

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, December 20, 2023 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with Chairman Brown presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: BROWN, ROBINSON, COOPER, BAKER,
STRACKHOUSE, WEATHERLY
Excused: DiCELLO, ROSEN

Also Present: Township Engineer Lee
County Planner Narcowich
Traffic Engineer Richardson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Strackhouse made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to approve the minutes from the Planning Commission Meeting of September 26, 2023.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

PRESENTATION: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

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

Mr. Brown said the applicant, Toll Mid-Atlantic LP Company has submitted a preliminary land development application proposing to construct a total of 150 age-restricted carriage homes as well as a clubhouse and pool on an existing parcel of land located within the newly created AR-Age-Restricted Carriage Home Overlay District. The entire site consists of approximately 46.37 acres located within the CS-Community Service District. Other site improvements include parking, curbing, sidewalk, landscape, lighting, sanitary and stormwater management facilities.

Ms. Alyson Zarro, Esquire, representing the applicant, introduced Brian Thierrin, representing Toll Brothers, Jeff Madden, PE with ESE Consultants, and Sandy Koza Traffic Engineer with McMahon Associates. Back in May 2023, there was a conditional use approval required for a small area of riparian buffer disturbance to connect the proposed sanitary sewer to an existing sanitary line on the property and the applicant received that conditional use approval in July 2023, and the plan is the same as previously presented to the Planning Commission.

The property totals approximately 46 acres located on Fox Chase Road and proposed are 150 carriage homes that will be age-restricted along with a clubhouse and pool as well as other amenities. There are two access points to Fox Chase Road; one full access that would align with access to Manor College that is signalized, and another to Fox Chase for emergency access, and there will be no other access points from the surrounding community. Stormwater management facilities are proposed for the back of the property as well as a 125 ft. buffer around the tract and 40 ft. wide medium intensity buffer.

Mr. Madden said the two front infiltration basins will be naturalized with minimal maintenance required.

Mr. Weatherly asked about a water quality component designed into the basins.

Mr. Madden replied that the water quality component is infiltration that will meet Township's regulations, but the overall site is designed to meet DEP's NPDES conservation requirements. Detention basins will capture the water, retain it, and release it at a reduced rate, and in one of the open space areas between the two cul-de-sacs, there will be an underground basin. All basins will have split rail fencing and mesh around them.

Mr. Baker asked will the basins have water in them or just during storms?

Mr. Madden replied just during storms and the water will infiltrate three days after the storm.

Mr. Weatherly clarified that the property is graded so that there will not be any additional water coming from the site. Is that correct?

Mr. Madden replied that is correct. There are reduction requirements per Township ordinances, and those requirements will be met.

Ms. Allison Lee noted that this project requires an NPDES permit, and the applicant has made a submission that is in the process of review.

Mr. Madden said there is an existing sidewalk and curbing on Fox Chase Road on the left and right side of the site with none located in the middle of the property. The proposal is to continue the same curbing and sidewalk on both corners of the site near the existing homes; add a meandering sidewalk off the road but within the Fox Chase Road right-of-way; and trees will be planted on the residential side of the sidewalk. The intersection will be revised adding a fourth leg as well as handicapped ramps and pedestrian walkways.

Mr. Baker said regarding the south side of the main entrance, the sidewalk should be offset seven or eight feet and then create a jog to meet the existing sidewalk to keep it away from the road for safety.

Mr. Madden replied that could be a possibility if requested.

Mr. Brown referred to Waiver #8 and clarified that the ductile iron pipe was reviewed and accepted by the Township's W.W.T.P. Is that correct?

Ms. Zarro replied that is correct.

Mr. Weatherly asked for further information on the grading.

Mr. Madden replied that proposed grades of 3:1 or approximately 33% are primarily for stormwater basins to limit any disturbance to the land and trees onsite.

Mr. Brown asked what is proposed for the green buffer area adjacent to the neighboring property?

Mr. Madden replied it will be a maintained lawn.

Mr. Brown said he would like to see something other than a grass lawn.

Ms. Strackhouse suggested native grass would be something to consider and it would keep that space open. Also, the EAC mentioned the Trees of Heaven should be removed and expressed concern about saving the Beech tree.

Ms. Zarro replied that the plan has been revised showing that the location of the sewer line was adjusted to save the Beech tree.

Mr. Brown questioned whether invasive species in the wooded areas have been addressed.

Mr. Thierrin replied we are willing to remove some of the invasive species.

Mr. Brown questioned whether there were any outstanding items regarding traffic.

Ms. Zarro replied that the applicant will submit a signal design plan to PennDOT; a letter was received from the Fire Marshal who reviewed the circulation pattern; and separate right and left turn lanes are not proposed.

Ms. Sandy Koza, Traffic Engineer, representing the applicant, said a traffic impact study was completed and reviewed by PennDOT and they do not require any turn lanes to be installed along Fox Chase Road, so we would like to keep this corridor one lane going in each direction without the need for widening or ancillary turning lanes.

Mr. Richardson agreed that it is not warranted; however, one vehicle making a left turn blocks traffic and backs it up.

Mr. Narcowich recommended that guest parking spaces be provided at convenient locations.

Mr. Madden replied that the overflow parking will be the parallel parking along Road A and Road B and in front of the clubhouse along with two handicapped parking spaces.

Mr. Brown asked about spacing for fire hydrants.

Mr. Madden replied we will comply.

Mr. Richardson questioned whether the Fire Marshal reviewed the entire circulation as well as the on-street parking plan. Also, any off-street parking on the curves would create sight-distance issues.

Mr. Madden replied that all recommendations will be included in the revised subdivision plan as well as McMahon's traffic signal plan.

Mr. Brown asked for any public comment.

Commissioner Rothman said the Board of Commissioners will be reviewing this matter at a future date, so if residents have any further questions, please send them to him.

Ray Vandergrift, resident, clarified that the buffer is a total of 125 ft. including 40 feet of trees, so it will not be just grass. When St. Basil's would let the grass grow high, there were bugs and ticks, and that is why the neighbors are happy there will no longer be high grass up against our property line.

John Tracy, resident, expressed concern about increased traffic. Also, how long will construction take because the neighbors will have to deal with construction vehicles going up and down Fox Chase Road.

Liz Kerr, resident, expressed concern about children drowning in basins. Every rendering presented by the applicant shows that the basins will not be naturalized and the Township's EAC advised that all five detention basins should be naturalized as prescribed by PADEP. She asked for this to be delayed until we see what these basins will look like.

Lorraine Swollack, resident, expressed concern that the elevation in the rear of the homes is lower than the elevation of the detention basins that will result in stormwater runoff on properties on Kirkwood Avenue, so please do not grant any waivers regarding stormwater management.

Pierce Kerr, resident, expressed concern about what the basins will look like from his backyard, and the waiver should be denied until we see what we are dealing with.

Vince Kelly, resident, said he moved to Abington for more open space, and he and the neighbors want 85 ft. of open space behind their homes, the 40 ft. berm with trees, and no cut-through.

Brian Gazos, resident, asked will the traffic light remain green when there is no traffic? Also, will the basin drain to the stream at the bottom of Montgomery Avenue?

Ms. Koza replied there will be video detection for the side streets, Manor College, and site access.

Mr. Madden added that the basins collect stormwater from the site, treat it, throttle back the rate, and discharge it back to the stream with a reduction factor.

David Berson, resident, commented that his mother owns the property at 623 Forrest Avenue, and how will drainage from the project affect the surrounding properties. Also, has there been any consideration given to a bike lane along Forrest Avenue and through the new development for the safety of bicyclists.

Fred Koelle, resident, expressed concern that the density of proposed homes is not consistent with the density of the surrounding homes in the neighborhood, and in addition to the environmental impact, this project will cause a lot of noise and traffic on Kirkwood Avenue.

Also, he expressed concern that traffic will cut through Kirkwood Avenue to avoid the light on Fox Chase and Cedar Road and there are many children living on his street. Also, 150 homes in that space is "ridiculous."

Mike Monteleone, resident, expressed concern about increased traffic as well as the duration of time for the project as construction and noise will be a nuisance. He would like to see an 8-hour workday so the neighbors can have some peace. Also, the number of proposed homes should be cut in half from 150 to 75, which will alleviate traffic problems.

Mr. Weatherly clarified that all basins will be naturalized, and that children would not be able to fit through any fencing surrounding them. Is that correct?

Also, he asked the applicant to clarify the discharge points from the basins as well as the duration of time for the construction project.

Mr. Madden replied all basins will be naturalized, and there are two discharge points that will ultimately get to the stream.

Mr. Thierrin added that the project will be done in two phases. Initial sitework will be a nine-month duration and there will be a break and then another nine months to a year followed by the dedication process at the end of the project.

Waiver requests by the applicant –

1. Section 146.11. A (4) – Property Identification.
2. Section 146.11. B (3) – Existing Features Plan.
3. Section 146-11. B (7) – Existing Features Plan.
4. Section 146-27. C – Sidewalk & Curbs Location
5. Section 146-27. F – Sidewalk & Curbs
6. Section 146-29. A – Blocks – Length
7. Section 146-33. I – Drainage
8. Section 146-35. C (2) – Design and Construction of Sewers, Size Grade & Type
9. Section 146-43. C (3). (a) – Excavation & Fills

Mr. Weatherly made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to accept Waivers #1-3.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

Ms. Allison Lee said Waiver #4 is a waiver from installation of sidewalks along Fox Chase Road, not internal to the site. The existing locations of the sidewalk along portions of the road are within a few feet of the curb and roadway and will be repaired and replaced with a new sidewalk and extended along the entire frontage. The area between the sidewalk and right-of-way is approximately 12 ft. and will be used for street tree plantings.

Mr. Baker made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Weatherly to accept Waiver #4.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

Mr. Weatherly made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to accept Waiver #5.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

Mr. Weatherly made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to accept Waivers #6-9.

Ms. Allison Lee clarified that Waiver #8 is the use of plastic pipe from ductile iron is only from Fox Chase Road and internal to the site. The pipe material within Fox Chase Road will remain as ductile iron.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

Mr. Weatherly made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Strackhouse to recommend approval of the preliminary major land development application LD-23-01 for the location at 711 Fox Chase Road, Jenkintown, PA, 19046 (St. Basils) as well as accept all waiver requests by the applicant.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

Consider the Preliminary/Final Major Land Development Plan for LD-23-04 – 640 Cedar Road (Hopewell Vet.):

Mr. Brown said this is a preliminary/final land development application for property located at 640 Cedar Road. Applicant proposes to maintain existing features onsite with the exception of construction of a new 1,048 sq. ft. building expansion to the rear of a two-story masonry and frame veterinary hospital building.

Mr. Gavin Laboski, Esquire, representing the applicant, introduced Chad Brensinger with Charles E. Shoemaker Inc., PE, and Mr. and Mrs. Rutkowski, owners of the property.

The plan as presented showed the existing site of the Hopewell Vet Hospital, and the proposal is to expand with approximately 1,000 sq. ft. addition for treatment rooms and surgical areas to improve the modernization of the building. There will also be improved parking in the rear, demolition of the existing garage behind the property, and stormwater management facilities. Also, there has been an effort made to retain large trees and new fencing to buffer from the neighbors in the rear.

The applicant appeared before the Zoning Hearing Board and received variances as listed in Pennoni's review letter dated November 17, 2023, and comments listed in review letters from the Township's consultants will be complied with by the applicant.

Regarding the waivers, the width of the sidewalk is less than 4 ft. and not within six inches of the right-of-way, so a waiver may be needed.

Proposed parking area was shown on the plan noting that neighbors from Roseland Avenue expressed concern about headlights shining into their backyard from the new parking area, so the plan is to install a blockade fence to block the headlights from the parking area into the rear of the properties.

Mr. Baker questioned whether the turnaround is an adequate size.

Mr. Brensinger replied yes.

Mr. Cooper commented that the proposed new parking area will vastly improve the existing conditions.

Mr. Laboski added that the rear parking area would be for staff, and patrons will be encouraged to park along the side.

Mr. Gavin said we still anticipate that the driveway will be two-way and propose widening it slightly to 20 ft. for two-way traffic to improve circulation.

Mr. Laboski said the width of the sidewalk is 3.9 ft., which is another waiver request although there will be no disturbance to sidewalks and curbs. The applicant has no issues with comments as listed in Mr. Richardson's letter as well as the letter from the Shade Tree Commission.

Mr. Weatherly clarified that the applicant is requesting a waiver from sidewalks and curbs. Is that correct?

Mr. Laboski replied that the waiver request is from Section 146-27. b.1 and Section 146-27. C – Sidewalks and Curbs as the existing sidewalks are below the 4 ft. requirement and not within six inches of the right-of-way.

Waiver requests by the applicant –

1. Section 146-9. A. (1) and (2) – Preliminary and Final Plan Stages.
2. Section 146-11. B. (3) – Existing Features Plan.
3. Section 146-11. B. (7) – Utilities.
4. Section 146-11. J – Recreational Facilities Plan.
5. Section 146-33. C – Drainage Location.
6. Section 146-33. D – Drainage Size, Grade and Type.
7. Section 146-43. C. (3). (a). – Cut and Fill Slopes.
8. Section 146-27. b.1 and Section 146-27. C – Sidewalks and Curbs.

Mr. Weatherly clarified that the pipes will be located on private property. Is that correct? Also, he asked about the slopes.

Mr. Brensinger replied yes, the pipes will be kept on private property, and regarding the slopes, any disturbance will be kept to a minimum.

Ms. Allison Lee noted that disturbance will be limited to the stormwater management area. Also, the EAC recommends stormwater management facilities have natural bottoms.

Mr. Brown asked for any public comment. There was none.

Mr. Weatherly made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to recommend approval of the preliminary/final major land development plan for LD-23-04 – 640 Cedar Road - (Hopewell Vet) as well as to accept all waiver requests as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 6-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary