

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING FEBRUARY 26, 2019

Attendees: Dave Shula, Sherri Glantz Patchen, Vince Manuele, Peter Cornog, Bob Dambman, Scott Quitel, Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning, Krista Heinrich, Township Engineer, T&M Associates, Amy Grossman, Board of Supervisor Liaison

1. Call to order: 7:00 PM by Chair Manuele
2. Announcements & Correspondence

Announcements:

Correspondence:

- Letter dated February 12, 2019 from Celine Childs to all the various Boards and Commissions with concerns about development in the Historic District.
- Several e-mails pertaining to ZHB#2019-06; 14 E. Germantown Pike opposing the project, which were submitted today

3. Approval of Minutes:

- Prior to the approval of the meeting minutes, Linda Doll, Fairway Road, spoke; she feels that if the public reads a statement, it should be included in the minutes since it is not being recorded. Eli Glick, 7 Whitefield Drive, wanted clarification as to where his written statement resides. It was explained that it resides in the Township file. Ms. Patchen asked that the minutes not indicate that Mr. Glick's statement should be listed as being in Township files as there are many documents in Township files and we don't indicate that about each one; she suggested a correction to indicate that he read from written comments. Mr. Dambman also requested that the minutes reflect the request discussed concerning posting the Planning Commission packet material on the Township website.
- Mr. Dambman moved to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2019 meeting with the minor changes as noted at the meeting regarding written comments and correspondence by the public and the request to provide meeting material on Township Website; seconded by Ms. Patchen. Vote 5-0 (Mr. Shula abstained, not present for that meeting)

4. Zoning Hearing Board Appeals:

- ZHB#2019-07: 252 Roberts Avenue, LLC, 252 Roberts Avenue (Lincoln Fire Co. property), Conshohocken, PA; Variances for 2-Lot Single Family subdivision. George Ozorowski, Esq. was present on behalf of the applicant. The applicant proposes to raze the existing building, divide the property into two lots, and construct one single-family detached home on each lot. The application requires dimensional relief for lot area, lot width at building setback line and side yard setback. The applicant met with neighbors and everyone was in favor of the new plan. There is a substantial decrease in impervious ground coverage (92.5% to 29.6%), building coverage (38.5% to 19.3%) and maximum accessory use coverage (57+% to 0) from currently conditions. This case is scheduled for a hearing on March 13th. Public Comment: Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road, feels this scenario is far better than the original plan, but feels the garage frontages are not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. Mr. Shula made a motion to recommend the Zoning Hearing Board approve the requested variances; seconded by Mr. Cornog. Vote 6-0
- ZHB#2019-06: 14 E. Germantown, LLC, 14 E. Germantown Pike, Plymouth Meeting, PA; Variances for 21 unit townhouse proposal. George Ozorowski, Esq., the applicant's representative, Ben Sparango, the applicant and Rachel Sclan Vahey, landscape architect, were all present. This is a proposal for 21 townhomes in the VC-2 District; townhomes are a conditional use in this District. This site is also within the Plymouth Meeting Historic District and contains two existing buildings, both of which have been converted into apartments. Mr. Ozorowski explained the proposal. The house is proposed to remain but without the apartments, to be used as an accessory building for the development; the barn would be razed. The applicant is requesting variances for building length for one building; buffer width in the rear yard along one building behind the Post Office; shared driveway/parking required for any conditional use in the VC District (sharing

parking was denied by both neighbors); and rear yard setback in the area where the buffer variance is requested. This case is scheduled for a hearing on March 13th. The many comments concerning the variance for the reduced rear yard setback were acknowledged; Mr. Ozorowski said they would withdraw that one and the one for the reduced buffer in the same area. After member comments about the lack of hardship for the variance for excess building length, Mr. Ozorowski agreed to withdraw that variance request as well. Ms. Vahey explained the landscape plan, and described the buffers briefly. Additional Planning Commission comments and concerns included: suggesting the applicant coming back with a plan that does not require any variances (would still need to one the shared parking/driveway requirement since they can't get agreement); that they are cramming too much on the property (at max. density) and it just doesn't work; not consistent with the character of the neighborhood; and that the developer should work around the existing trees. Public Comment: Elizabeth Sitko, 23 Laurence Place; Ann Dougherty, 25 Laurence Place; Eli Glick, 7 Whitefield Drive; Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road; Barry Reinhart, 518 Monticello Lane; Hope Nagy, 4 Tracey Road; Linda Doll, Fairway Road; and Joe Corcoran, Militia Hill Road, all spoke. Their comments and concerns included opposition to the variance for the 20' rear yard setback; encourage applicant to keep the tall black walnut trees; the addition of cars and congestion to an already congested road network; stormwater management; that the project is not in keeping with the historic district; the appreciation of discussion and push-back from the Planning Commission; suggestion to use the leverage powers for future conditional use to their full extent; would like to see this plan turned down and the applicant come back with an amended plan to be reviewed by the Planning Commission before going to the Zoning Hearing Board; not enough parking, need shared parking or don't have as many units; doesn't feel the Village Commercial District was anticipated as a townhome district; and suggestions to work/collaborate with the neighbors. At the end of the discussion, Mr. Manuele commented that even though they have represented the withdrawal of some of the variances, the Commission should make a recommendation on all in the event they move forward with the application. Also, even though the Conditional Use requires the shared parking/driveway, he can't support that variance to eliminate that requirement since it would remove an obstacle for conditional use approval and there are many impacts that need to be addressed to secure that approval that haven't been looked at yet. Mr. Quitel made a motion to recommend rejecting all four requested variances; seconded by Mr. Cornog. Vote 6-0

5. Subdivision & Land Development Applications:

- SLD#07-18 Whitemarsh Hotel Associates, LP, 432 Pennsylvania Avenue, Fort Washington, PA; Waiver of Land Development; 6,049 square foot restaurant. Rob Lewis with Kaplin Stewart was present representing the applicant; gave a brief overview and history of the property. The applicant is asking for a waiver of land development for a 6,049-square foot free standing restaurant at 432 Pennsylvania Avenue, adjacent to the refurbished Holiday Inn hotel. A previous 8,000-square foot restaurant was approved as part of a larger land development; the new restaurant will be entirely within the footprint of the former restaurant. The applicant will comply with all comments from the Township Engineer and Zoning Officer review letters. There was no public comment. Mr. Shula made a motion to recommend approval of granting the waiver of land development subject to obtaining an earth disturbance permit (as recommended by the Township Engineer); seconded by Mr. Cornog. Vote 6-0

6. Conditional Use Applications: None

7. Old Business:

- Mr. Dambman asked for a status update for posting Planning Commission documents on the website. In response, Mr. Guttenplan explained that it is actively being looked at for all boards and commissions.
- The Planning Commission discussed process options to take in consideration for future submissions, including environmental and other features as overlays to come up with what is developable; also noted current process is flawed because if a plan is approved by the Zoning Hearing Board, a slightly modified plan will be presented to the Commission for which they would have no input.

8. New Business:

9. Public Comment:

- Joe Corcoran, Militia Hill Road, liked what the Planning Commission did tonight. Suggested the staff encourage process being proposed. Also suggested doing a revision to the Village Commercial District as townhomes were not intended.
- Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road, expressed her appreciation for what the Planning Commission did tonight and with the Harth Project. She regrets they didn't do this when the Hovnanian project came before them. She is asking that the Planning Commission do everything in their power to press for a better plan.
- Eli Glick, 7 Whitefield Drive, read the advise from our website that encourages developers to meet with Township staff before early in planning a development project and would like the staff to encourage the developers to talk to the neighbors first to discuss the proposed project.

10. Adjournment:

- There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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.

All written or graphic material that is presented to the Planning Commission at a public meeting shall be kept in Township files and is subject to examination under the PA Right-to-know Law.