

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING AUGUST 13, 2019

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

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

Announcements: A special meeting was advertised for Monday, August 19, 2019 that will be devoted to continued discussion of the Selective Comprehensive Plan Update

Correspondence: None

3. Approval of Minutes:

- Mr. Shula moved to approve the minutes from the June 25, 2019 meeting; seconded by Mr. Doran. Vote 4-0 (Mr. Quitel and Ms. Patchen abstained, not present at that meeting)

4. Zoning Hearing Board Appeals: None

5. Subdivision & Land Development Applications: None

6. Conditional Use Applications:

- CU#03-19: Argos Associates/Adelphi Land Associates/Polergodom Group, Ltd. (Longfield Farm); Butler and Skippack Pikes, Ambler, PA; 58 Townhomes on the site within the VC-4, Village Commercial District, Sub-district 4. Caroline Edwards, Attorney for the applicants; Richard Collier and Dave Cavanaugh, Land Concepts; Robert Irick, Project Engineer; Brian Keveney, Traffic Consultant; and Bob Downs, owner's representative, were all present. Ms. Edwards introduced the team and the project generally. The applicant is proposing 58 townhomes, which townhomes are permitted as a Conditional Use, on the site within the VC-4, Village Commercial District, Sub-district 4. Preliminary Subdivision/Land Development plans have been submitted, but they are being held pending Conditional Use approval. The total area of the property is approximately 15 acres, zoning permits 118 units, 58 are proposed. Mr. Cavanaugh stated this plan is consistent with the sketch plan that was submitted but has been revised to include grading and stormwater management, landscape plan, lighting plan, added sidewalks per the Planning Commission's request and extended the trail system. Mr. Collier discussed the conditional use procedures and zoning requirements; he distributed a chart showing compliance with all zoning requirements; he indicated that they comply with all requirements for conditional use — townhomes are a permitted conditional use in the VC-4 District; compliance with the eight requirements in §116-37.F. (conditional use procedures); §116-291 conditions of approval for all uses in VC; 36 requirements, 15 are not applicable, they comply with the remaining 21; and with §116-292 (requirements for all conditional uses in VC) conditions of all conditional uses (5 standards and their plan complies with all). This plan meets all conditional use requirements, for example: consistent with zoning; consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for density, but the Comprehensive Plan says single family, so not consistent with that aspect; will not adversely impact visually, landscape buffering is being provided; townhomes are a permitted (conditional) use; driveways are no closer than 600' from adjacent ones; building entrances compliant; varying facades required (they comply); landscape and lighting comply (16' tall poles allowed, 14' poles provided); public sewer, water and utility lines will be placed underground; they are designing a pedestrian system to include sidewalks and trails; shared driveways and shared parking will be provided; and 2.5" caliber trees will be provided. Currently the applicant is requesting 8 waivers. Mr. Irick detailed all of the waivers, some of which are partial [from §§105-21.B.(1)(n), 105-47.A., 105-57.G. and 105-73 for information to be shown within 500' and for sidewalk requirements]m some of which are technical engineering issues, from requirement to dedicate 10% recreation land, and possible tree

requirements due to inability to fit them on site (fee in lieu to be considered). Mr. Keveney discussed traffic and stated a traffic study has been completed and reviewed by the township. Traffic issues and conclusions included: comments regarding adding a left turn lane on Butler Pike by Township traffic consultant (will coordinate with Township and County); studied intersections for existing traffic flow included Skippack/Butler, Butler/Norristown and 3 nearby driveways; 90% of traffic would be expected to use Butler Pike Driveway; the multi-family land use code was used to do the study; adequate gaps available at Butler Pike driveway to allow left turns out of the development.

- Planning Commission Comments: Mr. Manuele read excerpts from minutes of October 8, 2013, that the applicant sought a zoning change introducing the VC-4 district and promised to leave the site pristine, what happened with that? In response Mr. Downs said the applicant wanted a commercial mixed use development with a wine store, but ran into technical and stormwater issues, so ended up after looking at all options, with townhomes being the best. Commission members questioned whether single-family had been considered (response—this is a transitional area and townhomes are more appropriate); could retail be done in a scaled-back development (original plan was for 65,000 SF, only pursuing 4,000 SF in barn conversion now). Mr. Cornog indicated that he is not prepared to make a recommendation without seeing internal sidewalks throughout and what the Butler Pike improvements will look like; Mr. Quitel is not prepared to recommend or would oppose/abstain, not concur with zoning change that made this possible; Ms. Patchen is still concerned with the traffic impact on Butler Pike and doesn't feel the development is compatible with the neighborhood; Mr. Doran stated the conditional use requires the applicant to demonstrate compatibility, even though similar uses in other townships, that's not Whitemarsh; did not prove that the proposed use will not have a harmful effect on vehicular traffic; does not agree that the proposed development will not unduly burden the schools (schools did not seem to be considered at all); not compatible with the 2003 Comprehensive Plan and he would not recommend approval. Mr. Manuel does not believe they met their burden with respect to 116-37 (F)2, 3, 4 or 8 and for those reasons he does not support it.
- Public Comment: Linda Doll, Fairway Road; and Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road both spoke. Their comments and concerns were: is the stormwater BMP in open space, not good, not really open space; can school buses make a left turn onto Butler Pike and is there a way for school buses to navigate internal streets; surprised about applicant's comments about how VC-4 came to be; would sidewalks on both sides result in fewer units (unit count would stay the same, there would be a decrease in green space); 12 waivers were originally requested now asking for 8, how did this happen (not needed once the detailed plans were completed); can the market study be shared and when was it done (applicant declined to share it).

Motion: Ms. Patchen made a motion that they do not recommend granting the Conditional Use; seconded by Mr. Doran. Vote 6-0

7. Old Business: None

8. New Business:

9. Public Comment:

- Linda Doll, Fairway Road – Is there a way with the Comprehensive Plan or something in the future we can consider for all development in the Township that there is a fee attached for the stress they put on the infrastructure and the school system that they pay a fee.
- Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road – All the issues raised consistently with this project (CU #03-19) are issues that can and should be raised with the K. Hovnanian project. Hopes they are more diligent in reviewing the plan.
- Eli Glick – this project is scheduled for the Board of Supervisors on September 12, 2019 and hope that the Planning Commission members come individually as residents to express their concerns. The Board of Supervisors have pushed back with the VC-4 District and it's time to find out what went on.
- Richard Abraham, 607 Bethlehem Pike – thanked the Planning Commission for what they do and hopes the Board of Supervisors listens to every question that was stated and didn't get an answer on.

10. Adjournment:

- There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 9:01 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 Whitmarsh 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.