

The stated Working Session of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, July 11, 2024 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with President Hecker presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:50 p.m.

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

Also Present: Township Manager Manfredi
Township Solicitor Clarke

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the minutes from the Working Session of May 9, 2024.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Presentation of the Preliminary/Final Major Subdivision and Land Development for LD-23-03 – 1583 Rothley Avenue:

Ms. Amee Farrell, Attorney representing the applicant, said proposed is to redevelop 1583 Rothley Avenue in which the applicant received zoning relief from the Zoning Hearing Board and a recommendation for approval of the preliminary/final plan by the Planning Commission. Also, the applicant received review letters from the Township Engineer, County Planner as well as the EAC and will comply. The applicant requested a recommendation for approval of the preliminary/final plan.

This property historically has been used for commercial/manufacturing on the first floor and an office or apartment above in which the building is currently dilapidated and in disrepair. Also, there is a significant slope from the back corner to the street and there is an unrestricted driveway opening.

The proposed redevelopment is to retain the existing building but clad it with new improved materials and gut the interior so that the two-story building will become three townhomes. It is currently located on two parcels and the proposal is to consolidate it to a single property. The existing impervious surface will be modified to six parking spaces as required for townhomes and shorten the unrestricted curb cut down to 20 ft. channelizing the driveway as an entry/exit point for the residents. The balance of the site will become green and landscaped with interior pedestrian connections out to the street and new sidewalk.

Zoning relief was granted to permit townhomes within the Medium High Density Residential District. The plan has been revised in response to comments made by the Township consultants. Also, the applicant will provide an easement to the adjacent neighbor so he will have a driveway access point to park his vehicle.

HVAC will be small residential condenser units each independently controlled for the three townhomes. Also, each townhome will have its own area for trash and recycling totes. The discharge drain at the crosswalk and ADA ramp has been relocated to the downslope as requested by the Township Engineer.

Regarding landscaping, proposed trees along the southern property line will be spread out with modified species, types and locations; topsoil depths were improved throughout the site; we changed to an erosion control seed mixture on the steep slopes and created additional parking lot screening. Also, the EAC suggested that some of the shrubs in the parking island be swapped out for a tree, and the applicant's landscape architect feels there is not enough room for a tree to thrive, so shrubs will remain there. The plan is to retain the existing building and layout of the three proposed units were presented.

Waivers requested by the applicant - Section 146-9. A (1) and (2) - Preliminary and Final Plan Stages; Section 146.11. B (7) – Utilities; Section 146.11. J – Recreational Facilities Plan; Section 146-33. C – Drainage Location; Section 146-33. D – Drainage Size, Grade and Type; Section 146-43 C (a) – Cut and Fill Slopes.

Mr. Chad Brensinger, Project Engineer, said since it is a small site, most pipes are smaller but still meet conveyance capacity. Also, 15% is a gradual steep slope and we will provide proper groundcover on the steeper slopes.

Mr. Khal Hassan, Township Engineer, said he has reviewed this project as plans have been modified and the applicant received variances from the ZHB subject to certain conditions in which the applicant must comply. He supports waivers requested by the applicant and he will defer to the Board of Commissioners to consider the plan preliminary as final in which he supports.

The utility waiver is usually granted on smaller projects as it is not feasible to show an area three or four times the size of the project and the information provided by the applicant is sufficient. He has no issues with waivers for the location for drainage as well as the pipe size as all drainage will be contained within the site. The Board may wish to consider approval of the plan contingent that the applicant addresses all comments as listed in review letters from the Township Engineer and all Township's consultants.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Laney Martin said the neighbors she spoke with are excited about the property being developed, although one neighbor expressed concern about privacy and asked about the windows from the new building directly aligning with their adjacent building.

Ms. Farrell replied there are building code requirements for the location of windows. Each townhome will have a bedroom window, and only the middle unit will have a window facing the adjacent property, but we will do whatever we can to lessen the impact.

Commissioner Laney Martin clarified that an easement will be provided to the neighbor so he can use his driveway. Is that correct?

Ms. Farrell replied yes, part of the neighbor's driveway is located on 1583 Rothley property, and we have no objection for the neighbor to continue parking in the driveway and there will be an easement.

Commissioner Laney Martin clarified that the existing structure and foundation of the building will be redeveloped and improved as it is an old building that has been in disrepair. Is that correct?

Ms. Farrell replied yes, this will be a complete gut right down to the foundation, and structural drawings are required. Additional work will need to be done as it is an existing building and the Township's inspectors will make sure all requirements are met and the building is safe, which is part of the building permit process.

President Hecker asked for any public comment.

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern that we need homes that people can buy and afford to live in. We do not need people who will become renters for a lifetime and struggle to keep up with rent increases every year. "Abington already has many apartments and homes not maintained and fails to hold corporations and these slumlords accountable for all this damage."

Joe Rooney, resident, asked for the lot size.

Ms. Farrell replied 12,233 sq. ft.

Mr. Rooney commented that he assumes these will be rentals because of the layout and there will be people we don't know living in three rowhomes in Roslyn. The EAC indicated that this plan will increase the impervious surface, and if that's true, will this become the default position for developers building townhomes on 12,000 sq. ft. lots in Roslyn or even Ardsley.

Ms. Farrell replied there has not been a determination as to whether these three individual units will be for rent or for sale. Impervious coverage ticked up slightly to 40.5% and 55% is permitted in this zoning district, so even though there is a slight increase because of the configuration of the parking lot, we are still 15% under allowable impervious for the lot, and the tradeoff will be met with all new landscaping.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern that this property changed lives in this neighborhood. The preliminary and final land development is being pushed together, which takes a month away from people like herself and the neighbors to research whether this building was condemned. Also, she believes "the variances and waivers were illegally approved, and it is supposed to be in compliance with the character of the neighborhood."

Mr. Hassan said he does not agree with the statements by Ms. Lehmann. There are no nonconformities and reviews were done by his office as well as other agencies that are accurate and in accordance with codes and requirements. Also, the Board of Commissioners did not approve a variance, it was approved by the Zoning Hearing Board.

President Hecker clarified that this matter will be listed on the agenda at the August voting meeting. Is that correct?

Manager Manfredi replied that is correct.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary