

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING SEPTEMBER 25, 2018

Attendees: Bob Dambman, Vince Manuele, Patrick Doran, Dave Shula, Scott Quitel, Peter Cornog, 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 Manuele
2. Announcements & Correspondence

Announcements

- Mr. Cornog attended the Ridge Pike Project meetings and gave an update on the different elements of the project. The improvements are planned to start as early as 2020 in the section between Crescent Ave. and the city line.

Correspondence

- An invitation to a workshop was handed out to the members of the Planning Commission from The Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, Tyler School of Art of Temple University to attend a presentation of an undergraduate/graduate studio for a Vibrant Riverfront project to be held on October 3, 2018 in the Township Building.

3. Approval of Minutes:

- Mr. Shula moved to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2018 meeting; seconded by Mr. Dambman. Vote 3-0-2. Mr. Cornog and Mr. Doran abstained (not present at that meeting; Mr. Quitel not in attendance for vote)

4. Zoning Hearing Board Appeals:

- ZHB#2018-23 Conshohocken Land Development, LLC, 252 Roberts Avenue, Conshohocken, PA; Special Exception or Variance for Re-use of Lincoln Fire House (5 Single Family Attached Dwellings). George Ozorowski, Esquire, the applicant's attorney, Paul Hughes, P.E., applicant's engineer with Kimley Horn and Mark Jones, the developer were all present. Mr. Ozorowski gave a brief background of the property. The property is the former Lincoln Fire Company. The Applicant is proposing to use and convert the existing building (with an added second story) into five (5) attached residential units. The prior zoning in the area was CR-H which permitted a Fire Company. It is now B-Residential residential. The applicant is scheduled on the Zoning Hearing Board agenda for October 3, 2018 to seek relief for a change in the now non-conforming use and for dimensional variances. Mr. Hughes described the site plan; the stormwater under the parking lot and the driveway depression in the rear. The Planning Commission comments and concerns included: the appropriateness of the proposed use for the neighborhood, the close proximity of the south side of the building to the adjacent neighbor, questioned why a lesser number of units would not work here, and also questioned what would happen to the building's nonconforming status if a portion was removed. Public Comment: Tim Ferris, 300 Summit Avenue; Terry Ferris, 300 Summit Avenue; Anna Gregory, 1500 Wells Street; Sean Bennett, 234 Roberts Avenue; and Sydelle Zove, 644 Harts Ridge Road, all spoke. Their comments and concerns included: the neighbors are not opposed to new development but would like to keep with the character of the neighborhood (single family dwellings); concerned about the layout; wondered if the Township is allowed to review the appraisal of the property once it is complete; and will the residents have a say on where the money and proceeds go. In response, Mr. Ozorowski explained that single-family homes won't work, including multiple ones on the site, and reiterated that the fire house had been there for generations and had been compliant with zoning until it was changed just a few years ago, and that the attached dwellings would be more compatible with the neighborhood than the firehouse use had been. Tony Sherr, attorney representing Lincoln Fire Company explained the process of selling the Fire Company's assets and its responsibilities in this process; process is overseen by Orphan's Court, expectation is to maximize the assets, and that the proceeds are to be distributed to other first responders. Mr. Cornog moved to recommend that the Zoning Hearing Board look unfavorably upon this project as it doesn't meet the zoning code; seconded by Mr. Dambman. Vote 6-0.

5. Subdivision & Land Development Applications:

- SLD#06-18: Ben Sparango, 14 E. Germantown Pike, Plymouth Meeting, PA; 21 Single Family Attached Dwellings; Sketch Plan Review. (Discussion Only). Plato Marinakos, the applicant's architect and Ben Sparango, the applicant/owner of the property were present, as was Barry Reinhart, consultant to the applicant. The applicant is proposing a 21-unit townhome development on the combined properties of 12 and 14 E. Germantown Pike. In addition to being in the VC-2 District (requiring conditional use approval for the townhomes), this property is within the Plymouth Meeting Historic District and the project has been discussed with HARB informally several times. Two existing older buildings, currently divided into apartments and commercial use, are proposed to remain. The apartments and commercial use would be eliminated and it is anticipated that these buildings would be preserved and used as community space for the townhouse owners. The Planning Commission comments and concerns included: they would like to see the existing trees saved instead of removing and replacing them, by re-positioning the townhomes; wants the developer to take another look at the elevations and the orientation of the units facing Germantown Pike; more landscaping to make it more interesting; talk with the adjacent properties about shared parking and shared access; and they would like the owner to come up with different/creative options for the existing house and barn use. The Commission also asked the applicant to address comments made by the County: Mr. Sparango said that he would replace trees lost behind the post office and said that he has not yet met with the Shade Tree Commission; he believes two entrances are preferable for emergency purposes; he will review their comments about changing the building footprints to create more green space and he commented that he needs to review space needed for stormwater retention. Public Comment: Sydelle Zove, 644 Harts Ridge Road; Richard Abraham, 670 Bethlehem Pike; and Matt Sitko, 23 Laurence Place, all spoke. Their comments and concerns included: the requirements of the Conditional Use process for townhomes and the condition that they must comply with for shared driveways and/or shared parking; the barn in its current state leaves much to be desired; the design of the buildings are not consistent with the historic structures on Germantown Pike—not an appropriate façade for the area; would like to see other iterations that reflect historic nature; traffic turning left onto Germantown Pike will pose a serious problem; stormwater maintenance and buffering along property line. The applicant agreed to take all comments into consideration.

6. Conditional Use Applications: None

7. Old Business: None

8. New Business:

- Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Fireworks Sales; tabled to future meeting.

9. Public Comment: None

10. Adjournment:

- There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 8:59 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 Whitmarsh 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.