

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING - TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2022 - 7:00 PM
PALMER TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL MEETING ROOM, 3 WELLER PLACE (LOWER
LEVEL), PALMER PA 18045

The March 2022 meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 7:00 PM with the following in attendance: Chairman Robert Blanchfield, Vice-Chairman Chuck Diefenderfer, Jeff Kicska, and Robert Walker. Also in attendance were Solicitor Charles Bruno, Ron Gawlik of The Pidcock Company, Planning Director Cynthia Carman Kramer, and Supervisor Michael Brett.

1. Minutes of February 2022 Public Meeting

Motion: Approve, Moved by Robert Walker, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 4-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Walker
Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Lammi, Wilkins

NEW BUSINESS

2. Carson Lot 100-200 Preliminary Land Development Plan
1571 Van Buren Road & Main Street - J8-27-1 & J8-271A
NEB District
Request by Carson Van Buren LLC

DISCUSSION

Present for the applicant were Chris Hermance of Carson Companies, Shaun Haas of Langan Engineering, and Chris McLean, attorney with Fitzpatrick, Lentz & Bubba.

Blanchfield gave a background on the project. The plan proposes the removal of the lot line between two existing lots and resubdivision of the resulting 95-acre tract into two lots. The tract is the part of the previous Chrin Southwest Quadrant lot line consolidation. Lot 1, containing 77 acres, proposes the development of five limited distribution/manufacturing buildings totaling 1.5 million square feet, with 985 total parking spaces, 221 total tractor trailer parking spaces and 185 total loading docks. Lot 1 development is proposed in two phases, with three of the buildings in Phase 1 and two buildings in Phase 2. Lot 2, containing 18 acres, is proposed for future development.

The property is located on the south side of Main Street and the east side of Van Buren Road, within the North End Business (NEB) and Main Street Commercial (MSC) zoning districts. The proposed limited distribution/manufacturing use is permitted by right in the NEB district.

Haas located the site and gave a description of the surrounding area and zoning. There has been some previous development on this property, mainly roadway improvements. The Northwest Quadrant Roadway Improvements project

included drainage channels and swales and the Van Buren Roadway Improvements project included the widening of Van Buren Road approximately five years ago.

A lot line adjustment plan was previously approved. Land was subdivided into lots 1 and 2. Lot 1 is the subject parcel. It is zoned North End Business and Main Street Commercial. The proposed zoning realignment would allow the area along Main Street to be fully zoned as Main Street Commercial. Lot 1 of the proposed development includes five speculative warehouse buildings, truck ports on one side of the building, and car parking on the other. Lot 2 is reserved for future development. There would be three driveways off of Van Buren Road. The main driveway boulevard entrance provides access to buildings 1-4. Haas located the buildings on the plan. The middle driveway is for cars only.

Blanchfield commented that Pidcock mentioned the possibility of alignment of the driveways with the property development across Van Buren. Haas explained they are in discussion with them. As shown on the plan, there is about a 280 foot offset with their driveway and the driveway that they are proposing. Blanchfield questioned if there is any possibility of an outlet going through Lot 2 to Main Street. Hermance explained that it was discussed, but as of now, the applicant would like to leave it undeveloped. They are working with a retail developer to potentially develop that lot and there is a desire to keep the retail traffic and the warehouse traffic separate.

Haas explained that development has a phasing plan. The phasing line follows the boulevard entrance. Buildings 3, 4, and 5 will be in Phase 1 and buildings 1 & 2 will be in Phase 2. Rough square footage is about 1.1 million square feet with 985 car spaces, 185 total loading dock spaces against the building, and 220 trailer parking stalls. Truck traffic will go out onto Van Buren Road, take a right out of the site, go up to the light at Main Street and Van Buren Road and to Route 33. Cars can go in either direction. Impervious coverage for the NEB portion of the site is 70%. The buildings will be less than 60 feet high so building height isn't an issue. The developer will comply with the zoning comment related to parking setbacks.

Haas explained that stormwater analysis indicated that runoff flows in three directions. The top left of the plan shows the Route 33 right of way with a PennDOT structure. There is a discharge point below building 3 that enters into the existing stormwater infrastructure. There are seven infiltration basins spaced throughout, where they make the most sense based on the drainage on the site with a larger basin between buildings 3, 4, & 5. The site will be sourced by public water from PA American Water and public sewer. They have an existing watermain that runs along Van Buren Road. Nazareth Borough Municipal Authority owns a sewer main that runs along Van Buren Road and the treatment plant is next door.

Blanchfield questioned where they are at on the traffic impact study that is required. Haas explained this is still being prepared and will be submitted with the next submission. They are currently doing the required counts at the intersections. Blanchfield questioned the traffic flow inside the site and

expressed the Township's concern for no truck traffic being parked out on the street. Haas replied that the boulevard entrance would allow for queueing, if needed. Drive aisles are proposed in other areas of the property that would allow for queueing as well. Blanchfield questioned pedestrian crossings and walkways on the site. Haas indicated it is not currently shown on the plan, but explained the crosswalks and that there will be sidewalks throughout the site and along Van Buren to the retail on Main Street. Blanchfield commented that people will work there who need access to public transportation. Blanchfield questioned the structural capability of Van Buren Road. Haas expressed the need to do a pavement analysis. They are currently scheduling boring of the pavement. Gawlik explained they will look at the original traffic study for the improvements along Main Street and the consideration of a signalized intersection.

Blanchfield questioned if there is proposed recreation. Kramer stated there is nothing planned for this area. Blanchfield indicated a correction on the recreational fee calculation.

Kicska questioned if there will be a bus stop for public transportation. Kramer will have to check with LANTA but they do have a route that goes up Van Buren.

Diefenderfer questioned the sidewalks at the Chrin property getting done at the same time as this site's development. Haas indicated that is not an issue.

Diefenderfer questioned if these warehouse buildings can serve other uses. Hermance explained these buildings could be retrofitted for another use if needed eventually. Kramer explained that these buildings, referred to as warehouses, can typically be either distribution or industrial manufacturing buildings and would be adaptable to other uses.

Walker questioned if the different driveways will just use signage. Haas proposed signage along Van Buren Road. Walker stated that drivers are not real good at reading signs. Haas suggested exiting signage at the driveways indicating that trucks must turn right. Kramer stated trucks could go south on Newlins Mill Road to Hollo Road.

Kramer asked for clarification that the driveway is not going to align with the property across the street. Hermance tried to coordinate with that developer, but they aren't cooperating. Hermance is trying to keep the retail line flexible, in case it needs to be further south based on a potential retailer's need. Kramer suggested to number the buildings on the plan in the order that they intend to build them to avoid confusion. Haas agreed.

Richard Karp, 107 Stephanie Drive, questioned how many employees would be working at these facilities. Hermance speculated hundreds to a thousand jobs. Karp questioned if this would be a 24 hour operation. Hermance indicated they don't know because they don't know the tenant yet. Karp thought the Township didn't want truck traffic on Van Buren Road. Blanchfield explained there are no trucks allowed south of Newlins Mill Road.

Seeing no further comments or questions, Blanchfield called for a motion to

table.

Motion: Tabled, Moved by Jeff Kicska, Seconded by Robert Walker. Passed. 4-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Walker

Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Lammi, Wilkins

3. Williamson Street Subdivision - Preliminary/Final Subdivision Plan

Williamson Street - M9NW4-8-37

HDR District

Request by Rocky & Sons Construction, LLC

DISCUSSION

Present for the applicant were Keith Lawler of Keystone Engineering and Plamen Ayvazov.

Blanchfield gave the summary of the project. The plan proposes to subdivide an existing 1.7± acre lot into three lots for development for single family dwellings. The property is located in the High Density Residential (HDR) zoning district at the intersection of Williamson Street and Lieberman Terrace, west of South 25th Street. The site is currently unimproved. The properties surrounding the property are zoned HDR and are mostly developed with residences. The Township Comprehensive Plan designates this area for residential use.

In a decision letter dated February 15, 2022, the Zoning Hearing Board granted a variance from §190-150.B(2) of the Zoning Ordinance requiring a minimum lot area of one acre for properties having more than 1,000 SF of slopes between 15% and 25%. The Board found that due to the topography, irregular shape of the lot and utility tower, there is a hardship that warranted the variance.

Lawler explained that this lot was previously approved for 8 townhomes but that approval expired and they are now looking to subdivide it for 3 single family homes. The L-shaped lot at the top contains the high tension tower, which is going to be left alone. The large lot at the bottom extends down to Lieberman Terrace and 25th Street to which they are not proposing any improvements. Williamson Street is a one-way street that exits onto 25th Street. The electrical lines from the tower extend over a large portion of the site.

Blanchfield asked about the impervious cover. They are proposing an increase of 9,350 square feet, which is less than the 10,000 square foot threshold required for stormwater management. Lawler explained that is the maximum increase but that number includes the area for sidewalk, which they are requesting to partially defer. Gawlik confirmed that if the street widening is waived, as it was with the previously approved plan, they would be below the 10,000 square foot threshold for stormwater management. Lawler clarified that they are proposing to install the curbing and sidewalk in front of the houses to connect with what is there at the north end of Williamson Street, they are looking for the deferrals only from the Lot 3 driveway down to Lieberman.

Blanchfield asked about the other waivers. Gawlik stated they have no objection to this being considered as a preliminary/final plan. They are proposing dedication of additional right-of-way on Williamson Street but not the widening of the pavement. There is a requirement that the centerline of a driveway be at least 150 feet from the centerline of an arterial road, which 25th Street is an arterial road. The distance to the driveway for Lot 3 would be about 135 feet. Since Williamson Street is a one-way street, they don't see an issue with that. There is a requirement for the maximum slope of a driveway to be 5%, they are proposing 7% due to the existing topography of the site. They are asking for waiver of the installation of street trees due to the location of the existing power lines, which was previously granted for the townhouses.

Gawlik stated there are also two deferral requests, one for installation of sidewalk and one for installation of curbing, only from the south of the Lot 3 driveway on Williamson Street and along Lieberman Terrace. Blanchfield asked about the need for a streetlight. Kramer replied that there is one already at Williamson and 25th Street. Blanchfield asked about comments from the geotechnical engineer and LVPC. Kramer replied that the geotech did not have any comments and that LVPC comment had not been issued yet.

Diefenderfer asked about having stormwater management on each lot. Lawler replied that they considered that as an option if they went above 10,000 square feet of impervious. Diefenderfer asked if in lieu of the street trees, the developer would be willing to donate the same quantity of trees to the Township to be planted in a public park. Ayvazov replied absolutely yes.

Kramer asked Bruno what mechanism do we need to put in place to ensure that the deferred sidewalk will get built in the future if the Township determines it necessary. Bruno replied that the deferral will run with the land. Any deeds would need to be subject to the plan of record.

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

The Commission voted to recommend approval of the plan subject to the following conditions:

1. Comments of the Township Engineer's letter dated March 2, 2022 are satisfactorily addressed.
2. Any comments of the Township Geotechnical Consultant are satisfactorily addressed.
3. Any comments of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission are satisfactorily addressed.
4. Requested waivers and deferrals are approved. Regarding the waiver of street trees, the developer should donate the same number of required trees to the Township for planting in a public park or other location.
5. All conditions of the Zoning Hearing Board decision letter dated February 15, 2022 are incorporated by reference.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Robert Walker, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 4-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Walker

Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Lammi, Wilkins

4. Villages at Wolfs Run Phase 2 - Final Subdivision Plan
145 Clover Hollow Road - K8-15-2
MDR District
Request by Wolf's Run Land, LLC

DISCUSSION

Present for the applicant were Phil Malitsch of Tuskes Homes, Andy Woods of Hanover Engineering, and Joe Piperato, attorney.

Blanchfield gave the background on this project. The preliminary subdivision plan for this development was first approved by the Board of Supervisors in November 2007. The Board of Supervisors has granted an extension until May 31, 2022 to the requirement to submit a final plan within five years from the date of approval of the preliminary plan, as required at Section 165-35.B of the SALDO.

The Phase 2 final plan proposes 4 units of townhouse dwellings. Except for the sewer, the majority of the improvements for this phase will be constructed as part of Phase 1. The plans are accepted for review by the Township on March 8, 2022. The Board of Supervisors has a current deadline of June 6, 2022 to render a decision on the plan.

Malitsch explained that with DEP requirements, the same gravity system that is used on the units in Phase 1, can't be used for these four units. These four units are down the cul-de-sac and are significantly lower. This plan subdivides these four lots with utility connections pertaining to sanitary sewer and water. Gawlik commented they are unclear on the limits of Phase 1 and where Phase 2 starts. He understands it will likely be all constructed together, but they are two separate plans standing on their own. Pidcock's comment is to delineate where Phase 1 work would end and Phase 2 work would pick up. This can be clarified on the plan with shading. Bruno stated the approval should be conditioned upon the Phase 1 improvements being completed, or at least being recorded, before or at the same time since they are tied together.. There can be discussion about if this small phase needs to be a separate land development plan. Phase 2 can't be done by itself, since it is dependent on Phase 1, but could be added to Phase 1.

Richard Karp, 107 Stephanie Drive, asked for clarification on what a unit is. Blanchfield explained this plan deals with 4 units. One unit is one townhouse. Bruno explained these units were already approved with the Preliminary Plan.

Joan Stratton, 128 Glenmoor Circle, questioned where Glenmoor is in relation to these units. Malitsch indicated it would be located at the top of the plans. Woods pointed out other points of reference on the plan. Stratton explained that the residents were told that trees would be planted where the trees had been taken down and questioned when this will happen. Malitsch explained that they never promised that trees would not be taken down, but they will supplement

those treelines that are disturbed with additional plantings. That will not happen until much later in construction. Nothing has changed with the approved Phase 1 landscaping plan.

Harry Graack, 1380 Van Buren Road, questioned if any excavation of land has been done on the Phase 2 segment. Malitsch confirmed. Graack thought that nothing could be done on Phase 2 or Phase 3 until the bridge was built on the Schoeneck Creek at Van Buren Road. Blanchfield believed the bridge construction was tied to Phase 3. Piperato explained these four units were part of the original Phase 1. Bruno explained that the original phasing plan changed. Walker stated the original Phase 2 is now considered Phase 3. Malitsch clarified that the bridge is tied to units on the west side of the creek. Kramer clarified that the financial security for the bridge is tied to Phase 1. Malitsch explained that the four townhouses in Phase 2 are not being constructed now. Bruno questioned if permits have been secured for the land disturbance there. Malitsch confirmed and explained this is needed for the sediment basin there for the NPDES permit.

Mary Jane Stopp, 104 Glenmoor Circle, questioned where the sediment basin is. Woods indicated the location. Stopp explained that there was a tree that was partially on her property that Tuskes cut in half and left half that wasn't stable and had to be taken down completely. Tuskes agreed to remove the stump with permission to be on her property.

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

The Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the plan by the Board of Supervisors, subject to the following conditions:

1. Comments of the Township Engineer's letter dated March 3, 2022 are satisfactorily addressed.
2. Township Departmental comments dated March 4, 2022 are satisfactorily addressed.
3. Any comments of the Township Geotechnical Consultant are satisfactorily addressed.
4. Any comments of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission are satisfactorily addressed.
5. All conditions of the preliminary plan approval, including variances, conditional use approvals, waivers and deferrals are incorporated by reference.
6. The need and method of any recreation contribution is determined to the satisfaction of the Recreation Board and Board of Supervisors.
7. Phase 1 plans need to be recorded and all Phase 1 improvements need to be secured at the same time or prior to Phase 2 plan being recorded.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Chuck Diefenderfer, Seconded by Robert Walker. Passed. 4-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Walker
Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Lammi, Wilkins

5. Villages at Wolfs Run Phase 3 - Sketch Plan

Van Buren Road - K8-15-1A, K8-15-1, K8-15-2
MDR & HDR-2 District
Request by Wolf's Run Land, LLC

DISCUSSION

Present for the applicant were Phil Malitsch of Tuskes Homes, Andy Woods of Hanover Engineering, and Joe Piperato, attorney.

Blanchfield gave the background on the project. The preliminary subdivision plan for this development was first approved by the Board of Supervisors in November 2007. The Board of Supervisors has granted an extension until May 31, 2022 to the requirement to submit a final plan within five years from the date of approval of the preliminary plan, as required at Section 165-35.B of the SALDO.

The sketch plan proposes revisions to the previously proposed plan for Phase 3, to eliminate private alleys and garages and add three off-street parking areas containing a total of 45 parking spaces. The number of units remains the same at 139 units and the general street layout remains the same. The property is within the MDR and HDR-2 zoning districts.

Malitsch explained they tried to stay true to the original approved preliminary plan. The unit count has not changed. They removed alleys with detached rear loading garages. Those units were all 24 feet in width. The proposed units are 24 feet and 27 feet wide. The roadway network is the same. Two roads exit onto Van Buren Road and tie into the new design of Van Buren Road, which will be elevated. They reconfigured some of the parking areas, impervious coverage is down with this design, there are no shared driveways, and they eliminated all 5 and 6 unit townhouse buildings.

The original plan had conditional use approval for parking in the front yards. Piperato stated he will confirm whether that was for a certain number of units or if it was a blanket approval for front yard parking. Malitsch explained there is more open space and more yard space in the lots by removing the rear alleys.

Blanchfield commented on the need for a traffic study. Piperato believed the Northern Tier study for traffic that was used to determine the need for off-site improvements was sufficient. Gawlik believes this was discussed in regards to the Final Plan for Phase 1. This would be a legal question as to whether it is required. Kramer explained with the original Preliminary Plan, there was not a separate traffic study done for the development. The Township relied on the Northern Tier Traffic Study, which led to the improvement with the bridge being part of that project with the Phase 1 Plan. The Township was satisfied with the trip generation numbers that were submitted because there was no where else for that traffic to go as it was already planned to go through Stephanie Drive and Scotty Drive. Kramer still thinks it would be helpful to see what impact this additional traffic is going to have on Van Buren Road. This road is a different road than it was back then with all of the other developments that have happened there. Blanchfield indicated this would be a Township and solicitor discussion.

Blanchfield questioned the entrance issue with the Meilinger property. Malitsch expressed very strongly that the Meilingers do not want their driveway coming through the development. They want to maintain a separate dedicated access onto Van Buren Road. Blanchfield explained that at a previous Board of Supervisors meeting, Chairman Jeff Young said he absolutely wants to see an agreement on this before the plan moves forward to the Board. He doesn't want this to be handled after the fact. Kramer stated that the Township staff, developer, Graack, and Harkin will be setting up a meeting in order to discuss the bridge and will also cover this issue.

Kicska questioned if there is any plan for a recreational path connection. Kramer explained Phase 1 is constructing a path that will come through Fox Run Park to the bridge at Howard Lane. As part of this Phase 3, they would be doing the widened bike path sidewalk all along Van Buren Road. Kicska referenced the pedestrian walkway at the lower cul-de-sac on the original plans. Malitsch explained that a connection there would be a 20-30 foot deviation from the trail and an adjustment could be made for that connection in the final plan.

Diefenderfer asked about the garages. Malitsch explained they range from 1 to 1-1/2 car garages for the 27 foot wide units and 1 car garage for the 24 foot wide units. With the rear loading garages, there was really no room. Now with front loading garages, all of the units push back from the street. Blanchfield commented they would like to avoid cars being parked across the sidewalks.

Walker commented that the plan seems more open with units set back and the elimination of alleys looks good and very similar to Phase 1. Kicska questioned the architectural differences between the units. Malitsch explained they are proposing two widths and a couple different products to give variation of units and colors, similar to Phase 1. Kramer questioned the price range. Malitsch indicated that would be a question for Tuskes and speculated the units are similar in size to the Phase 1 units.

Supervisor Brett commented that this plan combines urban, high density development in a suburban layout. He expressed his safety concerns for vehicular, pedestrian, and neighborhood traffic being combined and was in favor of keeping the rear alleys.

Bill Harkin, 1375 Van Buren Road, expressed his concerns for stormwater runoff, flooding, sinkholes, loss of woodlands, reduction of open space, increased traffic, difficulty of elevated access with the bridge construction in relation to his driveway, reduced rain water absorption, length of construction time, loss of property value, and loss of buffer zones.

Diefenderfer questioned if the plans can incorporate saving as much of the old growth landscaping as possible. Malitsch stated they can make the same type of commitment as they did with Glenmoor's existing landscaping.

Harry Graack, 1380 Van Buren Road, stated that this project involves one of the last old growth forested areas in the Township and he commented on the huge

mound of ripped out trees, stumps, and roots from Phase 1 already. He is concerned for the loss of open space, the traffic study being dismissed in lieu of building the bridge, and the rerouting of the Meilinger driveway. He believes that environmental concerns should be factored into plans. He is also concerned about traffic, floodwater issues, and the sewer line that borders the Schoeneck Creek.

Dorothy Wilson, 172 Glenmoor Circle, expressed her concern for the protection of the environment, flooding, and traffic.

Bill Ruch, 206 Mill Race Drive, Chair of the Environmental Steering Committee, stated he will start interacting with developments and looking at environmental impacts on plans and focus on the concern for the woodlands in our area.

As this was a sketch plan, no action was required to be taken by the Planning Commission.

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Kramer stated that three other plans were received for review for this meeting - MRP Industrial, First Park 33, and Easton Senior Living, a lifecare facility across from Palmer View Apartments. There was a conflict with our Township Engineer so the lifecare facility will be reviewed by an alternate engineer. 530 Milford Street was on the agenda, but an extension was secured so they can continue to work through the environmental issues.

Kramer reminded the Commission that a Workshop meeting would be held the following Tuesday for the Planning Commission review of the Zoning Ordinance. There will be a separate meeting to receive input from the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tim Fisher, 68 Moor Drive, questioned if the meeting on the 15th was going to be for the Planning Commission only and if the consultant would be there. Kramer explained the purpose of the meeting wasn't to receive public input on the ordinance but the public was welcome to attend. Fisher questioned when a publication of the text will be available to the public. Kramer explained that whatever gets on the agenda for that night will be available to the public afterward. Fisher questioned if the new zoning map will be included. Kramer indicated that public hearings may be held sometime in April or May.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Jeff Kicska, Seconded by Robert Walker. Passed. 4-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Walker
Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Lammi, Wilkins