

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, July 23, 2019 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Chairperson Lucy Strackhouse presiding.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: BROWN, GAUTHIER, COOPER.  
DiCELLO, RUSSELL, ROSEN, ROBINSON,  
STRACKHOUSE  
Excused: BAKER

Also Present: Planning & Zoning Officer PENECALE  
Office Manager WYRSTA  
County Planner NARCOWICH

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**MINUTES:**

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve the revised minutes of the June 25, 2019 Planning Commission Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Agenda Item PC1 - Application of Abington/Jefferson Health Systems:

Mr. Zachary Sivertsen, Attorney, Eastburn & Gray, representing the applicant, introduced Ms. Christine Lynn, Director, Facilities Design, Planning, Construction & Sustainability for Abington Hospital and Mr. Craig Bryson, Project Engineer, and said we propose to demolish existing Woodland Parking Garage and construct a new five-story parking structure of 40.77 feet in height in the same location that will include additional stormwater management facilities and landscaping and ingress/egress will be from the same location on Woodland Road. The applicant received review letters from Township Engineer, MCPC and Shade Tree Commission.

Ms. Lynn said we propose to replace the parking garage as it is a 50-year old structure, and we had construction design professionals provide an assessment indicating that the maintenance and repairs were so lengthy that it made sense to pursue a replacement. We engaged with the neighbors in this process and invited them to the hospital to review the project and design options being considered in which the neighbors provided feedback. Our concern is that if we do not replace the garage on the hospital's campus there would be parking in the neighborhood.

Thaddeus J. Przybylowski, Jr., Principal Architect, of Ewing Cole, Federal Reserve Bank Building, 100 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19106, presented replacement design of the garage that will be refitting the existing garage footprint of approximately 20,200 sq. ft. The parking levels are proposed to be taller and there will be two elevators as opposed to one and stairs on the northwest and southeast corner of the garage with the brick wall facing the neighborhood. Screening that runs vertically is to allow vegetation for a more green-environment and all views from the site were presented. There will be five levels of parking in an open-air garage and we will create a green wall across the frontage.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any comments from members of the Planning Commission.

Ms. Gauthier asked about parking on the top level during a snowstorm.

Ms. Lynn replied we close the roof level during heavy snow until it is cleared and made safe for parking.

Mr. Bryson presented the site plan noting that it is the same impervious coverage and a new connector is also being proposed that is more user-friendly. Also proposed is a stormwater management system that is a rain garden that will be a basin mix promoting growth of meadow mixture, and along the front, we will be planting Ivy growing upwards.

Ms. Gauthier clarified that the applicant will take recommendation by the MCPC that English Ivy is invasive and will plant an alternative. Is that correct?

Mr. Bryson replied he will address that in a moment. Existing garage as it sits now violates building setback line by two feet, so the garage is a foot and a half further into the site and we also put in a landscape buffer. The entrance will be the same and we improved the pedestrian ADA ramps at the corners and added two as shown on the plan.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for the hours of operation.

Ms. Lynn replied existing garage closes around 9-10 p.m. and we have not discussed what the operation hours will be for the new garage.

Mr. Bryson continued that the new garage will be higher to meet regulations and will be modernized to be safer. Regarding review letter dated July 17, 2019 from Boucher & James; items are technical that include waiver requests and we will comply with all items with the exception of comment No. 18 of Boucher & James letter regarding the Shade Tree Commission's letter about their concern of Ivy growing on the wall and migrant birds. The applicant is dedicated to the green wall and we accept that there is an ecology effect such as birds making a mess; however, we would rather have a green wall instead of a substitute tree in the front.

Ms. Strackhouse agreed that the green wall is a wonderful aspect of this parking garage, but English Ivy is not a good plant to use. It is invasive and not native species, so we would like the applicant to consider something other than English Ivy.

Mr. Bryson replied he understands the concern, but it is hearty and grows well and we are worried that some other species would look "twiggy" growing up the side of the garage.

Ms. Gauthier said Virginia Creeper would not look bad in the wintertime and English Ivy is not a good choice because it is invasive.

Ms. Strackhouse suggested using more than one type of vine.

Ms. Gauthier asked for the location of temporary parking while the new garage is under construction.

Ms. Lynn replied we have other lots and staff will be directed to park there.

Ms. Gauthier asked how demolition and construction will impact traffic on Highland Avenue.

Ms. Lynn replied no trucks will enter the site from Highland. They will enter through a secure, gated alleyway.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for the construction schedule.

Ms. Lynn replied we are hopeful for a fall demolition and completion in 18 months.

Ms. Gauthier asked will LED lighting be used inside of the new garage?

Mr. Bryson replied yes, and will shut off at reasonable hours.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments.

Dan Gillegan, 2005 Woodland Road, asked for an explanation for having a green wall as opposed to the planting of trees. Also, he asked for the time/days of when construction will occur and questioned whether there are any environmental concerns in regards to demolition.

Mr. Bryson replied it is an architectural element that we would like to see vines growing in and around and a tree would be stationary and away from the building losing the green wall effect.

Ms. Lynn replied work would not begin before 8 a.m. until 3-4 p.m. during the weekdays and occasional weekend work and we will communicate that with the ward Commissioner. Regarding demolition; due to neighbors concerns that during the summertime windows are open, so we scheduled demolition for the October/November timeframe. Going forward, we will meet with the neighbors again to discuss demolition plans.

Joseph Markham, 2056 Woodland Road, commented that he likes the green wall effect, and he asked about a brick pattern on the wall to give it a more layered-look.

Mr. Przybylowski replied we tried to follow the pattern of the existing building, but there are some vertical lines associated with it and we would like to have a green wall.

Mr. Penecale asked about landscaping on Woodland Road.

Mr. Bryson replied a buffer is proposed to satisfy zoning requirements and the utilities will dictate the layout of the trees.

Mr. DiCello said he will recuse himself from voting on this application.

Waivers requested by the applicant were voted on separately as follows:

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Rosen to recommend approval of waivers from Sections 146-11.A. and 146-11.B. – Proposed Layout & Existing Features Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Rosen to recommend approval of waivers from Sections 146-11.D. & 146-32.B. – Sanitary Sewer Datum Elevations.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Rosen to recommend approval of waivers from Sections 146-11.F & 146-33.B. – Profile Plan & Storm Sewer Computations provided that the applicant can work out flow calculations to the satisfaction of Township Engineer.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to recommend approval of waiver from Section 146-17 – Detailed Projected Construction Cost & Public Improvement Cost.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to recommend approval of waiver from Section 146-25. D. – Curb Radius/Radii of 20 feet v. 15/18 feet ROW & 10/15 feet onsite.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to recommend approval of waiver from Section 146-28.A. – Parking Stall Size of 9' by 18' instead of 10' by 20'.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Cooper made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to recommend approval of waivers from Sections 146-33.C. & 146-33.D. – Manhole Cover Size & Pipe Dimensions for Storm Sewer.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Ms. Gauthier made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Rosen to recommend approval of waiver from Section 146-43.C. – Creation of Steep Slopes of greater than 15% along the Highland Avenue frontage.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Penecale noted that applicant added two crosswalks; one across service drive and one across the entryway on the road.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to recommend approval of the plan with two conditions; that the final design of the onsite stormwater management system must conform to the requirements of Stormwater Management Ordinance and to the satisfaction of the Township Engineer and that the applicant will consider another option in replacing proposed English Ivy for the proposed green wall as well as approval of waivers as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Note: Mr. DiCello recused himself from voting on this application.

Item PC2 – The Shade Tree Commission presentation on proposed revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and SALDO pertaining to tree preservation, tree protection and planting requirements:

Dr. Rita Stevens, Chair of the Abington Shade Tree Commission, gave an introduction of the STC strategy in which they continually seek to preserve and enhance Abington’s tree canopy and ecosystems that trees provide. We embrace a goal of sustainable canopy coverage for our Township, which is 40% on average with the large, mature trees providing the biggest benefit and are an integral part of Abington’s canopy. We do recognize that we are losing trees from climate change and development decisions, and we need to continue to preserve and plant them and make sure that the planting sites are suitable.

Mr. Rosen asked for clarification on the 40% canopy average.

Dr. Stevens replied there should be 40% of trees on 60% of ground and that is the goal regionally for the five-county area and it is a widely-used national standard as well.

Also, Abington Township was the recipient of the 2018 Tree Vitalize Community Forestry Management Grant that enabled the Township to hire two arborists who developed and applied the type of changes the STC are proposing.

**Presented were the motivation, background and proposed revised changes to Article XXIV – Landscaping Chapter of the Abington Zoning Ordinance -**

Large, mature trees are critical to maintaining an adequate canopy that maximizes urban benefit and we need to strike a practical balance to achieve a sustainable urban canopy.

Abington Township revised its Zoning Ordinance in 2016-2017, which included many aspects of tree care and the Shade Tree Commission participated in the rewrite of the zoning ordinance. At that time, we recognized that the new ordinance did not offer critical and practical standards related to tree preservation, protection and replacement, but we lacked the knowledge to develop it. Tree Vitalize Grant provided the means to work with consulting municipal arborists with practical experience in ordinance development and implementation.

Project scope; we benchmarked ordinances relevant to Abington and consultants reviewed several ordinances from other municipalities that they felt were similar to Abington Township and provided best practices/options; we identified case studies to use to inform ordinance development for Abington Township; recommend practical improvements to the Abington Township Zoning Ordinance; create outreach documents such as tree preservation, protection and replacement during construction and care of street trees.

Key decisions; focus on Landscaping Article of the Zoning Ordinance; focus on critical gaps in tree protection, tree preservation and tree replacement; refine the entire Article for practicality, effectiveness and ease-of-use and introduce proposed Zoning Ordinance revisions into the SALDO revision process, which is currently underway. Situations this would apply to are site disturbance and site-specific requirements and there would be exceptions.

Tree Survey Plan – Key Features include: Existing trees, topography, existing and propose buildings and structures and associated amenities; designation of trees to remain v. removed, tree protection zones and tree replacement schedule.

#### **Standards for Tree Preservation and Protection –**

Tree Preservation; minimize removal of healthy trees; conserve steep slopes; preserve existing drainage patterns; protect soil; tunnel for underground utility lines and management of invasive vines.

Tree Protection; set up and respect the tree protection zone (TPZ); manage potential conflict with adjacent construction activities.

#### **Standards for Tree Replacement –**

Trees to be removed; add up caliper of all trees to be removed that are equal to or greater than 6' DBH; sum = total caliper.

Number of replacement trees; minimum caliper for replacement trees is three inches and total caliper of replacement trees shall be equal to exceed the total caliper of the trees to be removed.

**If replacement trees do not fit –**

Substitutions for three-inch caliper trees; up to six-inch caliper trees and partial substitution with ornamental trees, shrubs or groundcover; credits for preserved trees within the limit of disturbance; stormwater management BMP's as approved by Township Engineer; commemorative Shade Tree Fund to support planting trees in other areas of the Township. An example of tree replacement was presented.

**Maintenance of Public Trees –**

Permits necessary to plant or remove a tree in the right-of-way; responsibilities of the Township; standards of care and prohibited activities. With the exception of permits and standards of care, these provisions are part of current landscaping article of the zoning ordinance.

**Private Tree Responsibilities -**

Clearance; sidewalk nine feet; street 16 feet; Public Health Nuisance; provisions for tree and stump removal.

**Responsibilities of Shade Tree Commission or Designee -**

Review permits; review tree surveys and tree protection plans; review final landscape plans; onsite pre-construction conference focused on tree plan and protection; early-construction inspection and tree and vegetation inspection. This will need to be staffed by someone who is an arborist and proposed was to set up, as part of the land development escrow, a provision for professional services covering services of the arborist as well as consider process for review of permits.

Ms. Gauthier asked about the cost for an arborist consultant.

Dr. Stevens replied she will look into it and report back.

Mr. Rosen suggested having a business plan for having an arborist consultant including risk management.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for a copy of the proposed text amendment for members of the Planning Commission to review.

Ms. Gauthier asked for the existing language and what is proposed to be changed incorporated into one document for comparison purposes.

Dr. Stevens indicated that she will color code existing language and what is being proposed.



Planning Commission Meeting

July 23, 2019

**ADJOURNMENT:** 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary