

**MINUTES  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
AUGUST 9, 2022**

**Attendees/Participants:** Dave Shula, Sherri Glantz Patchen, Robert Dambman, Aaron Kostyk, Elizabeth Shaw-Fink, Charlie Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning, Krista Heinrich (Township Engineer), Vince Manuele (BOS Liaison), Dave Sander (Township Solicitor's office).

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** 7:00 PM by Chair Kostyk

**2. ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE**

- A request was made to speak as close to the microphone as possible so that we can hear the recording for the meeting minutes.
- This is the only August meeting; the next meeting will be September 13, 2022.
- A new waiver letter was placed at the members' seats for tonight's agenda item.
- Mr. Guttenplan demonstrated how to access the bookmarks in the meeting packets

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- On a motion by Mr. Shula, seconded by Ms. Shaw-Fink, the Planning Commission moved to approve the July 26, 2022 meeting minutes as written. Vote 4-0-1 (Ms. Glantz Patchen abstained, not present at that meeting)

**4. ZONING HEARING BOARD APPEALS:** None

**5. CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS:** None

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

- Review SLD #07-22 AIM Academy/1200 River Road, Conshohocken; Major Land Development Preliminary/Final Plan for Review for 2-Story Building Addition (8,590 sq.ft. footprint)

Attendees: Dan Rowley, Esquire, the applicant's representative from Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr; Jim Bannon, Civil Engineer from Nave Newell; Jennifer Crawford, Principal Architect from Blackney Hayes Architects

Mr. Guttenplan gave a brief introduction: This proposal is for a 2-story building addition with an 8,590± sq. ft. footprint in the rear of the school as well as the removal of several parking spaces and replacement with a rain garden for stormwater control.

Mr. Rowley: this is a 1<sup>st</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade school that caters to children with language learning differences. AIM has been in the Township for several years. The applicant is proposing a small 2-story addition over an existing parking lot and the installation of a rain garden. The addition will contain additional space to enhance the school's science and tech offerings. The addition is not anticipated to increase enrollment, they are looking at it as a way to expand and enhance the current curriculum. One of the ways the school was able to enhance its campus and curriculum without the expansion of students was because they applied for and was awarded a RACB grant to fund the project.

Ms. Patchen: Are there currently robotics and other labs in the existing structure? Ms. Crawford responded: yes, they have a physics, chemistry, and biology lab; they are not state of the art labs. They are also looking to add a robotics and drone lab, a virtual reality lab and coding lab.

Mr. Bannon: AIM moved to this location from Manayunk in 2008, since then they did the athletics field in 2012, the Gym in 2015, and last year Sam's Place. The applicant is now proposing an addition to the rear of the existing building. To the top right there is a parking lot with 17 spaces; that's where they are putting the addition. It is a very good location for this; it is not visible from the road. Visually it should blend in. The addition is approx. 8,600 square foot footprint. The applicant is using this as an opportunity to be leaders in the environmental aspects of their curriculum. They are not technically required to, but the applicant is installing 4 Electrical Vehicle charging stations to the front of the building. The school is currently overparked, so they are removing 30 parking spaces along River Road and making a rain garden: removing 5,200 square feet of impervious coverage. The rain garden will provide stormwater management benefits and will also be a teaching opportunity. The rain garden will be heavily planted with grasses, shrubs, and native trees.

Mr. Dambman: what does it mean when you say overparked, does that mean you have more parking spaces than are needed? (Mr. Banon responded: according to the current zoning code, 167 spaces are required, they will have 259 spaces. AIM had been leasing spaces to SEPTA. SEPTA no longer needs them, so they did not renew the lease. AIM has control of all the parking spaces.)

Mr. Dambman: the County review had some comments regarding species, will this require Shade Tree Commission (STC) review (Mr. Bannon responded: he had not seen the County letter, they have not been in front of the STC yet. Any approval or recommendation they seek tonight will be contingent upon their approval. The shade trees are all native but will take comments of the STC under consideration. Mr. Bannon will reach out to start the scheduling process for STC)

They received review letters from the Township Engineer and the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal is requesting one additional fire hydrant in the entrance drive; that will be shown on their next submission. There are some waivers being requested, but all other comments are "will comply".

A total of 8 waivers are being requested (per updated request dated 8.9.22).

#### Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

1. Ch. 105-12(D) of SALDO to allow the plans to be reviewed and approved simultaneously as both Preliminary and Final plans, rather than requiring separate Preliminary and Final submissions.
2. Ch. 105-21 (B)(1)(n) Requiring features shown on the plan within 500 feet of the property. We request a modification of this section to allow the Aerial View on the Title Sheet, which shows existing conditions within 500 feet of the property, to satisfy this requirement.
3. Ch. 105-21(B)(9)(C)(2) Requiring preparation of Traffic Impact Study. The proposed building addition is not expected to increase enrollment; therefore, the current traffic patterns will not be changed by the addition onto the existing building.

#### Resolution 2004-8: Grading, Erosion Control, Stormwater Management, and Best Management Practices

4. II(D)(2) – The top of any slope shall be located a minimum of five (5) feet from property line: We request a waiver from this requirement because we will be constructing the rain garden less than five feet from the ultimate right-of-way line. The existing parking area currently does not meet this requirement and the removal of parking spaces for the construction of the rain garden will also be less than five feet from the property line.
5. II(E)(2)(g)(iv) - storm drainage pipes shall be at least 18 inches and RCP: We request a waiver from this requirement to use a twelve-inch HDPE pipe in the proposed rain garden. No new storm pipes are proposed within the Township's right-of-way

#### Street Standards

6. 105-30 – Minor Collector roads shall have a 40' cartway, curbs, sidewalks, and tree zone: We request a

waiver from this section to leave the existing streets in their current conditions and not widen the cartways to 40' or install additional sidewalks and tree zones.

#### Street Trees

7. 105-48 – Installation of street trees along all streets where suitable trees do not exist: We request a waiver from this section to allow the number and location of trees as shown on the Landscape Plan. There are existing street trees in the area of the proposed rain garden and no improvements are proposed along the rest of the property frontage.

#### Buffer Yards

8. 105-52 – Buffer yards are required between land developments: We request a waiver from this section because the proposed addition will be connected to the existing building, which is already located directly adjacent to the property line, so a buffer yard is not feasible. The proposed building addition will be located adjacent to the Schuylkill River Trail and will not negatively impact adjacent properties.

#### Planning Commission Comments:

Mr. Kostyk: Is there any screening between the Schuylkill Trail and the rear & side of the building that is facing the trail (Mr. Bannon responded: Yes, this seems to be the one area of the river trail with existing screening).

Ms. Patchen: Street standard waiver is the idea that you wouldn't be doing any improvements to the streets (Mr. Rowley responded: given the location of the addition and the enrollment not increasing, we didn't feel street improvements should be required).

Mr. Kostyk: do you intend to comply with the other comments in the Fire Marshal's letter (Mr. Bannon responded: they met with the Fire Marshal to review the comments, he wants to make sure the Fire Department connection at the gym is clear and they will be adding a hydrant in a landscape island.)

Ms. Patchen: because the student body is not increasing, is the grant how they are paying for the addition? (Mr. Rowley responded: since they got this grant from the Governor's office they are not increasing enrollment to offset the cost. This addition is meant to enhance the curriculum).

Mr. Dambman: what is going in the existing space (Ms. Crawford responded: the space where the upper school labs are will be used for the middle school to expand their program. So now they will be able to use the existing labs for the middle school, and new labs for the upper school. The second floor is solely for the upper school. The labs are about 650 square feet, slightly larger upstairs. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor is devoted to upper school, the 1<sup>st</sup> floor is mixed.)

Mr. Guttenplan and Ms. Heinrich have no issues with the waiver requests

Ms. Patchen: if they end up in 3 years adding 30 kids, would we have no recourse with regard to the traffic impact fee. (Mr. Guttenplan and Ms. Heinrich explained that with necessary permits or other changes needed at such time, the Township would be aware and it could be considered then.) The County review questioned the plantings for the rain garden; that is not related to any of the waivers; does that then go to the STC

Mr. Bannon: they could have gotten away with a much smaller rain garden that is being proposed. This is much larger. They still need to go to STC.

Mr. Kostyk: does that require a waiver if they are putting in 4 EV Stations instead of the 9 required (Mr. Guttenplan responded: they are not changing the entire parking lot, based on what they are modifying, the 4 spaces are reasonable. So, they wouldn't need a waiver. Mr. Rowley pointed out comment #5 in Mr.

Guttenplan's letter. Mr. Guttenplan clarified: if they weren't meeting the EV requirement, they would actually have to go to the ZHB since it's a zoning requirement.

Ms. Patchen: questioned how will the PC know the County's comments will be addressed regarding the rain garden and species review? (This is an issue for the STC when they review the plan.)

Motion

Ms. Patchen made a motion to recommend granting of the waivers subject to Shade Tree Commission Review of the landscape plans; seconded by Ms. Shaw Fink. Vote: 5-0

Mr. Dambman made a motion to recommend preliminary/final plan approval; seconded by Mr. Shula. Vote 5-0.

**7. OLD BUSINESS:** None

**8. NEW BUSINESS:** None

**9. PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS COMMENTS:** None

**10. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS:** None

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

- On a motion made by Mr. Shula; seconded by Ms. Glantz Patchen, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 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.