

East Whiteland Township

Planning Commission

Wednesday –August 28, 2019

Minutes

Members Present:

Deb Abel, Chair; Jeff Broadbelt, Vice Chair; Peter Fixler; Tim Kelly; John Laumer; Todd Asousa and Dante Bradley.

Also Present:

Zachary Barner, Director Planning & Development; Brittany Bulger, Planning Coordinator; Darrell Becker, Township Engineer; and Steven English, representing Township Solicitor's Office.

Call to Order:

Ms. Abel called the meeting to order at **7:00 p.m.** and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes:

Approval of the July 24, 2019 meeting minutes.

Action: Mr. Kelly made a motion, seconded by Mr. Asousa, to approve the minutes.

The motion carried unanimously **(6-0)** [Mr. Bradley arrived after the minutes had been approved]

Development Applications:

1. [2019-14-LD for 32 Bacton Hill Road](#) (Bacton Hill Partners, LLC) – Preliminary / Final Land Development application to create an expanded surface parking area and associated improvements at an existing commercial property. The existing building will be used as a contracting operation and the proposed surface parking area will be used as a private fueling station and outdoor storage area for commercial vehicles, equipment, and materials. The property, located at 32 Bacton Hill Road, is within the I – Industrial District.

Dave Rentschler, Engineer for the Applicant, explained that his purpose for attending the Planning Commission meeting was to provide a status update and answer any questions the Commissioners may have in advance of returning to next month's meeting. Mr. Rentschler stated that, in addition to Township approvals, the proposed project will require an NPDES permit.

Mr. Becker advised the Commission that his office had not yet reviewed the most recent submission for compliance but that he did not foresee any substantial issues that the Applicant would be unable to address.

Mr. Fixler stated that he agreed with the LandConcepts review letter and its recommendation to install alternative tree species that are less problematic.

Ms. Abel opened the floor to the public for comment...

Frank Donohoe, representing Trout Unlimited, asked that the Applicant's engineer provide additional details regarding the proposed hotspot runoff and spill controls around the fueling station. Mr. Rentschler acknowledged the request and advised that he would provide additional information for review.

Action: the Application was continued...

2. [2019-13-LD for 57 Lancaster Avenue](#) (Haly Associates, LLC) – Preliminary / Final Land Development application to redevelop a portion of an existing office and warehouse / flex building complex for the addition of a new +/- 7,000 s.f. warehouse / flex building to be utilized as a rock climbing gym. This plan is associated with Conditional Use Application [2019-05-CU](#). The property, located at 57 Lancaster Avenue, is within the O/BP – Office Business Park District.

Dave Rentschler, Engineer for the Applicant, explained this application was resubmitted as a draft after one round of reviews by the Township’s Review Consultants. Like the previous application, Mr. Rentschler requested any comments or questions in advance of a full resubmission.

Mr. Barner explained that there are currently few (if any) storm water management controls at this property, however the applicant will be re-greening portions of the property and reducing the existing impervious coverage. As a result, much of the stormwater and runoff controls are being proposed voluntarily by the Applicant.

Mr. Laumer asked if this property bordered the PECO property. Mr. Rentschler answered that the property does abut the PECO corridor and that the owner has an agreement to park vehicles off-site on PECO’s property.

Mr. Barner explained that many of the questions raised during the Conditional Use process, including those deferred to Land Development, had been addressed by the Applicant.

Action: the Application was continued...

Zoning Applications:

3. [2019-07-ZHB for 49 Lancaster Avenue](#) (Lamar Companies) – Zoning Hearing Board application seeking a variance or various forms of alternative relief to permit a +/- 300 s.f. “off-premises” sign on a property already improved with an office building (thereby constituting a principle use). This application is associated with Conditional Use application [2019-06-CU](#). The property, located at 49 Lancaster Avenue, is within the O/BP – Office Business Park District.

Mr. Fixler advised the Commission that he would recuse himself from the discussion and recommendation as a result of his request for “party status” at the previous month’s Zoning Hearing Board hearing regarding this application.

Julie Von Spreckelsen, Attorney for the Applicant, explained that her client had originally applied to the Zoning Hearing Board for a variance (to permit more than one principle use at the property) and has since revised the Application to request additional alternative relief, including a special exception via Section 200-89, which states that “...*signs which do not meet the restrictions set forth in this Article XII (Signs) may be permitted in unusual circumstances by special exception, provided, however, that the Zoning Hearing Board, in considering any such request for a special exception for special signage, shall consider the unusual circumstances upon which the special exception application is based, and the review and recommendation by the Township Planning Commission with respect to the application.*”

During her presentation before the Zoning Hearing Board, the Board stated that the Applicant should go before the Planning Commission for discussion prior to returning to the Zoning Hearing Board, per the terms of the ordinance language.

Mrs. Von Spreckelsen started by addressing what she and her client believed to be “unusual circumstances” of the application, including:

- the location of the site near an existing railroad corridor;

- the presence of an existing non-conforming sign (located near, but not within, the subject property) which would be removed as part of the proposed project;
- the triangular shape of the lot; and
- the assertion that there are no vacant parcels in the surrounding area upon which an off-premise sign could be constructed.

Mrs. Von Spreckelsen further explained she believes the Applicant should be granted the requested relief based on a nearby business receiving similar relief years prior. Mr. English and Mrs. Abel advised that the Commission would not be discussing nearby properties or the specifics of the proposed sign and asked that Mrs. Von Spreckelsen only provide information regarding the “unusual circumstances” of her application in her presentation.

Mr. Barner noted that, in addition to any zoning relief required to permit the proposed sign at this specific location, all off-premises signs require Conditional Use approval.

Following a discussion, the Planning Commission members stated that they did not believe the applicant had identified any “unusual circumstances” that would justify the granting of special exception pursuant to §200-89 (Special Signs).

Action: Mr. Asousa made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kelly, to recommend denial of the requested special exception based on the lack of “unusual circumstances,” as presented by the Applicant.

The motion carried **(6-0-1)** with Mr. Fixler recused from the vote.

Ordinance Amendments:

4. The following [Ordinance Amendments](#) are proposed for discussion by the Planning Commission:

- a. Updated Standards for Streets and New Design Guidelines for Bicycle / Pedestrian Facilities

Mr. Barner stated the current draft of the ordinance amendment had been revised following comments received at the previous month’s meeting, as well as comments that had been received from outside agencies. Pending the Commission’s review of these revisions, the ordinance will be sent back to the County Planning Commission and onto the Board of Supervisors.

The Commission members agreed that the previous comments – particularly those related to grading at street intersections and easements around paths – had been addressed.

A resident inquired as to why the Roadway Functional Classification Map had been revised in comparison to previous Township documents, including the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and Act 209 Study. Both of these documents label Sidley Road, Moores Road, and Mill Road as “Local Distributor,” whereas the Roadway Functional Classification Map labels these road as “Minor Collector.”

Following a discussion among the resident and the Commission, Mr. Barner advised that the he would discuss this proposed change in classification with McMahon Associates to determine why these specific roads had been reclassified.

Adjournment:

Ms. Abel adjourned the meeting at **8:21 p.m.**

~ Next Meeting ~
September 25, 2019