

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the second May meeting

May 19, 2020

Members Virtually Present

Chairman Anita Nardone
Joe Altimari
Dan Cote
Jeff Glisson
Mark Gordon
Mary Frances McGarrity
Ray McKeeman

Township Personnel Virtually Present

John Weller, Planning Director
Justin Smiley, Township Planner
Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Pam Gural-Bear, Asst. Township Manager
Ted Otteni, Public Works Director

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Anita Nardone called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held online via Zoom. Ms. Nardone explained the “raise hand” feature of Zoom and asked that any public wishing to make comments use this feature.

II. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes for the meeting of May 5, 2020. (Glisson/Altimari)

ACTION: A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 7-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment on items not on the agenda.

IV. PLANS

1. **Raj Real Estate, LLC**
Address: 4 Tabas Lane
First Review: Conditional Use
Request: Construction of a 24,795 square foot self-storage facility

Initially, no one representing the Applicant was in attendance despite indications from the Applicant’s attorney, John Jaros, that they would be attending. John Weller reviewed his memorandum dated May 15, 2020, noting that the Applicant has previously presented plans for other uses on this site, including a hotel and an apartment building; the current application proposes a self-storage facility. Mr. Weller advised that this was a more appropriate use of the site, but he expressed particular concern about the lack of any stormwater management strategy. He also noted that the plan does not comply with the Town Center design standards and suggested that some relief from these requirements may be appropriate due to the character of the neighborhood. He concluded by pointing out that there were no pedestrian facilities and that the open space requirement would be about ¼-acre or a payment of approximately \$22,600.

Ms. Nardone pointed out that the area appears to be an “appendage” to the Town Center zoning district, bounded by residential zones on the west, east, and south, and asked for some background on how the site came to be zoned Town Center and how Tabas La. - a private street - is maintained. Mr. Weller replied that the Tabas La. properties and the adjacent area now occupied by the Exton Crossing

community were once zoned to promote development as an office/industrial park, but only Tabas La. got developed that way. The Town Center zoning designation came later and appears to have been “aspirational,” perhaps to encourage redevelopment of the Tabas La. lots. Ted Otteni confirmed that Tabas La. is a private street and is not maintained by the Township. Maintenance appears to be the responsibility of the adjoining property owners.

John Jaros, attorney for the Applicant, virtually joined the meeting at 7:25 p.m. He said while the Applicant has previously proposed several uses for the property, he felt the present self-storage facility was the most appropriate.

Ms. Nardone then asked the Commission members for their comments and questions on the plan.

- Joe Altimari - Expressed concern for the safety of those using the Chester Valley Trail at the Tabas La. crossing; suggested restricting vehicle access to Tabas La. from Lincoln Hwy. to right-in and right-out only.
- Jeff Glisson - Felt that waivers from the Town Center design standards may be reasonable in light of the current warehouse nature/feel of the area. He questioned the Township’s authority to impose sidewalks given the private ownership of Tabas Lane.

Ms. Nardone questioned whether decisions regarding waivers, traffic, architecture, etc. should be based on how the area looks today or how it could look in the future, considering that Exton continues to grow. Existing warehouses in the area could be redeveloped in the future. Does the Township want to continue with an industrial feel in this portion of the Town Center because that is what is there today, or should other possibilities be considered? She felt this was a key question in determining how this area fits into the Town Center. Also, while there may not appear to be a lot of pedestrian traffic currently through the site, future uses could increase such traffic. Mr. Jaros responded that the proposed self-storage use will not promote pedestrian traffic.

- Mark Gordon - Expressed concern for the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists at the entrance to Tabas La. from Lincoln Hwy. and felt that a study should be done to clarify the movements through this area. Also felt that two uses on the site was too intense. Any waivers need to be justified, and stormwater management feasibility must be demonstrated. He noted that pedestrian traffic comes through the site from the adjoining Exton Crossing community.
- Ray McKeeman - Agreed with previous members’ comments that conflicting traffic movements are problematic. Given the varying width of Tabas La., coordination among its owners may be difficult.
- Dan Cote - Echoed previous safety concerns for Trail users and vehicles at Tabas La. entrance. Noted his appreciation of the architectural design of the adjacent Cube Smart facility.
- MaryFrances McGarrity - Due to the industrial uses in the area, full pedestrian access may not be needed but agreed that some type of warning system for the Trail was warranted. Liked the elevation of the proposed facility, noting its windows and clean lines but added that the existing market building that shares the site appears in need of renovation.
- Ms. Nardone said safety issues at the Tabas La./Lincoln Hwy. intersection must be resolved and stormwater management must be addressed. Felt that the two uses on the site were not complementary. She encouraged members to consider the changing nature of retail and how a change to the stores across Lincoln Hwy. may further impact the Tabas La. intersection.

Mr. Jaros said he will advise the Applicant to address the aesthetics of the existing market building, architecture of the proposed building, and internal circulation between the buildings. Since Lincoln Hwy. is a State road, he questioned whether the Applicant could do much to improve the intersection other than to provide signage.

Mr. Weller pointed out that even though the proposed uses are allowed by the Township's Ordinance, the Township cannot approve a plan that creates a hazardous situation.

Ms. Nardone suggested that the Township pay its traffic consultant to study the area for possible improvements. Ms. Gleason pointed out that the Township does not own the property and was not in favor of spending money for something that may never come to fruition. She suggested instead a site visit with the engineers, Staff, and the County (as the owner of the Trail) to brainstorm possible ideas before the Applicant's next review. Mr. Otteni clarified that Tabas La. is a driveway entrance rather than an intersection and suggested there may be some low-cost solutions. Staff will notify the Applicant of the site visit.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Weller advised that Staff has developed a draft Scope of Work for the application to the Urban Land Institute for the Technical Assistance Panel project regarding the Exton crossroads. This will go to the Board of Supervisors for approval next week and, if approved, will be submitted by the end of the month.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The agenda for the next Commission meeting on June 9 includes conditional use applications for a commercial development (including a new Wawa) at the intersection of Ship Rd. and Lincoln Hwy. and a residential development by NVR Homes on the southern portion of the Laborers' Training Facility property. Staff will send links to the Commission members of minutes from previous meetings regarding these projects and the Ship Road Couplet in preparation for this meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



John Weller, AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning