

Lower Salford
Township Planning
Commission Meeting
September 28, 2022

Planning Commission Chair Manus McHugh called to order the Lower Salford Township Planning Commission meeting at 7:30pm. Other Planning Commission members in attendance were John Kennedy, Joe Harwanko, David Goodman, Brad Landis, and Andy Shields. Also in attendance was Mike Beuke, Director of Building and Zoning, Stephanie Butler, P.E. of McMahon Associates, the Township Traffic Engineer's office, and Claire Warner of the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Michele Fountain, P.E. of CKS, the Township Engineer's office was in attendance via Zoom. Planning Commission member David Bowe was excused from the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes from the August 10, 2022, meeting were reviewed. Mr. McHugh requested one minor addition to the Almac notes – “the applicant returns with *a new depiction of the revised plans;*” Mr. Kennedy made a motion to accept the minutes with the edit and Mr. Landis seconded the motion.

Motion 6 Yes; 0 No

488 Harleysville Pike – Revised Sketch Plan for 38 townhomes/9 buildings on 9.15 acres in the R-4 District. Applicant DR Horton.

Present to review the application on behalf of the applicant was attorney Michael Malloy, Jr. of Overmayer Rebmann Maxwell & Hippel; CJ Bock, P.E. of Bohler Engineering; Eric Ostimchuk, P.E. of Traffic Planning & Design; and Jesse Carpino of DR Horton.

Two review letters were prepared, one from Michele Fountain, P.E. of CKS Engineers, dated 8/22/2022 and one from Stephanie Butler, P.E. of McMahon Associates dated 9/13/2022.

Mr. Malloy opened by stating that he represents the applicant who is here to discuss a by-right plan and he explained the application process to the residents in attendance. He explained that the review of the sketch plan is clean and that his client can meet the storm water and trail requirements outlined in the review letters.

Mr. Bock gave an overview of the plan, describing the project as a cul-de-sac on 9 acres with 38 housing units and 40% open space. He noted that the applicant is only required to provide 15% open space, but they are giving 40%. He stated that 5% could be active open space and that the applicant is willing to work with the township on what this would include. Mr. Bock noted that there is a small, dry stream on the property that the applicant would like to relocate a portion of so that it hugs the perimeter of the property.

Mr. McHugh stated that area residents have told him that this creek runs strong with a heavy storm. Mr. Bock said a study of the creek would be conducted; also, a previously conducted study indicated there are no wetlands on the property.

Displaying the plan, Mr. Bock pointed out the 19 over-flow parking spaces that will be provided and that currently the access is planned to be aligned with Meetinghouse Road.

Mr. McHugh applauded the applicant on pushing the units back from the road but stated that he feels this is too many units for the parcel. Mr. McHugh also stated that he would prefer to see singles or twin homes in lieu of townhomes. The access alignment is a concern as well as stormwater and potential wetlands.

Mr. Harwanko stated that the emergency access is a concern to him; he would like to see it come from a main artery not through another parcel; Mr. Bock said he would consult the fire marshal regarding the emergency access.

Ms. Butler stated that her original opinion was to align the entrance with Meetinghouse Road; however, after reviewing the initial offset proposal, she preferred the additional separation to Cheswyck Drive since the left turn movements into the proposed access and Meetinghouse Road would not be in conflict. Ms. Butler noted that there are pros and cons to the offset and aligned options; in the end, PennDOT will need to approve where the entrance is located through the Highway Occupancy Permit process.

Mr. Kennedy has concerns with the length of the cul-de-sac, the emergency accessway and the number of units proposed.

Mr. McHugh explained that PennDOT must conduct a review and they will make the decision on the location of the entrance.

Mr. Kennedy asked if this parcel was on the Sidewalk and Trail Committee review list; Ms. Butler stated that it is not, however, she would like to see sidewalk on the frontage as this will help create a loop in the trail system.

Ms. Fountain noted that a five-foot walkway is proposed for the frontage.

Mr. Carpino stated that patios are planned for these units; Ms. Fountain assured the audience that the setback requirements must be met for the patios. Mr. Carpino assured everyone that the developer wants what is best for the community and encourages the residents feedback.

Mr. Bock confirmed that what he referenced earlier as a small, dry ditch becomes a stream and is a waters of the Commonwealth and has a floodplain associated with it. Ms. Fountain reminded him that any disturbance will require permits from the PADEP and/or the Army Corps of Engineers and approval from the Township.

Resident Keith Bonkoski of Harleysville Pike voiced concerns about the connection to the Foxlane development, traffic, noise, speeding cars, and zoning. He sought clarification on the number of units being built; he would prefer to see detached single-family homes on half acre lots.

Nick Coyne of Cheswyck Drive stated concerns about speeding; he feels this is a sloppy plan with too many houses proposed.

Mr. Ostimchuk, applicant's Traffic Engineer, stated that a traffic study is required by the Township and PennDOT and it will include evaluating the conditions with and without development at the Meetinghouse Road intersection, as well as look at sight distances, auxiliary lane warrants, etc.

Colleen Shronk of Windsor Drive would prefer to see the entrance moved farther away from Cheswyck Drive. She asked about overflow parking and had concerns about the number of proposed homes and traffic.

Jamie Coyne of Cheswyck Drive inquired about patios and setbacks; she also asked about school district student capacity.

Mr. Kennedy confirmed that the proposed homes are planned to have two car garages; he also inquired about the number proposed stories and requested that the applicant supply renderings.

Darlene Coyle of Cheswyck Drive commented on the number of traffic accidents at Cheswyck Drive and Harleysville Pike. She inquired about the homes being pushed back on the parcel, closer to the Cheswyck development; she feels this is not aesthetically appealing to the Cheswyck residents.

Alan Duddy, Cheswyck Drive, inquired about open space, buffering, property maintenance, and a homeowner's association.

Tom Boggs of Harleysville Pike questioned if the relocation of the stream would affect his well.

Bette Duddy, Cheswyck Drive, stated that she currently has a great view from her home, and she does not want to have to look at townhomes. She feels the proposed homes are crammed against the property line adjoining Cheswyck. She is appalled at the proposed plan and feels the developer has done a lousy job. She claims this development is ruining her quality of life and will decrease her property value.

Justin Barry, Harleysville Pike, asked for a survey of hands from the audience, requesting who in the audience wants to see this property developed; he guaranteed that he will never develop his property.

Dan Coyle of Cheswyck Drive asked if this project was a “done deal;” Mr. Kennedy explained that this is a long process and there is a lot of work to be done before this project gets approval.

Mr. Kennedy suggested that the applicant consider moving the entrance and reconfiguring the development, making it into two cul-de-sacs. He again explained to the audience that this development is by right.

Mr. McHugh stated that he too would prefer to see single family homes.

Mr. Kennedy informed the audience that anyone with additional questions, concerns or comments may reach out to Mike Beuke; he then continued and briefly explained that a PennDOT permit will be required for this project since Harleysville Pike is a state highway.

Ms. Butler explained how PennDOT will review the application to determine the best access point and that access from a state highway is by right which means that PennDOT is obligated to allow access.

Mr. McHugh asked if there were any final comments.

Bette Duddy suggested that the developer move the access away from Cheswyck Drive, save the trees, save the farmhouse, and install a substantial buffer; she inquired about the existing fence, suggesting that if removed, resident’s pets could be eaten by wildlife.

841 Main Street - Sketch Plan for one 4800sf office building and six apartments on 1.39 acres in the Village Commercial District. Applicant SCK2 Group. LLC

Present to review the application was property owner Keith Bergman.

Two review letters were prepared, one from Michele Fountain, P.E. of CKS Engineers, dated 9/19/2022 and one from Stephanie Butler, P.E. of McMahon Associates dated 9/23/2022.

Mr. Bergman explained that currently the parcel has a two-story brick home built in 1939 and that he is proposing adding six apartment units and three two-story twin buildings on the west side of the lot. The parking is proposed to be installed in front of the apartments with the storm water management in the front of the lot. He is also proposing a two-story office building on the east side of the lot beyond the existing house; no basement is planned for this building. Mr. Bergman described the apartment units as being like the units planned for Creekside at Mainland. The parcel has an industrial building to the west, preserved farmland to the rear and a church with cemetery to the east. Regarding the review letters, the applicant has had a clean phase one environmental study, made application to the Lower Salford Township Authority, and is waiting on a response from North Penn Water Authority.

Mr. Kennedy initiated a discussion regarding relocating the driveway.

Mr. McHugh voiced his concern over the proposed front yard parking in the Village District.

Mr. Bergman feels he is meeting the Village aesthetic since the existing house fronts the roadway. The proposed layout is more aesthetically pleasing, and the apartment units have less exposure to noise and speeding vehicles.

Mr. Shields asked if the existing home will be a residential rental.

Mr. Bergman conducted a speed study at the property and finds there is a need to reduce speed in the area. At some point, Mr. Bergman envisions a commercial use for the existing home and feels a buffer would be necessary at the street. He voiced his concern for a traffic light at Morwood Road and would like to see the trail system extended through the Village of Vernfield.

Ms. Butler discussed sidewalks, trail and walkway connections, and the possibility of a center turn lane within the village area.

Mr. McHugh initiated a discussion on buffer, basin, and berm at the roadway.

Mr. Kennedy agrees with Mr. McHugh and does not like the layout of the plan; he reminded the applicant that front yard parking is not allowed in the Village Commercial District.

Mr. Bergman claimed that this plan does meet the requirements since the existing, primary building fronts the roadway and that his proposal best fits the lay of the land. He also informed the members that he has infiltration testing for storm water management scheduled for Friday.

Ms. Warner opened a discussion regarding trees.

Mr. Bergman agreed to address the comments and plans to return to the Planning Commission in November.

Ordinance Amendments

Sign Ordinance Amendment

Mr. Beuke presented his changes to the ordinance, reminding the members that the review of the ordinance was prompted by freedom of speech signs within the township. He stated that it is time to take a fresh look at the ordinance while remaining sensitive to content neutrality. Temporary sign regulations will remain unchanged: maximum size being 24sf, 30-day duration, limit of three temporary signs per year. No change will be made to the posting of 3sf political signs and two non-commercial signs no larger than 4sf will be allowed per property. A daily, portable sign, such as "Open" will be allowed to be posted during business hours.

A brief discussion followed; the ordinance needs to be reviewed by the county and will then come back to the Planning Commission.

Restaurant Parking Ordinance

Mr. Beuke reminded the Planning commission that the parking concerns at 285 Maple Avenue prompted the review of this ordinance. Ms. Butler and Sandy Koza have some recommendations for changes to this ordinance and Mr. Beuke will include them in his edits.

A discussion followed regarding an ITE study, guidelines for a self-study, and calculations.

Mr. Beuke will supply an edited version of the ordinance at the next meeting.

Wireless Communication Facilities Ordinance

Mr. Beuke informed the Planning Commission that this ordinance is not ready to be discussed tonight. Mr. Beuke will be discussing the ordinance with Andy Freimuth and Jim Garrity; Mr. Beuke would like to include Mr. Freimuth in Planning Commission discussions of this ordinance.

County Plan Reviews

Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Ms. Warner has supplied three version of the edited ordinance for the Village District. The discussion included drive-throughs in the Village District, removal of the density bonus calculation and preservation of historic buildings.

Mr. Goodman pointed out that there is a difference between free standing drive-throughs and end cap drive-throughs; he suggested that this may need further discussion.

Mr. McHugh suggested that prohibiting drive-throughs in the Village District may be preferable; he also feels that eliminating the bonus calculation should be considered. Mr. Bergman asked for clarification on green area versus open space and the related maximum impervious coverage. Mr. Kennedy suggested that bonuses for shared access be revisited; a bonus with a cap should be considered. A discussion followed regarding maximum building coverage versus maximum lot coverage; maximum building length; main facades facing the street; garage setbacks from principal buildings; and eliminating the requirement of sketch plans for review. Mr. McHugh suggested that the term “Green Area” may seem confusing; Mr. Kennedy said he had no problem eliminating the term.

Mr. McHugh asked if there were any questions or comments. There being no further discussion, Mr. McHugh asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Goodman made a motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Harwanko. The meeting was adjourned at 10:03pm

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for 7:30pm on Wednesday, October 26, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Reimel
Administrative Assistant