

**Lower Salford  
Township Planning  
Commission Meeting  
December 13, 2023**

Planning Commission Vice Chair John Kennedy called to order the Lower Salford Township Planning Commission meeting at 7:30pm. Other Planning Commission members in attendance were Joe Harwanko, David Bowe, and Scott Bamford. Also in attendance was Mike Beuke, Director of Building and Zoning, Michele Fountain, P.E. of CKS, the Township Engineer's office, and Claire Warner of the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Chairperson Manus McHugh and Stephanie Butler, P.E. of Bowman/McMahon Associates joined the meeting via Zoom. Member David Goodman arrived at the meeting just after the vote on the October Minutes. Member Brad Landis was excused from the meeting.

**Minutes**

The minutes from the October 25, 2023, meeting were reviewed. An edit was made adding Mr. Bowe to the list of attendees. Mr. Bowe made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion.

Motion 6 Yes; 0 No

**Plan Reviews**

**LSTA Act 537 Special Study**

Present to review the study on behalf of the Lower Salford Township Authority was Tom Duffy of Gilmore and Associates. Mr. Duffy explained the study and the planning items. The study suggests eliminating two pump stations and upgrading the Quarry Road pump station. A review of seven lots on Harleysville Pike was also conducted for connection to public sewer. Mr. Duffy pointed out that this study does not require a vote, but he is here seeking comments. It was decided that Mr. Beuke will prepare a response letter stating the Township has no comments.

**488 Harleysville Pike- Sketch Plan**

Present to review the plan was Sean Cullen, Esquire of HRMML; he introduced Shawn Muntz, P.E. of Bohler Engineering who discussed the development of the site. Three review letters were prepared, one by Michele Fountain, P.E. of CKS Engineers, dated 12/7/2023, one by Stephanie Butler, P.E. of Bowman/McMahon dated 12/6/2023, and one from Claire Warner of the MCPC dated 12/7/2023. Mr. Muntz noted that the property is 9 acres, zoned R4 Medium Density, and the plan to build is by-right. He stated that what he is proposing tonight is a better plan and a better fit than what was previously proposed; the plan now consists of 36 units as opposed to 38 and all units are proposed to be two-story as before they were proposed as three-story units. Mr. Muntz stated the homes will be similar in size to the previous submission, but they will be wider, more carriage style homes with more curb appeal. The homes call for two car garages and two car driveways and the buildings will consist of either three, four, five or six units.

A proposed landscape buffer 15' wide is shown adjacent to the existing subdivision and the minimum 40' setback will be met or exceeded in some places. Mr. Muntz pointed out the emergency access, proposed trail connection, proposed recreation area, and storm water management area.

Mr. Cullen addressed the review letters and mentioned that waivers will be requested.

Ms. Fountain informed the Commission that no variance requests are shown for the proposal.

Mr. Cullen stated that there are no firm plans yet for the recreation area but that a trail is part of the plan. A brief discussion ensued regarding the open space and its use and maintenance.

Mr. Goodman asked about the floodplain; there is a delineated stream on the property. The applicant hired a wetland scientist, and they are proposing to relocate the stream. The applicant pointed out on the map the proposed relocation route and the plan to pipe two separate portions and outlet it at the bulb of the cul-de-sac and direct it to the open space along the neighboring subdivision.

Mr. McHugh thanked the applicant for the change to two-story units and is pleased the applicant will berm the landscaping adjacent to the existing residential subdivision.

Ms. Butler requests the radii at the intersection be set back to allow a center left turn lane in the future; she would like to see this as part of the preliminary plan submission. PennDOT has determined that the new driveway will be aligned with Meetinghouse Road. There is a plan to extend the sidewalk to the Cheswyck development.

Both Mr. McHugh and Ms. Butler stated that they do not prefer the alignment with Meetinghouse Road as determined by PennDOT because it results in a closer spacing to Cheswyck Drive. Ms. Butler also noted that the offset intersection would not create additional left turn movement conflicts which is a consideration for such offset intersections. However, Ms. Butler informed the audience that PennDOT has authority and initial coordination with PennDOT has resulted in a preference to align the access with Meetinghouse Road.

Mr. Muntz stated that the applicant would be agreeable to connectivity to Cheswyck.

Mr. Kennedy informed the applicant that it is premature to discuss waivers this evening. He wants a better understanding of the bonus calculations for open space.

Ms. Warner commented on the removal of large trees, the stream channel, street trees, double-loaded garages, recreation space and the emergency access. She suggests reducing the driveway widths to one car loading to allow for more landscaping and reducing the amount of impervious coverage. Ms. Warner also suggested the emergency access also be used as pedestrian access.

The Planning Commission opened the floor for public comment.

Resident Keith Bonkoski of Harleysville Pike commented that 36 homes are too many, he does not like the style of the homes proposed, and he would like to see elevation views of the homes. He suggested building to R2 specification and adding additional setbacks. He noted five accidents have taken place when drivers are trying to make a left turn onto Cheswyck. He would like to see a center turn lane and a reduced speed limit on Harleysville Pike. He asked how a 1977 rezoning plan could apply today. Mr. Bonkoski feels the 1977 rezoning was a mistake and it should be revisited; he also stated concerns over traffic.

Mr. Kennedy informed the audience that the Township cannot just change the zoning and how if we tried, it could open the Township up to legal action. He explained the Regional Planning Commission and how zoning is evaluated on a regular basis. He also reminded the audience that this is just a sketch plan and that a lot of detailed information will be required before this project

moves forward. Mr. Kennedy also explained that there is no legal requirement to notify residents of land development inquiries or applications; however, all applications are posted on the Township website for all to view.

Nick Coyne of Cheswyck Drive commented on the increased amount of traffic in just the past few years. He would like to see a center turn lane installed and feels the road will be too close to Cheswyck Drive and his home.

Mr. Goodman reminded the audience that the Township has no authority as to where the road is located; this is a PennDOT decision.

Ms. Butler again informed the residents that PennDOT has authority, traffic studies will be conducted, and PennDOT will consider Township comments during their review process.

Darlene Coyle of Cheswyck Drive would like to see twins or single homes that would blend in with the existing Cheswyck development, a wider setback from her home, and feels the open space is too close to Harleysville Pike for space for kids to play. Ms. Coyle informed the group that there have been numerous accidents at Harleysville Pike and Cheswyck Drive, including one where she was rear-ended while waiting to make a left turn onto Cheswyck Drive. She would like the developer to consider what the residents want and consider something other than just making money.

Eric Kerr of Morris Road commented on the proposed Lederach bypass and pond flooding in Lederach.

Debra Heldt of Wexford Circle commented that her home backs up to the storm water area. She has concerns as this area flooded during hurricane Floyd. She has concerns about the safety of children and the area becoming a mosquito zone. She asked who will maintain the area and how deep it will be.

Ms. Fountain clarified that the storm water management has not yet been designed; once it has, Ms. Heldt's questions will be answered.

Colleen Shronk of Windsor Drive commented on existing traffic concerns, not enough room for 36 homes, and the need for additional over-flow parking. She also feels the open space is too close to Harleysville Pike.

Judy Hewitt of Windsor Drive asked what is planned for the existing home on the site and in the spirit of gemeinschaft, is there any Township plan for setting up historic preservation of older homes? Ms. Warner briefly discussed historic preservation and stated that historic preservation is managed at the municipal level. Mr. Kennedy stated that it is a private matter for the property owner to decide what happens to the existing home.

Bette Duddy of Cheswyck Drive discussed her research stating that the home was built in 1880, she would like land grants to be investigated for preservation and found information claiming the site has Bowmansville soils and nothing may be built within those soils. She would also like to see an old tree saved that she determines to be 100 years old and is concerned for the wild natural habitat of the deer, eagle, and fox.

Resident Lori Yamashita of Wexford Circle asked if PennDOT studies are open to public opinion as she would like them to hear her input. Ms. Butler informed that there is no procedure to allow residents to comment on private development, however, she can provide contact information for a PennDOT representative.

Shelby Lynch of Traffic Planning & Design, the applicant's traffic engineer, stated that their traffic study will be submitted to the Township which will allow for public comment.

Mr. Kennedy informed the audience that they should contact Mr. Beuke and he will provide them with contact information for PennDOT as supplied by Ms. Butler.

Mr. Kennedy informed the residents that crash data will be included in the traffic study.

Ms. Yamashita also inquired if the stormwater management takes into consideration adjacent properties and the effect it has on those properties. Mr. Muntz noted they will analyze the effect and noted that the homes will be built slab on grade; he added that the applicant must meet all requirements of the Township and the DEP.

Ms. Yamashita also asked Ms. Warner to elaborate on the rerouting of the natural waterway.

Alan Duddy of Cheswyck Drive asked if Mr. McHugh and Mr. Kennedy are still of the opinion that this is too many homes for the site. Mr. Kennedy stated that if this number of homes is permitted by zoning, it must be allowed. However, Mr. Kennedy reiterated that he is still not comfortable with the density calculation so this will be examined further.

### **RO District – Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment**

Present to review the application on behalf of the applicant, Mainland V, LLC, was Rick Mast, P.E. of RCMA. Mr. Mast gave a brief overview of what has been discussed to date. He explained that, in his opinion, a Bank or Financial Institution was inadvertently left out of the Class Three Uses for the RO District. The amendment would add banks as a Class 3 Conditional Use, add same uses for all districts and clarify driveways on a corner lot. This will allow a Class 3 Use to have primary access on the street of lesser classification and a secondary access on the street of higher classification. Mr. Mast had no objections to Mr. Freimuth's version of the ordinance.

Mr. Beuke announced that a recommendation from the Planning Commission is needed to move the ordinance forward. If recommended, the Township will submit it to the MCPC for review. When the review is complete, it will be scheduled for the Board for authorization to advertisement.

Mr. Goodman suggested that the ordinance be moved along for review; the other members had no comment and agreed.

Resident Betty Duddy asked if this new ordinance would affect the 196 Main Street development. Rick Mast stated that the development is within the RO district and therefore this ordinance would affect that development. He briefly explained the Conditional Use and Land Development processes.

Resident Lori Yamashita wanted to know how homeowners can be kept abreast of new developments and agendas for the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors and about the relationship between the County Planning Commission and the Township. Mr. Beuke answered the questions.

Resident Keith Bonkoski, regarding the notification process, asked why the neighbors for this ordinance were being notified. Mr. Kennedy stated that neighboring property owners within 500' must be notified because there will be a hearing. Ordinance amendments, such as this ordinance and Conditional Use approvals require notification.

Mr. Kennedy made a motion for the Township to adopt the ordinance. David Goodman seconded.

Motion 6 Yes; 0 No

A general discussion took place regarding Township zoning, notification of township residents and infiltration testing done by the previous developer, DR Horton.

Mr. Bamford explained to the audience that the Township does not always have knowledge of property sales and potential land development proposals that may be discussed with private landowners. He suggested that residents view the zoning map to see what parcels could potentially be developed in the future.

Mr. Goodman explained that there are growth areas and non-growth areas within the Township. Mr. Kennedy explained how the Planning Commission is an advisory board that makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. He informed the audience that growth must be accommodated, and development cannot be stopped if the rules are followed. He added that 25 + years ago there was no storm water management and now all new development is subject to it so that may help with old storm water problems.

Mr. McHugh recommended that no further discussion take place this evening regarding 488 Harleysville Pike as most of the public has already left the meeting.

### **Ordinance Updates**

Mr. Beuke stated that he will review the sign ordinance with the Planning Commission in January. Changes will be made to the temporary sign ordinance section.

### **VC district Amendments**

Claire Warner stated that she has met with Andy Freimuth to discuss changes to the ordinance but wants to put it on hold until the MCPC does some ordinance testing to see how the ordinance will work in a real-life scenario. They want to look at the front yard setbacks and the frontage occupation percentage and density requirements for residential and non-residential and building lengths. The proposed sites are Gehman Design (355-375 Main Street) and A.W. Bergey & Sons, Inc. (311-315 Main Street). Mr. Kennedy stated they wanted sites that are really under-utilized. The Planning Commission agreed that these sites are appropriate for the exercise. Ms. Warner hopes that this testing can be done within the next couple of months.

### **Joint Meeting Dates for 2024**

A discussion about the 2024 joint meeting dates of July/August and November/December took place. Mr. McHugh informed the Planning Commission that if we set these dates ahead of time and avoid additional advertising, it could save the Township nearly \$1000.00 in additional newspaper advertising fees. The chosen are 8/14/2024 and 12/11/2024.

There being no further comments, Mr. Goodman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and the motion was seconded by Mr. Harwanko. With all members in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 9:39pm.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for 7:30pm on Wednesday, January 24, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Reimel  
Administrative Assistant