

East Whiteland Township

Planning Commission

Wednesday – April 27, 2022

This meeting will be held in-person (not virtually) at the East Whiteland Township Building.

Minutes

(agenda items [linked](#) to online documents)

Members Present:

Deb Abel, Chair; Todd Asousa, Vice-Chair; John Laumer; Tim Kelly; and Dante Bradley.

Members Absent: Jeff Broadbelt

Also Present:

Scott Lambert, Township Supervisors Chair; Steve Brown, Assistant Township Manager; Brittany Carosello, Deputy Director of Planning & Development; Bernadette Kearney, Township Solicitor; Darrell Becker, Township Engineer; Al Vennettilli; Incoming Township Engineer; Chris Williams, Township Traffic Engineer; and Chuck Faulkner, Township Sanitary Sewer Engineer.

Call to Order:

Ms. Abel called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes:

Mr. Asousa made a motion, seconded by Mr. Laumer, to approve the **February 23, 2022**, meeting minutes.

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

Ms. Abel made an announcement that Darrell Becker, the Township Engineer will be retiring in May. The Commission wishes him well. Mr. Becker introduced Al Vennettilli who will take over Mr. Becker's responsibilities at the Township.

Presentation:

1. [Federal RAISE Grant Application for "Route 30 Corridor Improvement Project"](#) – Presentation and Project Overview by Scott Lambert (Board of Supervisors Chair) and Chris Williams (Traffic Engineer).

Township Supervisor Scott Lambert explained that the Township had recently submitted an application for a \$25 million Federal RAISE Grant to complete traffic improvements to Route 30 in the vicinity of Planebrook Road, Sproul Road and Church Road. Many governmental and community leaders wrote letters of support for the Township. Chris Williams provided a brief presentation on the application process, project background, and key issues. The improvements would occur on approximately 1.4 miles of Route 30. If awarded the grant, the Township would begin engineering for the project immediately.

The Commission members all echoed their support of the grant application and improvement project.

Sanitary Sewer Planning:

2. [Act 537 Special Study Transfer of Sanitary Sewerage Facilities](#) – Overview of Study and Review of Component 4A "Municipal Planning Agency Review" of Sewage Facilities Planning Module.

Chuck Faulkner, Sanitary Sewer Engineer for the Township explained the update of the 537 plan is a requirement of DEP. The study identifies the flow of the system, agreements with other municipalities, and maintain obligations for the system after the sale.

Ms. Abel asked about the sewer upgrade plans that were planned prior to the sale of the system. Mr. Faulkner explained that the upgrades will still happen after Aqua acquire the system. Mr. Bradley believes the study was written very general and one sided, the study touts the benefits of a Township selling its system to a private company. Mr. Bradley would have liked to see the benefits to the residents as well as a cost analysis and discussed the alternatives. Mr. Faulkner explained that the form that is under review is intended solely to address whether the sale conforms to the Township's land use and zoning ordinances. There is no construction or modifications being made to the system as a part of the sale to Aqua. The sale of the sewer is scheduled to close in August, the transaction is roughly \$55 million.

Action: Mr. Asousa made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mr. Laumer, to authorize Deb Abel, to sign the Component 4A.

The motion carried (4-1) with Mr. Bradley opposed.

Development Applications:

3. [PEG Companies at Sonesta Suites](#) (PEG Companies) – Proposal to convert an existing extended-stay hotel complex into multi-family apartment dwellings. The Applicant seeks initial feedback from the Planning Commission prior to making a formal application to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Denise Yarnoff, Attorney for the Applicant, explained the proposal and introduced Jeff Warr, Chief Legal Officer for PEG Companies. Mr. Warr briefly presented and provided an overview of his company. PEG has converted many extended stays to apartments in the past few years. The conversion upgrades include new paint, new appliances, newer countertops, and new flooring. PEG Company officially purchased the Sonesta Suites in April.

The building is 120 units currently and would not increase in size or the number of unit. Mr. Warr explained that the apartments are generally class B apartments and are more suited to the working class and young professionals. Mr. Warr stated police calls to other properties in other communities have decreased since converting from an extended stay hotel to apartments. He also believes very few school children will live in the apartments, especially since they are only small 1- and 2-bedroom apartments. If PEG companies are not able to make the apartment conversion proposal work, they will likely to sell the property to a hotel operator.

Mr. Laumer asked about the parking for the complex. Mr. Warr stated there is the existing parking which will remain. No garage parking is proposed. Mr. Asousa asked for clarification on what type of hardship the applicant has if they intend to go before the Zoning Hearing Board. Ms. Yarnoff explained that the property is set back from the roadway and does not have a clear frontage. Ms. Abel asked how PEG companies would control the types of tenants who would be able to reside in the proposed apartments and how they would control subleasing. Mr. Warr explained that they have a stringent background check process, including a credit check. Mr. Kelly asked about the leasing process and how long it takes. Ms. Abel asked about apartment staffing. Mr. Warr said there would be a full-time property manager, a full-time leasing manager, a full-time maintenance person and then possibly 1-2 more employees. Mr. Warr said rents would be market rate and are anticipated to be approximately \$1,500-\$1,800 per month. Ms. Kearney asked about the property management company and if they are always on the property. Mr. Warr stated someone is always on the property.

4. **1 Mill Lane Subdivision** (Mystic Financial II, LLC) – Sketch Plan proposal to create four (4) residential building lots from an approximately 5.6-acre tract consisting of two (2) existing lots. The property, located at 1 Mill Lane, is within the R-1 (Residential) Zoning District. The Applicant seeks to utilize the Cluster Design provisions outlined in Attachment 3 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Dave Rentschler, Engineer for the Applicant, presented a sketch plan showing 4 single family homes using the cluster design provisions of the ordinance. The property is on Mill Lane across the street from the East Whiteland Fire house. Each lot is approximately .5 acres, and the site contains 43% open space which may change slightly as the design advances. A steep slope analysis was completed and reviewed by the Township Engineer and Zoning Officer, who both agree the slopes are man-made. The homes will sit about 30 feet above Mill Lane and should not be affected by the digital sign being erected between Conestoga Road and Route 202. Mr. Rentschler addressed and explained each waiver being requested.

The Commission members were all supportive of the waivers being requested but would like the Applicant to discuss the paving thickness with the township engineer to figure out what makes sense for large vehicles, such as trash trucks and school buses. Stormwater and flooding along Conestoga Road were discussed.

Public Comment:

Martin Lutz stated he believes this is a good project but has a few concerns about flooding at the 401 and Mill Lane intersection. He is also concerned with the potential loss of existing sycamore trees. Mr. Rentschler stated the trees will remain and Mr. Becker stated that the applicant will need an NPDES permit.

5. **Knickerbocker Tract Redevelopment** (DP Whiteland, LLC) – Preliminary Subdivision & Land Development application to construct 280 single-family attached (townhouse) and semi-attached (twin) dwellings, a clubhouse and amenity space, trails, stormwater management, and associated improvements. The property, which is comprised of several parcels of land located between Mill Lane, Lapp Road, Old Morehall Road, Liberty Drive, and Swedesford Road, is within the RMH (Residential Medium-High Density) Zoning District. These parcels, known collectively as the "Knickerbocker Tract," total approximately 176 acres.

Jason Dempsey, the Applicant, provided a brief update on the redevelopment. The plan has mostly remained the same; however, recreational facilities have been shifted slightly from previous iterations. The amenities and walking trails have not changed much. Ms. Abel asked for an overview of the project and an update of changes. The clubhouse orientation has changed slightly due to the pipeline on the site.

Mr. Kelly asked about the sewer to the site. Mr. Dempsey explained it would be a gravity fed system to the Lapp Road pump station.

Mr. Dempsey explained the plan had previously showed a parking lot on the old landfill, however after speaking with DEP the parking lot will no longer be on the landfill, the applicant has added additional parking around the site instead.

Mr. Dempsey explained as a part of the post closure of the landfill, nothing can modify or disturb the existing cap and leachate liner. Because of this, Knickerbocker Way may only be one way rather than two way. Residents will be able to exit via Knickerbocker Way but will not be able to enter there.

Public Comment:

Martin Lutz commented he owns a residential property adjacent to the Knickerbocker site. He believes the multi-use trail as well as the access road requires a more detailed design. Mr. Lutz will defer the rest of his comments until a fourth submission is made.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment:

6. [Parks, Recreation, and Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#) – Review and Recommendation of the Township’s *Draft* PROS Plan, which constitutes an amendment to the Township’s Comprehensive Plan from 2016.

Steve Brown, Assistant Township Manager, presented the updated PROS Plan and explained various changes that have been made over the past few months. The PROS Plan is technically an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Changes made have mostly been implementation-related. All of the plans in the land use section are considered recommendations only and not required to be implemented by the Township. The Commission members expressed their desire for a dog park in the Township.

Action: Mr. Asousa made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mr. Laumer, to recommend the board of supervisors adopt the PROS Plan.

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

Adjournment:

Ms. Abel adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.