

**MINUTES**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING FEBRUARY 11, 2020**

**Attendees:** Dave Shula, Sherri Glantz-Patchen, Bob Dambman, Peter Cornog, Scott Quitel, Charlie Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning and Zoning, Jacy Toll (BOS Liaison), Jim Hersh (Township Engineer), and Dave Sander, Esq. (Township Solicitor)

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** 7:00 PM by Chair Dambman

**2. ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE**

**Announcements:**

- Montgomery County Planning Commission / Planning Smarter Montco 2020 Courses and Events (provided in packet). Mr. Guttenplan highlighted Course in Community Planning coming up in late March and April and recommended it as a good introductory course for various aspects of planning that the Commission may be involved in.
- The entire packets that are provided to the Planning Commission are now available on the website; this is now the case for all of the various boards and commissions.
- All active Subdivision/Land Development applications will be located under the 2020 Subdivision/Land Development link on the website, regardless of the year they originated.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- On a motion by Mr. Shula, seconded by Mr. Cornog, the Planning Commission approved the January 28, 2020 meeting minutes with amendments made by Ms. Patchen. Vote 5-0.

**4. ZONING HEARING BOARD APPEALS:** None

**5. CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS:**

- Review CU#02-20; Anusa Nail Studio, LLC/428 Germantown Pike  
*Personal Service Shop in VC-1 District*

Attendees: Dave Ennis, Esquire, the applicant's representative and Xine Huynh, the applicant and owner

The applicant is seeking approval to open a personal service shop pursuant to Section 116-290.C.(2) of the Zoning Code. The applicant is proposing to lease space within the strip shopping center located at 428 Germantown Pike. There are 8 code criteria for conditional use approval; many of which do not apply for shopping centers. The floor plan was reviewed showing 4 manicure stations and 4 pedicure stations; ventilation will be installed for fumes associated with the nail polish; they are starting out with 2 technicians with a potential of 4; hours of operation are Monday-Friday 10:00 AM-7:00 PM and Saturday 9:00 AM-6:00 PM; mostly by appointment only with a minimal number of walk-ins; customer parking will be in the existing parking lot as well as on Germantown Pike and the lease requires all employees to park behind the WAWA. Ms. Patchen stated she doesn't see anything stopping them from filling all stations at the same time (there are only 4 technician chairs so only 4 customers can be serviced at a time; manicures and pedicures aren't each done on 4 different people).

No Public Comment

Motion: On a motion by Mr. Quitel, seconded by Mr. Shula, the Planning Commission recommended granting approval of the conditional use application. Vote 5-0.

## 6. SUBDIVISION &/OR LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

- Review (continued) SLD#05-14; 901 Washington Partners, LP/901 Washington Street  
*Revised Preliminary Plan; 62 Townhomes*

Attendees: Jim Vesey, one of the owners of the property at 901 Washington Street Partners; his partner Gary Cole; Jim Bannon, Engineer from Nave Newell; Sarah Peck, developer/partner from Progressive New Homes and her associate Justin Moody were present.

Mr. Cornog wanted to know the basis for the request of the variances from the Zoning Hearing Board regarding the reduction of the open space along the river bed from 150' to 45' (the hardship was the irregular shape of the lot and the narrowing on the east side, they were not willing to provide the proper buffer). It was noted that the Zoning Hearing Board disregarded the Planning Commission's recommendations, noting particularly the recommendation to deny the variance to reduce the riverfront open space (§116-284.A.). Mr. Quitel stated he feels they should start the project with an overlay and then fit the footprint of the development behind that. Mr. Bannon stated this is a much better condition; the impervious coverage is going to be reduced from 92% to 63%. Ms. Peck stated the setback allowed is actually 100' not 150' with 2 public amenities, which they are providing (it was confirmed there is a 49' easternmost setback and 145' westernmost setback).

Ms. Peck presented a PowerPoint hitting some of the things that were addressed since the first meeting. There were some issues raised by the Commission members and staff which they took to heart and made some revisions to the plan. The plan changed to show all units have riverfront views and roof decks on all homes or the option to have one; all units have two car garages and a third parking spot was added; they improved connectivity, changed trail along the river from the Boardwalk back to a red shale macadam trail because it is a zoning requirement; a 5' retaining wall will be built to maximize stormwater management; avoided removal of heritage trees by changing placement of the trail; the basin was changed to increase the capacity while not increasing the area; road widths were changed to 25'; pedestrian access was discussed with SEPTA and David's Bridal and they are working on concepts with them; they are talking to SEPTA about a potential guide rail, future handicap accessibility and also having a separation from the Septa train cars.

Mr. Cornog asked how do you access the trail and who is responsible for maintaining the public access (there are stairs that connect to the trail; and public access will be maintained by the Home Owners Association if the Township won't take it); questioned the proposed size of Washington Street and that no section of the right-of-way be less than 40 ft. (due to site constraints the new street will not meet Township standards; they are proposing a 30' cartway which is more than adequate and it is identical to their former approved office plan); he stated the Township needs to think about alternate roads to Hector Street for future planning.

Mr. Bannon discussed flooding issues that were brought up at the last meeting. They are considering a flooding event at this site elevation 56 ½' which is 1' above the garage floor of the lowest units, so our thinking being below that you are okay, above that you will need to move your car; there have been 4 flooding events since 1999 that are considered a 10 year storm and only 1 of them got to that elevation; it was pointed out that the 100 year storm is 6 feet above the pad and the living spaces are 9 feet above the pad. Mr. Vesey stated there are 10 items that can trigger an evacuation. They met with Nick Weaver, Fire Marshal, who had some good additions to the emergency evacuation plan which they revised and he also recommended the residents downloading an app so they be warned when to take appropriate action. Mr. Cornog asked if there are any guidelines as to when you can return (it was not addressed, that would be dictated by the Township and safety precautions as to when); Ms. Peck stated a public offering statement is required and will be given to a perspective owner or renter with the rules and they will have 7 days to back out. Mr. Bannon explained the 10 year and 100 year floods: the 10 year storm is about the elevation of the pad, the 50 year storm is about 3 ½' above that. The Schuylkill River in this location has never reached that elevation since they installed the gauge at the Fairmount Dam. He

explained that for the 4 storm events they looked at the peak of the storm to river crest; the shortest was less than 7 hours, the average was 9 ½ hours and the highest was 12 ½ hours; it took Floyd 9 hours to crest at this location.

Sara Peck stated they tried to make the development as open as possible but they just couldn't make it work; they already cut the number of units back from 75 to 62; and by moving the units back the views will be of David's Bridal and the loading docks. Ms. Peck offered to walk the site with anyone that is interested to show what is there and to appreciate what is there and how nice it is going to be.

Public Comment: Linda Doll, Fairway Road; Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road. Ms. Doll commented if the public has access to the red shale trail how do they get to it, where do you park (come down Lee street and park on Washington Street); doesn't feel the trail is a trail, it is not connected to anything (the Planning Commission stated this is just the first step; it is the same as the sidewalk issues; this is the start of the future development of a longer trail); didn't understand how parking was added (39 spaces were added behind garages though they are only 8' wide and are not included in the parking count, there is ample parking for visitors and public parking for those with no driveways); where are the trash cans kept (in garages until collection day then will be placed in front of the units); and concerned about the narrow roads (will add no parking signs. Ms. Zove agreed that the 36' road width was too wide for residential, but suggested not going below 26'; perpendicular parking and backing into a road way is a safety issue; concerned with the proximity of the sidewalk in proximity to the tracks; she explained her observations on how the Zoning Hearing Board decided to grant the variance for the setback reduction from the riverbank; and she stated that the 24' street width is traffic calming but the motive behind this waiver is to put in more units. Debra Harris, Pilgrim Road, stated that cars parked on streets make it safer; 24' wide streets with parking on both sides tends to slow down vehicles; trash trucks are able to get through, and wider roads are more dangerous.

Planning Commission Final Comments: Mr. Quitel stated it is not the street width, it is the open space (or reduction) that drives the number of units; they fought for reduced green space width but didn't fight for an alternative to the red shale trail; asked if they had to meet the 150' setback would they still build (not sure but it is not economically feasible for less units).

Ms. Peck stated they received a lot of feedback on design issues; the landscape architect is very excited about this opportunity in helping restore the riverbank and improving its environment.

Ms. Patchen and the other members would like to take up the applicant's offer to walk the site; this will be advertised as a public meeting once a day and time are set.

**7. OLD BUSINESS:** None.

**8. NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**9. PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS COMMENTS:** None.

**10. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON AGENDA ITEMS**

- Chair Dambman reiterated on the Montgomery County Planning Commission / Planning Smarter Montco 2020 Courses and Events for those who were not present at the beginning of the meeting.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

- On a motion by Mr. Cornog, seconded by Mr. Shula, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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**Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning**

The Planning Commission is appointed as an advisory group to the Board of Supervisors and the Zoning Hearing Board with respect to comprehensive land use planning, existing land use, and various land use and zoning applications in Whitemarsh Township. No formal decisions are rendered by the Planning Commission. Formal decisions are rendered by the Board of Supervisors or Zoning Hearing Board, as prescribed by law, based on the type of application.

G:PLANNING COMMISSION/PC Minutes/2020/2.12.2020