

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING – NOVEMBER 8, 2011 7:00 P.M.

The regular monthly meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, November 8, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. with the following in attendance: Chairman Tom Grube, Vice Chairperson Virginia Rickert, Ron Grandinetti, Rich Wilkins, Bob Blanchfield and Chris Briglia. Jo-Ann Stoneback was absent. Also present were Supervisor Liaison Robert Lammi, Planning Director Cyndie Carman, Attorneys Charles Bruno and Victoria Opthof and Engineer Ralph Russek. Chairman Grube convened the meeting and led those present in the Pledge to the Flag.

Minutes of October Meeting – On motion by Rickert, seconded by Wilkins, and agreed by all, the minutes of the October meeting were approved.

OLD BUSINESS –

Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Digital and Electronically Changing Signs – Request by Administration.

Carman informed the Commission that during a meeting with a couple of Supervisors they questioned the maximum height of 40 feet above the surrounding ground. They stated that some lots along Rt. 22 or 33 are below the grade of the highway. The maximum height was changed to 35 feet above the grade of the highway.

It was also felt that the digital signs shall be required to allow emergency messages during an emergency situation.

In regards to the signs being illuminated for 24 hours, it was felt that the signs should not be illuminated between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. and not be on 24 hours a day. Commission members felt there are travelers at night time and did not agree with this. Bruno stated if the majority of the Commission feels this should stay in the ordinance as they recommended prior then this should be in their recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

On motion by Blanchfield, seconded by Rickert, and agreed by all, the Commission approved the changes to the ordinance with the exception of the signs being turned off from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.

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.

Developer Gary Strausser was present along with his Engineer David Lear of Lehigh Engineering. Also present was Mike LaCesa of Sheetz Corporation. Lear informed the Commission that all township engineers' comments have been or will be complied with. They do not have any questions or problems with them. He did discuss an item in the township departmental comments made by the zoning officer in regards to parking spaces 25-33. These spaces will be 10 feet away from the building except for space #33, which will be 5 feet. There

is a jag in the curbing due to the configuration of the building and Lear stated they exceed the number of required spaces already. They would like to keep these spaces around the building. Blanchfield asked if there would be any traffic problem with this and was told no. In regards to the backing out onto a public or private street the Commission stated this is a zoning issue and he must contact the zoning officer. Lear stated this space that the cars will be backing out onto is an access lane, not a private or public street. There is curbing only along the farther most edge so cars will not be backing onto curbing. Carman noted that according to her calculations they are using the spaces at the gas pumps as parking spaces. Lear stated yes and that they are required to have 48 spaces. They have 56 and without these pump spaces they would have 42. Mike LaCesa from Sheetz spoke to the Commission and told them that people actually gas up their vehicles and keep them in the spaces when they go into the store so they feel these spaces are able to be used as parking spaces. Commission felt he was correct that people do leave their cars in the spaces when they go in to pay. Wilkins asked about any diesel pumps and he was told there would be one at each end of the pumps which will alleviate the stacking up of trucks.

The Planning Director's comments were reviewed and they discussed the HOP and traffic issue. Strausser reported on his traffic consultant calculations and noted that this is an on-going issue and will be for the next couple of months and that PennDOT is looking at the property as a whole and noted that the counts are going down due to building not being done north of this project. The Township would like a copy of the traffic study that is being done. Strausser will get a copy to Carman.

Lear reviewed the one waiver request which is for the requirement for elevations to match USGS datum. Russek did not have a problem with this request. Carman pointed out the note on the plan in regards to the deferral of the sidewalk on lot 3 and 4 and Lear stated he has to revise that note to remove the reference to Lot 3.

At this time Grube called for a motion. Wilkins motioned to recommend approval by the Board of Supervisors subject to the following conditions: comments of the Township Engineer's letter dated November 4, 2011 are satisfied; departmental comments dated November 4, 2011 bare satisfied; recreation fees and voluntary traffic contribution are addressed to the satisfaction of the Board of Supervisors; the requested waiver is approved by the Board of Supervisors; space #33 be approved by the Zoning Officer for not having to be 10 feet from the building which is recommended by the Planning Commission; the zoning text amendment amending the definition of convenience store and allowing for them in the GC district is approved by the Board of Supervisors and any prior conditions of approval of the Northwood Center subdivision and land development plan are satisfied. The motion was seconded by Rickert. Grube asked if there were any comments or questions on the motion and seeing none he called for a vote which was agreed by all.

NEW BUSINESS –

Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Convenience Stores Request by Gary Strausser –

Carman noted that during the review of the Sheetz development plan it was noted that convenience stores were not listed as a permitted use in the GC district, nor were they listed as a

permitted use in any district. The Commission felt this should be a permitted use. Grandinetti motioned that this proposed ordinance amendment be recommended for approval conditioned on the approval for the Sheetz development plan. Wilkins seconded this motion. Bruno asked the Commission if they felt that if the Sheetz plan would not be approved did this mean that they would not want this text amendment approved? The change of the ordinance should not be determined by the Sheetz plan. Commission agreed and Grandinetti amended his motion to state that they recommend approval of the text amendment in regards to convenience stores. Wilkins amended his second and this motion was approved by all.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Zoning Hearing Board Members – Request by Administration

The Board of Supervisors has expressed their intent to expand the Zoning Hearing Board from three to five member board. The MPC does allow but since our Ordinance specifies a three member Board this has to be an ordinance change which this Commission has to recommend. Carman noted at times the Board is having difficulty getting a quorum or getting motions passed. On motion by Rickert, seconded Grandinetti, and agreed by all the Commission recommended approval of this text amendment.

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS – None.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to all if there is no meeting in December.

On motion by Rickert, seconded by Blanchfield, and agreed by all, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Diane Grube, Secretary