

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2017 - 7:00 PM

CHARLES CHRIN COMMUNITY CENTER OF PALMER TOWNSHIP - 4100 GREEN POND RD,
PALMER, PA

The February meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. with the following in attendance: Robert Blanchfield (Chairman), Robert Lammi (Vice Chairman), Jeffrey Kicska, Richard Wilkins, Robert Walker, Thomas Grube and Andrew Rossi. Also in attendance were Planning Director Cynthia Carman Kramer, Engineer Ralph Russek, Solicitor Charles Bruno and Supervisor Liaison Jeffrey Young. Chairman Blanchfield opened the meeting by leading those present in the Pledge to the Flag.

1. Reorganization - Election of Officers

Chairman Blanchfield turned the meeting over to Temporary Chairman Charles Bruno who called for nominations for Chairman.

Robert Blanchfield was nominated and appointed as Chairman for 2017. Bruno then turned the meeting back over to newly appointed Chairman Blanchfield.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Jeff Kicska, Seconded by Thomas Grube. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins

Blanchfield called for nominations for Vice Chairman. Robert A. Lammi was nominated and appointed Vice Chairman for 2017.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Jeff Kicska, Seconded by Richard Wilkins. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins

Blanchfield called for nominations for Secretary. Kathleen Sciascia was nominated and appointed Secretary for 2017.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Thomas Grube, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins

2. Minutes of December 2016 Meeting

Motion: Approve, Moved by Thomas Grube, Seconded by Richard Wilkins. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins

NEW BUSINESS

3. Werner Enterprises - Conditional Use Application - Trucking Terminal Use in PO/IP District

1470 Tatamy Road & Newlins Mill Road- K8-5-2 & K8-5-9

PO/IP District
Request by Werner Enterprises, Inc.

DISCUSSION

Present on behalf of the applicant were Randy Kraft, Chad Harrington and Jamie Moss, as well as attorneys Joseph Fitzpatrick and Mallory Sweeney, engineer Paul Szewczak of Liberty Engineering and Peter Terry of Benchmark Engineering.

Kramer explained that the applicant, Werner Enterprises, Inc. was requesting conditional use approval for construction of a 67,005 square foot tractor-trailer training and maintenance facility on a 38-acre tract at the northwest corner of Newlins Mill Road and Tatamy Road. The parcel is located within the Planned Office/Industrial Park (PO/IP) zoning district. To the extent that the maintenance portion of the proposed facility meets the definition of a Trucking Company Terminal as defined under §190-13 of the Palmer Township Zoning Ordinance, the applicant is seeking conditional use approval under §190-125.M – Trucking terminal in PO/IP, which shall meet the associated requirements at §190-210.B(33). Kramer explained that there were no land development plans being presented at this meeting for review and that would take place at future meetings.

Bruno explained what a conditional use application consists of as well as the Planning Commission's position. They are a recommending body to the Board of Supervisors and the the Board of Supervisors makes the ultimate decision on any and all projects in Palmer Township. The Planning Commission is the first step of the process. The only item being discussed at this time was the conditional use request. The last time Werner was present was with a conditional use application and a land development plan. The applicant chose to only submit the conditional use application this time. They need the use approved before they can get to the actual land development. He further explained the law on conditional use applications noting that the land development cannot continue until a conditional use has been approved. He then noted that all comments at this meeting would be limited to conditional use issues only.

Bruno then asked Attorney Joseph Fitzpatrick to confirm for the record, on behalf of the applicant, that this was a conditional use request only and there would be no discussion of the land development plan, which would take place at a later time if the conditional use request were approved. Fitzpatrick confirmed this, stating that in no way did that evening's proceedings create a right for Werner to build anything.

The Werner representatives showed a short video about the company and how it operates. Fitzpatrick stressed that a training facility is allowed in this district and that this facility would in no way be a distribution or trucking terminal. There would be no transporting of goods, and no loading/unloading at this site. He stated that Werner has 13 other facilities across the country and this would be their most northeastern one. They would have access to local highways,

interstates and the eastern seaboard, which is where their customers are located.

Kraft stated that they had purchased the adjoining property to what they originally owned and that they would now have land to have detention ponds and would not need to go underground now with their stormwater management. They are proposing to reposition the building further to the south and provide all car and truck access from Newlins Mill Road rather than Tatamy. Their average truck traffic in and out of the facility would be 35 trucks a day or 70 trips. When trucks leave the property they would be required to turn right, they would not be able to turn left due to the proposed angle of the driveway. They would then travel to Van Buren Road and could go directly to either the Rt. 248 or Main Street interchange. The property would be surrounded by trees and a berm so the neighbors wouldn't even see the building. There would be parking for the personal vehicles of the workers that come locally. The buildings would be heated and air conditioned so the doors of the building would remain closed. They would be doing regular maintenance on the trucks but they would not overhaul engines or any of that type of work. Any of this more intense work would need to go back to the dealership. There would not a dealership or sales showroom on this property.

Blanchfield asked if there would be any loading docks in the building. Kraft replied there would be absolutely no loading docks at all, no warehouse, or no unloading/loading of product. It would be strictly coming in with a load and another trucker then picking it up and continuing on his route.

Blanchfield asked if there would be any overnight sleeping arrangements. Kraft responded not in the building but if they needed to stay overnight they could stay in their trucks. By law, a truck can only stay running idle for 5 minutes. If a truck wasn't running and the temperature went below a certain threshold, there is technology that could start the engine to run the heat or AC until it reached the designated temperature, then it would shut off. None of their trucks have pipe exhaust, they all have "belly" exhaust.

Grube asked about the truck driving training. Kraft noted that they would not have a truck driving course at this facility. This has been removed from the plans for this location as well as the truck course simulators which would have been on the third floor of the building. The building would now be only a two story building. Lammi asked why they would need such a large parking lot then. Kraft noted that there is no way they would need the 200 spaces for 35 trucks per day, but would it always stay at 35, he didn't know.

Blanchfield asked how many employees there would be. Kraft stated there would be 40 full-time employees over three shifts. The administration would work from 7 to 5; the shop would be 24 hours a day as would the security. Asked if this number of employees could grow, he replied yes.

Blanchfield asked if there would be gated access to the site. Kraft replied that the site would be completely fenced in and all vehicles would come through

gates. Blanchfield asked if there would be any problem with trucks backing onto Newlins Mill Road because of the gates. Kraft replied no, because the driveways were so long they could stack about 20 trucks in there. Wilkins asked if there were any improvements needed to be done along Newlins Mill Road since they were using this as their entrance/exit and Kraft wasn't sure. He knew that that road had been improved in the past but they would have to see what the traffic study showed.

Kicska asked what would happen if a truck came off Route 33 and turned left to go onto Tatamy Road. Jamie Moss responded that there trucks have in-cab electronic devices that show the drivers the travel route they are supposed to take and which roads they are restricted from traveling on.

Blanchfield asked if there would be any refueling on site and Kraft replied there would be no refueling stations at all. He also commented that there would be no hotels, no rest areas, no dorms, and no beds but they would have showers and lounge chairs in the building for the drivers.

Fitzpatrick stated that training facilities are allowed in this zoning district. He was asked why the training/maintenance portions of this project are important. Kraft responded their drivers need to continually refresh their education and all trucks need maintenance at some point. They would be an integrated purpose for the facility. He also stated that the building would not be engineered to have loading docks in the future. The proposed building is a 67,000 square foot building which is well under the permitted building coverage for the size of the lot. This site would be large enough to house 3 warehouses.

Lammi asked if there would be any hazardous or toxic materials stored on site. Kraft responded there would be nothing other than the typical engine oil and hydraulic fluids that are needed for truck maintenance. Asked if this material could in any way spill out, he responded no, not at all.

Fitzpatrick noted this would all become one large piece of property. They will meet all requirements for this and they are not looking for any variances, encroachments or anything that will need special zoning approvals. He stands by everything that was said this evening, as does Mr. Kraft. The company is extremely regulated by state and federal laws and they both noted they heard what the residents said in past meetings. Werner is a good neighbor, a good corporate facility. They listen to the neighbors and they have never had any complaints of noise, etc. from any neighbors at any of their facilities. They are very community oriented.

Fitzpatrick asked Kraft how high this proposed building would be in relation to the old "Chesterfield Manor" building that is staying on the property. Kraft replied that the Manor building is taller and their proposed building would not be visible to the neighbors to the east.

Blanchfield stated that in accordance with the conditional use requirements, the applicant must provide a traffic impact study for review by this Commission and

the Township Engineer. Fitzpatrick stated there is a study being done at this time and introduced the Traffic Engineer.

Peter Terry stated that the traffic study is near completion. He reviewed the intersections that are being included in this study: Newlins Mill and Tatamy Roads; Newlins Mill and Van Buren Roads; Van Buren and Hollo Roads; Van Buren Road and Main Street; Newlins Mill and McFadden Roads and the two site driveways. He was asked about any of the intersections along Tatamy Road and he responded that they are not doing anything on that road, which is a state highway, so PennDOT would not be involved.

Paul Szewczak again stated that with the additional property they had purchased they would be able to have above ground basins which would allow for better handling of the stormwater discharge and just an all around better facility.

Bruno asked if all drivers are expected to be trained. Kraft responded new hires will have their CDL license but need to go through Werner's training program. After they are trained, they are assigned a truck.

Wilkins asked if truck trips would begin and end at this facility. Kraft replied that some would but for others this would be a stopover point. Grube asked if they could drop and hook loads here from one tractor to another. Kraft replied yes.

Walker asked what would happen if a driver didn't follow the navigation system and went off the allowed course. Moss replied that the driver would no longer be employed with the company. Their drivers are closely monitored on location, direction, speed and a multitude of other things.

Bruno questioned the drop and hook activity and what that had to do with training or maintenance. Kraft stated that due to their customers' locations in the northeast, this facility would be closest to these customers. Trucks coming here wouldn't need maintenance every time, just periodically. Bruno asked how this would tie into training. Fitzpatrick stated that in the conditional use requirements it defines distribution as being allowed and again noted that they would not have any docks or loading bays so they did not treat this as a distribution center. Bruno noted he understood this but just wanted to clarify that the primary use is training and maintenance but heard this aspect that also sounded like distribution. Kraft noted that due to the strategic location, it is important to be able to have the loads picked up by a driver then taken to a customer.

Lammi asked if drivers who live nearby would be allowed to bring their tractor/trailers to this site and then leave and go home. Kraft noted they would usually take the tractor home. Lammi questioned this due to the amount of tractor-trailers that are being parked throughout communities in shopping malls, parking lots, etc.

Supervisor Young asked why the Route 248 and Hollo Road intersection was not included in the traffic study. Terry responded that it was not on the recommended list from the Township's engineer. Kramer stated it should be

included and noted that Palmer has an agreement with Lower Nazareth to monitor traffic coming from Palmer to that intersection.

Blanchfield asked if there were any further questions and/or comments from the Commission or staff. Seeing none, he explained to the audience that the meeting would be opened to the public for questions or comments. Bruno asked if there was a spokesperson for the group, which is sometimes the way large groups prefer to go. He was told no there wasn't and Bruno assured everyone that they would all have their time to be heard.

Greg Lapham, 52 Country Side Court, stated that low frequency noise from the trucks would permeate the neighborhood 24/7 and would disrupt their sleep and be a health concern for his daughter.

Bill Barnes, 5 Mill Race Drive, asked what kind of training would be done, would there be off-site training and would students train on the roadway.

Ann Marie Panella, 15 Marc Lane, asked what would be the size of the training facility versus the size of the maintenance facility, and why they showed so many truck parking spaces. She stated it sounds like a trucking terminal not a training facility.

Karrie Ruch, 206 Mill Race Drive, asked if sex offenders working there would be required to register for Megan's Law.

Richard Himstedt, 11 Mill Brook Court, asked if there was anything to protect the residents if the company would do an expansion in the future.

Eddie Calderone, 9 Country Side Court, thanked Werner for addressing the issues raised previously and changing their plans to stay off Tatamy Road. He asked how many properties Werner now owned. Kraft replied just the two shown on the plan. Calderone stated they should be required to put in a dedicated turning lane on Newlins Mill Road so the trucks don't back up traffic.

Tina Zambo, 19 Country Side Court, stated that three warehouses would produce much more truck traffic than what Werner is proposing.

Frank Kehm, 1 Moss Court, asked what percentage of Werner's trucks have the navigation systems. Moss replied all of them.

Art Kerscher, 19 Mill Brook Court, asked if he training/maintenance employees would be certified through the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training.

Larry Cecio, 33 Country Side Court, asked if the Board of Supervisors has the power to add contingencies/conditions. Bruno replied they can add reasonable conditions relating to public health, safety, and welfare concerns.

Charles Young, 33 Glasglow Way, commented that adding more trucks to our roads will require more improvements.

Lisa Lagomarsino, 6 Country Side Court, asked about a traffic light at Newlins Mill and Tatamy, and questioned whether lights would shine into their homes.

Robert Bell, 2100 Dakota Drive, stated that he lived there before any of their homes were built and asked if anyone checked the zoning in the area before they purchased their home.

Andrew Brown, 107 Moor Drive, clarified that there would be 35 trucks in and out, for 70 total trips per day.

Wayne Conrad, 41 Moor Drive, asked if anyone had ever done an aggregate traffic impact study. Russek responded that Pidcock had done this in the past. Kramer noted that whenever a new development is proposed they are required to look at the traffic from previous developments.

Cheryl Kosmaczewski, 38 Water Wheel Lane, asked about air pollution from the trucks.

Danielle Swicki, 10 Mill Race Drive, asked about how many drivers would stay overnight in their trucks. Kraft responded maybe 5 at the most.

Agnes Himstedt, 11 Mill Brook Road, talked about how the neighborhood will be in the future with this company and warehouses and stated that this community needs to stick together.

Seeing no further questions or comments, Blanchfield asked for a motion.

Lammi stated that our ordinance requires that a traffic impact study be submitted along with a conditional use request and this has not been completed as of yet. We need to see the traffic study before we can make a decision to move this forward to the Board of Supervisors.

Bruno asked Terry his estimate on submitting the traffic study, who replied possibly in two weeks. Bruno stated that would be too late to submit for the March meeting so this would likely return for the April meeting, at the earliest.

The Commission tabled action on the request.

Motion: Tabled, Moved by Richard Wilkins, Seconded by Thomas Grube. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Kramer reminded everyone that the Comprehensive Plan meeting would be held Wednesday night at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Center.

4. 2016 Annual Report

Kramer stated that every year the Planning Commission is required to submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors. She prepared a report summarizing all activities of the Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board and Planning, Zoning and Code department. The Planning Commission recommended submission of the annual report to the Board of Supervisors as prepared.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Robert Lammi, Seconded by Andrew Rossi. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Diane Grube, Corresponding Secretary

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Andrew Rossi, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 7-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Grube, Kicska, Lammi, Rossi, Walker, Wilkins