

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the first June meeting

June 9, 2020

Members Virtually Present

Anita Nardone, Chairman
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. and explained that due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic the Commission has been meeting virtually via Zoom. However, tonight's meeting is "hybrid" meeting with some members attending in person at the Township Building and others attending from remote locations. She further explained the "raise hand" feature of Zoom and asked that any public wishing to make comments use this feature. In addition, e-mail questions from residents were received and will be answered over the course of the meeting.

II. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes for the meeting of May 19, 2020.
(McKeeman/Glisson)

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

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Annette Murray, of 502 Winding Way, said there was a lot of construction dust in Meadowbrook Manor and asked if the roadway could be wet down to help those suffering with respiratory issues. Ted Otteni said that he would speak to the contractor on this matter.

IV. PLANS

1. **690 E. Lincoln Associates, LLC**
Address: 690 E. Lincoln Hwy.
First Review: Conditional Use
Request: Construction of three commercial buildings, including a Wawa convenience store with a gas station, at the former Entenmann's bakery site

John Weller provided a summary of the project at the southwest corner of the intersection of Lincoln Hwy. and Ship Rd. The site is the former Entenmann's retail bakery store and distribution center, and surrounds the historic St. Mary's Chapel, which is on a separate lot not owned by the Applicant. The site has access to both Ship Rd. and Lincoln Hwy. and was affected by a Zoning Ordinance amendment adopted in May 2019 that allowed commercial development within 750 feet of the intersection and vehicle fueling stations when accessory to a convenience store. The proposed design complies with the area and bulk standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Existing buildings on the site will be demolished and a new road segment (the "Couplet") will be constructed by the developer consistent with the Township's Transportation Capital Improvements ("Act 209") Plan.

Mr. Weller noted that the plan meets 6 of the 12 criteria listed in the Zoning Ordinance for conditional use approval and briefly described the criteria that were not met.

Mr. Weller advised that the Township Historical Commission reviewed the plan on June 8 and passed a motion recommending approval conditioned on the Applicant providing architectural elevations, signage, and lighting plans sympathetic to the nearby historic resources during land development review.

Joseph Brion, attorney for the Applicant, introduced attorney Lou Colagreco, who is representing the developer of the adjacent Ship Run residential project; Dave Gibbons, civil engineer; and Greg Richardson, traffic engineer.

Mr. Brion said that due to earlier concerns about the impact on the historic Chapel, the Applicant purchased additional land from the adjacent Laborers' Training facility so the Wawa building could be moved further away from the Chapel. He noted that the Applicant will construct a parking lot for the Chapel and that a landscaped stormwater basin will provide a "green" view for both the Chapel and the historic Ship Inn. Mr. Brion said the Applicant will resolve other landscaping issues raised in the review from Theurkauf Design & Planning.

Mr. Brion said the Applicant is considering different designs for the building and gas canopy to be more compatible with the historic neighborhood. Tenants have yet to be found for the two retail buildings at the rear of the site.

Mr. Richardson then reviewed the traffic study, which evaluates the impact of this project in combination with the adjacent Ship Run residential project. The developers of the two projects will build the longer south leg of the Couplet and the Township will construct the northern leg. The Couplet is featured in the Township's Act 209 Plan adopted in 2015 to mitigate congestion at the Lincoln Hwy./Ship Rd. intersection caused by new development. The number of driveways and access points along the Couplet are being reconsidered. Mr. Richardson said that they have had numerous discussions with PennDOT since Ship Rd. and Lincoln Hwy. are both State roads and improvements must meet State requirements. The Township's traffic consultant (McMahon Associates) advised that traffic impacts from the proposed development have been adequately addressed.

Ms. Nardone explained that the Couplet was not developed for any particular project but rather came about during the creation of the Act 209 Plan. This Plan estimated future traffic volumes based upon what development was permitted by the Zoning. The Couplet was developed as a means for relieving congestion at the Lincoln Hwy./Ship Rd. intersection while preserving the historic structures at three of the corners.

Prior to the meeting, Richard DeAngelis sent an e-mail expressing concern about the impact of additional traffic on Lincoln Hwy. upon the Chester Valley Trail crossing and suggesting a bridge. Mr. Weller responded that a bridge would be ideal, but cost-prohibitive; the one-way traffic flow on the Couplet legs in combination with a new traffic signal will still be a noticeable improvement.

An e-mail from Peter Ricard of Green Valley Rd. expressed concern with increased noise, backed-up traffic, and trail users parking in his neighborhood. Mr. Weller said the Couplet will mitigate the backup, and public education is needed to let trail users know that there is plenty of trail parking available at Exton Park.

An e-mail from Kathleen Logan of Logan Funeral Home asked how the Couplet would affect the funeral home during and after construction. Mr. Weller responded that when the Couplet is completed, the section of Ship Rd. fronting the funeral home will be northbound only. The PennDOT permits required for work on Ship Rd. will require the developer to preserve access to the frontage properties during

construction. In the event of a large funeral where access to the funeral home would be a concern, Mr. Weller suggested contacting the Township Police Department or Fire Police for assistance in managing traffic.

Virginia Kerlake of Shoen Road asked how the Couplet would be paid for and that the Developers should pay for the entire project. Mr. Weller explained that by adopting an Act 209 Plan, the Township has the right to charge developers a traffic impact fee. The collected funds may only be spent on road improvements shown in the Plan. In some cases, developers build projects for the Township in exchange for a credit toward their fee. In this case, the Township will use the fee revenue toward construction of the north leg and tonight's Applicants will construct the larger southern leg at no cost to the Township, giving an overall result of minimal expense to the Township and taxpayers.

Joe Altimari expressed concern about tractor-trailers and other large trucks parking on the road shoulder to go to the Wawa and suggested larger parking spaces in the rear of the site to accommodate them. Mr. Brion said parking on the road shoulder is an enforcement issue, and Mark Gordon noted that there is no road shoulder in this area.

Ms. Nardone then asked if there were any more comments or questions concerning traffic.

- Mr. Gordon said the configuration of Road D at the entrance to the two retail buildings in the rear of the site appeared confusing. Mr. Richardson agreed and said he will take another look at that. Mr. Gordon also felt that the number of access drives along Couplet was excessive; Mr. Richardson agreed again and said he will try to reduce the number.
- Mr. Gordon felt the area at Springdale Dr. where the one-way Couplet becomes two-way was confusing. It was explained that the two-way traffic is being maintained here to preserve access to the businesses along this section of Ship Rd.

Tim Hubbard of Stonegate Ct. agreed that this area may be a little confusing, but said the Township has a responsibility not to diminish access to existing businesses. Ms. Nardone agreed and said the Township will honor the commitment it made to these business owners.

An e-mail from Fred Fonseca of Ship Rd. noted that it is already difficult for Ship Rd. residents to get out of their driveways due to traffic along with the backups that occur during rush hour. Mr. Weller agreed and said that the Township has plans to review the Ship Rd. corridor as part of its planned update to the Act 209 Plan.

David Mano of Valley View Dr. asked questions about various turning movements on Ship Rd. He is also concerned about tractor-trailers at Wawa and suggested putting double-length parking spaces in the rear of the site. Citing numerous retail vacancies within the Township, he questioned the building of more and suggested the rear of the site be turned into green space. Mr. Brion explained that the retail space is needed financially to support the cost of constructing the Couplet. Matt Adams, representing the developer, said that the existing retail buildings on the site are not marketable. Eli Kahn, also with the developer, said that he would only build the two retail buildings when he has long-term leases from credit-worthy entities, adding that the property is zoned for commercial use and will generate tax revenue for the Township. Ms. Nardone further explained that property owners have a right to develop their property in accordance with Township ordinances.

Regarding the multi-modal trail along the Couplet, Mr. Brion said he will work with Staff to resolve the issue of width. The Applicant maintained that a 12-foot wide path adjacent to the Couplet would look like an extra road lane and could be confusing.

Ms. Nardone then polled the Commission members for final comments.

- Mr. Altimari expressed concern about beer sales in close proximity to a school. Mr. Kahn responded that Wawa has committed not to sell beer at this location.
- Mr. Cote asked about the location of signage. Mr. Brion said signage will be placed at the Couplet entrance to the property and along Lincoln Hwy. in accordance with Township regulations.
- Ms. McGarrity asked what measures there would be for pedestrian safety within the site. Mr. Brion said that this would be fully addressed during the land development process.
- Mr. McKeeman asked if the Applicant anticipated any issues resolving consultant comments. Mr. Brion said they did not and added that Wawa is a “good neighbor” to its communities donating funding, food and beverage for community events, etc.
- Mr. Glisson asked if all four sides of the buildings will have the same architectural treatment since the townhomes will face the rear of the commercial site. Mr. Kahn said the rear buildings are only conceptual at this time. Vegetation will provide a buffer. It was noted that SSM does not support the waiver to disturb the riparian buffer for Couplet construction, but Mr. Weller pointed out that there is no other alternative and that the Township supports the waivers to the extent needed to accommodate the Couplet.
- Mr. Gordon asked if any major changes to the plan were anticipated before returning for land development review. Mr. Brion said that there would be no major changes to the site layout.
- Ms. Nardone asked if the gas pumps could be placed in the rear of the building. Mr. Brion explained that State law requires fuel pumps to be placed so that employees can see them clearly from inside the building in order to address any problems that may arise. Ms. Nardone maintained that an architecturally attractive elevation could face Lincoln Hwy. while placing the registers in the rear of the building and adding a window so employees could see the pumps in the rear. She added that this configuration would also reduce conflicts with motorists coming off the Couplet to purchase gas. Mr. Brion maintained it would be difficult but will consider it.

Historical Commission member Jonathan Martin of Queen Dr. noted that while the Commission passed a motion recommending approval of the project, members struggled with it and placed numerous conditions on the recommendation.

JoAnn Kelton of Brecknock Terr. asked if the Applicant would consider removing the gas pumps from the plan, noting that the Wawa at Banbury Shoppes on Pottstown Pk. does not sell gas. If this was not feasible, she agreed that moving the pumps to the rear of the site was worth considering to lessen the impact on the historic resources in the area.

The Commission took no action on the plan.

2. Ship Run Developers, LLC

Address: 500 E. Lincoln Hwy.

First Review: Conditional Use

Request: Construction of 95 single-family detached and 54 townhouse homes at the rear of the Laborers’ Training facility

Mr. Weller provided a summary of the project, noting that a Zoning Ordinance amendment adopted in May 2019 established the “high-density single family” option for residential development in this area, which accommodates the single-family portion of this project. The Historical Commission reviewed the plan on June 8, and Phil Yocum - that Commission’s historic preservation consultant - determined that there would be no adverse impact on the nearby historic resources: the House at Turnpike Station (431 E. Lincoln Hwy.), the Exton Hotel apartment building (439 E. Lincoln Hwy.), and the Williams Cabins (513 E. Lincoln Hwy.). SSM’s review cited the lack of sidewalk along Lincoln Highway, but Mr. Weller explained that the Zoning encouraged alternatives for pedestrians here due to traffic hazards

and environmental constraints. The Theurkauf review cited the extensive removal of woodlands, a lack of active recreational areas, and the proximity of the pipeline.

Mr. Colagreco, attorney for the Applicant, responded that they understood the consultants' concerns and that the Applicant will work to resolve them.

Mr. Hubbard suggested written disclosures be made to potential buyers regarding the pipeline and the nature of the businesses along Ship Rd. in front of the townhouses, so they are aware of the potential for business-related noise and pipeline issues before purchasing a home.

Commission members added the following comments:

- Mr. Altimari was concerned with the traffic impact, especially if the north leg of the Couplet is never realized. Mr. Otteni assured Mr. Altimari that the Township was moving forward with the north leg, noting that it was 80% designed, and the Township was already in contact with the property owners about acquiring the needed land. Mr. Weller added that the goal is to construct the north and south legs simultaneously. Mr. Gordon and Ms. Nardone further added that the Township was in a good position for receiving grant funding as an example of public/private cooperation and its safety and multi-modal aspect.
- Mr. Cote expressed concern about snow removal given the density of the design.
- Ms. McGarrity asked what plans have been made for dealing with noise from the US Route 30 bypass. Mr. Colagreco said this matter will be considered.
- Mr. Glisson expressed concern about pedestrians crossing the Couplet and suggested landscaping to guide them to safe crossing points.
- Mr. Gordon pointed out that impacts from the proposed adjacent businesses, such as the smell of paint or the backup alarms used by delivery trucks, cannot be adequately buffered from the residential area, and residents will complain.
- Ms. Nardone echoed other Commission members' comments and concerns as did Mr. Kumbhardare.

The Commission took no action on the plan.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Weller advised that Staff has submitted the Township's application to the Urban Land Institute for their Technical Assistance Panel program to do a study of the Exton Crossroads. Ms. Nardone thanked Staff for their work on the matter and the Board of Supervisors for supporting the application.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The June 16 meeting agenda includes a sketch plan for the Weston tract and the land development plan for Exton Knoll.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Recording Secretary,

John Weller, AICP

Director of Planning & Zoning