

**Planning Commission
Minutes
June 3, 2024
7:00 PM**

Present:

Brett MacKay, Chairman
Nancy Becker
Dennis McGeehan
Douglas Leach
Michael Main
Patricia Younce, Vice Chairman
Joseph Vavra
Ed Buonocore

Absent:

Matt Chartrand

Staff:

Mary Stover, Township Engineer CKS

Supervisor Mr. Kofi Osei was present.

Approval of the May 6, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Vavra made a motion to approve the May 6, 2024 meeting minutes and Ms. Becker seconded. Mr. McGeehan and Mr. MacKay abstained. All were in favor.

New Business:

SLD 836 – Mainland Golf Course Parking Lot – Preliminary and Final Plan

Presented by Ms. Susan Rice

Ms. Rice explained that all the plans were revised from the last meeting and all plans are a will comply to the comments from the review letters.

Ms. Rice went over the CKS Engineering review letter. She explained the final plan review references the preliminary plan review, except for items they will comply with.

Ms. Rice went over the CKS Engineering letter dated May 28, 2024. She addressed the Subdivision and Land Development ordinance comments, which were asking for an additional note on the plan and Ms. Rice stated they will comply and add the note to plan.

Ms. Rice went over the comment regarding the lighting design and stated they have added a sheet set to adjust the lighting. They will comply with any outstanding comments. She also noted for the lights on the back of the pavilion, they will note those on the plan and include it in the lighting plan as well. This is a will comply.

Ms. Rice went over the comments regarding the tree layout relative to the lighting design and the trees and lights in the islands. She stated they will comply and make some adjustments. Ms. Rice also explained some plantings were adjusted according to the comments, and they will adjust some others. This is a will comply.

Ms. Rice went over the grading and stormwater comments and stated the ENS plan was submitted on May 10th, 2024, and they will comply. Ms. Rice stated they will comply with the statement for an easement and for the calculations for the retaining wall. She stated it is a brand-new wall and was placed when the driveway was made.

Ms. Rice explained that all items in the May 14th, 2024 letter have been addressed, as well as the applicable impact fees that they will comply with. She explained that she will go over the waiver requests.

Ms. Younce asked about the four trees in the parking lot that are planted. Ms. Rice showed the landscape plan on the overhead and showed the current trees and landscaping. Ms. Rice explained they can update the plan, as the existing trees on the current plan are not there anymore.

Mr. Buonocore asked about the existing trees and if it would be impossible to build a parking lot around the trees. Ms. Rice explained that the trees are in the middle and it would not be possible to build a parking lot around those trees. Ms. Rice stated the existing trees have a 41-inch caliper/diameter. She explained the tree Mr. Buonocore is requesting to be saved, cannot be saved for this project. Mr. Buonocore asked if the tree can be saved if they don't use as many parking spots for the plan, and Ms. Rice explained that tree may not be as healthy as they think or that how it looks on the plan. She feels it is a large tree, but not a healthy tree.

Ms. Younce asked how many trees are marked for removal and Ms. Rice showed 4 trees to be removed and stated they will have to calculate the trees again for the total replacements.

Ms. Stover stated there are 5 on the plan to be removed and they are requesting to replace them with 2 ½ inch caliper trees, as required.

Mr. MacKay stated the applicant should go onto the waiver requests at this time and Ms. Rice went over the letter for waiver requests with the Planning Commission.

Ms. Becker discussed the deferral decision for sidewalk and curbs, and explained the Planning Commission will not recommend a waiver for sidewalks/curbs.

Mr. Main asked if sidewalks and curbs are not required by code in that district, he wanted to know if the deferral needs to be on the application, and Ms. Stover stated they are not deemed necessary in the R-200 District, unless for safety. Discussion regarding curbs and sidewalks for this application. Ms. Stover explained the Planning Commission members could state they are necessary in lieu of deferral or waiver.

Ms. Stover stated at the last meeting there was concern regarding the use of an 8-inch pipe and she wanted to let the Planning Commission members know that the applicant provided all the required information, and this issue will be addressed. It will be taken care of in the stormwater management agreement. Ms. Rice provided information regarding the slope and the reason why they want the 8-inch pipe stating that if anything would clog over the creek and the pipe couldn't convey it, then the spillway is designed to handle it. Ms. Rice explained the applicant is very conscientious about maintaining it and if they used a bigger pipe they would have to raise the cart path.

Mr. Main mentioned the concern had been if it can handle the excess spillway and Ms. Stover stated they meet the requirements.

Mr. MacKay asked if there were any other comments or questions. Hearing none, Ms. Younce continued with making a motion.

Ms. Younce made a motion that the Planning Commission members recommend preliminary and final approval for SLD836 Mainland Golf Course Parking Lot, revised preliminary and revised final plan review subject to the review letters as follows: CKS Engineering review letter dated May 28, 2024, Bowman review letter dated May 28, 2024, Gilmore and Associates review letter dated May 23, 2024, Keystone review letter dated May 14, 2024, as well as the plan being amended with 5 trees for removal on the plan and revised to add a 5th replacement tree. Regarding the waiver request, the Planning Commission members recommend waivers for waiver requests numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. For waiver request 2, the Planning Commission does not recommend a waiver, but does recommend a deferral. Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor.

ZA 2023-03 Limited Industrial (LI) District & E9-Place of Worship Zoning Amendment

Mr. Will Brugger explained the letter from Montgomery County Planning Commission dated May 5, 2024. In the letter there were comments and concerns regarding legal issues for some of the wording. Mr. Brugger explained that all Towamencin counsels met and looked at the proposed language and they made some slight changes and removed section number two on the amendment.

Mr. Brugger stated that section number one remained the same. Section 2 was removed, and then they combined section 3 and 5. Section 4 remained the same. The sections were re-numbered 1 to 4 after taking out number 2. He explained this is what is presented tonight for approval. He added that the Township solicitor, the county planning commission and the applicant were all in agreement with this change.

Ms. Becker made a motion to accept this change. Ms. Younce seconded. All were in favor.

Township Comprehensive Plan – Meeting #3 – Simone Collins
Presented by Mr. Todd Poole and Mr. PJ Jobanputra

Mr. Jobanputra explained they will go over the schedule and explained where they are right now, and where they are currently with the survey results. He stated they received 234 responses.

Mr. Jobanputra went over the calendar and summarized the plan. The next meeting they will be coming to is the August meeting. In the next two months, they will continue with the analysis and recommendation phase. They are still in the process of collecting a lot of good data from the Township and the residents analyzing the feedback. They are also working on a good foundation for mapping and the existing features as this will help formulate recommendations.

Mr. Jobanputra showed slides of the public survey and went over the responses and explained the percentages and results of the survey.

Mr. Poole explained the market and real estate analysis support and that a lot of comprehensive plans rely on their market analysis.

Mr. Poole showed the geographies they studied and explained the contacts in the surrounding townships. Mr. Poole went over the population change trends and projections. He went over the household change trends and projections and stated that basically deaths are outweighing births with less migration. Mr. Poole spoke about household size trends and projections. This helps with what type of products are in demand. He explained that household sizes are getting smaller with many households that are only 1 and 2 person households if they wish to downsize to something smaller there is not a lot of available options. With this phenomenon, it is part of this housing crisis with nothing available to downsize to.

Mr. Poole stated the median household income is 102,000.00 annually and 57 percent of this group have a bachelor's degree or higher. He also went over the shopping centers and the empty available spaces.

Mr. Poole showed the map with the drive-time and a scale and showed that very little new housing has been built or permitted in the township over the past two decades. This is contributing to the existing low housing vacancy rate.

Ms. Younce feels the marketing real estate analysis report is all about how many units or how much development can be brought into an area, and nothing seems to be said about the quality of life for the residents. Mr. Poole stated that is a small sliver of the report and not the maximum regarding development. Ms. Younce stated that in the analysis open space and farms are mentioned with how much could be built or developed. Mr. Poole explained a market analysis is not a traffic study or quality of life, it is to do analysis on potential opportunities. He explains that he is all for open space, but when he is brought into a community, he is to show what all the possibilities are. Mr. Jobanputra stated they will then tie it in with parks and recreation trails,

along with the community and quality of life. The township consists of well-established nice homes, but they are getting older. Those households change and a business community needs a diverse group for their development, which consists of a mix of people and income. They are here to identify a community that is in one direction, which can be harmful.

Discussion regarding the market being saturated and being in a new realm of work with hybrid. Office buildings that were dependent on workers all changed with the pandemic. Mr. Poole stated it is very important to make sure the community can support the local residents.

Ms. Becker stated only multifamily homes were mentioned and Mr. Poole stated the reason is that the need for single-family homes is not that great. He explained people are wanting townhomes and condominiums based on income, and by providing more rental housing this helps make housing available for workers that will support new businesses.

Ms. Becker stated there already exists multiple low-income housing and Mr. Poole explained that yes some do exist, but there are few that are available.

Discussion regarding rezoning and what was included in this study. Mr. Poole went over the calculations in addition to existing households. Mr. Main went over the rental vacancy rates and looked at Montgomery County at 6.3 with the newest residential units built, which is high. Towamencin hasn't had that many and the 1.1 vacancy rate is not high enough. With 6.3 being too large, he asked Mr. Poole what a good number is, and Mr. Poole stated the average is 4 to 7 percent.

Discussion regarding the market analysis. Mr. Leach feels there are a lot of uninhabitable buildings. Ms. Younce asked if vacant housing counted and Mr. Poole stated yes, the data comes from postal details. He explained that the point is Montgomery County vacancy rental rate is higher, but still in a healthy range. 1.1 rate is not healthy which means it puts pressure on existing rentals, which comes back on employers and housing prices go up. Sooner or later, it impacts the employment base.

Discussion regarding available land. Mr. Poole stated it is also what is zoned for developers to build the housing. Discussion regarding infrastructure, schools, roads, and areas already overbuilt. Discussion regarding surrounding townships.

Mr. MacKay asked if there are any other questions or statements.

Supervisor Osei made a comment:

Mr. Osei stated he defended this idea at the last Board of Supervisors meeting. He feels they should be making these changes for residential housing and stated that the schools have lower enrollment and the traffic, since covid, has gone down a bit. The traffic issue is a big misconception in his opinion. As for the positive effects, he feels development would be good. Mr. Osei explained at the Board of Supervisors meeting they discussed wanting the shops and the restaurants, but they must be supported by residents and affordable housing. He stated the sewer

authority is at 50 percent capacity. The township lost 300 houses to Upper Gwynedd, and for sewage flow it would be nice to get that back to our township.

Mr. Osei discussed a bigger tax base as well. He is in favor of connectivity and creating downtown Kulpsville. He also mentioned aging in the township and people keeping their houses. He feels multi-units for housing, taller buildings and similar things should be considered. Mr. Osei feels everywhere in the country is having the same kind of discussion moving toward market housing and two-level housing. He stated he is in favor of developing the bird farm property, lowering the parking regulations, and if connectivity is improved it will help.

Mr. MacKay thanked the presenters.

Other business:

Mr. Brugger stated there is no new business. For the upcoming proposed Wawa there is nothing new since the last meeting. He mentioned they submitted an application to the Zoning Hearing Board for a sign variance that had expired. He is hoping to issue the demolition permits soon.

Ms. Younce asked if anything has been prepared after initial plans were discussed regarding EV charging stations and Mr. Brugger stated nothing has been submitted. Once the building goes in, they will most likely propose something for the chargers.

Mr. Brugger stated there have been discussions with the condo associations regarding EV chargers.

Ms. Younce asked if there were any other issues. Hearing none, Mr. Vavra made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor. 8:37 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Shisler
Towamencin Township
Zoning and Code Enforcement