

Upper Gwynedd Township Planning Commission

Wednesday December 13, 2023

1. Call to Order

The December 13, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Ken Weirman, Vice Chairman, at 7:30 pm. In attendance were:

Ken Weirman	Vice Chairman
Kathryn Carlson	Secretary
Gil Silverman	Member
John Tierney	Member
Chris Carroll	Member
Andrew Faulker	Member
Megan Weaver	Assistant Township Manager
E. Van Rieker	Zoning Officer
Nick Cross	Township Engineer
Colleen Tronoski	Recording Secretary

Mr. Weirman thanked Andrew Faulker for his time on the Planning Commission. He stated that Mr. Faulker was stepping down. Mr. Faulker stated that he enjoyed his time serving on the Planning Commission. He said it was a great experience and he learned a lot.

2. Approval of October 11, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Weirman asked for any corrections/additions to the Minutes of October 11, 2023, which had been circulated via email. Mr. Silverman made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Tierney seconded this motion, and the minutes were unanimously passed.

3. Report of Commissioners' Meeting

Commissioner Hull stated that the 2024 budget was approved with no tax increase. The super Wawa on Valley Forge and Sumneytown Pike was approved. She also noted that they will only be planting native trees and they will also be installing a bike rack. They will be reaching out to the bike lane advisory committee as to what kind of specific kind of bike rack. She stated that Dave Richards from the Public Works Department is officially the longest working employee at 50 years.

4. Old Business

None.

5. New Business

A. Merck Building 41 Land Development Plan

Greg Landis was present for Merck and spoke on their behalf. Also present were Tom Alvarez and Bob McCaughern, who was part of the site master plan team. Mr. Landis provided a slide show of the Land Development Plan. He noted that this building will be placed where three other buildings were previously demolished. Mr. Landis noted that there is already a roadway network, parking and plantings showing eleven trees and seventy-five shrubs that will surround the building. There wasn't a lot of landscaping done for two reasons: there's limited space and to the right there is a park with many plantings and an area where employees can sit. Mr. Landis explained that the building will be used for late-stage bioanalytical testing for clinical trials. The building itself is 110,000 square feet with a footprint of 40,000 square feet. It has three floors, but only floors two and three are full floors. Floor one is only 20,000 square feet because the building is tucked into a hill. There will be two loading docks, a waste area, shipping and receiving on the first floor and on the second and third floor will have clinical sample testing labs, cold storage, offices and the third floor has some shelf space. The building is 850 feet from Sumneytown Pike and 800 feet from West Point Pike. The building will house approximately 180 staff, and this is a mix of transfers and new employees. Twelve parking spots were added after demolition. An NPDES Permit will be required. Mr. Landis provided a rendering of the building façade. There will be 3 tanks that go along with the building to hold nitrogen and CO2.

Mr. Landis then went through the review letters.

The County had two concerns. The first is onsite parking. There are eight new spots added, three for trucks and additional ones prior to this. The second concern was pedestrian circulation. There will be sidewalks and wayfinding signs. Merck is in the process of upgrading the signage.

RVE Township Engineer had fourteen comments.

1. A NPDES Permit will be required – will be provided.
2. Retain a letter of adequacy for Montgomery County Conservation District – will be provided.
3. Provide hydro graphics and pre and post development peaks. Mr. Landis noted that they are operating under a plan from the Township where they recorded O&M storm plan in 2013 and revised it in 2021 that allows them to track the puts and takes of buildings down, buildings up within basin areas. This one they are well under for the 124 acres of the basin they've taken down, about 100,000 sq. ft. of foot print they are replacing with 40 sq. ft. There's plenty of space for the basins.
4. The storm water management report. Mr. Landis confirmed the 100-year storm water conveyance capability with the existing network.
5. No change in land type between pre and post development drainage areas. They updated the pre and post development information in peak flow rights. The predevelopment area was 1.56 acres, and the post development area is 1.25 acres.
6. Storm water management report shows hydraulic grade lines. The lines will be shown on the drawing.
7. Show capacity of hydraulic grade line results. The existing pipe network to basin four is expected to have adequate capacity based on the removal of impervious areas.
8. Storm water management report shows inlet capacities. They will be shown in the drawings - will comply.
9. Plans set arrows to true North. Arrows will be shown on all sheets.
10. Plan set shows existing contour lines. They will be shown.
11. Contour lines – will be provided.
12. Plan set sheet 12. Portions of drainage areas appear to be outside the basin drainage area. The boundary has been updated.

13. The boundary will be shown.
14. Turn leaders off within the project, they're too small to read. Leaders will be removed from the drawings.

Gilmore and Associates

1. Plan appears to show proposed sewer facilities for only one of the three proposed building options, this needs to be clarified. Mr. Landis stated that this was clarified in the response when Merck noted the building they were proposing to build tonight.
2. Existing laterals are proposed to be demolished. The method of decommissioning should be detailed to eliminate the possibility of infiltration. Mr. Landis noted that laterals will be removed from the manholes and the manholes will be plugged with hydraulic cement. Construction details will be provided per township standards.
3. Sanitary sewer construction details should be checked and updated to provide all details and details will be updated to reflect township standards.

Mr. Landis noted on the record plan that there are eight waiver requests. These are:

1. Submit for combination preliminary/final plan at one time.
2. Not to provide utility and man-made features within 100 feet of the property line.
3. Not provide a performance guarantee.
4. Not provide a maintenance guarantee.
5. Allow final plan approval without performance and maintenance guarantees.
6. Allow 12-inch and 15-inch storm water conveyance pipes.
7. Not sign operations and maintenance agreements with the township.
8. No record operations and maintenance agreements with the County Recorder of Deeds.

Mr. Landis stated that they had their PRC Meeting with staff on October 19, 2023. Submitted the Application to the Planning Commission on November 17, 2023 and held the site review.

Mr. Weirman asked what the current census of the location of this building, relevant to parking. There are 1000 less people compared to 2019. Mr. Landis said between the two sites there were approximately 9700 people between Upper Gwyned and West Point. Currently they have 8500 people. He said there is plenty of parking.

Mr. Carroll gave the site review report. He stated this was completed on December 6, 2023. He noted that this building will be built over vacant land that was previously occupied by three buildings and part of an existing road. He stated that this road will be rerouted. The building will house offices and labs with 180 employees and will have additional parking for 8 cars and 3 trucks. This plus existing parking and the parking garage, which is a short walk, should provide ample parking. Three tanks will provide liquid nitrogen, gaseous nitrogen, and carbon dioxide. This facility will not generate any toxic waste. No remediation of soil is necessary. There is no need for additional wastewater management. The existing storm pipes and retention basin have sufficient capacity. Landscaping will include 11 small trees and 75 bushes and the retention of several small mature trees. The plan has received approval from the EAC. The estimated date of construction will be early summer. He said that here were no issues found to prevent the approval. (The site review is attached).

Mr. Weirman asked for any questions from the public. There were none.

Ms. Carlson made a motion to recommend this land development project for approval to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Silverman seconded this motion, and this motion was unanimously passed.

B. Zoning Text Amendment, Definitions and C-Commercial District

Mr. Rieker stated that this amendment was made by township staff. It doesn't result in any new uses being accommodated nor any new districts. What it does is clean up some inefficient language and clear up some requirements regarding parking. Another issue was to better define a convenience store because it was undefined. It does explain that a convenience store includes, if it wishes, the sale of gas, but when gas is proposed then that requirement still requires approval from the Zoning Hearing Board.

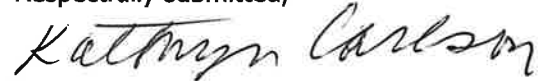
Mr. Weirman noted that the Montgomery County Planning Commission wanted to strike one of the other requirements. Mr. Rieker stated that MCPC saw it as a more complicated effort. Mr. Tierney asked if this should include electric chargers.

Mr. Carroll made a motion to recommend the Text Amendment for approval as worded to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Silverman seconded this motion, and this motion was unanimously passed.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business for discussion, Mr. Weirman asked for any further questions or comments. Hearing none, Ms. Carlson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. Silverman and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathryn Carlson".

Kathryn Carlson, Secretary