

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION OCTOBER 2015

A work session of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, October 13, 2015 at 7 p.m. at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA for the purpose of reviewing the agenda of the public meeting to be held that evening. Chairman Kenneth Corti presided with Commission members Richard Shorin, Bradley Tate, Otis Hightower, Edward McLaughlin, and Penelope Gerber present. Township Engineer James E. Blanch, P.E., Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, Assistant Zoning Officer William McManus and Recording Secretary Virginia Papale were also present. Planning Commission member Tory Meitner was absent. There was one member of the public in attendance.

The members discussed approval of the minutes of the September 8th meeting and the presentation to be given by Michael Stokes of the Montgomery County Planning Commission regarding the County's Comprehensive Plan.

A review of Conditional Use Application #CU30-15 for Korman Properties, Inc. followed. The Zoning Text Amendment for Corporate Rental Suites (Ordinance #4-241) was approved June 16th. Mr. Blanch explained that there is a lot of perimeter landscaping bordering the property at Union Meeting and Jolly Roads. There should be guarantees to preserve and protect the trees, and supplemental landscaping should be required. Traffic improvements at Arch and Jolly Roads to include a left turn lane on westbound Jolly Road on to southbound Arch are recommended to help movement during morning and evening peaks. A dedicated right turn lane from northbound Arch on to Jolly would also be beneficial. Mr. Blanch said these improvements would cost approximately \$300,000-to-\$400,000. A traffic study will be required as part of the land development application, as well as stormwater calculations and landscape buffering. All are key elements to the application. Members discussed the aesthetics of the building, suggesting it looks too commercial, too industrial, more like a reclamation building. Their website shows many types of styles. Mr. Blanch noted they want to preserve the height of the building for the view out the back, rather than the front with the turnpike and high tension wire views. The developer also wants to keep within the original footprint of the warehouse and office. Korman has another community further along Jolly Road. While its type is a different nature, with traffic improvements, they could be connected. During the land development phase, this and more will be addressed.

A review of Conditional Use Application #CU31-15 for the Centre Square Fire Company ensued. Mr. Blanch explained that the timeline is very complicated. The shopping center is in the land development process now. The fire house will be built with access through the shopping center property. There are no definite tie-downs on the preliminary Centre Square Fire Company

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Plans regarding stormwater management, sidewalks and landscaping. There will be shared expenses with the developer of Centre Square Commons (CSC) and the shopping center across from the fire house which will be defined by agreement. If the shopping center (CSC) is not built, who will install the improvements? There are many facets of the development that have to be tied-down, although because the timeline is questionable, there are no set agreements. Someone has to figure out how the stormwater management will be addressed in case the shopping center is not built. With the PennDOT approval process, it could take some time.

The amended plan for the 688 Cathcart Road subdivision was then discussed. It is a three-lot subdivision; two parcels are to be developed and they will incorporate stormwater improvements that were not addressed previously. The developer is trying to help downstream water issues with the proposed improvements. It will not correct any matters on Parkwood Road, but will help Cathcart Road. There will be driveway changes to accommodate the new culvert, although there are no changes to the property lines. Relative to the stormwater basin, Mr. Blanch said the basin will be maintained by all of the residents, as was done with Gable Estates. Further discussion included the slope of the sanitary sewer laterals, which Mr. Blanch said has been, and will be further addressed by the review letters from the sanitary sewer consultant.

A review of the current zoning hearing board applications for the rear and side yard variances did not bring up any troublesome matters, other than to ask that the property owners discuss the proposals with their neighbors. The parking concern with the restaurant application is a matter for the applicant to clarify.

Prior to the end of the work session, members discussed the postponement of the Comprehensive Plan meeting scheduled at MCCC. An announcement will be made during the public meeting.

The group left for the public meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Virginia M. Papale
Recording Secretary

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
OCTOBER 2015

The ninth meeting of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, October 13, 2015 at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA. Chairman Kenneth Corti presided with Commission members Richard Shorin, Bradley Tate, Otis Hightower, Edward McLaughlin, and Penelope Gerber present. Township Engineer James Blanch, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, Assistant Zoning Officer William McManus and Recording Secretary Virginia Papale were also present. Planning Commission member Tory Meitner was absent. There were approximately 30 members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Corti called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The members of the Planning Commission and Township Staff introduced themselves to the public.

Chairman Corti asked if there were any comments or questions on the September meeting minutes from the Commission, Staff or audience. There were none. Upon motion by Mrs. Gerber and duly seconded by Mr. McLaughlin to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2015 minutes, the motion carried.

Chairman Corti introduced Mr. Michael Stokes, the Assistant Director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) to present the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, MontCo 2040: A Shared Vision. Mr. Stokes was joined by Senior Planner Jon Leshar and MCPC Board member Charles Tornetta.

Mr. Stokes gave a presentation highlighting the 50-year efforts of the MCPC. Their works include assistance given to municipalities to facilitate specialty plans, addressing potential hazards, updating stormwater management plans, designing model ordinances, involvement with trails development, tracking trends, providing digital maps and all around assistance with planning and regulating. Under the MCPC review process for land developments and subdivisions, Whitpain Township has received "247" letters from Jon Leshar with comments including the impact the projects will have related to others. Their website offers much information. On Monday, October 26th, the MCPC will host its Planning Smarter Educational Series to be held at the Ambler Theater, on the subject of walkability. The session includes two nationally recognized speakers who will highlight the successes and challenges in making MontCo a more walkable place. Mr. Stokes noted that the County Comprehensive Plan is available online. There are two documents and they include three basic fundamental themes of connected communities, a vibrant economy and sustainable places. Further discussion among the presenters, the Planning Commission and staff focused on sustainability, traffic, walkability and

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open space. Mr. Tornetta added there is much knowledge among the members of the County Planning Commission, and no one should be afraid to call on those members.

Chairman Corti asked if any member of the Commission or audience had any questions or comments. There were none and the presentation was completed. Chairman Corti thanked them for their presentation and discussion.

Chairman Corti announced that there is no public Comprehensive Plan meeting on October 14th at Montgomery County Community College, as originally scheduled.

Representatives of Korman Properties were present to explain Conditional Use Application No. CU30-15, a proposal for the construction of a corporate rental suite building at 1600 Union Meeting Road, at the corner of Jolly and Union Meeting Roads. This application will be heard by the Board of Supervisors at its November 4th meeting. Chairman Corti noted that the presentation had been shown twice previously, and asked that only updates be discussed. Messrs. Shapiro and Lewis explained that in meeting with Township staff, and in response to comments received, they realized more was needed with respect to the architectural schemes in the proposal. The original proposal included 290 units, with part underground parking and part surface parking. The focus has shifted since then with the removal of much of the surface parking and a more compact footprint, while keeping the main aspects of the original proposal and focusing on open space and the wonderful view. The below-grade parking has been increased to 302 spaces, and the entire building is located over the parking bed.

The presentation continued with an explanation that the first floor amenities include controlled entry and views with central elevators, as well as elevators on the ends. The revised proposal includes 270 units, down from 290. They are still working through the heating and cooling of the units in the complex. They will preserve as much of the existing vegetation along Union Meeting Road as possible, and to promote walkability, are considering moving the sidewalk in from Union Meeting Road and also widening it. At the corner of Jolly and Union Meeting Roads, a large rain garden is proposed with vegetation that will be maintained. Discussion among Commission members centered on the renderings that make the building look industrial, when a residential appearance would be more appropriate. Mr. Shapiro explained that this is still a work in process, and the architectural details such as lighting and colors will be addressed. Additional thoughts by the Commission involved the underground parking with clearance accessibility to include handicapped vans, parking in the portico area, and landscaping. There are many mature trees within the complex and its borders, and the strategy is to maintain as many evergreens as possible. They will plan and plant for the future.

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The applicant was asked about a traffic study and traffic mitigation at Arch/Jolly Roads and Jolly/Wentz Roads. A preliminary traffic study has been done, and will be submitted with the land development plan. In brief, during daily peak hours the traffic will be the equivalent of when the warehouse/building was in operation, with a reduction in truck traffic. This traffic will be heading in the opposite direction of normal traffic patterns and will actually complement existing traffic patterns. To date, no discussions have been held with the Engineering Department related to intersection improvements.

Further dialogue included the stormwater management plan and design. There are two basins in which water would be directed from one to another. Preliminary stormwater design to maintain grading to ensure they can accommodate what is on site such as volumes and water quality. The plan has not progressed from the conceptual level of stormwater management until approval is made to enable them to move forward.

After additional clarification discussion with the applicant by the Consultant and Commission members, Chairman Corti called for audience participation. Mr. Mark Eberle of 832 Ivy Road offered comment on the landscape plan, and that there are over 300 native plants listed in the SALDO ordinance that was passed in 2013 that should be consulted as a resource.

A motion was made by Mr. Shorin, duly seconded by Mr. Hightower and unanimously passed to recommend the approval of Conditional Use CU30-15 to the Board of Supervisors for the construction of a corporate rental suite building at 1600 Union Meeting Road, at the intersection of Jolly of Union Meeting Roads.

Attorney Dave Davis of Davis Bucco presented the Conditional Use Application CU31-15 on behalf of the Centre Square Fire Company, which proposes the construction of a new firehouse with office, storage, meeting and garage spaces. It will replace the existing firehouse on the same parcel. Mr. Davis explained that the proposed construction will be in concurrence with the development of Centre Square Commons at Rt. 202 and 73. This project is located in the Community Shopping Center Overlay District, and the firehouse is a conditional use within the district. The approved ordinance contains a number of conditions that do not apply to the firehouse. They are seeking a waiver of many of the conditions approved, but know for sure that there will be a condition to develop an easement to construct an eastern access driveway

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to Skippack Pike. Communication with the Madison Group and the fire company are close to wrapping up. Engineer Joseph Hanna with Chambers Associates continued with the balance of the presentation. If approved, and upon completion, the site will have 69 existing parking spaces with a 12,000+ sq. ft. building footprint, new stormwater management plans and everything required to comply with Township regulations as part of the land development application.

Chairman Corti explained that the biggest concern raised during the work session is the coordination of the construction between the firehouse and the shopping center so all items are addressed and there is not a partially completed development. Mr. Hanna assured everyone that many meetings and discussion have occurred since the previous August. It is designed to be completed independently of the shopping center. The existing driveway apron will be used as the access to Skippack Pike until the access drive is built by the developer of the shopping center. At that time the firehouse will connect with the access driveway. The existing firehouse will function during construction, and will be demolished after the completion of the new building. The temporary access along the east side of the driveway will be used until the access drive is constructed. Mr. Davis added that the actual easement agreement addresses the completion with respect to all improvements in a cooperative manner.

Stormwater management is an important part of this development. Mr. Hanna explained that the infiltration testing has been completed, with the design of the site to include two underground basins and tied into future improvements. He also explained that the Township Engineer will have to review the plans during the land development process, and all stormwater matters will be addressed.

In moving the new firehouse toward the rear of the property, the noise and lights and all operations will include buffering for the residents of Grant Avenue, with a double row of evergreens, and includes the berm with landscaping that is part of the shopping center plan.

Additional discussion centered on the submittals and the increased parking. Overall there is satisfaction with the plans and the responses to questions. There is still much work to be done, and as far as the conditional use, the plans and elevations supplied are sufficient. Chairman Corti called for any comments or questions. There were none.

A motion was made by Mr. Shorin, duly seconded by Mrs. Gerber and unanimously passed to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors for Conditional Use CU31-15 for the construction of a new firehouse with office, storage, meeting and garage spaces.

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Chairman Corti opened the next agenda item for discussion. This is the review of an Amended Subdivision Plan for 688 Cathcart Road, which is being revised for stormwater management and landscaping improvements.

Mr. Josh Gross of Mast Associates explained that the two existing parcels of the three created in 2006 are located on Cathcart Road near Boxwood Road. There is a home on the front lot. The original plan included replacement of an underground basin with an above-ground basin in order to comply with more stringent water quality requirements.

The landscaping from the original plan has been retained, with some of the internal landscaping removed and substituted with PA native trees. A panel board fence between this subdivision and the adjoining property was part of the original plan, as well, with the original driveway plan being 12 ft. wide; the shared driveway width has been increased to 16 ft. in order to abide by current standards. The two curb cuts will remain. The stormwater basin and the swales will be maintained by the property owners of the two new homes to be built, per agreement. There will be a small reduction in runoff volume to Cathcart Road, as well as a reduced rate of runoff flow, per Mr. Blanch. Additional discussion include the flow of sewage out to Cathcart Road, and this will be addressed when the plans are submitted.

Resident Mrs. Piezek of 678 Cathcart Road asked about the water run-off and how it will affect her property. Mr. Gross explained that the water will follow the existing grade and run parallel with the adjacent property and will not create a backup. Mr. Blanch further clarified that when the permits are submitted, the more stringent guidelines will be in effect to curtail the water flow. He is confident the results, when new stormwater guidelines are applied, will improve the current situation.

Mrs. Piezek further questioned the approved fence on the plan. The approval was granted in 2004, and the fence was included at the request of the neighbors, per the meeting minutes. Mrs. Piezek prefers not to have the fence. Mr. Lakimenko, the property owner of 1041 Hemlock Drive indicated that he will take the fence to screen his property from the new construction and lights from cars in the driveway shining toward his lot. In addition, with each upgrade, the water along his property becomes worse. He added that a neighbor keeps dumping leaves in the swale, further blocking the runoff flows. The fence will be not permitted to cross the swale so as not to impede the flow of water. Mr. Gross said the flow of water in the swale cannot be impeded, and Mr. Blanch added that an inspector would verify that the swale is not blocked. He verified that the new construction would not affect the water flow on Mr. Lakimenko's property. Mr. Blanch also indicated that an evergreen buffer could be a benefit. All agreed that the developer should keep the neighbors updated as the project moves forward.

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A motion was made by Mr. Shorin, duly seconded by Mrs. Gerber and unanimously agreed to approve the Amended Subdivision Plan for 688 Cathcart Road, subject to the applicant, engineers and neighbors working together to resolve the tree and fence issues.

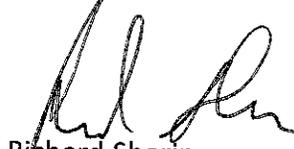
The applicants for the three Zoning Hearing Board cases were present. For applications #2056-15 (rear yard setback) and #2057-15 (side yard), it was suggested the property owners include statements at the hearing from their neighbors that they do not object to the proposed changes. The representative for the applicant of case #2058-15 (parking) explained that the parking arrangement with the neighboring businesses has worked to date, and they've agreed to time restrictions for weekdays and weekends. Should complaints be received about parking, enforcement will be required. The Commission remained neutral on all cases.

Pertinent planning matters were then reviewed.

Mr. Hightower updated the Commission on the meeting that was held October 8th regarding the Wissahickon Valley Boys and Girls Club, proposed at 350 Railroad Avenue at the corner of Mt. Pleasant Avenue. Private donors will help with the funds needed to develop the Club. It is greatly needed, especially since the YMCA moved from Bethlehem Pike further out into Lower Gwynedd Township. The children of Ambler, Upper Dublin, West Ambler and Lower Gwynedd need a place to go. They can walk to this site and in talking with Roman and Fred, it has been discussed to make Maple Avenue and Beech Alley one way streets for the safety of the children.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Richard Shorin
Secretary