

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
August 6, 2014 – 7:30PM

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 7:40 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present

Commissioners – Rodia, Whitig, Adler, Pomerantz, Hatton, Lees and Criddle. Also present were Township Planning Director Chris Patriarca, Township Manager Rob Pingar and those mentioned below.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted and approved as amended unanimously (BW/RH).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission (PC) meeting of July 23, 2014, were approved unanimously (SR/DC) with both Whitig and Adler abstaining.

Reports

Mr. Pomerantz gave an overview of the worksession held prior to the meeting. He discussed it was undertaken for the PC to learn about a quantitative method for the PC to consider utilizing when making decisions on land use applications. At the end of the session, the PC decided to incorporate elements of the method, but that its full implementation would be far too detailed in working to make recommendations to the BOS. He further noted the PC has not convened as a group to discuss possible conditions on the Bozzuto application, but that the process will likely begin at their August 20 meeting.

Mr. Pingar presented the August 4 Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting. The BOS held an executive session during their worksession. Issues discussed at their regular meeting included WEGO issues/accreditation, an appointment to the WEGO finance committee, the 1146 Kolbe Lane lot-line adjustment and the launch of the Neighborhood University initiative.

Announcements

Mr. Patriarca stated first the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) granted the variance request by Silver Star for a larger real estate sign at Westtown Village. He noted the ZHB placed limitations on their order limiting the sign for the period of time it may be placed on site, and further requested the PC and BOS consider amending the ordinance to address this issue in the very near future. Mr. Patriarca also informed the PC of a minor amendment to the Historic Preservation section of the zoning ordinance. He stated the amendment is under review by the CCPC, will result in an increase in the membership of the Historic Commission from five to seven members and once the CCPC review is complete will be advertised and adopted by the BOS.

Non-agenda Public Comment

There were no non-agenda public comments at the meeting.

New Business

Bozzuto and the SCOWT citizens group

After a brief introduction by Mr. Pomerantz, a discussion on the Bozzuto application was opened up to the residents in attendance.

Janice Oakey, of 10 Jacqueline Drive – Mrs. Oakey spoke first and indicated the overall goal of SCOWT is for the Crebilly property to be fully preserved as documented in previous Township planning studies. Further she noted there are potential grants available to assist the Township in the acquisition of the property to preserve it as permanent open space. With that stated, she spoke to potential conditions that SCOWT would recommend if approved. She first spoke of a bike/pedestrian trail encompassing the entire perimeter of the Crebilly Farm in addition to the dedication of a 20 acre piece for a potential park and require the developer install parking for its use. She next spoke to the desire to have all of the historic properties preserved, and specifically noted the serpentine home at 1142 Old Wilmington Pike.

She next spoke about the need for the developer to pay for a traffic study and hold money in escrow for a potential traffic light at the intersection of the connector road and 926. She spoke that SCOWT does like the idea of a small convenience facility included as part of the development that could also be utilized by existing residents. Specific to the berm, SCOWT would like it to maximize views of the farm and minimize the view of the development when possible. Although SEPTA does not currently serve the area proposed for development, consideration should also be given to accommodation of transit with its design.

As a related issue, Mrs. Oakey stated SCOWT would like the PC to consider an ordinance that would allocate 10 percent of overall development costs of future projects towards public recreational space/amenities. She also noted the possible Agricultural Security Area issues with the proposed development.

Mr. Pomerantz, followed with a question about the 10 percent for recreation she mentioned. Mrs. Oakey stated the idea actually came from the previously adopted Open Space Plan, but that in their version what is dedicated to the Township is not a percentage of the overall land area, but rather a percentage of the overall development costs to be used for recreation. Mr. Pomerantz next asked about if the SCOWT viewpoint represents that of the Township as a whole. Mrs. Oakey noted in her interactions with other residents from throughout the Township that none have had positive comments on the apartment proposal. Next Mr. Pomerantz asked to prioritize the top potential conditions. Mrs. Oakey stated she felt the funds for the traffic study/light, additional recreational facilities and preservation of historic structures as being the most important.

Megan Bruns, of 4 Jacqueline Drive – Mrs. Bruns first listed the reasons the Township is considering the apartment proposal. The reasons for consideration she gave were an improved sewer system, the connector road and the preservation of the rear portion of Crebilly. She then listed the negative components of the proposal as she views them. These components included: reduced revenue, increased traffic and crime, transient students in schools, contradicting existing Township planning documents, lower property values, construction on the Brandywine and the overall change in character the Township will experience with its development. She stated that as a result of the numerous concerns from many Township residents that The PC consider denial of the application.

Mr. Pomerantz followed with several questions. He asked about the issue of transient students

and for further clarification as to exactly what the concern encompasses. Mrs. Bruns stated that her experience as a teacher the difference between students who live in a home long-term versus students who go from school to school in generally rental environments tend to struggle more socially and academically. This in turn can potentially result in lower overall test scores and as a result lower overall funding from the state for failing to meet required benchmarks. She further stated that the transience issue for her is related only to school-age children, not to renters as a whole. Mr. Pomerantz noted that developers around the nation are building more apartments as a result of the fallout from the economic slowdown as a result of national trends towards apartment living. Mr. Hatton followed by asking if she viewed renters of home the same as those in apartments with regards to the transience issue. Mrs. Bruns again reiterated that the her view of the transience issue is not about renters, but about children who move from school to school and that in her experience this is generally more associated with apartments.

Janice Oakey, of 10 Jacqueline Drive – Mrs. Oakey noted her experience with education and spoke about the effects of transience on No Child Left Behind and school funding. She noted that funding is based on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores and that AYP scores must be higher each year in order to have additional funding. She stated that improved AYP is difficult to achieve with transient students as they have not been there previously to continue to building upon what was taught previously. Mr. Hatton asked how 31 additional students will significantly impact the 13,000+ students already enrolled in the WCASD. Mrs. Oakey stated she is not speaking towards the WCASD as a whole but the impact of potential transient students at Starkweather, Stetson, and Rustin locally.

Mr. Pomerantz followed by asking which of the SCOWT recommendations will help to address the issues of transient students. Mrs. Oakey stated the recreational amenities advocated by the group could help in the socialization of these new students as they interact with other children outside of the classroom.

Ken Lawson, of 904 Shetland Court (Chadds Ford) – Mr. Lawson noted that although not a Westtown resident, his concerns are about the relationship with the development and the Brandywine Battlefield. Mr. Lawson noted his experience owning a historic property and how he is familiar with regulations associated with its ownership. He stated that battlefields matter and are important in understanding of history. He stated that although Mr. Comitta testified the proposed development will not impact the battlefield, he believes the Crebilly site was part of the battlefield as identified in recent Brandywine study. Specifically he referenced an image of the apartment site in the battlefield plan. He further stated the community impact provision of the conditional use process should address the Brandywine issue.

Mr. Lawson suggested the Crebilly property could be utilized as a gateway to the Brandywine Battlefield, and suggested this type of attraction could result in an economic boon for the Township. In order to make this vision happen it will require strong leadership and planning to complete.

Mr. Pomerantz followed by asking if it is reasonable for the PC to tell a property owner to “hold out” for this type of opportunity. Mr. Lawson stated that the community impact portion of the application is not adequate as it has not addressed the Brandywine issue. Further he stated that we do not know if his vision of the property as a historic attraction is viable.

Doug Anderson, of 606 Jacqueline Drive – Mr. Anderson spoke to the issues that have brought about the SCOWT group and their efforts. He noted that the proposed development ignored

local sensibilities. He cited their assessment of the serpentine home at 1142 Old Wilmington Pike and the blocking of views of the farm from the east as examples of this ignoring of local sensibilities. He next spoke about the “implied threats” of other potential development if the apartment proposal is not approved. Mr. Anderson then spoke about the quarry the serpentine stone was mined from in the Township. He gave a brief history of it and structures that utilized its stone. He then spoke of what he feels is the “right” development for the property and did echo Mr. Lawson’s sentiment about using the property as a Gateway to the Brandywine and/or a recreational area. He concluded the apartment proposal does not represent overall community sensibilities and should not be approved.

Ginger Gray, of 706 Jacqueline Drive – Mrs. Gray spoke for the first time on the apartment proposal and first described where she grew up in Delaware County and how it changed with commercialization back in the 1960s and 70s. She then stated that the less commercialized nature of Westtown is what many find attractive about the community. She further suggested the property be developed with large-lot, single-family homes with a historic park as its centerpiece if it is developed. Mr. Pomerantz asked if the property owner cannot maximize their monetary potential with the single-homes and park, what they should be allowed to do. Mrs. Gray indicated she does not have documentation to this point, but that she prefers single-family home over apartments.

Doug Anderson, of 606 Jacqueline Drive – Mr. Anderson specifically stated about the Crebilly Farm, previous opposition to apartment development in the Township and the overall importance of the farm within the overall fabric of the Township.

Alternative Energy Ordinance

Mr. Patriarca gave a brief overview on the previous history of the ordinance. After the PC made their recommendation, the BOS decided to kick the ordinance back to the PC for their consideration of the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) comments. Mr. Hatton noted many of the CCPC recommendations were to ask experts, to which the Township did. Ms. Adler also stated that the PC did discuss wind farms and decided to exclude them as part of the ordinance. The PC decided that the inclusion of the CCPC comments in the final draft are unneeded and recommend approval of the April draft as originally approved.

Public comment

There were no public comments at the meeting.

Adjournment

9:30 pm (EA/DC)

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Planning Commission Secretary