

Upper Gwynedd Township Planning Commission

Wednesday October 11, 2023

1. Call to Order

The October 11, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by John Lancaster, Chairman, at 7:30 pm. In attendance were:

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

2. Approval of July 12, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Lancaster asked for any corrections/additions to the Minutes of July 12, 2023, which had been circulated via email. Mr. Silverman made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Weirman seconded this motion, and the minutes were unanimously passed.

Approval of September 13, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Lancaster asked for any corrections/additions to the Minutes of September 13, 2023, which had been circulated via email. Mr. Silverman made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Weirman seconded this motion, and the minutes were unanimously passed.

3. Report of Commissioners' Meeting

Commissioner Hull shared the accomplishment of Assistant Manager Megan Weaver. Megan maintains and updates the Township website. Recently Megan made an addition to the subdivision and land development portion of the website. Commissioner Hull explained how to get to the page that Megan has updated. She noted this page is under the Code Enforcement and Zoning section. If you click on Subdivision and Land Development, it will tell you what developments are under review and what's under construction. It provides maps of these developments and how they are zoned, status of reviews, etc.

4. Old Business

A. 825 Morris Road, Proposed 4-lot Subdivision.

Rick Mast, Engineer for the proposal was present. He stated he was before the Planning Commission last month when the project was reviewed along with the staff review letters and waivers. He noted that the discussion focused on the preservation of trees. Mr. Mast had a plan that he shared with the group. He stated that this project is located at 825 Morris Road and the proposal is for four residential single homes. Currently there are two residences on the property. These buildings would be removed. The new homes would be served by a private roadway that will be maintained by an HOA. Mr. Mast pointed to the top of the plan. He noted the considerable number of trees and vegetation and that it was important to the neighbors that this be preserved. Mr. Mast suggested a 20-foot-wide conservation easement along that entire westerly property line. He stated that the applicant's attorney is working on a Declaration document for the HOA and within this document there would be the conservation easement. This document would need to be reviewed by the Township's solicitor and the Township's engineer. The future owners would not be permitted to remove trees from the buffer, but they could remove diseased or dying trees. These trees would then need to be replaced.

Mr. Weirman asked, if the Planning Commission were to approve this, it would be under the condition that there's a mutually agreeable easement that's acceptable to the solicitor as well as the commissioners. Mr. Weirman noted that he was on the site review team. He stated that there were some trees that were in bad shape and probably would have to go along with additional pruning. Mr. Mast agreed. He also stated that the language of the easement can allow some removal of undesirable, diseased or dead vegetation. Mr. Weirman asked if the land under the easement would be owned by the HOA or if the individual homeowners still have that as their property. Mr. Mast said the land in question would still be owned by the individual owners, however the easement would come under the purview of the HOA and the township would have some enforcement ability. Mr. Rieker added that accessory structures, which typically could be placed as close as 6 feet from the rear property line, would not be permitted to be located within the easement. The easement area would be limited to the preservation of vegetation and/or the location of new trees.

Mr. Lancaster asked if there were any questions from the public.

A resident asked what the enforcement of the violation of the easement would be? Mr. Mast stated that the first level of enforcement would be the homeowners, with the Township being a secondary level if for some reason the homeowners or HOA did not maintain that buffer properly. Mr. Rieker added, if the Township had to get involved with an easement issue, for example replacing or removing a tree, the Township would lien the property to recover its costs. Mr. Weirman asked if the easement would be codified or published before the commissioners would approve it. Mr. Rieker said yes. Mr. Mast explained that the easement would be on these lots to the property line.

A resident from Armstrong Drive asked, if this gets approved, what is the time frame and who maintains the property lot now? Mr. Mast stated that there are many more steps before approval, so this project probably will not start until spring 2024. The applicant owns the land so it's his responsibility to maintain it.

There being no other questions, Mr. Lancaster asked for a motion. Mr. Weirman made a motion to approve the plan as described with the condition that the conservation easement is put forward in an agreeable way moving forward. Mr. Silverman seconded this motion, and this motion was unanimously passed.

B. Proposed Wawa, South Valley Forge Road & Sumneytown Pike, Land Development Plan.

Christin Pionzio, Esq., from Hamburg, Rubin, Mullin, Maxwell, & Lupin was present. She is representing Provco/Goodman, the property owners. She stated she was before the Planning Commission last month. They have all the staff review letters and it's a "will comply" for everything. There are four waivers the applicant is asking for. They are for preliminary/final approval; instead of curbing around the building that it be flush with bollards for ADA accessibility; the requirement that parking be ten feet from the building, it is seven feet in the front and full access in the rear; and that there is spillover of the foot candles onto the Marathon Gas Station next door. The owner and his counsel both agreed to that waiver.

Mr. Lancaster asked if there would be accessibility to enter from the front and back of the store. Ms. Pionzio noted the access to the back would be for emergency vehicles only. No parking in the back. Mr. Lancaster asked if this store would be a franchise. Ms. Pionzio stated that Wawa owns their stores.

Mr. Lancaster asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Lancaster asked for a motion. Mr. Weirman made a motion to approve the proposal. Ms. Carlson seconded this motion, and this motion was unanimously passed.

5. New Business

A. 212 Church Road, Land Development for detached storage building (Secure Storage)

Bob Jordan, with Woodrow and Associates, was present for the applicant, 212 Church Road LLC. He introduced Peter Michalski from Insite Property Group. They manage the site. The subject parcel is located at 212 Church Road. It consists of 8.02 acres. It's located in the LI- Limited Industrial District. They are currently operating as a storage facility. This proposal calls for the construction of a 34,415 sq ft storage building located at the rear of the existing building. This will be set where currently there are motor homes stored/parked. These vehicles will be removed from the site. The applicant is in receipt of Mr. Cross's review letter, dated October 6, 2023. All items are "will comply". There are some minor waivers the applicant is asking for and they are: to provide architectural plans at the time of preliminary plan. There are renderings available, the applicant is asking to defer that until after final approval just for the cost associated with preparing architectural plans because they are site specific. Mr. Rieker asked if the plans would be provided at the time of the building permit? Mr. Jordan said yes. The second waiver concerns landscape design. The site is fully developed and was constructed as a warehouse. The landscape around it is constructed in compliance, so this waiver is asking for no additional landscaping. Most of the site is composed of impervious surface. The next waiver would be the lighting. The applicant is not proposing any new free-standing lighting. There will be wall pack lighting on the new building. The next waiver is to provide curb radii less than five feet. There is no curb planned so this is to validate what's existing.

Mr. Bachman stated that he was on the site review team. He noted that there were many RVs on the property. Will they not be on the property anymore? Mr. Jordan stated that there will be parking for RV's after they configure the property. Mr. Bachman asked what is stored in the taller storage units. Mr. Michalski stated that no gas-powered vehicles or equipment are permitted to be stored in the units. Usually, furniture and other household items are stored in the units. Mr. Bachman asked if there was a big need for additional storage space in the township. Mr. Michalski proposed this because they believe there is a need for it. Mr. Weirman asked if the original plans had the height being 25 feet in height, the same as the existing building. Mr. Michalski noted that may have been once proposed but this project will be a single-story building. Mr. Weirman asked if this was going to be all exterior access. Mr. Michalski

said there will be both interior and exterior access. Mr. Weirman asked about security practices. Mr. Michalski stated that there is facial recognition on the security cameras and there is 24-hour monitoring. There are also unique key codes for everyone coming in and out. The site is also managed 24/7 and they walk the facility. Mr. Lancaster asked if there was a ventilation system. Mr. Michalski said yes there is. Mr. Rieker asked about the original building height, said to be 21.3 feet. Mr. Michalski said this should be closer to 10 feet in height. Mr. Rieker asked if the large travel vehicles that are currently in this space would have their leases terminated. Mr. Michalski said if they ran out of room these leases would be terminated but right now there is a lot of open parking. Mr. Rieker stated that the township would need to see a parking plan if the parking space were made bigger.

Ms. Carlson asked Mr. Cross if he had any concerns about this project. Mr. Cross stated that when he reviewed the resubmission there were no concerns with the waivers that the applicant is asking for.

Mr. Rieker stated that the County did submit a review and they do support this project.

Mr. Silverman asked if there were any stormwater issues. Mr. Weirman noted that this is almost all impervious and it won't be changing anything. Mr. Jordan noted that there are no known water issues with this property.

There were no questions from the public. Mr. Lancaster asked for a motion. Ms. Carlson made a motion to approve the plan on the condition that they provide a parking plan that will be reviewed and acceptable to the Township Engineer and Fire Marshal. Mr. Silverman seconded this motion, and this motion was unanimously passed.

6. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,


Kathryn Carlson, Secretary