

The stated meeting of the Administrative Code and Land Use Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, September 4, 2019 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Brodsky presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners BRODSKY, THOMPSON, GILLESPIE, CARSWELL, WINEGRAD

Township Manager MANFREDI
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Township Engineer MONTGOMERY

Also Present: Commissioners KLINE, ROTHMAN, BOWMAN, ZAPPONE, SCHREIBER, DiPLACIDO, VAHEY, SPIEGELMAN, MYERS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Brodsky made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Gillespie to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2019 Administrative Code and Land Use Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

PRESENTATION: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item ACL-01-091219:

Commissioner Brodsky made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Gillespie to consider approval of the Land Development Plan for the replacement of the Woodland Parking Garage structure at the southeast corner of the intersection of Woodland Road and Highland Avenue.

Mr. Zachary Sivertsen, Attorney, Eastburn & Gray, representing the applicant, Abington Jefferson Health Systems, introduced Ms. Christine Lynn, Director of Facilities Design, Planning, Construction & Sustainability for Abington Hospital; Mr. Ted Przybylowski, Project Architect with Ewing Cole and Mr. Craig Bryson, Project Engineer with Pennoni Associates, said we are proposing to demolish the existing Woodland Parking Garage that is part of the Abington Hospital complex and reconstruct it taller with additional parking spaces and modernize it so that the garage is code compliant.

Applicant is in receipt of review letters from Township Engineer, MCPC, Abington Township Planning Commission and the Shade Tree Commission in which both of those bodies recommended approval of the project. Stormwater management will also be added to the site as well as improvements to the landscaping with a number of trees and greenery beautifying the building.

Applicant has worked with the neighbors to address their concerns and we are willing to work with the Township and neighboring property owners in reaching mutual agreeable conditions of the project.

Ms. Christine Lynn, Director for Abington Jefferson Health, said 18 months ago, a structural assessment was done of the parking garage, and when the report was completed, we weighed maintenance/repairs v. replacement and the decision was to proceed with the replacement option. At that time, we engaged with designers, construction managers, and Township staff to understand what will be required for the approval process.

A meeting was held at the hospital in February/March with the neighbors to show them the planning documents and they were asked for feedback. What we will be presented tonight takes into account the neighbors' concerns such as dust/debris from demolition and demo will be done in the wintertime; parking when the garage is closed and staff will be relocated and there will be supplemental parking for visitors/patients, so they do not have to park in the neighborhood. Additional concerns were increase in traffic on Highland due to construction and we will make sure all traffic coming to the site will be from Old York Road through existing loading dock entrance.

It is important to the hospital to replace this garage for patients and visitors who park there, and if it is not replaced, there will be parking in the neighborhood, which is something we do not want.

Mr. Craig Bryson, Project Engineer, Pennoni Associates, said proposed garage will be taller, but it does not violate height requirement within the zoning district; site plan showed that existing garage violates building setback requirement and the improvement is to put a skew in so it will not violate the property line. Proposed parking spaces are 247 and garage entrance will remain the same; stormwater management facility was added to the site as well as a heavily vegetated screen along Highland Avenue, and in conjunction with that, we will add a growth wall to the façade.

Applicant requested waiver from submitting a complete total boundary survey along the entire campus; an indication that the elevations are based upon sanitary sewer datum of the Township; the location, site ownership and purpose of rights-of-way and easements located within property boundaries; curbing shall be rounded by a tangential arc having a minimum radius of 20 feet; dimensions of parking spaces are required to be 10 X 20 and proposed are 9 X 18 parking stalls; storm drains shall be located behind the curb and within the right-of-way of the street and protected with a 24-inch cover and Township Engineer was in favor of the waiver and a stronger pipe will be used; minimal internal diameter storm drain shall be 15 inches and we used an elliptical pipe that is not 15 inches, but the same capacity; cut and fill slopes shall not be 15% or steeper and waiver is requested because existing steep slopes were manmade.

Commissioner Brodsky asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Spiegelman said he looks forward to working with the hospital team on this project to address resident's concerns of demolition debris; construction noise; increase traffic on Highland Avenue and mitigating any parking from this project into the neighborhood and resolving hospital staff parking on certain streets in Highland Farms and throughout Ward 11, and in particular the 1900 block of Guernsey. Also, waivers requested by the applicant make sense and he clarified that the detention basin proposed for the site will meet MS4 requirements. Is that correct?

Ms. Amy Montgomery, Township Engineer, replied yes, the new plan complies with all stormwater management requirements, and currently there is no stormwater management onsite, so this will be a benefit.

Commissioner Spiegelman said he is in favor of this moving forward.

Commissioner Gillespie asked about the smaller-sized parking spaces and expressed concern about the possibility of doors of vehicle's hitting each other.

Ms. Lynn replied parking spaces are standard size and improvements will be made to existing conditions.

Commissioner Gillespie questioned whether the neighbors have been receptive to the project.

Ms. Lynn replied at our last meeting their concerns were about existing parking issues and it was addressed.

Commissioner Brodsky asked to be notified and included in future meetings with the hospital team and neighbors as well as all of the members of this committee and other Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson echoed Commissioner Spiegelman's comments in regards to supporting this application as a deficient parking garage will be removed and replaced with a modernized one that will be better for all of us. Although he appreciates and admires outreach to the neighbors, his concern is that the height of the garage will be increased with a brick wall staring down on Highland and how that will affect the neighbors.

Ms. Lynn replied the way the parking garage is designed is that it faces the neighborhood, and during the nighttime hours, which it is open until 9-10 p.m., there will be headlights shining into homes, so without some sort of solid wall, there will be headlights shining onto second floors from 5 p.m. on in the wintertime. Also, there is more landscaping planned than what is there today to break up the monotony of the brick and the brick material is consistent with other hospital buildings.

Commissioner Thompson said he appreciates the brick material as it is a hallmark of the neighborhood and it works with the residential vibe of that street. What is problematic is the scale and lack of articulation on the façade, so what will be done to break up the scale to make it work better with the neighborhood?

Ted Przybylowski, Principal Architect with Ewing Cole, replied there are vertical panels on the façade and there are seven slots that run vertically between the panels that vary along the side to break it up giving it more dimension. We are limited with the amount of depth that we can provide without going beyond the perimeter and losing parking spaces. We want to create a vertical mist and the green wall will cover most of it in four to five years after the garage is built.

Commissioner Thompson asked why is the green wall only on the service courtyard side rather than the street side?

Mr. Przybylowski replied there are trellises on the slots on the other side and there will be greenery growing there.

Commissioner Spiegelman clarified that the applicant will comply with comments of the MCPC review letter regarding curb cuts and crosswalks along the main entrance and there will be no use of invasive English Ivy for the green wall. Is that correct?

Mr. Bryson replied yes, there will be new ADA ramps. In regards to the English Ivy; we studied five or six plants and there is only one true plant that will have a chance of being leafed year round and that is English Ivy. We understand the commitment of training the plant, clipping it and treating it for insects, but welcome the invasiveness of it because we want it to grow quickly establishing a green wall. If there is an issue, we will consult a horticulturist and work with the Township, but our stance is that we want to plant the invasive ivy.

Commissioner Spiegelman said he looks forward to working with the hospital team on it.

Commissioner Myers expressed concern about parking stall size and questioned whether there is any data on fender-benders or vehicles being scratched while parked in the garage.

Ms. Lynn replied we are proposing the same sized parking spaces in this garage as what Ziple has today. Every time a vehicle gets nicked or dinged, we get the report because we are asked to pay for the repair, so there is data; however, there are not many complaints from the Ziple garage; most of them are from this garage.

Commissioner Myers questioned whether the space between the parking spaces will increase.

Mr. Bryson replied no. The garage is designed to minimize and eliminate columns and the 9 X 18 space is industry standard, and if it was larger, we would lose spaces. The neighbors want more spaces so there will be less parking in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Myers said she feels a lot of the parking in the neighborhood is to avoid cost. What will the cost be to park in the new facility?

Ms. Lynn replied the cost will be the same as it is in all of our existing garages. Internally, we looked at parking structure fees, and we offer a free parking stamped voucher for patients coming into the hospital for a service.

Commissioner Brodsky asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that 9 X 18 is not large enough and she is against it; noninvasive plants feed our wildlife and she asked for “all documents to be on one page.”

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item ACL-02-091219:

Commissioner Brodsky made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Gillespie to consider approval of Land Development Plan for 2907 Jefferson Avenue.

Ms. Kristin Holmes, Project Engineer with Holmes Cunningham Engineering, representing the applicant/property owner Tim Calhoun, Crest Commons, LLC, said property is located at 2907 Jefferson Avenue and proposed is a minor subdivision for two single family residential homes. Property is surrounded by Ardsley Park on three sides and Jefferson Avenue along the front. There was an existing single family home with detached garage/driveway that was recently demolished and proposed is to build two new single family dwellings. The driveway from the home that was demolished will be used for one of the new homes on Lot 1 and a new home, driveway and utilities will be installed on Lot 2 as shown on the plan. Stormwater seepage pit is proposed in the back right corner that is the low point of the property to collect runoff from new impervious surface and will be maintained by the homeowner of that respective lot. The applicant has been through the review process with Township staff and Township Engineer and there are waivers requested from SALDO. Also, the applicant received approval from the Montgomery County Conservation District as well as PADEP for sewer exemption for the new lot for connection of public sewer.

Applicant requested waivers from Section 146.11.B.(7) partial waiver from providing a 400 ft. overlap of miscellaneous existing features and an aerial has been provided; Section 146.24 D. – partial waiver from providing roadway improvements along property frontage; Section 146.33.B. (1) from using runoff coefficient C value for a .025 acre lot and Section 143.33. D. & G – from providing a storm pipe with a minimum 15 inch diameter.

Commissioner Brodsky asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Thompson asked for clarification on waiver request from Section 146.33 B. (1).

Ms. Holmes replied there is conflicting information between SALDO and the Stormwater Management Ordinance, which have different runoff coefficients and those numbers represent land cover, so the applicant has used the more restrictive requirement from the Stormwater Management Ordinance rather than the value prescribed in the SALDO.

Commissioner Gillespie asked for clarification on waiver request regarding cartway widening and sidewalk area and also about a garage and parking.

Ms. Holmes replied there is already sidewalk along the frontage of the property and the request is that if the road were to be widened the sidewalk would also need to be re-done, so request is a waiver from widening and therefore the sidewalk would remain in place. There will be an attached garage for each dwelling and a two-car wide driveway.

Commissioner Zappone questioned whether the applicant has scheduled any meetings with residents.

Ms. Holmes replied she is not aware of any.

Commissioner Zappone said that he has received calls so let's get a meeting scheduled with the residents.

Ms. Holmes agreed.

Commissioner Winegrad asked about the seepage bit in the back of the property.

Ms. Holmes referred to the plan showing the seepage pit in the back corner of the property and it will be an underground stone well and the entire property drains from the front towards the back corner, so that is the natural low point to collect all of the runoff from both properties. Any maintenance or restoration would be the responsibility of the owner of Lot 2 and there is an operation/maintenance agreement for stormwater management facility.

Commissioner Thompson questioned whether it is legal to push stormwater across a property line into a stormwater management basin.

Ms. Montgomery replied the existing house and existing impervious is mostly on Lot 1 and she approves of having one stormwater management facility for the two lots that mostly encompasses Lot 2.

Manager Manfredi clarified that the deeds for each lot will include the O & M agreement. Is that correct?

Ms. Holmes replied yes.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT – general matters relating to Administrative Code and Land Use:

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that she attended a Penn State meeting and she was “saddened to see a repeat of what we had with the YMCA in regards to text/map amendments and not honoring the zoning.”

Vice President Kline stated that none of what the speaker just said is true.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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