

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

The November 2022 meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at 7:00PM with the following in attendance: Vice-Chairman Chuck Diefenderfer, Richard Wilkins, Jeff Kicska, Robert Lammi via phone, Robert Walker, and Robin Aydelotte. Also in attendance were Solicitor Charles Bruno, Ron Gawlik of The Pidcock Company, and Planning Director Kent Baird.

1. Minutes of October 11, 2022 Meeting

Approval of the minutes from the October 11, 2022 Meeting.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Jeff Kicska, Seconded by Robert Walker. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Diefenderfer, Kicska, Lammi, Walker, Wilkins

Commission Members voting Abstain: Aydelotte Commission Members Absent: Blanchfield

OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION

Commission Members Absent: Blanchfield

2. MRP-Industrial

DISCUSSION

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said MRP industrial is a project for a warehouse on the northern end of the township on Van Buren Rd and Main Street. It's in the T1-2 district and it's requested by CL PF MR PI and Maastricht LLC. It was in last November meeting and was tabled for more information. The usage is approved as a "by right" in that zone. And it's for two distribution buildings ranging for 251,000 square feet to 400,000 square feet on a 52.5 acre of land. The site's currently unapproved.

MATT CLYMER principal with MRP industrial represents the owner seeking recommendation for approval for application for a preliminary final land development plan. He asked if the commission would like them to review the comments and waivers. He noted that he was in receipt of the latest engineering review letter of 11/2/2022.

KATE DURSO asked if they wanted to go through all waivers.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said there were a couple outstanding to discuss.

KATE DURSO said the first waiver is to allow concurrent submittal of preliminary and final together.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said they could talk about that later pending how

some other things may come up.

It was agreed they did not have to discuss the waivers that had already been approved.

KATE DURSO said the only thing different from the previous meeting they were at pertained to the sidewalks. They had previously requested deferral of the sidewalks but were asked to show it on the plan.

CHRIS ARNOLD pulled up an aerial plan of the site showing the site layout showing the nearest connection point of existing sidewalk running from their site to the nearest connection point. It shows just one mile before you get another connection point to a sidewalk.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if they were still asking for a deferral.

KATE DURSO said in the resubmittal they were asking for a waiver request to not put sidewalks in at all. But she said they were aware that Board of Supervisors may not want that. KATE DURSO said they presented this to show that the basis for requesting the waiver is the fact that there aren't any sidewalks in proximity to get anybody anywhere. They just end.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said the Township is not in favor of doing waivers on the sidewalk aspect.

JEFF KICKSKA said the land to the east is going to be developed and that will probably have some sort of sidewalk attached to it. The connection would be to our east, not just to their neighbor

KATE DURSO said they had another exhibit to show, expecting that may have been the comment.

ROBIN AYDELOTTETE said that she would like to see how it could connect to the Sheetz and Burger King so the employees could go there.

MATT CLYMER said the sidewalk as designed goes out to the intersection has connections between the property to the east as well as across the street to the Amazon facilities on the other side. Once you reach the edge of the property line, that bridge is not yet constructed in a manner that enables pedestrian traffic where you reach a dead end.

KATE DURSO clarified after a question from RICHARD WILKINS that they are proposing sidewalk along Van Buren.

CHRIS ARNOLD explained the exhibit they handed out of a provisional path for the sidewalk and going through the property and connecting from Van Buren Road to a terminus along the floodplain of the Schoeneck Creek on the far west of the property.

MATT CLYMER added that due to the stormwater improvements the sidewalk needs to be set back on the property.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked RON GAWLIK for comment

RON GAWLIK added they understand that there are reasons why the sidewalk can't go in a standard location. It is recommended that there'll be provided a pedestrian easement to allow for passage of pedestrians through that area. He said they have not reviewed this design previously but would review to come up with something the township finds acceptable.

MATT CLYMER asked that if the township is unwilling to consider waivers, they would be willing to request a deferral so they could construct in the future when it is needed.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked at what point would they be looking to defer to?

KATE DURSO responded that would be up to the township to decide.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said the Township Supervisors are at the point where they no longer wanted to defer past the time when the property is being developed.

KATE DURSO clarified that the Township would be looking for it to be installed at some point in time during the construction phase.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER and KENT BAIRD said yes

BOB LAMMI added that it should be included before going to the Board of Supervisors.

KENT BAIRD added that the Board Of Supervisors is in support of different types of sidewalk path such as macadam that might add some flexibility to the design. The Board Of Supervisors would also like to hear the schedule of construction.

MATT CLYMER said they are expected to break ground at the end of March beginning or April 2023 with completion around April or May 2024.

MATT CLYMER asked if they were talking about macadam for all sidewalks

KENT BAIRD said concrete on Van Buren would make everything look cohesive. Macadam along Mainstreet fits the idea of a multi-use path.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said if they requested a deferral, it should be by the end of the construction period.

MATT CLYMER and KATE DURSO said they will remove the request for deferral

RON GAWLIK clarified with the macadam sidewalk

KATE DURSO asked if it was an option of macadam or concrete.

KENT BAIRD added the BOS was flexible with that option and that they would speak to it.

KATE DURSO clarified that they would remove waiver and deferral

CHRIS ARNOLD said they were wrapping up the comments that were provided from Pidcock on the most recent letter, and then we will be submitting that to the NBMA for their review. As far as stormwater comments they are still working with the NCD and will comply with Pidcock requests.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if it would also take care of the issues with LVPC.

CHRIS ARNOLD stated that since the plans have changed so much, they want to at least get a recommendation of approval before going back to them for review.

KATE DURSO asked if CHUCK BRUNO could review the easement language.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked about re-routing

CHRIS ARNOLD said that it was resolved. They adjusted emergency spillway location it is now aimed at the Schoeneck not the southern property.

JEFF KICKSKA asked about extra parking that was going to be in that area.

MATT CLYMER said the parking in the south of the building is going to be kept as grass areas until needed by the tenant.

KATE DURSO asked BEN GUTHRIE to talk about the traffic.

BEN GUTHRIE addressed the 2 remaining items related to traffic. Regarding the northbound right turn lane at Main Street and Van Buren Road, they are coordinating with the property owner across the street to determine how that will be constructed and what timeline. The second comment has to do with

corresponding with Lower Nazareth township regarding the review of the operations of Route 248 and Eastgate Boulevard. They provided a copy of the traffic study and analysis to the township and have not received a response.

There's no significant impact on that signal. They don't anticipate any further response but will provide copies of the correspondence for the record.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked when the correspondence was sent

BEN GUTHRIE said it was over the summer.

RON GAWLIK asked for them to follow up with lower Nazareth to make sure all adjoining municipalities are satisfied.

CHRIS ARNOLD addressed comment 2 and said they will fix the grading.

BEN GUTHRIE said comment number three relates to the pavement design calculations that were submitted and they conducted brand new traffic counts with a clean set of data to resolve the issues. They are also going to go out and take pavement samples so there is a shared understanding of the pavement.

RON GAWLIK said they are comfortable with those conditions of approval if the Board wants to move it forward

ROBIN AYDELOTTE asked if the traffic was being considered in the bridge design Tuskes is putting in at Wolf's Run.

RON GAWLIK explained that the bridge design was part of the Norther Tier Traffic studies which included the development of the area. The lanes at the bridge should be the same as there.

BOB LAMMI asked about trucks going over the bridge.

RON GAWLIK said there will not be trucks allowed on the bridge.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if Ron had concerns about the right turn lane

RON GAWLIK referred to comment 1A and said he would expect that upon completion of this plan, that they'll identify what the improvements are and will be part of the project.

KATE DURSO stated they are proposing a fee in lieu for this project. Due to prior use and location, the ordinance allows a fee proposal.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER stated the BOS might be looking more for open space and that they want to have some type of option with open space in some capacity to show the Board.

KATE DURSO stated that there are differences between this property and the other properties that may not makes sense to include open space. She clarified they are still in including the fee proposal.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked for hands up if individual members of the commission agree with the fee.

RICH WILKINS agreed with fee

ROBERT WALKER agreed with fee

JEFF KICKSKA added that considering the property was previously used as a sludge field, he agrees with the fee.

BOB LAMMI said in this case the fee could be used for true open space for the public to enjoy where it is suitable. Land in an industrial area is useless as a recreation area.

ROBIN AYDELOTTE asked what the amount of open space would be.

MATT CLYMER said 5% or approximately 2.5 acres once the floodplain is subtracted.

ROBIN AYDELOTTE said her concern was so much of the land in in general is being paved over, that it is affecting groundwater absorption.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER mentioned that last time when they presented there

was a net reduction in the amount of runoff from the property.

CHRIS ARNOLD said there is a net decrease in peak rate of runoff from the property and the volume is being managed to an alternative practice that is not being driven into the ground. It is allowed to leak out slowly.

ROBIN AYDELOTTE wanted to state her concern that so much of the ground is getting paved and the residents in the area are flooding. Her open space concerns are more about that than using the space for recreation or public use.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked RON GAWLIK would dry ground where there were once cornfields react similarly to concrete

RON GAWLIK explained that concrete is going to react differently than something like the dry cornfield. With something paved you will have direct runoff that you wouldn't from something less impervious.

There was some discussion regarding how much open space they would have.

RON GAWLIK clarified what they would need to do is to remove approximately two and a half acres from their plan. A space would be subdivided around the lot line and donated to the Township.

There was general discussion as to whether the sidewalk area proposed could be considered open space.

RON GAWLIK clarified there are certain requirements as it relates to the open space criteria that needs to be flat and level and usable. The Township does have some flexibility but there are also zoning considerations as it relates to setbacks from property lines

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked what is the likelihood that the area slated for potential parking would be paved.

MATT CLYMER responded that they can't predict that. What they have designed is what the township requires relative to parking based on employee counts.

KENT BAIRD went on to explain the open space initiative is really just the active and passive recreation conversation. The Board Of Supervisors is also interested in the "gateway experience" like the property across the street. Open space can be scenic like something left in a meadow condition.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if they could dress up where they had their rain gardens.

KATE DURSO responded that they would be giving the Township the rain gardens to maintain.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said they he believed that there might be some type of caveat to remain with the owner of the property.

CHUCK BRUNO said that everyone has provided excellent comments. However, unless anyone has been convinced otherwise that they should make the motion regarding approval of the plan with a comment whether it should be fees in lieu of open space.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER said he agrees with CHUCK BRUNO and feels it should be fees in lieu of open space, but it would be nice to create a nice presentation.

KATE DURSO asked if they meant a kind of aesthetic using natural grasses or something like that.

KENT BAIRD said it's something along the lines of good corporate stewardship of that corner. It is a prominent corner for anybody traveling through the Palmer.

It is a higher responsibility to represent Palmer in that prominent location.

MATT CLYMER said as an owner, they also want it to be a showoff point. They

will need to look at what can be done as a large stormwater basin was just constructed at the corner of the property.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if KENT BAIRD could see anything that would be outstanding before proceeding.

KENT BAIRD said he is happy to be brought in at the conversation of sidewalks and open space because that is his passion. He said he was happy to be a part of the collaboration and brainstorming. The area is an entrance to Palmer Township and should represent Palmer Township being pleasant and inviting.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if RON GAWLIK had anything to add.

BOB LAMMI addressed that on the property there should be amenities available for truck drivers as they wait. He also asked if there had been talks to see where public transport would pick up near there for employees.

MATT CLYMER stated that they mark some spaces for the dedicated overnight parking. As it pertains to employee breakrooms and places for those drivers to go, we are always constructing those as part of the tenant fit out. They do not automatically build them in because they don't know where the tenant would want them. However, they do consider them standard operation.

BEN GUTHRIE addressed the comment about public transportation noting that the nearest stop is at the intersection of Main Street and Van Buren Road. The Van Buren front sidewalk would provide that access.

RICH WILKINS made the motion to approve the preliminary plan subject to the comments of the township engineer, technical consultant and township environmental consultant, comments of landscaping lighting consultant and any subsequent comments that may be warranted. LVPC correspondence and concerns as warranted. Also, recreation fees in lieu of open space are recommended.

JEFF KICKSKA seconded the motion

ROBIN AYDELOTTE asked if at the time when you get a tenant and have to extend the parking spaces, will the commission be notified.

KATE DURSO explained that it would go through zoning to obtain the occupancy permit.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Richard Wilkins, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 6-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Aydelotte, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Lammi, Walker, Wilkins
Commission Members Absent: Blanchfield

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

KENT BAIRD noted that we'll be applying for Tree City USA status with the Arbor Day Foundation. We spend over \$100,000 a year on trees in this township and that's one of the qualifiers for getting into Tree City. We also get some of the perks of belonging to Arbor Day Foundation such as information, free trees, and the Proclamation. We do have a tree coordinator Paige Strasko. The planning department is not just looking at warehouses. We submitted three grants to collaborate with the other departments for the trails and parks.

KENT BAIRD also stated that BOB BLANCHFIELD wanted to congratulate JEFF KICKSKA for completing the training modules of the Lehigh Valley government Academy, an extension of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Jeff has also

achieved that outstanding award from the MPPEIPMPEI.

Commission Members Absent: Blanchfield

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Leahy (40 Edinburgh Dr.) would like to recommend more information be added to the agenda. Kent Baird responded that as being new to the position and new to the software that creates the agenda, he would make sure going forward that more detail would be on future agendas.

Harry R Graack Jr. (1380 Van Buren Rd.) commented that he was concerned about sinkholes and paving of the area. He was also concerned over traffic on Van Buren Rd. He would like more truck signs at other areas you can enter Van Buren Rd that to announce no truck traffic. He would like to make sure that any new plans consider the increase in truck traffic, speeding and open space.

JEFF KISCKA asked Graack how he felt about apartments going in.

KENT BAIRD clarified that what they are speaking about has not been formerly presented and was discussed as an option if the original request for more manufacturing was denied. He also noted that the number of apartments mentioned would not currently be allowed due to zoning ordinance.

JEFF KISCKA also said that if there were apartments going in and they would need to be considered for construction of the bridge for Wolf's Run 3.

CHUCK DIEFENDERFER asked if there is a way to get the traffic committee to look at where some other signs should go for trucks.

KENT BAIRD said he would get the traffic committee involved.

KENT BAIRD also said the BOS doesn't want the north end of the township to be the "docks". They want sidewalks and open space. KENT BAIRD said they hired him to be a proponent of this. KENT BAIRD said he will go after grants to help with things like connecting sidewalks to the Northampton County Trail system. The Board Of Supervisors hears the concerns of residents like Graack, and they are working on it.

Commission Members Absent: Blanchfield

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:39pm

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Robin Aydelotte, Seconded by Robert Walker. Passed. 6-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Aydelotte, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Lammi, Walker, Wilkins

Commission Members Absent: Blanchfield