

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2016 - 7:00 PM
PALMER TOWNSHIP LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM - 1 WELLER PLACE, PALMER, PA

The February meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, February 9, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. with the following in attendance: Robert Blanchfield (Chairman), Robert Lammi (Vice Chairman), Tom Grube, Rich Wilkins and Jeffrey Kicska. Also in attendance were Planning Director Cynthia Carman, Engineer Ralph Russek, Solicitors Charles Bruno and Ryan Fields, and Supervisor Jeff Young. Chairman Blanchfield opened the meeting by leading those present in the Pledge to the Flag.

1. Minutes of January 2016 Meeting

Minutes of the January 2016 meeting were approved as written.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Robert Lammi, Seconded by Richard Wilkins. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Wilkins

NEW BUSINESS

2. Werner Enterprises Training & Maintenance Facility - Preliminary/Final Subdivision and Land Development Plan

1460 Tatamy Road - K8-5-2

PO/IP District

Request by Werner Enterprises, Inc.

DISCUSSION

Present for this application were Attorney Joseph Fitzpatrick, Chad Harrington from Werner Enterprises, Paul Szewczak of Liberty Engineering, Ray Wright of Blue Rock Construction, and architect Chris Portner.

Attorney Bruno noted that he had spoken with Attorney Fitzpatrick regarding the work that is still needed to be done for completion of this application and stated they do realize they have significant work but wanted to keep the process moving and keep the Township aware of what is going on with this project. Bruno also informed the Commission that he received a letter from Attorney Fitzpatrick regarding the Conditional Use that they would like to get this approval prior to the final plan but he explained that we run these two applications concurrently and the applicant did not have a problem with this.

Fitzpatrick highlighted what is going to be done with this project and reiterated that this will be a truck training facility. He then asked Chad Harrington to review what is proposed for the site. Harrington explained that they are subdividing off 2.8 acres of land for the Raub family, who are the current owners of the property. He highlighted the truck route noting that they will have a high volume of truck traffic which will only use Tatamy Road north of the driveway toward the Route 33 interchange. All trucks will have to check in at the guard shack when entering

the property. The office areas will be in the front of the building on the second floor. The training areas will consist of large classrooms and simulators which will be on the third floor. There will also be a large area for a road course on the property. They want to make this as comfortable an environment as they can for the drivers using the facility. They will have access to showers and relaxing areas. They are constantly doing training so they have the safest drivers on the road. There will be no loads being delivered or unloaded from the trucks. The driver will bring a truck there and park it, then another driver will come in and pick up that trailer and leave with it. There will be no transferring of merchandise. There will not be any loading docks nor fueling stations. The staff will work the usual 8 hour daytime shift.

Storm water issues were then discussed with Szewczak. He noted they will be meeting with the Pidcock Company to review the issues. He stated that all storm water will be able to remain on site using underground systems to handle this. He stated that their site is the low spot in the area and all water runs to it and gets stuck there. They were trying to find a way to get it off the property by running it underground down Tatamy Road to Newlins Mill Road to the Bushkill Creek. They proposed piping the water across the farmer's field across the street but the owner was not in favor of this. Based on Pidcock's suggestion, they can use three detention ponds large enough to hold two back-to-back 100 year storms so there wouldn't be any off-site discharge. If there would happen to be any overflow it would go into the industrial park swale that would control it. There wouldn't be any water runoff in the area with all that is being proposed. Szewczak stated that all water in the eastern basin would be pumped to the far western basin through the underground pumps. He stressed again that all water will be kept on site.

Russek stated that under Township ordinances, this would be considered a hot spot use. Szewczak replied that it would not be because all maintenance would take place inside the building and there won't be any fueling on the site so there won't be any exterior source that could cause contaminated runoff. Russek stated they will defer to DEP on this. Szewczak will get this pertinent information to the engineers in writing.

Blanchfield asked what the status of the traffic study is Harrington noted they have had a meeting with PennDOT and discussed several intersections along Tatamy Road as well as use of the new interchange. PennDOT was agreeable to them installing a deceleration lane on Tatamy Road. The applicant had requested a deferral for the curbing and sidewalk along their frontage on Tatamy Road. Lammi asked if there would be people using bus transportation to get to and from work here. He stated they would not want anyone standing in the roadway especially during winter time. Carman stated that LANTA currently runs their route though the Industrial Park to Tatamy Road but if there was enough demand for bus usage they would like to see sidewalks so people could get to the bus safely. Fitzpatrick stated they will speak with LANTA directly about this. Blanchfield stated they should ask for the deferrals for the portion of the property that will be maintained by the Raubs but that curbing and sidewalk would probably be required from the driveway north to the property line. Lammi

added there should also be a walkway provided from the building to the sidewalk. Carman asked them to verify the total number of students/workers. Harrington noted they would be divided by shifts but the total would be approximately 100 full-time workers and maybe 50 students at a time.

Waivers were discussed. Blanchfield noted the Township Engineer was in favor of some of the requests but recommended the Township Geotechnical Engineer to review others. He stated the Commission will hold off on any type of recommendation for those waivers until that review is complete. He did state that two of the requests would be supported.

Blanchfield pointed out that there is a "tail" of a concrete at the end of the entrance drive and wondered if this would be something vehicular traffic would hit as they were exiting the car lot. Harrington explained the reason for this is to direct the trucks to go a certain way as they enter the property. There is a flow they want the trucks to follow to get to the truck parking, scales and snow removal areas and they want to prevent cars from driving into these areas. They will review it and see if there is a change they can make to improve it.

Fitzpatrick noted that easements have been worked out with Met-Ed for the existing electrical tower in the rear of the property.

Blanchfield asked if there were any further questions or comments by the Commission members or staff. Seeing none, he asked if there were any questions from the audience.

Carol Fehnel, who lives on the corner of Newlins Mill Road and Tatamy Road, stated that she is concerned with water ending up on her property. Scott Fehnel stated that he understands that all water is staying on site and any overflow will go into the industrial park swale. He realizes this property is the low point and what they are proposing there should really not be any problem. Szewczak agreed. Scott Fehnel asked if the existing truck restrictions on Newlins Mill Road will remain and was told yes.

There being no further questions or comments, Blanchfield called for a motion to table the application.

Motion: Tabled, Moved by Richard Wilkins, Seconded by Thomas Grube. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Wilkins

3. Conditional Use Application - Increase in Building Height in HDR District
3100 Charlotte Avenue - L8-25-2
Proposed HDR District
Request by Palmer Point, LP

DISCUSSION

Present on behalf of the applicant were Lou Pektor and Joe Gartner, Attorney

James Preston, and Mark Metzgar of Cornerstone Consulting.

Attorney Bruno explained the reason why this applicant was appearing here tonight, that this proposal is located in an HDR District and needs further conditional use approval for the height of the proposed buildings, which was missed during the original submission and review of the plans. Bruno then asked Carman to review the section of the ordinance which necessitated this request. Carman read Section 190-54.F of the zoning ordinance.

Bruno stated that everyone here was familiar with this proposed project and that this review was different than the proceeding going on in front of the Board of Supervisors, which was the first part of this application. That first part had already been before this Commission and was forwarded on to the Board of Supervisors. That first part would again be before the Board of Supervisors, along with this conditional use request, on February 23. He stated that this meeting was limited to the height request only, not anything that was discussed during the last proceedings at the Board of Supervisors meeting.

Preston reviewed what they were requesting and stated that this conditional use is allowed under the Township zoning ordinance. He also reviewed what they were proposing for the exterior. Wilkins asked if the area below the roof peaks and dormers would be livable space. Metzgar replied no, the roofs and dormers were architectural only. Lammi asked what the height was to bottom of the roofline. He was told in this rendering about 30 feet. Metzgar stated that they could do 3 stories with a flat roof and stay below 35 feet. Lammi replied yes they could do them without the peaked roofs and dormers but that would look terrible. Lammi added that one of the requirements for the conditional use for height is to allow for excellence in architectural design, including pitched roofs and variations in rooflines, which this design meets. Wilkins agreed that the buildings would no doubt look better with this roof line than they would with flat roofs.

Blanchfield asked if there were any further questions or comments by the Commission members or staff. Seeing none, he asked if there were any questions from the audience about the height request.

Chuck Piazza, Acopian Technologies, felt this design was very unusual for this neighborhood and that they could build a 2.5 story building and make it look nice. He recommended that the Commission not approve this request because it's not characteristic of the neighborhood.

Attorney Gary Asteak stated that he was there representing the neighbor Acopian Technologies, who are in opposition to the rezoning as well as the conditional use request. He stated that had they not read a legal notice in the Express-Times regarding the conditional use hearing they would not have been aware of this project. They had not received an invitation or notice to any Planning Commission meetings so they never had a chance to voice their opinion. He requested that the Commission re-review the plan that was submitted, as there were may be other things that were missed, such as the parking in the front yard. He noted that his client feels this has been rushed

through without a thorough examination of everything. He asked what is architecturally excellent with this design.

Bruno responded that the procedure of this matter was done by the law and what is required specifically as far as giving notice of Planning Commission meetings. He noted the agendas are always posted on the Township web site ahead of time and that there are absolutely no requirements stating individuals have to be personally notified. There was nothing wrong with the procedure that was followed. He commended the Township staff and the applicant that the height issue was discovered and that everyone was trying to do this right. If the parking is incorrect as Mr. Asteak has stated, and something has to be done to correct it, then it will be. This procedure was done according to the law.

Kevin Wasielewski, 2916 Hartley Avenue, stated that a Conditional Use approval has to be justified for the good of the whole of the community not just the developer. He was opposed to the fact that there isn't anything favorable to the neighbors. There is no benefit to the community by allowing more apartments due to this higher height. This goes against the safety, health and welfare of our community.

Bruno explained that a conditional use applicant is not required to demonstrate a benefit to the community but rather that they meet the conditions contained in the ordinance for that use and that there is not a detriment to the health, safety and welfare of the community. There was not anything shown here as far as the health, safety and welfare of the community being of a concern.

Wasielewski responded that the additional height adds more people and puts a greater burden on services. Chris Galdieri, 2920 Hartley Avenue, stated that this is a public safety and health issue because with 600 to 800 more cars, fumes and speeding will be a problem. No one is going to be safe with this. Christina Galdieri, 2920 Hartley Avenue, agreed that the extra occupancy is the issue. Joseph Gagliano, 2900 Hartley Avenue, stated that he is opposed to this project and has been from the beginning. He feels this is absolutely detrimental to his health.

Lammi commented that the height of the occupied floors is below 35 feet. There will not be additional density by having a pitched roof. Wasieleski thought the buildings looked 60 feet high in the rendering. Lammi responded that they cannot go higher than 48 feet. Metzgar confirmed that they are not 60 feet high and that the area under the roofline would not be occupied, the pitched roofs are just the architectural design.

Asteak read from Section 190-208 of the Zoning Ordinance regarding the conditional use process and noted that the Township should follow the standards. Bruno replied that the Township will satisfy every section that is required.

Bruno asked if there would be actual plans at the next Supervisors' meeting for residents to review. Metzgar responded that he would have architectural

renderings, as well as sectional plans for review.

There being no further questions or comments, Chairman Blanchfield called for a vote.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Thomas Grube, Seconded by Robert Lammi. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Wilkins

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Carman reported that the Board of Supervisors had just approved issuing RFP's for consultants for the Comprehensive Plan Update. She will be sending them out immediately, requesting proposals to be returned in a month. Since this is a professional service, the Township does not need to go through the bidding process, but will instead will be looking for the best combination of quality and value of services.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.
Diane Grube, Secretary

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Thomas Grube, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Wilkins