

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING - TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021 - 7:00 PM

ZOOM MEETING 878 1877 6093

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The May 2021 meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 7:00PM via Zoom with the following members in attendance: Chairman Robert Blanchfield, Jeff Kicska, Robert Lammi, Robert Walker, Michael Brett, and Chuck Diefenderfer. Also in attendance were Solicitor Charles Bruno, Ron Gawlik of The Pidcock Company, Planning Director Cyndie Carman Kramer, and Supervisor Jeff Young. Absent was Vice-Chairman Richard Wilkins.

1. Minutes of April 2021 Public Meeting

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

OLD BUSINESS

2. Villages at Wolfs Run Phase 1 - Sketch Plan

Van Buren Road - K8-14-4 & K8-15-2
MDR & HDR-2 District
Request by Wolf's Run Land, LLC

DISCUSSION

Present for the applicant were Phil Malitsch of Hanover Engineering and Joseph Piperato, counsel for Tuskes.

Blanchfield explained that the preliminary subdivision plan for this development was first approved by the Board of Supervisors in November 2008. The Board of Supervisors has granted an extension until June 30, 2021 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 1, to include 107 units of townhouse dwellings and re-addition of the cul-de-sacs, as originally approved. The plan also eliminates the previously proposed blocks of 5 townhouse units.

Piperato stated that the sketch plan no longer contains any 5-unit buildings and this sketch plan very closely mirrors what was originally approved. Malitsch explained that the main objection last month focused on the density of the layout. Even though it was the same amount of units, the townhouses were all positioned on the loop road called Timber Trail. Tuskes' units are slightly smaller than the original product that was proposed. The cul-de-sacs are back on this

plan, but shorter than the original plan. The cul-de-sacs meet the minimum requirements of the township ordinance at 275 feet, from the center line intersection with the loop road to the center of the cul-de-sac. This results in 12 units spaced out onto the cul-de-sac. There are still 107 units, but the footprint has changed. The basin still remains in the upper cul-de-sac off the southwest corner. Malitsch explained the purpose for submitting the sketch plan is to get feedback from the Planning Commission before re-doing all of the engineering work. All of the details will be submitted next month on the final plan. Malitsch also pointed out that to address the concerns of Public Works, areas are designated on the plan for snow storage easements. Also, the plan shows blocks of units for simplicity, but these units will still be individual lots.

Blanchfield stated that final plan approval may take place next month and there may be stormwater upgrades required that differ from 2008. Some concerns over past submissions were the 5-unit buildings, trash and snow removal.

Lammi questioned how many units were originally proposed by Tuskes. Malitsch stated 135 units. There are no more 5-unit buildings. Lammi asked if the 4-units will still be similar architecturally to the 5-units that were proposed. Malitsch explained that these are not cookie-cutter buildings. The 4-unit prototypes offer a variety in the façade of the units. Blanchfield requested elevation drawings for the next meeting. Malitsch explained it would be the same rendering with 4-units instead of 5-units. The buildings will look the same. Kicska questioned the on-street parking. Malitsch explained that the cul-de-sacs will add over 500 feet of road to the development with on-street parking available on each side of the street. They will provide a calculation of driveways, garages, and guest parking areas. Gawlik stated his office can do a new analysis of on-street parking. There would be more on-street parking available because of the new layout.

Brett questioned if all of the units have garages. Malitsch confirmed that is the case. Brett asked if there would be playground space offered. Malitsch explained that there is no active recreation space. There will be a trail connection to the southwest to the soccer fields and there is an open space lot provided. Kramer confirmed that the Township is looking for the developer to construct a recreational trail connecting to Fox Run Park and a 10-foot widened sidewalk along Van Buren Road. Brett encouraged considering including a recreational area for this neighborhood. Lammi suggested a tot lot area at Lone Fox Lane near the guest parking area. Brett stated he is still not a fan of the front loading garages in a townhouse development.

Diefenderfer questioned the parking variances. Malitsch explained that the detailed analysis will be included with the final plans. Some relief will be needed on the driveway separation offset, but should be less due to the density going down. Diefenderfer believes this is an improvement over the previous plan, but the issue of the roads still exists. Walker is concerned over the traffic on the two roads. Brett feels the most appropriate development for this site would be single-family homes. Gawlik stated they will determine what waivers and deferrals will be necessary as the developer works through their plans.

Denise Heaton, 1415 Howard Lane, expressed her concern for increased traffic

and the safety of children. Drivers disregard the speed limit. She requested traffic safety signs and/or speed bumps, a bridge over the creek at the end of Howard Lane or to build a direct road to Van Buren Road. Blanchfield explained that there was a proposed road in the floodplain that was researched, but this permanent road development was strongly discouraged from the township's geotechnical engineer. Young recommended that Heaton's concerns be addressed to the Township's Traffic Committee. Kramer explained that the developer would be willing to look at any improvements that need to be made within the existing neighborhood.

Matt and Rita DeFranco, 116 Scotty Drive, asked if a traffic study has been completed on Scotty Drive and Stephanie Drive. Malitsch explained this was evaluated during the preliminary plan approval phase and the developer provided revised calculations when they were proposing increasing the amount of units. Gawlik stated the preliminary plan was approved by the Township for 107 units and this sketch plan is proposing the same number of units. Blanchfield requested that the traffic engineer be available for questions at the next meeting when the final plan is presented. DeFranco questioned why the East and West Villages can't be connected to facilitate with traffic. Malitsch explained the plan wasn't approved that way and it's not feasible because of the topography and floodplain on this site. The existing Wolf's Run neighborhood to the east was planned to service this tract of land. The stub streets and rights of way were designed anticipating the future connection to this parcel.

Kristina Kukuy, 117 Scotty Drive, questioned whether there is another engineer willing to design a proposed road on Van Buren Road. Brett expressed his concern over any road being constructed in the floodplain disturbing the density of soil and contours of the existing floodplain. A temporary permeable construction road is proposed in order to keep construction traffic out of the existing neighborhood. Gawlik and Blanchfield gave a brief explanation of how a traffic study is done.

Michelle LaBreche, 103 Stephanie Drive, expressed her concerns on the increased traffic, the current condition of Corriere Road, the expansion and development in this part of the Township, and the hardship of reaching this community in an emergency situation without a direct road. She feels that there has to be another way to divert traffic out of this neighborhood for the safety of the community.

Jamie Collins, 214 Berks Street, stated that a temporary construction road through the floodplain will have a serious effect on impervious coverage and will ruin soil structure. She also questioned the stormwater plan. Blanchfield explained that the stormwater management plan will be submitted with the final plans and must meet 2021 development standards. Kramer explained that this was reviewed on an alternate design plan, but not on the specific layout on this sketch plan.

Ron Kantor, 131 Brendan Road, questioned if plans approved over a decade ago are still valid, if there have been updated geotechnical assessments, and new floodplain maps. He stated his concern over the traffic, the current poor

condition of Corriere Road, and the changes this construction will cause in the floodplain. Gawlik explained the development being proposed is outside of the floodplain and the information being requested will be included on the final plans. Kramer explained that there have been studies done and some generalized information is known based on previous submissions.

James Fritts, 110 Scotty Drive, stated that Howard Lane was supposed to go through with a bridge and this would create a third access. He feels that a new traffic study should be completed since the previously approved plan is 12 years old.

Chris Pagotto, 104 Lois Lane, expressed his concern for the need of traffic calming measures in the existing neighborhood and stormwater management concerns. Blanchfield assured that the stormwater standards will be met and Kramer stated that the developer should address traffic measures in the existing neighborhood that may be needed.

Adreen Masanto, 118 Scotty Drive, questioned how tall the townhouses will be. Blanchfield stated that the elevation will be listed in the final plan submission next month. Diefenderfer stated that they look similar to the typical two-story townhouses. Masanto expressed her concern of the traffic and difficulty maneuvering in a dense townhouse community, such as Penn's Grant. She questioned if Tuskes considered building single-family homes instead and encouraged a direct road be constructed to Van Buren Road.

Ashley Evans, 217 Brendan Road, questioned the possibility of engineering a road over the floodplain. Gawlik explained that the developer did research and propose a road that the Township's Geotechnical Engineer advised the Township against. Lammi pointed out that the proposed road would have attracted a lot more traffic from Wolf's Run into the Villages neighborhood resulting in concerns for increased traffic there as well. Evans questioned zoning issues and ordinance requirements between the developer and the Township's approval. Bruno explained that the Township and the developer are bound by the Township's ordinances. The preliminary plan was approved many years ago and the approvals were extended over time. The developer is required to meet current requirements and regulations that have changed over time, but there are limitations to what the Township can do.

John Hellwig, 74 Glenmoor Circle, asked if the treeline between Glenmoor and the proposed village will be affected. Blanchfield and Kramer stated that plans were drawn up to include this and will be discussed with the developer at the next meeting. Hellwig also asked if Tuskes has another development in the area that is comparable to what he is proposing, so that the community has a better idea of what this neighborhood might look like. Blanchfield mentioned that Mill Race is a Tuskes development with single family and townhouses. Hellwig asked if the traffic study has to be updated. Gawlik said it needs to be determined if these units will have an impact on the adjacent road network.

Alice Stolarz, 154 Glenmoor Circle, questioned how traffic will be controlled on Van Buren Road and Corriere Road and expressed her concern over the health

of the people in the community.

Ron Kantor asked if the original approval is still valid if the property owner changed. Kramer clarified that the rights of the original developer have been assigned by a written agreement to the new owner.

Vikki Zimmer, 120 Stephanie Drive, questioned why the proposed road can't be closed during flooding, like Van Buren Road is. Zimmer expressed her concern over traffic on Stephanie Drive and Scotty Drive. Kramer explained that Van Buren Road is a problem and the developer is being required to build a new bridge over the creek.

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

NEW BUSINESS

3. FR Newlins Logistics - Sketch Plan
Newlins Mill Road & Tatamy Road - K8-12-4, K8-12-5 & K8-12-10A
PO/IP District
Request by FR Newlins Logistics Park, LLC

DISCUSSION

Present for the applicant were Jim Knopka of First Industrial, Keith Ottes and Ann Marie Vigilante of Langan Engineering, and Greg Davis of the Saul Ewing Law Firm.

The sketch plan proposes the construction of four limited distribution buildings ranging from 150,000 to 210,000 square feet on a 66.4-acre tract of land. The property is located in the Planned Office/Industrial Park (PO/IP) zoning district on the west side of Tatamy Road between Newlins Mill Road and Tatamy Road.

Davis explained the applicant is proposing to consolidate the three parcels and develop a four building limited distribution facility. Ottes described where the parcels of land lie in relation to the surrounding roads of Newlins Mill Road, Tatamy Road, and Corriere Road and in relation to existing businesses. This area is generally agricultural now. There are several utilities going through the site including an easement for transmission wires from Met-Ed and a gas line. Three driveways would access Newlins Mill Road, two full access driveways and a right-in only driveway. There is no access proposed onto Corriere Road. There are heavily buffered areas proposed along the perimeters where there are adjacent residences. They have reached out to Lanta and there are no planned bus routes in this area. Sidewalks are included for pedestrian access to offer more walkability. Queuing areas are striped out with very wide driveway areas to provide for additional tractor trailer queuing on the site. Lanes have been widened per the Fire Chief's comments. The developer's intention is to send truck traffic to the west to get up to the interchange. Trucks will be coming

from and going to Route 33 via Van Buren Road and McFadden Road.

Ottes explained that the occupants are not yet known, but they speculate that there would not be limits on hours of operation for a distribution facility. Vigilante calculated about seven to twelve trucks during peak periods. Blanchfield mentioned the importance of the traffic study and the possibility that a traffic light might be required at Tatamy Road and Newlins Mill Road. Ottes stated there is no reason for trucks to go to Tatamy Road. Signage and curb radii can be designed to deter trucks from turning right out of the site. Blanchfield stated that Werner Trucking used a configuration of the exits to force the right-hand turn. Ottes agreed that a design can be used that would force the trucks to go west or risk getting stuck.

Brett questioned what the requirements are for buffering to be maintained. Kramer explained that code enforcement would try to enforce buffering maintenance with the property owners if an issue would arise. Brett asked if the Bushkill Creek Watershed (Act 167) ordinance adopted in 2010 would be operating on obsolete information. Gawlik explained the developer would be required to meet the current water quality requirements as part of their DEP permitting. Brett questioned if the lower right parking area was designed for cars or trucks. Ottes stated it was a car parking lot. Brett did not have an issue with this since Corriere Road also separates the lot from the residential area.

Lammi questioned the height of the warehouses. Ottes stated the height will comply with the 40-foot limit, probably around 32 or 36 feet. Lammi expressed his concern for truck queuing while they are waiting for their dock time. He would like to see parking available on site while they are waiting and provisions provided. Ottes explained there are 122 trailer spaces and 32 queuing spaces for a total of 154 parking spaces. Drive aisles are usually 28-30 feet and here there is 42 feet and plenty of pavement for trucks to sit, if needed. They will comply with building coverage, parking standards, and dock spacing. Knopka said that at a similar facility in Nazareth the truck queuing is handled within the truck court areas and they haven't run into any problems.

Young questioned why Ottes designed stacking in the middle as opposed to on the side. Young feels this isn't a safe design. Ottes discussed the generous width of the queuing area lanes and the need for creativity in design due to site limitations with utility placements. Young emphasized the importance of a buffer on the section near residences. Ottes hasn't completed a full landscape design yet, but there will be a big emphasis on buffering that particular area. Lammi questioned if there will be a tall berm to buffer along Corriere Road. He pointed out the limitation in this area due to the high tension lines. Ottes intends to create a buffer with fencing, trees, bushes, etc., acknowledging that they are at the mercy of Met-Ed's height limits on trees and lights in this area.

Lammi expressed his concern for protecting the surrounding neighborhood of Wolf's Run and he is worried about the 24/7 operations and the sound of tractor trailers beeping when backing up disturbing the residences. Kicska is also concerned over the noise affecting the Mill Race neighborhood to the northeast. Lammi feels that the design of warehouses looks packed into that space and too

crammed.

Diefenderfer is concerned with the design of traffic flow and the co-mingling of cars and trucks. He would like to see more of a segregation. He questioned the Met-Ed wires on the property and the location of the stormwater basins. He mentioned that Werner Trucking had a difficult time with the type of soil and how much water could run into them. Ottes stated the developer would need approvals from Met-Ed and UGI as the plan progresses.

Kicska expressed his concern over the intersection at Tatamy Road. He stated that it is already overcongested and there are often multiple accidents there each day. He hopes that with the results of a traffic study the developer will take on the responsibility of making sure that this intersection is safe. Ottes explained that a traffic study is planned and improvements will be made based on recommendations from Pidcock and involvement from PennDOT.

Walker agreed with the concerns already expressed over the residences at Corriere Road, traffic flow, the intersection, and he felt that four warehouses seems like a lot for this parcel. Ottes mentioned that as the plan progresses and a traffic study is completed, they would focus on improvements to the road, keeping trucks and cars segregated, traffic and site configuration, and the stacking locations.

Mike Miller, 2310 Newlins Mill Road, stated that Werner Trucking is rebuilding the road structure to handle truck traffic and questioned if the developer will continue rebuilding the road further to the intersection. Blanchfield explained that discussion on this issue may be too preliminary. The traffic study would need to be completed in order to determine what physical improvements are required. Miller also questioned how to prevent the truck drivers with GPS from taking a right at Newlins Mill Road. Ottes explained that the road could be constructed to tighten up the radii and force the trucks to go west or risk damaging the trucks on higher curbing at the intersection.

Michelle LaBreche, 103 Stephanie Drive, is concerned about truck traffic on Corriere Road. In spite of signage, Nazareth Pallet has tractor trailers on this road. She questioned if there will be a berm high enough to limit sound in Wolf's Run. She is also concerned about run off and flooding from both the new development and this property. Ottes stated that a berm is not necessarily required, but they would look to do what they could. Stormwater management above-ground basins are shown on the sketch plan. Stormwater calculations haven't all been done yet. Volume requirements and peak rate reductions will need to be met. This will all be designed and ordinances will be met throughout the plan development.

Eric Belshaw, 130 Melissa Drive, questioned if anything will be done to address the high-tension tower that sits right on Corriere Road. Ottes explained that it is Met-Ed's facility and a concern over proximity to the road would have to be addressed to Met-Ed. Gawlik stated that the Township has requirements for road improvements along all frontages and the developer would have to coordinate with Met-Ed and the Township's requirements.

Diefenderfer questioned the distance between the trailer parking/docking for buildings A and B and the residential properties. Ottes stated it is approximately 250 feet. Blanchfield reminded that engineering data will be available at later stages of development, such as preliminary and final plan stages.

Bruno suggested that the required conditional use application should run concurrent with the land development plan.

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

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Kramer stated that the Zoning Ordinance Committee has two additional meetings scheduled this month to work on the process of adopting zoning changes. She would like to get a draft to the Commission so they can familiarize themselves with the changes. They would like to start the public meetings to introduce the recommendations to the public and start the adoption process in June or July.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 pm.

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Robert Walker, Seconded by Jeff Kicska. Passed. 6-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Blanchfield, Brett, Diefenderfer, Kicska, Lammi, Walker

Commission Members Absent: Wilkins