

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at the Township Administrative Building, Abington, PA.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

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

Also Present: County Planner NARCOWICH
Township Engineer MONTGOMERY
Engineering Consultant PRUGAR
Administrative Manager WYRSTA
Commissioner SPIEGELMAN
Commissioner WINEGRAD

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES:

Mr. Baker made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2019 Planning Commission Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 9-0.

REORGANIZATION:

Mr. Narcowich opened nominations for Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Rosen nominated Ms. Strackhouse as Chairperson of the Planning Commission, seconded by Ms. Robinson. There were no further nominations.

Ms. Strackhouse was reappointed as Chairperson of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington for calendar year 2020.

Ms. Strackhouse opened nominations for Vice Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Rosen nominated Mr. Russell as Vice Chairman, seconded by Ms. Gauthier. There were no further nominations.

Mr. Russell was appointed Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington for calendar year 2020.

Agenda Item PC1 – Baederwood Residential Partners, LP:

Ms. Strackhouse read agenda Item PC1 into the record and called on the applicant.

Mr. Marc Kaplin, Attorney representing the applicant Baederwood Residential Partners, LP, presented approved conditional use plan noting major difference will be in the parking lot and current land development includes a series of review letters; Pennoni's letter dated November 12, 2019; Fire Marshal's letter dated August 1, 2019 indicating an emergency secondary access; County's review letter dated September 26, 2019 and Boucher & James Engineers letter dated January 6, 2020 and then applicant made a submission contained in Bohler Engineering letter dated January 21, 2020 in response to Boucher & James' letter.

Ms. Prugar said Bohler Engineering letter dated January 21, 2020 was received and reviewed by her office and that was in response to Boucher & James January 6, 2020 review letter.

Mr. Kaplin referring to the plan showing eight acres in which the applicant has cross easement agreements with the owners of the shopping center that allows the applicant to make improvements and develop apartments in the rear, and as part of the variances received and as part of the settlement of litigation, substantial improvements will be made in the parking lot. Other than the Whole Foods parking lot, the parking lot has been reconfigured with additional landscaping and islands containing lighting as well as the main entrance to the apartments located on the west side of the property and upper level grade becomes the same grade as the Noble parking lot.

When conditional use was approved, the Township indicated that the applicant will need to get the next door neighbor to agree to an easement for emergency vehicle access and the applicant is currently negotiating an agreement with the Township that will be brought before the Board of Commissioners, so with that agreement we will be able to make the connection.

There will be walking trails at the back of the property towards the entrance to the building and there is existing open space in the shopping center and another area that will be landscaped as open space, which is near Planet Fitness that can be used by tenants. Overall plan showed structured parking permitted by ordinance and 15% of the parking spaces (60 spaces) will be open to the public and there will be multiple floors of parking for the building. Bonuses were taken advantage of by complying with a series of requirements of the FTD Ordinance.

Mr. Matt Hammond, TPD Traffic Engineer representing the applicant, presented outline of improvements to existing driveways from the Fairway and the first driveway westernmost driveway is a right-in, right-out with median extending across the Fairway in this area.

The second driveway, the western central driveway is an existing full access driveway and plan proposes to create full access signalized driveway at this intersection that will provide direct access into the center from proposed residential development as well as the existing Ford Dealership. There will also be dedicated left turn lanes on the Fairway in each direction with pedestrian accommodations such as crosswalks; hand-man countdown timers; ADA ramps, etc. Internally, a larger, longer throat driveway with "Stop" control and pedestrian crossings will be provided. Western central driveway is a full access driveway and proposed is to extend the median converting it to a right-in, right-out only for the center and a left-in.

Further east on the Fairway is the eastern central driveway, which is full access and un-signalized and the easternmost driveway is also full access and un-signalized. Driveway opposite Whole Foods is proposed to be a full access signalized driveway with left turn lane into the site including pedestrian crossing equipment. For the easternmost driveway, we propose to extend the median on the Fairway and turn it into a right-in, right-out.

There are two existing mid-block crossings on the Fairway for pedestrians that are un-signalized and we propose to eliminate them altogether so as to bring all pedestrians to the signalized intersections.

Ms. Gauthier asked how the signals will be coordinated and why there are four right-in accesses going westbound.

Mr. Hammond replied due to the fact that we are proposing two new traffic signals on the Fairway and it's close proximity to the intersection of Rt. 611 and Harte Road, we propose to coordinate those traffic signals so they operate as one to help facilitate traffic.

Mr. Brian Keaveney, Traffic Engineer with Pennoni representing the Township, requested that the applicant work with the Township in retiming that signal at Rt. 611, the Fairway and Harte Road as part of this development.

Ms. Gauthier asked could PennDOT re-time that intersection.

Mr. Hammond replied the municipality owns and maintains traffic signals and PennDOT permits them. This is not a PennDOT roadway so we do not need an HOP; however, we do need approval from PennDOT to install traffic signals, which is in the review process now.

Mr. Russell asked about trip generation from the new development.

Mr. Hammond replied traffic impact study showed that there will be 88 trips during a.m. peak hour; 106-107 trips during p.m. peak hour and Saturday mid-day peak hour.

Mr. Russell asked about the intersection of Valley and Susquehanna.

Mr. Hammond replied traffic study included the intersection of Rt. 611; the driveways along the Fairway; Fairway/Rydal as well as Susquehanna. Early on during the project, there was discussion about the intersection of the Fairway/Rydal and what can be done there, and that would be a complete redesign of that intersection; however, that would solve some problems, but would create others. It was ultimately decided that on the amount of traffic generated it was better to focus on improvements on the Fairway than to focus efforts on that intersection.

Ms. Gauthier said traffic study showed intersections were assigned an “A” level of service but will drop down to a “C” level. How are these driveway intersections currently functioning versus how they will function after development such as the level of service and how many seconds of delays?

Mr. Hammond replied there is a summary of all levels of service within the study and Table 9 summarizes each movement at each intersection at each level of service, and he provided Table 9 – Level of Service Delay (Seconds) Summary to members of the Planning Commission. Traffic study shows improvement, but does not show there is degradation. It either shows it stays the same or an improvement depending on the intersection. Traffic study was performed in October and submitted to the Township for review.

Mr. Keaveney added that in regards to Table 9, level of service is indicated by letter grades “A-F” and each letter grade has a range of average delay at the intersection. Intersection of Valley and Rydal delay will be increased by an average of seven seconds per vehicle over the course of an hour with added traffic from the development. For mitigation, we follow PennDOT’s guidelines in which PennDOT allows a 10-second delay increase before any type of physical mitigation.

Mr. Rosen asked about target market for apartments.

Mr. Kaplin replied he does not know yet; however, it will not be an age-restricted community.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for timeline of when the project will be shovel-ready and construction schedule.

Mr. Kaplin replied late summer, early fall and 18-24 months construction schedule.

Mr. Christos Dinoulis, Engineer, Bohler Engineering, said we conducted a comprehensive study of existing ADA facilities throughout the shopping center and a few areas were found to be deficient and they will be improved and brought into compliance. That will include re-stripping parking stalls; re-work some of the asphalt making it the appropriate grade; provide crosswalks where necessary as well as ADA ramps. One of the larger improvements will be in front of Panera Bread where there is a substantial grade difference between Panera and adjacent retail space, so we will provide both stairs and ADA accessible ramp along the path.

Ms. Stackhouse asked for the size of the parking stalls.

Mr. Dinoulis replied 9 X 18.

Mr. Russell asked for the grade going up to the main driveway.

Mr. Dinoulis replied six percent starting from the crosswalk all the way to the end. There will be retaining walls along the property line in the range of 8-10 ft. that will increase towards the highest point, and there will be a series of two-tier retaining walls on the back and side of the property.

Mr. Baker asked does the circular courtyard follow the grade of the driveway?

Mr. Dinoulis replied it is the same grade as the entrance into the first level parking garage. Stormwater facilities will be piped underneath retaining walls into detention facility and water quality features will discharge directly into the Fairway, so it will not connect into the existing system of the shopping center.

Ms. Gauthier asked about a connection from the trail to the sidewalk.

Mr. Dinoulis replied there is a significant grade change of 20 ft. or so.

Mr. Brown asked for the elevation of the parking garage and the main parking field.

Mr. Dinoulis replied the garage is approximately 224 ft. and the parking field is about 40 feet of rise.

Ms. Gauthier asked about a connection into Rydal Waters.

Mr. Kaplin replied by opening something in the back of the apartments from a single street could be a security issue.

Ms. Gauthier said regardless of that, the plan should be updated to show the location of that road.

Mr. Narcowich agreed there is a significant grade change that could be a challenge, but a connection to Rydal Waters would be an amenity for the apartment complex.

Ms. Strackhouse added that a pedestrian connection for both developments would be a good thing and should be something to consider.

Ms. Gauthier said she wants the plan to be updated to show that road so the Board of Commissioners can see it from a broader view.

Mr. DiCello asked are there any architectural treatments planned for the retaining walls?

Mr. Dinoulis replied they will be architecturally pleasing and not just a flat surface.

Mr. Narcowich clarified that the round open space area will include benches and gazebo. Is that correct?

Mr. Dinoulis replied that is correct.

Mr. Narcowich said in regards to the driveway going uphill, crosswalks were added except for the location near the loading area. Also, there needs to be signage for public parking.

Mr. Dinoulis replied it is tight in the back corner area and no room for it.

Mr. Kaplin added that we are required to have signage and will provide it.

Mr. Rosen asked about access into the parking garage and the cartway width.

Mr. Dinoulis provided the plan showing the first access into the lower level parking garage and as the grade continues to rise there is access to the second level parking garage. Cartway width is 24 feet.

Mr. Russell clarified that there is a full ADA accessible sidewalk all the way down traversing the site along with ramps, landings and railings. Is that correct?

Mr. Dinoulis replied that is correct.

Mr. Russell asked for a complete overview of stormwater management for the site.

Mr. Dinoulis replied there will be a conveyance system along the driveway and all runoff will be collected through inlets and run underneath the retaining wall to an underground detention basin and that basin discharges through a water quality structure which then flows down to existing system on the Fairway. There will be significant rate reductions from existing conditions and we will comply with Township requirements. Permit has been submitted to the Soil Conservation District and we anticipate getting administrative completeness and then a technical review.

Ms. Gauthier asked how will stormwater collection for the northernmost part of the site be maintained and accessed.

Mr. Dinoulis replied there is an inlet to collect some of the runoff upslope from retaining walls that will connect into conveyance system and there is a split in the retaining wall to get around it to access that edge of the property line.

Mr. Kaplin added that the Township will require stormwater facilities maintenance agreement and operations and maintenance requirements will need to be met that will be incorporated into recorded document.

Ms. Gauthier clarified with Ms. Prugar that she does not have any outstanding issues in regards to stormwater management.

Ms. Prugar replied she is satisfied with the stormwater plan.

Mr. Narcowich said the plan proposed a dog park at the rear of site and what about access points to it.

Mr. Fred Snow, Brandolini Companies, replied that will be solely for those living in the apartments and it will be fenced-in. When final design of the building is completed, then we will figure out where the access points will be for the dog park.

Mr. Narcowich said if there is no building access then he would suggest a sidewalk going back to the dog park.

Ms. Susan Myerov, Member of the EAC, provided a letter dated January 20, 2020, suggesting that the EAC would like to see more attention on “green stormwater infrastructure.”

Mr. Kaplin replied the applicant is meeting the list of items of the ordinance.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments. There were none.

Mr. Rosen clarified with Mr. Narcowich that stormwater management has been properly engineered for the site as well as that the applicant has done everything necessary to make this a viable functional site. Is that correct?

Mr. Narcowich replied yes.

Mr. Brown referred to the Fire Marshal's review letter in regards to fire exits around the entire building; there is no vehicular access behind the fourth side and has that been discussed with the Fire Marshal?

Mr. Kaplin replied we met with the Fire Marshal and we cannot get access to that last side. There will be fire hydrants placed around the building and the applicant will comply with the National Fire Protection Association, and if anything changes, the applicant will comply with that as well.

Ms. Gauthier said in regards to the intersection of Rt. 611, the Fairway and Harte Road that went from a level "C" to "D" in the weekday p.m., would that be revisited post-development?

Mr. Keaveney replied we would recommend that the applicant perform a timing adjustment at that intersection and it would be more efficient post-development.

Waivers requested by the applicant as listed in Bohler Engineering review letter dated December 17, 2019 were as follows:

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to approve waiver request from **Section 146-11.A.**

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-1. Ms. Gauthier opposed because she feels it would be helpful to have that information.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to approve waiver request from **Section 146-11.B.3.**

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-1. Ms. Gauthier opposed because she feels it would be helpful to have that information.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to approve waiver request from **Section 146-11.B.7.**

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-1. Ms. Gauthier opposed because she feels it would be helpful to have that information.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from **Section 146-35.C.2.**

MOTION was ADOPTED 9-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Robinson to recommend approval of Baederwood Residential Partners, LP land development application subject to compliance with Fire Marshal's review letter dated August 1, 2019; compliance with stormwater management requirements; provide updated plan showing existing features on the adjacent Rydal Waters property specifically the roadway as well as existing features of the Noble Center on the western side and a path connection from Rydal Waters to this development; also the plan should provide a pedestrian access pathway to the dog park; and approval of waivers as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 9-0.

Ms. Strackhouse thanked Mr. Mark Penecale for his time in working with members of the Planning Commission and wished him "Good Luck" in his new position.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary