project—not building sidewalks along the whole length of Skippack Pike would violate Condition #6 of the Conditional Use approval; how can sidewalks be installed around the Ambler water tower to allow pedestrian access to the intersection of Butler and Skippack Pikes (County and consultant letters recommend applicant coordinate those efforts with the various parties involved; Mr. Collier is waiting for response from Ambler Borough Manager); what is the hardship for the waiver to not dedicate 10% open space either within the property or by incorporating some of the adjacent property also under the applicant's control (this might be a more

feasible approach), a quarter acre of recreation land proposed is not adequate; was there discussion about the future intent of the adjacent property (applicant does not want to comment about the future); sidewalks on Skippack Pike.

After discussion by Commission members, the applicant's team discussed outstanding comments in the review letters from the Township/Township consultants. Those comments that had been addressed in discussion during the meeting will be addressed with the applicable reviewer. The County review was also discussed including: stormwater concerns with reference to Basin 2 having its emergency spillway discharging into pipe in Butler Pike (applicant met with County; 99% of the time, it is anticipated that no water will go into this pipe); recommendations for full widening of Butler Pike (not necessary and would result in more impervious coverage and loss of trees, will dedicate right-of-way, further discussion will be held with Roads and Bridges department); adequacy of open space (considered adequate for size of development but will see if there is something else that can be done to address this); and need for sidewalks along both external roads to their intersection (discussed during meeting).

Public Comment: Christopher Miller, David Brooman, Pat Sheinman, Kathryn Pedicino, Mark Eberle (Whitpain Township Residents), Sydelle Zove and Steve Kaufman (Whitemarsh Township Residents). Their comments and concerns consisted of stormwater management - where does the emergency spillway go; will the existing pipe be removed with the relocation of the basin (it's a County pipe); what is the frequency of discharge to the pipe; who is responsible for maintaining the detention basins onsite (homeowners association); traffic impact - what is the plan regarding school buses (requires discussion with School District Director of Transportation); how are you going to address cut thru traffic thru the development (re-timing of light should address this to an extent but there's no fool-proof solution, will discuss possibility of speed bumps); re-evaluation of the traffic needs should be done prior to development opposed to after; concerned about the overspray of herbicides and pesticides onto nearby properties; opposed to the waiver allowing an aerial view in lieu of identifying the surrounding properties; a small creek may have its flow affected by this project, has this been examined; are there plans to develop the large parcel to the east in the future, need to understand more about that parcel, and is there a need to accommodate tie-in to any such development; the Planning Commission should consider requiring open space from that parcel or reduce the number of units and provide more open space on the applicant's current parcel; has the applicant satisfactorily proven their hardship in support of their waiver requests, doesn't believe they have; if the applicant "negotiates away" any of the conditional use approval conditions, that's a big problem.

The Planning Commission questioned what they are expected to do at this time. Mr. Guttenplan explained that if they are not prepared to make any recommendation (which seems to be the case from the discussion), the Commission can take no action at this meeting and request that the applicant come back and address their concerns. No motion was made but the Commission summarized what they want the developer to address: they would like to see Mr. Quitel's comments on the landscape plan resolved; would like to have more information regarding the other property (to the east) discussed; would like to see language to guarantee the extension of the entry road into the other property when developed in the future (via easement or similar instrument). Mr. Sander cautioned that if recommendations are made against any waiver requests that result in any significant plan changes, it could be problematic because one of the conditions of approval of the conditional use (condition #10) requires that the preliminary plan be generally consistent with the conditional use plan (which the current plan is). It is now up to the developer how to respond to the Planning Commission's concerns, and how they will proceed to the Shade Tree Commission based on the comments this evening.

7. OLD BUSINESS: None

8. NEW BUSINESS: None

9. PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS COMMENTS:

10. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON AGENDA ITEMS

11. ADJOURNMENT

- On a motion by Mr. Cornog seconded by Mr. Shula, the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 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.