

East Whiteland Township

Planning Commission

Wednesday – March 24, 2021

Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom & Livestreamed via Township Website

Members Present: Deb Abel, Chair; Todd Asousa, Vice-Chair; Peter Fixler; John Laumer; and Dante Bradley.

Members Absent: Jeff Broadbelt and Tim Kelly.

Also Present: Zachary Barner, Director of Planning & Development; Brittany Carosello, Planning Coordinator; Joe McGrory, Township Solicitor; Krista Stefkovic, Deputy Township Solicitor; Darrell Becker, Township Engineer; and Chris Williams, Township Traffic Engineer.

Call to Order:

Ms. Abel called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes:

Ms. Abel requested a motion to consider approval of the **February 24, 2021** meeting minutes.

Action: Mr. Fixler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley, to approve the February meeting minutes as drafted. The motion carried unanimously **(4-0)** - Mr. Laumer was not present for this motion.

Presentation of Concept Plan:

1. [Great Valley School District Facilities Analysis](#) – Presentation of Concept Plan for a potential 5th & 6th Grade Center at the K.D. Markley Complex.

Dan Goffredo, Superintendent of Great Valley School District, introduced Charles Peterson, Director of Business Affairs for the District, and David Schrader of Schrader Group Architecture, the lead architect for the project.

Dr. Goffredo explained that enrollment has been on a steady increase and the district will likely increase by 500-600 students within the next few years based on the District's projections. Great Valley Middle school is 20 years old and is already considered to be at (or slightly over) capacity. More space is necessary to accommodate students. During the 2018-2019 school year, the District issued a request for proposal (RFP) to secure an architectural firm to perform a feasibility study and analyze the usage and potential repurposing of existing space. The District has held a series of meetings to discuss concepts and projections to help ease the overcrowding. The obvious answer was to develop a 5th and 6th Grade Center. Currently, all four of the Elementary School's serve Kindergarten through 5th Grade and the Middle School serve Grades 6 through 8. This new Center would alleviate the current and future impacts on the Middle School and each of the Elementary Schools. Alternatives were laid out in total 10 construction options, were presented to the School Board.

The alternatives to related to new facilities at the High School and Middle School Campus were not considered to a good options as the traffic is already at a high and adding in the extra students would not be feasible. The District does own property on Bacton Hill Road. Construction at this site would require substantial road work. In

addition, the Bacton Hill area is zoned for industrial uses and is located near an existing a gas plant. This is a significant concern for the District.

There are two primary options for the KD Markley Campus. The first option is to build a three-story structure. This would allow the District to maintain the existing Administration Building on Church Road but would look very out of place next to the existing KD Markley Elementary School. This option would consume a large portion of the existing green space and play areas. The second (and preferred) option would be to construct a two-story building by repurposing the existing Administration Building. The preferred plan would be less intrusive, give the District the chance to improve traffic flow in and around the KD Markley Campus, and allow the District to keep almost all the existing green space. Based on the enrollment projections, the District will need additional space for students by the 2024 school year. As of 2024, the District is projected to see close to 220 new students.

Mr. Schrader introduced the other professionals working on the project, Chris Jensen, of T & M Associates (civil engineer for the project) and Guy DiMartino and Eric Ostimchuk of Traffic Planning & Design (traffic engineers for the project). Mr. Schrader provided an overview of the project and presented the current concept plan, adding that there is no building design yet. The concept plan is more of a massing study to determine how the building and site improvements could be situated on the property. The property across the street (where the ball fields are located) is owned by the District. There are a few zoning considerations to sort through, however, there is a possibility of utilizing that space to manage stormwater. There are also overhead power lines and a utility easement to work around. Mr. Schrader discussed the traffic circulation and bus routes throughout the site.

Mr. Schrader explained that there is a plan to maintain the façade of existing Administration Building and perhaps build a STEM or STEAM facility in the area behind that façade. The applicant did present to the Historical Commission and there was desire to maintain the entire Administration Building, which is listed on the Township's inventory of historic resources.

Chris Jensen presented information regarding the zoning considerations at the site. The ball fields where the existing stormwater facilities are located is within the OS - Open Space district. To make any changes on that site the applicant may need to amend a previously approved Special Exception from the Zoning Hearing Board. The KD Markley site is zoned NS - Neighborhood School which requires 100 ft building setback requirement. There may be an existing non-conformity at the rear of the site but that cannot be determined until a final survey has been completed for the site. The impervious surface may present an issue, but that will also need to be determined as part of the survey and title report.

Mr. Schrader reiterated that the plan is not a full site design and is merely a massing plan to present for discussion purposes.

Mr. Bradley stated that he has a child that currently attends the KD Markley Elementary School and expressed that parking is very much an issue at the site. The cars are flooded onto Swedesford Road and there are traffic concerns. Mr. Jensen explained that the plan utilized the 1.75 parking spaces per classroom regulation and there would be an extra 100 spaces for overflow parking. The required parking spaces are 336 and the current proposal is 341. Mr. Bradley's concern is that while they may meet the required parking per the Zoning Ordinance, that may not be sufficient for large events and other functions. Mr. Peterson explained that, operationally, there will be no events scheduled on the same night in the hope that parking would not be an issue. Mr. Schrader commented that while there are 341 lined parking spaces, for evening and special events cars can also be stacked in the busing lanes.

Mr. Bradley asked about the play areas and whether there are plans to expand that area as part of the project. Mr. Schrader acknowledged that is one of the reasons to utilize the existing admin building so that the playground area and field space will not be compromised. Mr. Bradley asked about the pavilion area. The plans show the existing pavilion area being removed.

Mr. Bradley asked Dr. Goffredo to forward the Commission members the historical enrollment figures so that they may see how that number has increased and what the projections look like over time. Ms. Abel echoed the same sentiments; she too would like to review this information. Ms. Abel mentioned the District website was not clear on the projections.

Mr. Laumer asked if electromagnetic radiation exposure had been addressed? His home is roughly 400 feet from the utility lines and years ago he measured the electromagnetic exposure and saw glowing under the lines. Mr. Laumer expressed that this will likely be a question from parents and the District should be prepared to answer these types of questions.

Mr. Fixler asked about the High School and how that school will address the influx of students. Mr. Goffredo explained that the High School is less of a concern due to class schedule and the fact that some rooms are vacant during the day. Mr. Schrader explained that the High School has flexibility and is currently operating at approximately 70-75 % capacity.

Mr. Asousa asked about the feasibility of a trail or path on the site to provide a connection to the nearby neighborhoods? Trail connections on this site are very important to Mr. Asousa. Mr. Schrader explained that the District would absolutely be open to a trail or path on the property.

Ms. Abel believes that this site is a much better option than the site on Bacton Hill.

Mr. Bradley asked if there was any consideration on what would happen at the Church and Swedesford Road intersection. Currently there is a 4-way stop. Mr. Bradley asked whether the intersection would need to be upgraded to a traffic signal. Mr. DiMartino has performed some preliminary evaluations of the intersection. The initial findings are that that intersection would require a signal which is consistent with the Township's Capital Improvement Plan (from the Act 209 Study). This would include a traffic signal, but no turning lanes. Mr. Laumer expressed that, in his observation, much of the traffic is going from north to south.

Each of the Planning Commission members expressed their excitement to hear more about the project in the future. Mr. Schrader advised that the District will need to go back to see the Historical Commission as they have asked the District to perform a historic resource impact study.

Development Applications:

2. [WLD-02-2021 for Modular Office at 14 Lee Boulevard](#) (Vanguard) – Request for Waiver of Land Development to install a modular office building at an existing office building. The property, located at 14 Lee Boulevard, is within the O/BP (Office/Business Park) District.

Michael Kissinger of Pennoni Associates presented on behalf of Vanguard. His client first approached the Township to install in a new modular building to replace an existing building located on site. At this time, Vanguard is requesting permission to add an additional double-wide modular at the same site. This would be an

expansion of the previous request, which was approved a few months ago. This additional modular would be relocated from an existing site in Tredyffrin. The building is being relocated due to renovations. The plan complies with all impervious and building coverage requirements. The building would be used for presorting of mail before it goes into the physical building for distribution.

Action: Mr. Fixler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Asousa, to recommend approval of the requested waiver of land development to the Board of Supervisors.

The motion carried unanimously **(5-0)**.

Ordinance Amendments:

- 3. [Great Valley Revitalization \(GVR\) Overlay District](#)** – Zoning Text and Map Amendment to modify the existing Overlay District which permits mixed-use redevelopment within a portion of the Great Valley Corporate Center. The proposed amendment would reduce the geographic extent of the current overlay district and minimize the overall development yield permitted under the ordinance.

Alyson Zarro of Riley Riper Hollin & Colagreco presented on behalf of Philadelphia Suburban Development Corporation (PSDC). She introduced the development team Greg Newell and Paul Lepard (from Nave Newell Engineering) and Eric Ostimchuk (from Traffic Planning & Design). The GVR district is an existing overlay district on the west side of route 29. The proposal is a reduction of overall tract density and includes a new concept plan for mixed use within the Great Valley Corporate Center. A draft zoning ordinance amendment has been submitted and reviewed by staff and consultants. Mr. McGrory explained that the Planning Commission is being asked for a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to advertise the ordinances for a hearing.

Mr. McGrory advised that the Township is considering revisions to the steep slopes ordinance which would differentiate between natural slopes and man-made steep slopes. The ordinance would focus its regulations on natural slopes. Procedurally, the draft ordinance will come back to the Planning Commission for a formal review and recommendation after the ordinance has been advertised for a hearing.

Ms. Zarro explained this ordinance is just the start of a master plan and land development approval process that would come before the Planning Commission after the text and map change have been approved. In terms of revisions, the previously permitted hotel use is being eliminated; the maximum height is being reduced; and the setbacks have been increased.

There are extensive traffic improvements involved with this development. The concept of shared parking has also been introduced on this site, which would allow for flexibility in the future as the specific mix of uses is determined. Traffic construction is expected to take a phased approach that would require all onsite and offsite traffic improvements to be determined during master plan process. Ms. Zarro also discussed the corresponding design guidelines, which have been updated as a part of this ordinance amendment.

Mr. Laumer asked about steep slopes and whether that change would be relative to just this project or the entire Township. Mr. McGrory explained that the intent would be to amend the existing slopes ordinance, which applies to the entire Township. The intended changes have been discussed for many years. The current regulations have created challenges for many projects.

Action: Mr. Fixler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Asousa, to recommend advertisement of the proposed zoning ordinance text and map amendments to the Board of Supervisors.

The motion carried unanimously **(5-0)**

- 4. [Repeal of Article XIX: Amendments](#)** – Zoning Text Amendment to repeal the portion of the code related to modifications, supplements, and amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Barner explained that Article XIX is the portion of the zoning ordinance that regulates how amendments to the zoning ordinance should be processed. The Township's standards are inconsistent with the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Having two different set of standards can be confusing and create conflicts. The Township is preempted by the MPC. The intent is to simplify the requirements and defer to MPC to outline the process that will be followed.

Mr. McGrory followed up, including that the MPC is subject to change and that when the MPC does change the Township will not need to rewrite the ordinance.

Action: Mr. Fixler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley, to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors.

The motion carried **(5-0)**.

Public Comment:

Public comment will be facilitated during the virtual meeting and may also be submitted via email both *before* and *during* the meeting. Please submit comments to publiccomment@eastwhiteland.org.

Adjournment:

Ms. Abel adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.