

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
January 6, 2016 – 7:30PM

Present

Commissioners – Rodia, Whitig, Adler, Pomerantz, Hatton, Lees and Yaw. Also present was Township Planning Director Chris Patriarca, Township Manager Rob Pingar, Township Transportation Engineer Andy Parker and those mentioned below.

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 7:30 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was approved unanimously as amended by Mr. Pomerantz to include discussion on a draft Planning Commission (PC) annual report for 2015 as well as to recognize the opening of the new Westtown Village tenants (JL/EA).

Election of Officers

Mr. Patriarca led the process to elect officers for 2016. He first accepted nominations for PC Secretary. Mr. Pomerantz nominated Mr. Patriarca to serve as Secretary for 2016. His nomination was seconded by Mr. Lees and Mr. Patriarca was affirmed by a vote of 7-0 to the position. Next Mr. Patriarca accepted nominations for the PC Chairman. Mr. Hatton nominated Mr. Pomerantz to serve as Chairman for 2016. His nomination was seconded by Mr. Rodia and Mr. Pomerantz was affirmed by a vote of 6-0 to the position. Finally Mr. Patriarca accepted nominations for the PC Vice Chairman. Mr. Pomerantz nominated Mr. Hatton to serve as Vice Chairman for 2016. His nomination was seconded by Mr. Lees and Mr. Hatton was affirmed by a vote of 6-0 to the position.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the PC meeting of December 9, 2015, were unanimously approved as presented (EA/SY).

Reports

Ms. Adler presented the December 21 Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting. She stated their worksession consisted of an executive session and discussion of a small-flow package plant on Oakbourne Road as well as the comprehensive plan consultant. At their regular meeting the BOS had several departmental reports presented, selected the Brandywine/TCA team for the comprehensive plan update, authorized for advertising the SUO repeal and historic resources map amendments and adopted the 2016 budget.

Mr. Hatton presented the January 4 BOS meeting. He stated they started with their organizational meeting with 2016 improvements. At their regular meeting the BOS had several departmental reports presented, a presentation from the Deer Creek Malthouse and some public comment.

2015 Planning Commission Annual Report

Mr. Hatton discussed the genesis of the 2015 annual report linking back to MPC requirements.

As such, he did go through all of the 2015 minutes and synthesized it into an executive summary that highlighted the 2015 accomplishments of the PC. He further provided a summary of potential 2016 projects. Both Mr. Hatton and Mr. Pomerantz then went through the 2015 accomplishments. Mr. Hatton then asked for the PC to review the summary and send any comments and/or additions directly to him for inclusion in the report. He would like to have the report ready by February.

Announcements

Mr. Patriarca made several announcements. He first stated that for all interested PC members, the Township will provide access to a webinar series conducted by Penn State, and that those who are interested should coordinate with him. Mr. Patriarca next stated the initial meeting was held with the comprehensive plan consultant and that the process was just starting and regular updates will be provided as they occur. Next Mr. Patriarca indicated that the new owners of the Papenfuss property will be presenting their proposed 15 home development informally at the next PC meeting.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

There were no non-agenda public comments.

New Business

Dunkin Donuts (100 Skiles Boulevard)

Kristin Camp representing Abjibapa Enterprises led the discussion on a proposed reuse of the former Malvern Bank located at 100 Skiles Boulevard to that of a Dunkin Donuts (DD). She indicated in order to accommodate the use a zoning ordinance amendment would be required and that after an initial presentation with the BOS they were directed to present their proposal to the PC for their consideration. Specifically, the BOS wanted them to illustrate how the redevelopment would impact traffic in the vicinity.

Ms. Camp stated the property was developed as part of the Jefferson Center as a whole, and as such occupation by DD would need several amendments to the existing Planned Office Campus (POC) zoning regulations. Specifically, a new use would need to be allowed to accommodate a standalone Dunkin Donuts within the POC as well as other smaller amendments to the current design standards inclusive of the allowable signage for the district. She further stated all three of the existing structures are subject to existing cross-access agreements. Ms. Camp further indicated the current owners have not been able to lease the property to another bank tenant and support this potential application, and that her client has previous experience in the conversion of former banks into DD.

Ms. Camp elaborated on why this location is desired by her client. She stated the contemporary DD model requires a drive-through, but also is becoming more like a traditional coffee shop and providing for amenities to keep the customers in the shop longer. As such, the proposal will include approximately 1,000 square feet of seating area for 30-40 customers at one time. She then explained how DD is not a traditional "restaurant" as there is not a kitchen and all food products are brought in to the site. At their peak, the store would only have 8 employees and that they would only require a single drive-thru lane for their operation. Specific to signage, they are proposing wall signs on the Skiles and 202 facades, a menu board as well as a monument sign along 202 similar in size to the sign for the Township building on 202. She then concluded by discussing her involvement as East Goshen solicitor for a similar project by the applicant approved in East Goshen.

Speaking to the KinderCare located next door, Ms. Camp indicated they were excited about the proposal, but did have concerns about increased traffic. This is especially a concern to them as they share cross-access throughout their property with the proposed DD. Ms. Camp stated she will continue to work with them to address their concerns. At present, KinderCare indicated the maximum number of parent dropping off their children at one time is six and that employees park at the rear of the building. Mr. Pomerantz then asked what the average length of stay for a DD customer, and the applicant Diptesh Patel, stated the average stay is about 10-15 minutes. He followed by asking what the peak number of cars parked for the DD is at a single time, and Mr. Patel stated their maximum parking need is 15-20 spaces as 65-75 percent of their business is via the drive-thru.

Next the applicants' traffic engineer John Yurick of McMahon Associates led a conversation with Andy Parker on traffic related issues as well as responses to McCormick Taylor's (McT) review letter on the issue. Mr. Rodia asked how the increased traffic will impact parking needs to what was a former bank. Ms. Camp stated she did not think this will pose an issue as a result of the cross-access to the neighboring parking areas and excess capacity already in place. Prior to the full discussion on the McT letter, Ms. Camp stated her client is no longer seeking to request direct left turn access to the property from Skiles Boulevard as part of their application. Mr. Parker stated this change does address several, but not all concerns raised in his letter.

Mr. Parker asked first about why traffic counts from the former bank were included in the traffic scenarios instead of excluding them and only incorporating proposed traffic from the DD. Mr. Yurick stated this approach was taken in an effort to show what the impacts of a rezoning would be with and without a bank use highlighting the incremental difference in traffic counts. Mr. Parker stated he would still like to see the scenario excluding the bank traffic. Mr. Yaw this comment on how the traffic counts could be calculated. Mr. Yurick stated he would revise the study to include a scenario without the bank traffic. Mr. Hatton asked how far out the study considered traffic to which Mr. Yurick stated it was through 2016 with additional traffic included from several unbuilt developments.

Mr. Parker next discussed internal site circulation relevant to the increased traffic making the left turn movement onto Skiles from the eastern portion of the site. He stated coordination should occur between the applicant and KinderCare to address issues related to this increased traffic inclusive of internal directional signage. Mr. Yurick then proceeded to go through the existing signage on-site and describe present traffic circulation. Mr. Hatton then expressed his concern with westbound traffic from Skiles utilizing the area in front of the KinderCare to get to DD. He further asked if consideration was given to close the western access to the KinderCare to force traffic to go around the back of the building to access DD. Ms. Camp stated that she did not think this could be done due to the cross-access agreements.

Mr. Lees next asked if there is a specific drop-off/pick-up area for the KinderCare. Mr. Yurick stated there is not a drop-off area, but rather parents park in the front and walk their children from the parking area into the facility. Ms. Camp further stated drop-off/pick-up times are not concentrated at a specific time, but rather more sporadic in nature. Ms. Adler asked how wide the drive isle is, but the applicant was unable to confirm its width. Mr. Parker suggested that measures should be considered to prevent DD traffic from cutting through the front parking area of the KinderCare.

Mr. Pomerantz reiterated his concern with any additional traffic creating a potential safety concern for the KinderCare. Ms. Camp noted that although additional traffic will be generated by the DD proposal, other potential uses for the site could generate more and that the bank potentially resulted in some traffic through the front area of the KinderCare. Mr. Whitig then asked what these other situations would encompass and reiterated that only the DD is being considered at this time. He then stated the peak times for the DD use will conflict with that of the KinderCare, unlike that of the bank use, and that additional consideration should be given this as to not create a safety issue. Ms. Camp did indicate they would reach out to KinderCare to work out a solution to this issues that satisfies both parties and the Township. Mr. Pomerantz reiterated the PC is not necessarily against this proposal, but rather just want to ensure that if approved, it is what is best for the Township.

Mr. Pomerantz asked if it would be possible to have the adjoining owners present at the next meeting to discuss the traffic issue further. Ms. Camp stated it is possible if the other owners are willing to attend the meeting. Mr. Rodia reiterated the importance of having the adjoining owners take part in the process. Ms. Adler asked if the proposed median cut would definitely be not permitted. Mr. Parker stated that it potentially could be but that PennDOT would need to be involved and additional improvements would need to be made at the intersection to handle increased queuing issues. Mr. Yurick affirmed that additional improvements to the intersection would need to be made if the median cut occurred. Mr. Parker then stated his preference to properly sign the internal circulation for access instead of making the cut. Mr. Yaw stated the break in the median would be for left in traffic, not the left out onto Skiles.

Ms. Camp asked if this was a new project, what would be the preferred access and circulation plan for the site. Mr. Yurick suggested as a possibility working with the KinderCare to see about converting the driveway at the front of the building to being only one-way to address some of the traffic concerns as an option. Ms. Camp then suggested the two traffic consultants work together with the KinderCare to develop a solution to this issue and present it to the PC at a future meeting. Next followed a discussion on the existing school bus stop located on Skiles Boulevard in front of the KinderCare.

Mr. Pingar asked the applicant if their study was inclusive of bus traffic during the peak hour. Mr. Yurick did state they along with larger vehicles were included as part of the study. Mr. Pomerantz then requested Mr. Parker to work with Mr. Yurick to find a solution to this traffic issue. The conversation then concluded with a brief discussion on signage to be continued to the next meeting.

Old Business

Special Use Overlay (SUO) repeal

Mr. Patriarca started the discussion of the SUO repeal focused on the zoning map only. He first provided the context to the request and noted that after much discussion, at the November 4, 2015 PC meeting a recommendation was made to the BOS to amend and not repeal the SUO. In the interim the Township Solicitor noticed the PC recommendation was not inclusive of the zoning map as well. As such, the request was for the PC to make a formal recommendation on the map only impacted by the potential repeal of the SUO. Mr. Patriarca stated the map should have been included as part of the original recommendation with the ordinance.

Mr. Pomerantz noted the BOS had decided to proceed with a full repeal of the SUO and asked Mr. Pingar if he knew the reasons for this action. Mr. Pingar stated due to the numerous development proposals for the site that have fallen through, the BOS would like to have a clean slate when reevaluating this area as part of the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Lees stated if the SUO is repealed then the map should coordinate with this action or vise-versa. Mr. Pomerantz then presented three options for the PC to consider for their recommendation that included: offer no comment, reaffirm the previous PC recommendation or state the map should coordinate with the ordinance as amended or repealed.

Ms. Adler made the following motion, seconded by Mr. Lees and approved unanimously:

If the Board proceeds with the full repeal of the Special Use Overlay, the Planning Commission concurs the maps be adjusted accordingly.

Public comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

9:30 pm (DP/JL)

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Planning Commission Secretary