

The stated Working Session of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, May 9, 2024 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with President Hecker presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 8:33 p.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners BRODSKY, ROTHMAN, DiPLACIDO, LANEY-MARTIN, BROWNE, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, SPIEGELMAN, BOLE, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER

Also Present: Township Manager Manfredi
Township Solicitor Clarke

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Vice President Vahey to approve the minutes from the Working Session of February 8, 2024.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Presentation of the Final Major Development application LD-23-01 for the location at 711 Fox Chase Road, Jenkintown, PA 19046 (St. Basils):

Ms. Gina Gerber, Attorney representing the applicant, said preliminary land development approval was received in March, and then the plan was submitted for final approval, and the Planning Commission granted approval at the end of April. The applicant will comply with the comments listed in the review letter. There are two changes to the final land development plan; one is the front sidewalk, and the other is the buffer requirements that have been addressed to the satisfaction of the neighbors.

Mr. Jeff Madden, Project Engineer representing the applicant, said the applicant received a partial waiver for the sidewalk to remain in front of the right-of-way line and connect back down to meet existing sidewalk on both the north and side of Fox Chase Road, and that is the only minor modification made to the plan. Also, the ordinance includes a 75 ft. buffer requirement and there were a few trees on the property line, so they will be pushed back making sure there will be a clear distinction of the buffer, and other than that, the plan remains the same.

Commissioner Rothman said there was concern expressed by a resident regarding the sidewalks and safety for residents, and he asked the applicant to present the plan showing the internal sidewalks throughout the development.

Mr. Madden replied that the internal sidewalks will be on both sides of the street and there will be pedestrian crossings and handicapped ramps to navigate from one side of the road to the other. There will be no connections to adjoining residences.

Commissioner Rothman clarified that residents will be able to walk along the sidewalks out to the Fox Chase Road both ways. Is that correct?

Mr. Madden replied that is correct. The sidewalks will lead to the intersection of the main road.

President Hecker asked for any other comments from Commissioners. There were none.

President Hecker asked for any public comment.

John Tracey, resident, said that Toll Brothers has not done our neighborhood any favors. Toll sought out the St. Basils property for acquisition, and once secured, they used a multitude of representatives to handle community questions mostly on Zoom regarding overcrowded street exits, land development, and the amount of time it would take the homes to be built.

Toll knew to initially propose a high number of homes to cause anxiety in the neighbors and then introduced assisted living and nursing home drawings that included the fact that there was no zoning change needed to make it happen. Drawings for the assisted living/nursing home looked overcrowded on 47 acres with 24/7 activity in/out for staff. Surely the neighbors would rather have a zoning change for residential than have that.

Then “Toll played their over 55 carriage home cards decreasing the number of homes to 150,” which is much better than assisted living, and “surely it was a much-needed favor from Toll or was it the number they wanted in the first place.”

Please help this area of Abington remain a good place to live and ensure there are no cut-thru streets; the land buffer remains; water and waste are properly drained and safely taken out of the new community; building codes and inspections are followed; and that the demolition of a building with asbestos is done according to EPA's standards. We need the Commissioners to be the stewards for our neighbors and residents.

Joe Rooney, resident, expressed concern about 150 rowhomes to be built on 47 acres in Abington Township that no one is in favor of.

Liz Kerr, resident, clarified that the 75 ft. buffer is for the front and the 125 ft. buffer will be around the property. Is that correct?

Mr. Madden replied yes. There will be a 125 ft. buffer around the perimeter and a few trees will be moved back to create the 75 ft. buffer on the property line.

Mr. Tobin clarified that in total it will be 125 ft. but 75 ft. to the first buffer regardless of whether it is trees or shrubs. Is that correct?

Mr. Madden replied yes.

Mr. Tobin asked what steps will be taken to mitigate the amount of dust and debris from demolition; has the asbestos been removed; and will demolition be done by minimal implosion or a wrecking ball.

Mr. Brian Thierrin, representing Toll Brothers, replied it is required to water down the site as the contractor is responsible for keeping the dust under control. Prior to demolition, an asbestos contractor removes the asbestos per DEP guidelines, and then we can demo the structure. Asbestos is removed by picking it apart, bagging it and removing it and then an excavator will begin taking down the building, pushing everything in the middle, and then cleaning it up.

Mr. Tobin asked for the timeline of when demolition will begin.

Mr. Thierrin replied it should begin late summer in September after three outstanding permits are received.

Mr. Tobin said no one wants 150 homes built behind their homes on St. Basils, but unfortunately the nuns made the deal with Toll and the Township was not involved with it.

President Hecker clarified that this matter will be scheduled for the June Board meeting for a formal vote on the final plan. Is that correct?

Manager Manfredi replied yes.

Commissioner Zappone said as Commissioners we meet with our residents making sure everything is transparent and respond to what they want, which is most important, and we also meet with the developers who come in.

Commissioner Rothman said he appreciates the sentiment, and the residents do want something else as they are used to a quiet space. Toll met with the residents as well as himself and we made the best of a really difficult situation.

Commissioner Bowman commended Commissioner Rothman on this matter as he does meet with his residents as well as Commissioner Winegrad, and they both have tough districts, and he respects that. It will be a fine project, and everyone will like it.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary