

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Attendees: Dave Shula, Sherri Glantz-Patchen, Patrick Doran, Bob Dambman, Peter Cornog, Elizabeth Shaw-Fink, Scott Quitel, Charlie Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning and Zoning, Vince Manuele (BOS Liaison), Vince Esposito (Township Engineer's office), and Rebecca Geiser, Esq. (Township Solicitor's office)

1. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM by Chair Dambman

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Announcements:

- A Special Meeting will be held on Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 9:30 A.M. to walk the 901 Washington Street Site. Please approach the site from Washington Street. There will be representatives of the developer ushering you into parking spaces. The site will be toured with representatives of the developer. It is an advertised public meeting so any members of the public can choose to attend and or if there is any other business or deliberations that the Planning Commission wishes to make, these can occur at this meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- On a motion by Ms. Patchen, seconded by Mr. Cornog, the Planning Commission tabled the February 11, 2020 meeting minutes until requested edits are made and can be reviewed again. Vote 6-0-1 (Mr. Doran abstained, not present for that meeting)

4. ZONING HEARING BOARD APPEALS:

- Review ZHB#2020-06 Crown Castle / 400 Stenton Avenue, Plymouth Meeting, PA
replace existing 80'-6" unipole with an 88' unipole

Attendees: Nicholas Cuće, Esquire, on behalf of the applicant Crown Castle; Sundeep Patel, A&E Project Manager; Araian Arabi, Construction Manager, Crown Castle; and Sarah Brown, Crown Real Estate Project Manager.

Crown Castle owns a 80'-6" unipole at this location that has been there for over 20 years, At that time T-Mobile (Omni Point) made an application to the Zoning Hearing Board to place the facility on this property; it was denied and an appeal was taken to the federal courts which resulted in a settlement and that settlement led to the facility being built. There is a fenced compound that exists that is not being changed but the unipole for some reason is outside of the fenced compound. The applicant is proposing a drop and swap which is removing the existing unipole and putting in a new one which is a bit larger that would house T-Mobile as well as Verizon Wireless. The new proposed unipole will now be located inside the fenced compound which is better for the health, safety and welfare of the community. This site is being proposed for the benefit of Cellco Partnership/Verizon Wireless. This is in lieu of proposing an additional pole in the immediate facility.

Planning Commission Members Comments & Concerns: the applicant was asked if they are aware of the history of the site and the 1998 decision of the Zoning Hearing Board and subsequent settlement agreement (yes); why not place Omni Point on the PECO Tower (PECO didn't want it there); are there alternate mitigations for aesthetics of the unipole (all antennas are internal); the settlement shows there was an alternate site and the unipole at 78' in height, was there further negotiation for the 80'-6" pole (no, difference is the lightning rod); why are they going back to the Zoning Hearing Board if there was a settlement (new tower, different location, new regulations); why can't the existing design be used and just change the height (it is not upgradable and you can't fit another carrier on there). The length of the lease

was asked (15 -20 years, Ms. Brown was not certain). Landscaping was discussed (can't plant outside the leased area, but willing to discuss this with property owner).

Mr. Petersohn briefly touched on the need Verizon Wireless has in the area; gave a little history on what else is planned in the area and why they need this site. A map of the area showing the municipal boundaries and other typical map features, roadways, waterways and parks was presented. A map was shown with Verizon specific information to include all the existing, proposed and planned Verizon facilities in the area. Map exhibits showing gaps for in-vehicle and in-building coverage, with and without new unipole, were presented.

Mr. Patel, site engineer, briefly gave a narrative of what is existing and what is being proposed, the aesthetics and photo simulations of what it is going to look like; 5 simulations from 5 different locations were shown. The current compound is roughly 30'x30' and the existing pole sits right outside the compound. They are proposing to have the new pole about center within the existing compound with the associated equipment going all around and new equipment for Verizon. Compound size not changing.

Public Comment: Linda Doll, Fairway Road; Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road; Steve Kaufman, Harts Ridge Road. Their comments consisted of the meeting agenda needing to be clearer, not specific enough; the look of the tower doesn't blend into anything or the environment, looks like a smokestack; feels it is really about the data and not about better phone coverage; would like them to pay close attention to the dimensional aspects; asked if the Township staff confirmed what is currently existing against the terms of the settlement agreement; variances are based on hardship, where is the hardship here; and aesthetic impact can be reduced with trees; let them build for additional capacity but in return have them give something back that has a positive aesthetic and environmental impact

Responses to Comments: phone and data signals are the same, they are all cellular services and will improve anything you do on your device; there is a lightning rod on the current unipole that make the height 80'6", the new pole will not have one; there are several factors to the width of the tower being proposed – the amount of coax required for both carriers, the size of the antennas, you don't know how much coax you will need for a future carrier; and it helps with structural capacity; the capacity of the third carrier does not contribute to the size of the tower, they are planning ahead to avoid this process in the future, the height is due to the needs of Verizon and the width is for the canister for the Verizon install; the equipment is required to be underground which is an outdated requirement (that is one of the requested variances) the proposed equipment will not go above the existing fence height but the new cable bridge will be about 6' higher than the fence; and PECO was considered but they are not viable and couldn't accommodate a 2nd carrier.

On a motion by Mr. Cornog, seconded by Ms. Patchen (Vote 7-0), the Planning Commission recommended approval of the requested variances with the following recommended conditions:

1. Require co-location on the new pole "as an absolute" for a 3rd carrier;
2. Provide landscaping in the area (of the parking lot) to be vacated by the existing pole; and
3. Demonstrate that they attempted co-location (on PECO tower) in accordance with the ordinance requirements.

5. CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS: None.

6. SUBDIVISION &/OR LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

7. OLD BUSINESS:

- Comprehensive Plan Selective Update – Continued review of draft document

Mr. Guttenplan explained the process once the comprehensive plan draft is finalized. When the Planning Commission completes its edits and authorizes them to go back to the consultant, the consultant will produce a revised draft document; the revised draft document will be sent out for review by the County,

surrounding municipalities, the school district and the state historic preservation office to get new reviews; once their reviews are received it will go back to the Planning Commission who is required hold a dedicated public meeting after which a recommendation will be made and passed to the Board of Supervisors, who is required to have at least one advertised public hearing on the document and once comfortable and ready to approve, they then approve by resolution and it becomes official policy of the Township. Once a complete revised document is received, it could be a good 3 months before it goes to the Board of Supervisors for a public hearing.

The Planning Commission agreed the remaining items to finalize are the climate change/environmental 'underpinning' and historic language. Mr. Manuele stated this has been dragging on for too long and recommended they go through the two final items, add them to the list, get a new version and do a final review of that version and move it on. He suggested setting a deadline for the next meeting to hash those items out so that Mr. Guttenplan can get it to the consultant so a redline can be done and they can do the next review. Mr. Kaufman made a suggestion to put two small working groups together to come up with solid language to propose to the larger group. Ms. Zove reread a document that she sent to Mr. Manuele dated September 24, 2019 and was going to suggest some minor tweaks; it was suggested she revise the document and e-mail it to the working group for the historic language. Two working groups were established; historic preservation (Ms. Patchen, Mr. Dambman and Mr. Cornog), and climate change/environmental (Mr. Quitel, Mr. Doran and Mr. Manuele).

8. NEW BUSINESS: None.

9. PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS COMMENTS:

Mr. Doran stated his understanding for the renovations at the Whitmarsh Shopping Center was to redo the parking lot and then build the structure, they are doing the opposite. By cutting off 1/3 of the parking so they could break ground on their building before doing any changes on the parking arrangement seems like a smack in the face to the Township and the people that use it. Seems more disruptive the way they are doing it. Mr. Guttenplan stated he didn't think they were specific about the sequence.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON AGENDA ITEMS

Sydelle Zove doesn't know why townhouses are even considered at 901 Washington Street when the Washington Street Feasibility Study is not done; thinks we are going about this all wrong. The Township should define how Washington Street is being extended, not the developer. Ms. Zove also stated the Township code provides standards, developers are asking for waivers, you do not have to grant those waivers.

Steve Kaufman stated he is under the impression that the developer is requesting various waivers and that the Township should deliver a message that the waivers will not be granted unless there is something done in return that will have an impact; he also quoted a Commonwealth Court case dealing with waivers of the SALDO. Mr. Kaufman also commented that the perpendicular parking is a health and safety concern.

Linda Doll appreciates that the Commission asked very specific questions (of the ZHB applicant) to get needed responses.

11. ADJOURNMENT

- On a motion by Mr. Cornog, seconded by Ms. Shaw-Fink, the meeting was adjourned at 9:47 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.

