

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
September 3, 2008 - 7:30PM

Present

Commissioners – Whittig, Walter, Adler, Purcell, Lees, and Flynn. Also present were Township Manager Bob Layman and those mentioned below.

Call to Order

Chairman Purcell led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and called the meeting to order.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted as presented (MP/JL)

Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting of July 9, 2008, were approved as submitted (BW/LJ). Unanimously approved.

Reports.

Elaine Adler reported on the Board's August 18th meeting. Most of the discussion occurred during the Public Comment segment and centered on the request of a Thornbury Township business to connect to the Westtown sewer lines. Since this would involve a grinder pump, the Board has not yet approved the request. The other major discussion concerned the status of the Amendment of the Lighting Section of the Zoning Ordinance.

Dave Walter reported on the September 2nd meeting of the Board of Supervisors. There was a discussion of the condition of the Oakbourne Mansion and how renovations would be funded. The Board adopted Ordinance 2008-2, Trees in the Right of Way. The Board also approved the extension of the time period for the Conditional Use requested by Fair Share properties but indicated that it would not approve further requests.

Announcements

Elaine Adler announced that the Westtown-East Goshen Regional Police Department was conducting a "Citizen Police Academy" this fall and currently accepting applications. Other announcements related to the "Planning for Sustainability" event on October 6th and 7th, and "Zoning for Smart Growth" on September 13th.

The Board of Supervisors will be considering the Zoning Ordinance Amendment for the SUO Overlay on September 15, 2008.

The West Chester Area School District meeting on Thursday, September 4th, will address the District's proposal for closing several older elementary schools and building a new elementary school on the Rustin campus.

Non-agenda Public Comment.

None at this time.

Tract 2008-3, Conditional Use, Westminster Presbyterian Church-Temporary Structure

Present for the applicant were Ed McFalls, Tom Snyder and Attorney Mark Pinnie. Mr. McFalls explained that, because of crowding, the church needed another space to hold a worship service until such time as it could build additional permanent facilities. Westminster proposes erecting a tent in the existing courtyard which would serve this purpose for the next two or three years. The Westtown Zoning Ordinance requires Conditional Use approval for such a temporary structure.

The PC received a memo from the Township Engineer dated August 29, 2008 listing three concerns: storm water management, parking, and sewage capacity. Mr. McFalls explained that there would be no real increase in impervious surface so that the existing storm drainage within the courtyard would suffice. He further noted that the church had increased its parking area some years ago and that it currently exceeded the Township's requirements. He also stated that septic issue had been reviewed by Chester County Health Department at the time of the church's last expansion. The existing system was considered adequate. The tent would not, at least initially, increase the church's membership so that there was no sewer issue at this time.

As Westminster intends to swap land it owns further south on Route 202 for land adjacent to the existing church property on which it would build additional facilities, the PC asked if the church would continue to use the tent if this swap did not occur. Mr. McFalls indicated that under these circumstances Westminster would eventually build on the land it owns even if it was not as convenient.

The tent would be heated and air conditioned. There would be a wooden floor built on the existing paving in the courtyard raising the tent so that flooding would not be an issue. PC questioned how the tent would be connected to the existing structure. The church intends to have covered aisles extending from existing doors into the surrounding buildings to three doors into the tent. PC questioned size of existing and proposed doors, slope of the connection, and direction in which the doors would open and stated that the tent doors should be at least the width of the existing doors. Maximum capacity of the tent would be 150 people, but an average of 35-to 50 is expected.

Preliminary comments from the Fire Marshal indicate that there may be an egress issue as the tent would have no direct access to the outside – all the exits would lead into another building.

Motion, the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the requested Conditional Use Application for Tract 2008-3, Westminster Presbyterian Church, with specific reference to the following concerns:

1. egress from the tent into the existing buildings should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate authority.
2. the width of the doors from the tent into the connecting aisle and the width of the doors into the existing building should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate authority.
3. as the existing parking exceeds Westtown's zoning requirements, that should not be an issue for this application.
4. as the on-site septic system was reviewed and approved by the Chester County Health Department at the time of the last expansion of the church, that should not be an issue for this application.
5. all fire code issues should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate authority.
6. the Planning Commission recommends that the Conditional Use be approved for a specific time period as determined by the Board of Supervisors. Renewals of the permit to be at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors.
7. the Planning Commission recommends that a Building Permit be required for this temporary structure with inspections by the appropriate authorities prior to the issuance of a Use and Occupancy permit.

Public Comment: None at this time.

Motion unanimously approved. A letter will be sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Special Exception – Accessory Dwelling – Ward, Chesterville Way.

The Planning Commission has no comment.

Special Exception – Accessory Dwelling – Tapper, Stanton Avenue.

The Planning Commission has no comment.

Public Comment.

None at this time.

Adjournment. 9:03PM (DW/EA)

Elaine L. Adler
Planning Commission Secretary