

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 as a Zoom webinar and teleconference with Ms. Lucy Strackhouse, Chairperson presiding.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:33 p.m.

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

Also Present: County Planner NARCOWICH  
Administrative Manager WYRSTA  
Commissioner WINEGRAD

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Cooper to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting of May 26, 2020.

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0.

Agenda Item PC1 – Consider certifying a designated area north of the intersection of Old York and Susquehanna Roads as “blighted” as defined by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law (Act of May 24, 1945, P.L. 991, No. 385), and in need of redevelopment and to approve a redevelopment plan for that area:

Mr. Narcowich gave a power point presentation of the redevelopment area noting that the Township applied for multimodal funding back in 2015 and 2016 and was awarded approximately \$2 million dollars to make transportation improvements at this intersection such as adding a turning lane onto Susquehanna Road; realign the intersection; signalization improvements to improve traffic flow; accommodations for ADA access; improve pedestrian safety and promote transit. Also, the existing buildings are close to the street and the plan is to acquire land, demolish some of the buildings and redevelop it in a more coherent organized manner and design it to make it safer, so the general vision is for mixed use accommodating residential while promoting economic development. The Township will work with the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority to acquire land either by agreement with property owners or by eminent domain, and tonight’s presentation will focus on determining blight certification for this redevelopment area.

Presented was the redevelopment area at Old York and Susquehanna Roads highlighting 11 properties noting that under the Urban Redevelopment Law, the Township's Planning Commission reviews the redevelopment plan and determines whether the area meets blight criteria. If it is determined as blight, the redevelopment plan will then be sent to the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority that would prepare a redevelopment proposal that includes specifics such as land use and redevelopment details and then hold public hearings. The detailed redevelopment proposal would then be sent back the Township's Planning Commission for review and recommendation of approval, denial or to make revisions. If approval is recommended, it would then be sent to the Board of Commissioners for review and to hold a public hearing and then vote on the proposal.

Mr. Rosen clarified that the Planning Commission is only being asked to determine whether this area meets blight criteria. Is that correct?

Mr. Narcowich replied yes. Blight criteria is defined by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law, and if this area meets one of the criteria, it will legally qualify as blight and it does meet five or six of the criteria. Proposed resolution is based on a template that the Redevelopment Authority has seen used by other municipalities.

Ms. Gauthier suggested adding a **Whereas** clause to proposed resolution to say, "The replanning and redevelopment of such areas in accordance with sound and approved plans for redevelopment will promote the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the public."

Mr. Narcowich continued that if this area is certified as blight and the redevelopment plan is approved, then certified copies of the resolution will be sent to the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners, the Abington Township Board of Commissioners, the Montgomery County Planning Commission and the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority.

Ms. Strackhouse asked what will the next step be following approvals by the Township's Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners?

Mr. Narcowich replied if the area is certified as blight and the resolution for redevelopment plan is approved, it will be sent to the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority to prepare a redevelopment proposal and that proposal will be sent back to the Township's Planning Commission for review.

Ms. Gauthier asked has information on costs and whether there needs to be accommodation of displaced population been provided by the Township?

Mr. Narcowich replied he is currently working on clarifying that with the Township.

Ms. Gauthier asked for that information to be part of the overall redevelopment plan.

Mr. Russell questioned whether this process is subject to NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act).

Mr. Narcowich replied there is no NEPA involvement in the redevelopment planning process.

Ms. Strackhouse noted that if any federal money is involved, it would need a Section 106, which is review of any impact to historic properties.

Ms. Gauthier added that the Old York Road Corridor Plan recommends connecting the roadway system in this area, moving the buildings back and improve the sidewalk. Also, by approving the resolution for blight certification, no zoning would be changed, and this redevelopment plan is just conceptual. Is that correct?

Mr. Narcowich replied yes, it is a conceptual plan.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about accepting a redevelopment plan that increases density and intensity because this is one of the highest crash intersections in the Township. Also, the public should decide what the zoning will be.

Joe Rozak, 1927 Susquehanna Road, said he asked to be “kept in the loop” and no one contacted him about this matter. He has lived in this area for 40 years and requested that the blight zone on the map be decreased. Also, Susquehanna Road cannot handle any more traffic because currently it backs up to Highland even with the YMCA gone.

Natalie Sherstyuk, resident of Crosswicks area, referred to the plan of the Redevelopment Authority, Section D. is a preliminary plan that includes the possibility of zoning being amended and increased maximum building height. Section E. Land Use Plan considers increase of building height from 35 ft. to 45-50 ft. and Section F. mentions proposed changes to zoning; increasing population density, and land coverage with no mention of percentage of green space, which is “nebulous” and should not be part of what is being voted on tonight.

Susan Myerov, 2205 Wisteria Avenue, asked for the differences of the MS-L and MS-H Zoning Districts.

Mr. Narcowich replied most of the differences are the permitted uses and dimensional requirements that impact density and intensity.

Ms. Strackhouse clarified that the Planning Commission is also being asked to approve a conceptual plan. Is that correct?

Mr. Narcowich replied yes, and the plan will come in the form of a redevelopment proposal and the Township will need to make necessary modifications to accommodate the plan.

Mr. Rosen commented that the Planning Commission certifies this area as blight; however, the resolution should be amended that the Planning Commission is only approving a conceptual redevelopment plan as that area will become some type of mixed use of residential and commercial, but the details are not clear.

Mr. Russell said a concept plan is the first step and then there will be a proposal, and he suggested adding to the motion that “approval is subject to a detailed proposal.”

Mr. Rosen agreed that we can approve the plan in all respects as a conceptual plan pending further review of a detailed proposal including, but not limited to: green space, height, density, intensity, architectural style, traffic circulation, land use, safety of the intersection and any necessary modifications of zoning.

Ms. Gauthier recommend adding another **Whereas** section to proposed Resolution of the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board to say, “The replanning and redevelopment of such area in accordance with sound and approved plans for the redevelopment will promote the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the public.” Also, she asked about a left turn arrow at the intersection.

Ms. Strackhouse asked for any further public comments.

Natalie Sherstyuk thanked the Planning Commission for considering the public’s input.

Lora Lehmann said she is opposed to any increase in intensity and density of this area and requested that this not be acted on tonight.

Joe Rozak commented that a left turn signal on Susquehanna Road onto Old York Road cannot be done unless the church, cemetery and Wells Fargo Bank are moved.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Russell to certify designated area north of the intersection of Old York and Susquehanna Roads as blighted as defined by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law (Act of May 24, 1945, P.L. 991, No. 385) and to approve the conceptual redevelopment plan pending further review and approval of the following elements including, but not limited to: land use, height, density, intensity, architectural style, green space, traffic circulation, safety of intersection and include the necessary modifications of zoning. Also, to recommend adding another **Whereas** section to proposed Resolution of the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board to say, “The replanning and redevelopment of such area in accordance with sound and approved plans for the redevelopment will promote the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the public.”

MOTION was ADOPTED 8-0. Mr. DiCello was absent.

Planning Commission Meeting

September 22, 2020

**ADJOURNMENT:** 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary