



TOWNSHIP OF SPRING PLANNING COMMISSION

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Meeting Minutes

September 1, 2022

Chairperson Ulrich called a regular Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 1st, 2022 in the Public Meeting Room of the Township Administration Building. Upon roll call, LeRoy Schannauer, Ron Keating, George Stuck, Jeremy Zaborowski and Brad Weisman were present. Also present were Jim Moll, Director of Engineering and Planning Services; Dan Becker, Solicitor; Judy Houck, Director of Parks and Recreation and Jen Bensinger, Director of Information Technology. The following individuals also attended the meeting: Russ Long, Chris Falencki, Daniel Grassi, David Wilson and Steve Buck. Ed Schwarz attended the meeting virtually.

OPEN TO THE FLOOR: None

AMEND THE AGENDA – No amendments are needed for this meeting.

MINUTES:

August 4th, 2022 Meeting – Motion made by Mr. Stuck, seconded by Mr. Schannauer to approve the minutes of the August 4th, 2022 meeting. Upon roll call, Mr. Weisman abstained, all other members present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED - 5-0

NEW PLANS

Spring Commons – Sketch Plan

(Review letter dated August 31st, 2022 attached.)

Mr. Moll reviewed the sketch plan for this development which involves the replacement of existing office structures with apartments. There are two (2) lots on this site. The applicant is proposing a total of 42 apartments which will include a mix of one (1) and two (2) bedroom apartments. One structure will remain an office use with the addition of some retail space. This plan has been submitted under the Mixed-Use Regulations. These regulations are designed to promote developments that have a combination of compatible uses – residential with various commercial uses. Access to the property is on Windmill Road and also through an easement off Iroquois Avenue. This is a use that is permitted by right within the Planned Office Business District. The proposed apartments are considered garden apartments which are permitted within a mixed-used development as a special exception use requiring the approval of the Zoning Hearing Board. The applicant is aware of these regulations.

The mixed uses that are permitted are set by ranges:

<u>Use/Category</u>	<u>Allowable % of Total Floor Space</u>	<u>Proposed % of Total Floor Space</u>
Group 1 – Office	20% - 70%	12%
Group 2 – Retail Store	20% - 50%	8%
Group 3 – Garden Apartments	10% - 50%	80%

NEW PLANS (Continued)

Spring Commons – Sketch Plan – (Continued)

The applicant will need to obtain relief from the Zoning Hearing Board because none of their proposed uses fall within the allowable percentage ranges.

The applicant's representatives reported that the existing buildings are currently only approximately 20% occupied. The market for office space has dwindled significantly which is why the applicant is proposing more residential use than commercial in this development. The current owner/manager will remain the same and has many mixed-use developments in the area and throughout the Commonwealth. They distributed a draft drawing of the proposed buildings for the Commissions review.

Mr. Moll highlighted some of the comments in his review letter including the floor area ratio (FAR), the possible need for a Traffic Impact Study and why they are not retrofitting the current buildings. The applicant has reviewed the traffic patterns and is willing to meet with Township committees/consultants to further discuss the matter.

Mr. Stuck questioned if they considered putting retail on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. This would provide space for small shops that the younger kids are looking for similar to what is existing in West Reading. The applicant reported that this location doesn't have good street frontage for exposure and easy access. Mr. Stuck suggested speaking with Acacia Flowers about gaining access through their driveway. The applicant reported that it would be difficult to get the existing driveway up to PennDOT standards that that to create a new driveway would require the relocation of the retention ponds which provide a nice buffer between the building units and Route 724.

Mr. Zaborowski questioned what the applicant's hard-ship claim was for requesting the variances. The applicant reported that they would site the uniqueness of the building sites and the access points. The existing access points are the safest access points. Successful retail space requires easy access for the public.

Mr. Keating questioned if the existing facility has any residential space and it was reported that there are no residential spaces in the current buildings. Mr. Zaborowski commented that he recognized the market fundamentals have changed but the Commission must try to honor the sentiment with which the POB District was established. Mr. Stuck questioned if they wouldn't get enough traffic from the school district employees, the residents of Stone Gate and the residents of the area between Iroquois Avenue and Martins Road. He suggested they perform more market research.

Helping Harvest – Parking Lot Expansion – Preliminary Plans

(Review letter dated September 1st, 2022 attached.)

Mr. Moll has not completed his review and only provided a "draft" review letter to the Commission. The new plan was displayed and Mr. Moll reviewed the changes to the plan which included reducing the number of parking spaces in the proposed lot which moved the proposed lot back away from Morgan Drive and a "Phase 2" parking lot which is proposed to be located on the lot currently owned by PennDOT. Mr. Moll is unsure of what the applicant is intending by calling this area "Phase 2". He also reported that this site is in the PIB District. This district does not permit off-street parking that is not located on the same lot as the primary use. The applicant's representative indicated that they are in discussions with PennDOT.

Discussion was held regarding storm water management, purchasing vs leasing the property from PennDOT, the set-back from Morgan Drive and whether or not the area that does not comply could be deemed de minimis. Landscaping is proposed for this area. Mr. Becker confirmed that an access drive can be within this set-back area but the parking spaces cannot be.

NEW PLANS (Continued)

Helping Harvest – Parking Lot Expansion – Preliminary Plans (Continued)

Additional information is necessary for the Commission to proceed with plan approval.

Motion made by Mr. Weisman, seconded by Mr. Keating to recommend to the Board of Supervisors, approval of the Extension of Time until December 31st, 2022. Upon roll call, all members present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED - 6-0

Motion made by Mr. Stuck, seconded by Mr. Keating to recommend to the Board of Supervisors, approval of the Waiver Request to utilize a scale of 1" = 30' rather than the specified scale of 1" = 50'. Upon roll call, all members present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED - 6-0

St. Luke's University – Medical Office Building

(Review letter dated August 31st, 2022 attached.)

Mr. Moll reviewed the three (3) waiver requests that were requested. These waiver requests are:

1. To submit the Plans as a combined Preliminary/Final Plan.
2. To allow the Plans to be submitted as a scale of 1" equals 30'.
3. To allow the minimum storm pipe to be 12" in diameter.

The first two requests have already been acted upon by the Planning Commission. The applicant's representative reviewed the storm water pipe size waiver request. Discussion was held regarding previous flooding issue at this location. The applicant has reviewed this request with Steve Hoffman of Great Valley Consultants and Mr. Hoffman approved the 12" diameter pipe size.

Motion made by Mr. Stuck, seconded by Mr. Schannauer, to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the waiver request to reduce the size of the storm water pipe to a 12" diameter be granted. Upon roll call, Mr. Zaborowski abstained and all other members present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Mr. Moll reviewed the closing of the third driveway onto Hillvale Avenue. Brief discussion was held regarding the proposed planting strip in this area, the encroachment into the 10' set back and the reduction in the impervious surface.

Motion made by Mr. Zaborowski, seconded by Mr. Keating that since the Township's Engineer, Solicitor and Planning Commission consider this a de minimis change, they recommend that the Board of Supervisors also consider the closing of the third driveway and the installation of a planting screen a "de minimis" change to the plans and the applicant should not be required to seek any zoning relief. Upon roll call, all members present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED – 6-0

Mr. Moll reported that Entech Engineering has reviewed the sewer capacity and sewage generation rates for this site and have determined that the applicant does not need to purchase any additional sewage capacity. There are some stormwater issues that need to be addressed prior to approval of the plan. The applicant is re-introducing the underground storm water detention basin instead of the underground infiltration system that is currently in place. Since this is a Conditional/Final Plan, all conditions that are outstanding in Mr. Moll's review letter must be met prior to approval of the Final Plan. Mr. Keating questioned the amount of water that would be retained on site. The applicant is not introducing anymore impervious surfaces so the amount of storm water run-off would not be increasing from what it currently is. Mr. Moll reported that this detention facility will only be handling water run-off from this individual site – it is not handling any water from "up-stream".

NEW PLANS (Continued)

St. Luke's University – Medical Office Building (Continued)

Motion made by Mr. Stuck, seconded by Mr. Keating to recommend the Board of Supervisors approve the Final Plan once all conditions listed in Mr. Moll's review letter are adequately addressed. Upon roll call, Mr. Zaborowski abstained, all other members voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED – 5-0

PENDING PLANS

R. Weller II Minor Subdivision

Mr. Moll had nothing new to report about this plan.

Wilson School District – Building Addition & Athletic Field Improvements

Mr. Moll had nothing new to report on this project. The applicant has submitted an Extension of Time Request with an expiration date of November 29th, 2022.

Motion made by Mr. Weisman, seconded by Mr. Zaborowski to recommend to the Board of Supervisors, approval of the Extension of Time until November 29th, 2022. Upon roll call, all members present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED. 6-0

Montello Residences – Preliminary/Final Subdivision Plans

Mr. Moll had nothing new to report on this project. The current Extension of Time does not expire until December 31st, 2022.

INFORMATIONAL

Alcon – Entech Review – 8/24/22

This plan has already been recommended for approval but the plans have not yet been recorded. They are currently working with Entech Engineering regarding their sewage capacity.

The Learning Center – Entech Review 08/16/22

Entech is working with the applicant regarding their sewage capacity. They will eventually need to purchase additional capacity through the Township and the City of Reading.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Chairperson Ulrich adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m.



Ron Keating, Secretary