

**Planning Commission  
Minutes  
September 9, 2024  
7:00 PM**

**Present:**

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

**Absent:**

Brett MacKay  
Matt Chartrand

**Staff:**

Mary Stover, Township Engineer CKS

Supervisor Mr. Kofi Osei was present.

**Appointment of Secretary**

Ms. Younce made a motion that Mr. Will Brugger, Director of Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement, be appointed as the Planning Commission Secretary for the remainder of the year, Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor.

**Approval of the August 5, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Younce commented on several sections of the draft minutes. She requested slight revisions to the Comprehensive Plan section in order to more adequately address public input regarding open space and comments received in the public survey. She also stated that there should be concerns noted addressing higher density housing in certain zoning districts. Ms. Younce read aloud the proposed amendments and provided a written copy to Mr. Brugger to amend. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the August 5, 2024 meeting minutes, as amended, and Mr. Vavra seconded. Mr. McGeehan abstains. The motion carries.

**New Business**

**WLD 2024-01 – Goddard School**

Presented by Ms. Catherine “Kate” Harper, attorney with Timonthy Knox, LLP, Mr. Peter Stampfl, architect with Stampfl Associates, LLC, and Mr. Mike Thompson, owner/operator of existing Goddard Schools.

Ms. Harper began the Goddard School presentation and made introductions. She touched on the current needs for a daycare within the Township. The applicant would use the existing building and make no additions, removing the drive-thru portion of the building. She stated that the plans were submitted as a Waiver of Land Development. Ms. Harper goes on to state the plan was reviewed by the Township Engineer, indicating a need for zoning relief from parking. There is a requirement of 90 spaces, the applicant would have 51 spaces available. She asked that after the presentation the PC provide a positive recommendation on the submitted zoning variance application. She compared the required parking to adult day cares, which requires less parking. She also stated that drop off and pick up times vary throughout the day, not needing the required number of spaces. Ms. Harper stated that the applicant would be willing to provide a stipulation that the facility would not hold any parties or whole school activities on site.

Mr. David Goldstein, the owner of the property, was present. Mr. Thompson noted that he had two other Goddard School locations, one in Horsham and the other in Springhouse.

Mr. Stampfl presented the plans as submitted. He went to explain the site layout, parking, existing drive aisle, and proposed fencing and play areas. He explained the access drives that will remain from both Sumneytown Pike and Valley Forge Road. He continued to state that the applicant proposes to construct three additional parking spaces, where the drive is being removed. The building itself will remain with similar exterior materials and new windows/exits at classroom areas. The curved frontage will receive new façade and coloring. The footprint of the building will remain the same. He stated that the building will have a kitchen, but only to be used as a serving/catering kitchen. The mezzanine area will be for staff only.

Mr. Thompson stated that they do not need any additional parking. He explained how the parking and drop off/pick up works. He stated that typically there is two minutes for drop off, with a max of seven to eight minutes. There would be about 20 employees. There is no set school schedule, some kids only come a few days or a few hours. There is no kindergarten. He also stated that for graduations they typically use larger community centers.

Ms. Becker brought up La Petite, located along Forty Foot Road and Allentown Road. She stated that there are not many parking spaces for that site.

Ms. Harper described that there is a school next to this site, Calvary Baptist. The applicant has asked for a shared parking concept. Calvary Baptist did not want to engage in such an agreement. She stated that if the Zoning Hearing Board did not approve the application, the project would not occur. Mr. Thompson insisted that they did not need additional parking on site.

Mr. Main asked about the particulars of how many additional spaces were required per the zoning regulations. Ms. Harper directly read sections from the Township zoning ordinance. She indicated they need 90 total. Mr. Main asked about pick up/drop off lines. Mr. Thompson said he was a fan of this because they worked well at other locations.

Ms. Becker stated that she has been to La Petite, who has existing limited parking, and has not experienced any issues dropping off grandchildren.

Ms. Harper stated that the Goddard School has converted an existing Walgreens in Georgia.

Mr. Thompson again stated that the largest onsite event would be a “grandparents day” where select groups are brought in at a single time. The other holiday activities or events are held at community centers or similar locations.

Mr. Leach stated that he is in favor of the use, as proposed, as well as providing a recommendation for the relief. Ms. Becker agreed. Ms. Younce discloses that Ms. Harper and her firm represent a non-profit that Ms. Younce is a member of and sits on the Board of.

Ms. Becker made a motion that the Planning Commission provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to support the application before the Zoning Hearing Board, seconded by Mr. Vavra. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **PSDC Update – Shopping Center Master Plan**

Mr. Matt McHugh, attorney with Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg, LLP, stated that they will be omitting the shopping center presentation at this time due to Mr. Nicoletti not being present.

#### **ZA 2024-01 – Main Street Overlay Concept**

Presented by Mr. Matt McHugh, attorney with Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg, LLP, and Mr. John Alejиков, engineer with Bohler.

Mr. McHugh began by explaining that PSDC has submitted a zoning amendment request in order to create a “Main Street Overlay” in the Zoning Ordinance. He stated that the Township Engineer and other consultants have issued a few review letters during the Township Staff discussions over the last several months. He admitted that there is still some additional work to be done.

Mr. Alejиков presented the Concept Plan. He stated that this presentation is a high-level review for the concept. He indicated that the northern side of the plan would be mainly office and retail uses. The southern would be for residential uses. He indicated that there would be a walking trail that traverses the site to connect Bustard Road up to the existing pedestrian bridge. Mr. Alejиков went on to discuss buffering between the proposed site and adjacent uses. He indicated that they did reduce the size of Building K in order to increase the buffering.

Mr. McHugh explained the current Village Overlay zoning district and what the goal is of the current overlay. He explained that the intention would be to remove sectors of the Village Overlay but keep the core concepts through setbacks and buffering as well as similar proposed uses. He stated that they are not seeking approval at this time, just looking for feedback.

Ms. Younce spoke about the current overlay district in place and that the Township had proposed a percentage for residential and commercial development. Mr. McHugh stated that the ordinance provides for 25% of the floor area be used for residential. He also said that at the time of adopting the current overlay, the southern section was not part of the overall village concept. He stated that the proposal has residential loaded on the southwest corner of the Concept Plan.

Ms. Younce expressed concerns with building heights. Mr. McHugh stated that the proposed Concept Plan shows four-story buildings, or about 50'. He said that they have not chosen a residential developer yet. He stated that they were basing the height number off of the permitted Marriott height, which may have been 70'. Ms. Younce stated that the height of that building was based on a settlement agreement. Ms. Younce did not want buildings as high as the Marriott building. Ms. Becker also expressed concern on the height issue. She stated that the Township should not look like King of Prussia or Fort Washington. She wanted it to have a village feel along the northern side of the plan.

Mr. McHugh explained the idea behind the mixed-use concept on the northern side of the properties. He said there would be first floor commercial and then two to three stories of residential along the main street. Mr. McHugh talked more about height and the architectural differentiations in order to reduce the excessive height feel. Ms. Becker said she feels very strongly about not permitting the taller buildings. Mr. McHugh stated that the south side would have the taller buildings, it was not clear the height of the current buildings.

Mr. Main asked if the fire department has sufficient equipment to deal with the taller buildings. Mr. McHugh stated these have not been reviewed by Emergency Services. Mr. Main would be concerned with the large number of kitchens in a taller building and the increased risk it poses for fire hazards.

Ms. Younce asked how many floors would 70' tall building be. Mr. McHugh stated designers usually calculate 12' per floor. He said it would be about a six-story building, which is located in the southwest section of the plan.

Mr. Buonocore asked where the open space is located on the plan. Mr. Alejikov pointed out the trail, the stormwater facilities, and where the proposed trail was to cross Sumneytown Pike, ideally at a traffic signal. Mr. McHugh stated that a particular developer would tweak the plan and provide specific amenities.

Ms. Becker questioned if PSDC was counting the Towamencin owned parcels in their open space calculations. Mr. McHugh stated he did not believe that the Township property is contained within the calculation. The area in question would have been open space dedicated to the Township when the Turnpike went in. Mr. McHugh said there was a full survey of the proposed areas and that they will have to look at this again.

Mr. Main asked for the presenters to clarify equitable owner and properties that were owned by PSDC. A discussion occurred around open space provided by the County to the Township and that it appeared that the plan presented was using said open space to meet the parking requirements. Mr. McHugh stated that as presented, the plan would be deficient in overall parking per the proposed uses. He said that he does not feel the residential requirement for three spaces to one unit is accurate and that they usually see one and a half per unit. The proposed language would account for a shared parking concept. He then went on to state that the parking proposed on the currently owned Township open space would likely be overflow parking and was to be designed as pervious with an open space look and feel. Mr. McHugh stated that even with the overflow parking the plan is still deficient on the required number of spaces.

A brief conversation occurred regarding the parking areas of each of the proposed buildings. Mr. McHugh stated that they need an additional signal along Forty Foot Road.

Ms. Younce brought up the "H" & "K" indicated building, near Reiff Rd. She asked about the height. Mr. Alejikov stated that those buildings are proposed to be four stories.

Ms. Becker expressed opposition to PSDC using the Township Open Space from the turnpike project for their project.

Mr. Buonocore asked about the area located around building "L". Mr. Alejikov indicated this was to accommodate a courtyard concept between stores. Ms. Younce asked about the buffering proposal between the building and Reiff Road. Mr. Alejikov stated it would be a mix of berms and plantings. Mr. McHugh stated that they looked at what was in the current Village Overlay Design Manual and based the buffers off those requirements. He stated that there would be an exception for driveways located within buffers.

Ms. Younce questioned excluding certain properties from the proposed Overlay, such as the Wawa and Walgreens. Mr. McHugh stated they wanted to keep the nonconforming use out of the new zoning.

Mr. Vavra asked about the definition of commercial. Mr. McHugh explained that there are restrictions for retail and restaurants percentages. Mr. Vavra referenced past discussions on the original Overlay district where Mr. Nicoletti agreed to percentages. Ms. Stover stated that it appeared these percentages were taken out of the proposed language. Mr. McHugh began to reference specific sections of the proposed language regarding eating places and the mix percentages. Mr. Vavra stated that the Township does not have enough restaurants. Mr. McHugh said that with the increase in residential it would drive the support for new restaurants along the northern side.

Mr. Buonocore asked what the total residential units would be when all constructed and its associated population. Mr. Alejikov stated it would be about 480 residential units. PSDC has not determined the mix of each unit. Mr. Buonocore expressed a density issue. Ms. Becker agreed that this proposal included too much density. Mr. McHugh referenced Simone Collins and how they supported the proposed density of the overall Main Street development.

Mr. Main was generally supportive of the proposed Concept, he liked the mixed uses and the location. He had concerns regarding the height of the buildings, specifically building "K" & "M" and density. He also did not want to see Township open space property be used for parking.

Mr. Buonocore expressed concerns regarding potential increase of traffic in the area. Mr. Alejikov stated that they have traffic engineers analyzing the proposal.

Ms. Younce stated that she is in general favor of the Concept but believes it is too dense. Ms. Becker agreed as she feels that the proposal would not provide the village feel. Ms. Becker did not approve of the proposed height.

Mr. McHugh stated that they are working to strike a balance between height and density. He said that if the density is not there then you cannot get the appropriate commercial for restaurant or retail. Ms. Becker noted that the current Margaritas parking is already inadequate.

Ms. Becker asked if PSDC has had discussion with St. Lukes. She says offices would likely fill up fast in this area.

Mr. McGeehan suggested making building “K” smaller and “M” bigger.

Mr. Buonocore asked about constructing subsurface parking garages. Mr. Alejikov stated that the entire site will need a lot of stormwater management so the parking lots will likely have stormwater facilities under the surface parking. Mr. Buonocore continued to suggest that residential on top of the parking levels could provide for the parking requirement.

Ms. Becker referenced a past meeting where Reiff Road residents were told that “K” was going to be open space. Ms. Younce would like to see three stories on the right side of the plan instead of the four to five stories. She would also like the “I” & “L” buildings to be one story. The other members agreed that they would like to see a reduction in building height on the northern side.

Mr. McHugh thanked the Commission for their review and comments. He said that they will discuss, revise, and resubmit. They will be back to present in the near future.

**Old Business:**

**Drafting Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Chickens**

Mr. Brugger introduced the language that the Commission had reviewed several months ago. He stated that one of the Board members requested this language be reviewed again with an amendment to a smaller minimum lot size. The previous version recommended by the Commission in June or July included a minimum lot size of 30,000 sq ft, the proposed language recommended 5,000 sq ft.

Mr. Brugger stated that staff had provided both versions of the proposed ordinance for review.

Ms. Younce referenced neighboring Townships including Upper Gwynedd and Lower Salford. She said their lot minimums are 3 acres and 15,000 sqft minimum, respectively.

The Planning Commission agreed that 5,000 sqft lot minimum was not appropriate. Concerns arose about proximity to neighbors and their dwellings, specifically around townhomes.

Mr. Main recommended that they provide for a larger lot size minimum and can always go smaller in the future. Mr. Leach added a lot of research was put into this before and staff came up with 30,000 sq ft minimum. Mr. Buonocore suggested keeping it to the original recommendation of 30,000 sq ft. Ms. Becker recommended that chickens only be permitted on single family lots.

Mr. Main motioned to recommend to the Board of Supervisors keeping the language as recommended during June of 2023 with the minimum lot requirement of 30,000 sqft in order to have chickens, seconded by Ms. Becker. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Vavra made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor. 8:38 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Will Brugger

Director of Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement