

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING AUGUST 9, 2011 - 7:00 P.M.

PALMER LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

The regular monthly meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, August 9, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. with the following in attendance: Chairman Tom Grube, Vice Chairman Virginia Rickert, Jo-Ann Stoneback, and Bob Blanchfield. Also present were Planning Director Cyndie Carman, Solicitor Charles Bruno, Engineer Ralph Russek and Supervisor Bob Lammi. Grube convened the meeting by leading those present in the Pledge to the Flag.

Minutes of the Public Meeting of June 2011 – On motion by Stoneback, seconded by Blanchfield and agreed by all, the minutes of the June meeting were approved as written.

NEW BUSINESS –

Sheetz (Northwood Center Lot 3) – 3501 Nazareth Road – Preliminary/Final Land Development – Request by Gary Strausser. The plan proposes the construction of a 6,560 sq. ft. Sheetz convenience store on a 2.2+ acre lot.

Present were owner Gary Strausser and Engineer Dave Lear from Lehigh Engineering. Representatives from Sheetz were Brian Soyka and Michael LaCesa. Lear reviewed the township engineer's comments and informed the Commission that the original plan was done by Finelli Consulting Engineers and that he has re-drawn all the plans. The datum was also done by them but Lear would like to keep this datum. He stated they have filed for their HOP from PennDOT and they had a pre-construction meeting with various organizations to review some issues. They have a meeting set up for Friday with the township engineer to review the drafting comments on the Northwood Center plan. He also noted that he will be meeting with township officials to discuss some other issues such as parking. Lear reviewed what the proposal was for the site. The majority of the improvements will be along Rt. 248 which will be done with the Northwood Center plan. The largest truck will be the tanker filling truck which will be able to drive through the site. There is room for large vehicles. There is no curbing along the building but there will be concrete bollards to protect the building from vehicles. There is an indoor and an outdoor eating area. There will be 7 fueling islands – 14 fueling positions and will be open 24/7. Blanchfield questioned the handling of the storm water run-off. Lear stated they have onsite inlets and they do have to meet all NPDES requirements. The Northwood Center infiltration system is also designed to handle the storm water on the tract. The rear pond is part of lot 1 and 2. Blanchfield asked if there were any unresolved issues that have to be satisfied as far as the storm water management. Lear said there are some and they will be discussed at Friday's meeting. He stated they have conditional approval for the Northwood Center plan which includes Lot #1 and 2. Lot 3 plans have to be amended to accommodate this plan. If there are some drainage concerns this will be corrected but he didn't feel there would be any major problems since everything has been approved prior. This plan has not been recorded yet – it has to be reviewed.

Lear informed the commission as to the process they are looking at. They had a pre-construction meeting with PennDOT, Palmer Township and other departments. They have their Letter of Credit for PennDOT and they should be getting their permit for the CVS building and hopefully the pad will be ready in October. Plans have been sent to the township engineer and they will be reviewing this "new" plan this week. They are getting a demo permit for the existing building on this lot and they would like to start the erosion/sedimentation work for lots 1 and 2 in about 7 to 10 days. Bruno asked when they planned to get the first plan recorded. Strausser stated right before CVS work starts in October. Bruno asked if this included all the agreements, recording, and escrows. Strausser stated yes, everything should be by then. Sheetz probably would not start until November. Strausser has to get a traffic study completed for PennDOT. PennDOT looked at 1 and 2 and now will be looking at lot 3 (Sheetz) separately. He has to go by what Penn Dot requires. He stated at first they wanted a regional study so that is why he is doing this in separate lots as well as for financial reasons.

Bruno stated the Sheetz plan approval has to be conditioned on the approval and recording of the first project. Bruno stated Palmer Township has traffic impact requirements in addition to PennDOT's rules for the state road. He stated Strausser should request relief from the requirement in Palmer's ordinances since they have to go by PennDOT. Lear stated they are getting a list of waivers together and they would like to go to Board of Supervisors for these. They have to decide how they want to go about getting these waivers, either by Zoning Board approval or to the Township for a zoning ordinance change. Convenience stores are not permitted in this district so there would have to be a change for this request. Strausser asked if there was a possibility that they could come back here next month. He was told he has to get to Board of Supervisors this month to request the zoning ordinance change if this is how they were going to proceed. It would then have to get to LVPC and then back to the Planning Commission. There were no further comments or questions from anyone. Grube called for a vote. Blanchfield motioned to table this plan. Motion was seconded by Rickert. Grube asked if there were any questions on the motion. Seeing none he called for a vote which was approved by all.

Hess Wood Recycling – 2353 Newlins Mill Road – Sketch Plan – Request by Jerry & Michelle Hess. The plan proposes the construction of an additional 14,000 sq. ft. manufacturing/pallet repair building with a 3 space loading dock, an additional driveway and expanded parking area.

Present for this applicant were Jerome and Shannon Hess and from Keystone Engineering Karl Scherzberg and Dave Martin. Bruno distributed the prior history for this property as well as a zoning hearing review letter and prior approvals. Scherzberg stated this is a modification to a previous plan. There are some zoning comments that were reviewed and he noted they will meet with the zoning officer on his comments. The one major issue is the FEMA flood plain. This flood plain area encompasses about 80% of the land. They are proposing applying to FEMA for an amendment to the flood map so they can put the building outside flood plain. The other issue is that in the township ordinance it states that they have to go by the township topo maps to see if this area is in a major drainage swale. No one has been able to provide these maps so they don't know if it is in a major drainage swale. In regards to the buffer yard they are proposing to make modifications to the existing buffer due to proposed pond. They will review all these comments with the zoning officer. They would like to use fencing instead of a berm since a berm takes up a significant amount of land. They are not looking for anymore outside storage. The engineer comments were then reviewed and they have no real issues with any of them.

Commission members asked what they actually do with the pallets and they were told they recycle them. They refurbish and repair them and then ship them out. They have 5 tractor trailers that run now. They are in need of more repair area so they can get their inventory out faster. They have 27 employees and would like to add 10 – 15 more. They have woodworking type of equipment but are not adding anymore saws. There are no dust vacuums since they don't actually cut the wood, they just refurbish it. They were asked if they have anything stored in the flood plain area now and they stated no. They were asked about the trailers in the top left corner of the property and they responded that they are overflow trailers that they have parked there. Their driveway is proposed to be 2 feet away from the neighboring property line. Zoning would like to see 5 feet away with a buffer. They will be expanding their parking for 30 employees which is behind the house. They were asked if there would be adequate lighting at night. Hess responded that they work during the week, no weekends and no nights so they don't need lighting. The Commission would like the new plan to show where the outside storage is. They are not in the mulch business so there is no grinding of pallets into mulch. If they have any scraps they are sold to a nursery who does the grinding for mulch. The Chairman stated the large part of this plan is seeing what happens with FEMA. This is a Sketch Plan so no action is required. The Commission thanked the applicant for appearing before them.

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS -

Grube asked about the planning survey. Carman stated the public can do the survey on line or go into the Municipal Building and pick up a hard copy. Carman also informed the Commission that she is working on the Comprehensive Plan, focusing on the north end. There was a TIF request before the Board of Supervisors which received approval. This request now needs to go before Northampton County and the School District for review as well as the continued review by Penn DOT of the plans for the interchange.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

On motion by Stoneback, seconded by Rickert, and agreed by all, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Diane Grube, Secretary