

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, March 28, 2022 at 7 PM

Community Meeting Room, 425 Wells Road

Meeting Minutes

The Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular Meeting was held at 7:00 pm on Monday, March 28, 2022. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included Judy Hendrixson, Chairman; Greg Reppa, Vice Chairman; members Tom Kelso, and Ted Feldstein. Others in attendance included Stephanie Mason, Township Manager; Judy Stern Goldstein, Planning Consultant, and Dan Wood, member Board of Supervisors.

Not in attendance: Jill Macauley, member; Jennifer Herring, Board of Supervisors Liaison.

The meeting officially began at 7:02 pm.

Review of Minutes

On motion of Mr. Feldstein and seconded by Mr. Kelso, the February 28, 2022 minutes were unanimously approved.

Public/Commission Comments/Presentations

None.

Plans Scheduled for Discussion

Terrain at Delaware Valley University – Preliminary Land Development Plan

John Van LuVane of Eastburn and Gray was present to represent Delaware Valley University (DVU). Also present was Jennifer Calliagas, Director of Planning for Urban Outfitters, who provided an overview of the existing site and the changes that would be made. She emphasized their excitement in working with the students and community and highlighted the site itself, the strategic alliance agreement, overlap of resources, and the internships and other opportunities for students. The plan intends to expand upon what is existing at the site, utilizing the market space and greenhouses, and adding some additional parking. They also plan to slightly shift the gravel ring road and gravel lot in the back and shift the berm on the northwest side to offer more privacy for the outdoor space. An additional greenhouse is planned as well. Rather than adding additional parking at the site, they are requesting a waiver to have off-site valet type parking for larger events.

Ms. Hendrixson asked for a breakdown on the capacity.

Ms. Calliagas said that the event space would hold up to 150, with 90 total in the café area.

Ms. Hendrixson then asked for an overview of the parking.

Ms. Calliagas explained that they are looking at 276 total on the site, with an agreement for parking with DVU for an additional 75 spaces on a separate parcel. However, it is unlikely the additional parking will be needed, and it should not impact the neighbors.

Cheryl McDonald of 6 Garden Path asked if there were any plans for a buffer on the neighbor side.

Ms. Calliagas replied that yes, there are plans for a landscape buffer, with trees added.

Mr. VanLuvanee then began the discussion of the review letters received. He reminded the Planning Commission that this is an amended final development plan, and that the original land development approval was received back in 2003. There are some expansions to the site, but they are not starting over. Furthermore, the project was developed in accordance with the issues raised in 2003.

Moving through the review letters he noted three waivers in regard to the Pennoni review. First, to request that a portion of the paving be gravel in order to maintain the appearance, second that lots not be required to be physically separated from the street, same as in 2003, and third, that the overflow parking be allowed on a separate parcel, as agreed to by the University.

He added that they would like to ask for a conditional waiver that would allow an aerial photo to be used rather than a plan showing existing features, as required by SALDO.

Referring to items #12 and #13, Mr. VanLuvanee also noted that waivers for curbing and external sidewalks had been previously granted in 2003 and there is no reason for that to change.

He then noted that item #16 on page 4 of the review states that the access to the farm market is closer than 300 ft. This is an existing feature approved when the market was first built, and there is no reason to change it.

Additionally, comment #5 on page 6 raises the question of whether a more recent survey is needed. With no change to the topography since 2003, and an as-built done in 2006, this should not be necessary.

Lastly, in regard to outside agency approval, Mr. VanLuvanee noted that approval from the Bucks County Planning Commission, as noted on page 9, is not a requirement for approval.

Mr. VanLuvanee also noted that spelling out the ordinance should not be needed on the plan, as the ordinance can change, and that Township Solicitor, Jeffrey Garton, agreed to this.

Ms. Goldstein suggested that there be something on the plan that memorializes the ordinance at this time, as it is a benchmark.

Mr. VanLuvanee agreed that they can make a general note to put on the plan.

The Michael Baker review is also a will comply, and Ms. Calliagas noted that it would be to the satisfaction of the Bike and Hike committee.

Regarding the letter from Mr. Salisbury, Director of Code Enforcement, that is all will comply as well.

Mr. Kelso, referring to the site plan, asked if the expansion of the existing basins is intended for additional capacity. If so, can capacity be gained in the east basin, so that the bike and hike path can be moved more toward the lower parking on the east side of the nursery?

Dan Wright, engineer representing Terrain, explained that it was a challenge to meet the current ordinance requirements, but said they could potentially reduce this basin to bring the pathway more toward the connection.

Ms. Calliagas agreed that they can look at shifting the walkway.

Mr. Kelso also added that there should be a 5 ft radius on trails where they meet existing pavement. He then mentioned a previous discussion about using stormwater for irrigation but noted that he didn't see that incorporated in the plan.

Mr. Wright explained that they did attempt preliminary designs with a large tank included, but that it changed the look, and was not justified in the end.

In regard to the traffic impact study, Greg Richardson of Traffic Planning and Design (TPD) was present to discuss the review comments. He explained that the original study submitted was from the Terrain location in Delaware County. There are no comments that cannot be overcome, and they will provide the information requested.

The study at the DelVal site included four intersections that would have the greatest impact. Among the study conclusions was a timing issue at the signal at 202 and Lower State. It is believed they can optimize the timing here to make the intersection work better, which would require PennDOT approval also. Further, it is believed this would make the approach safer, smoother, and more efficient. Their analysis also indicated that widening the road would not be needed due to traffic generated by the site.

Mr. Reppa asked where most of the traffic is coming from.

Mr. Richardson noted that the majority leaving the facility is making a right turn onto Lower State toward 202, and then disperses from there.

Mr. Kelso asked how event traffic would be addressed.

Mr. Richardson said it was not addressed yet, but they are in the midst of revisions.

Ms. Calliagas noted that with those types of events they will be filing for permits with the Township and will work with the Police Department regarding traffic flow and needs for each event.

Mr. Richardson then noted that they did traffic counts at two different events at their Devon location; a wine tasting and a wedding, both falling outside peak hours. They will address the needs of these types of events but do believe that their study has considered the peak days and times of the week.

Ms. Goldstein noted that the University is familiar with large events and to build on their experience.

Ms. Calliagas agreed and said that they are accustomed to working on events in a residential area in the Devon location.

Mr. Kelso asked about the status of the strategic alliance agreement required under the ordinance.

Mr. VanLuvanee presented the Planning Commission with copies of the agreement that has been negotiated to date. Both the University and Terrain have agreed to the text.

Mr. Kelso asked if this was a two-party agreement with Township involvement and questioned if it is standard for the Township to accept or reject it.

Mr. VanLuvanee noted that the agreement is between the University and Terrain, and while comments will be taken under consideration, they do believe the agreement is just about settled and has taken everything into consideration.

Mr. Kelso noted that the agreement allows DeVal to hold a specified number of events and asked what they envision.

Julia Kelly from DVU explained that they would like to use the facility several times a year, in a fashion to be determined. They have a cross functional team that will discuss the types of events and educational programs to hold.

Mr. VanLuvanee then asked for preliminary final approval subject to the requests as previously noted.

Ms. Mason asked for it to be noted that a letter was received from a resident, Miller, in support of the project.

Mr. Kelso made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors Preliminary Final Approval of Terrain at Delaware Valley University, with the understanding that the applicant has agreed to come back to the Planning Commission as a courtesy to review changes in the plan as it is finalized, and that the Planning Commission is in agreement with three waivers as requested by the applicant, and two additional waivers related to existing features and sidewalks/curbing, and that outside approval not be required from the Bucks County Planning Commission. In addition, they agree to consider relocating the bike rack and location of the connecting trail.

Mr. Feldstein seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Sketch Plans Scheduled for Discussion

Doylestown Veterinary Hospital (DVH)– Sketch Plan

Kristen Holmes, the engineer representing DVH, presented the sketch plan for the DVH/Holiday House site at 380 Shady Retreat Road. She explained that there are multiple uses on the property today; a kennel and doggie day care as well as a veterinary hospital. The proposal is to provide expansion to DVH by way of the addition of a new building. It would also include widening of the existing driveway for two-way traffic, and some additional parking adjacent to the kennel facility.

Regarding review letters received, many of the comments are a will comply, as they move forward with engineering. Ms. Holmes also noted that this property is subject to a conservation easement, and they will make sure to be in compliance with that. She added that there is some zoning relief required in regard to parking, beyond the allowable non-conforming use, and should they move forward, they will submit an application to the Township's Zoning Hearing Board.

Ms. Hendrixson asked about the number of employees at the facility.

Dr. Randy Weis, owner of the property, replied that there are some seasonal fluctuations on the Holiday House side, but are looking at approximately 100 staff members for both businesses total, with all not being there at the same time. At the busiest time, approximately 1/3 of that number are on site. With the expansion that would increase slightly. He went on to explain that the Vet Hospital is jammed up

and needs to be expanded. Their existing building would be used more as office space. On the lodging side, the expansion would allow for a better system going forward, enabling them to move toward small playgroups rather than individual spaces. He noted that it is unusual that the dogs in playgroups bark, but it is the dogs who are alone that often do. He noted that they are very sensitive to the noise.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if there is a drop-off set-up at the doggie daycare?

Dr. Weis said they are certainly looking at options for as smooth a flow as possible. In regard to the driveway, they do not wish to take out any old trees and are hoping to add some way of lowering the speed of cars coming in and out.

Mr. Kelso then mentioned some work that is to be done on the bike and hike trail near the property, including possibly adding a three way stop sign, which could help the property a lot, offering some breaks in traffic.

Dr. Weis suggested that they could possibly add in a crosswalk down the line.

Ms. Holmes added that they will also go through the NPDES process. She also suggested that the stormwater basin will likely be near the addition, but a viable location will be confirmed.

Mr. Reppa asked about tree removal at the property.

Ms. Holmes said they will be surveying and looking at individual tree protection.

Dr. Weis added that he is very concerned about tree protection, but noted that due to some infestations and infections, there are a number of trees that still need to be removed.

Ms. Goldstein suggested speaking with their arborist to ensure that the trees being taken down are documented, and that this doesn't go against them during Land Development.

Ms. Hendrixson asked about the parking numbers, since they are asking for less than what is required.

Ms. Holmes explained that 1 space is required for every 4 animals. For 310 animals' capacity, for both the doggie daycare and kennel, that would require 115 total. They are proposing 81 on this plan, as full capacity is very unlikely due to the nature of the operation, with animals coming and going. They also wish to maintain the aesthetic features of the farm.

Ms. Hendrixson added that they would like to see some sort of set-up where there is an area for drop off that rotates so the additional parking is not required.

Ms. Mason suggested that the plan show parking in reserve for the future.

Ms. Goldstein added that the Zoning Hearing Board may want to see that as well, as they don't grant too many parking variances.

John Weisbecker of 8 Fiaba Court asked how many dogs are anticipated on the property.

Dr. Weis estimated that they currently can house approximately 148, and that with the expansion they could add potentially another 100 maximum, utilizing a new system of small playgroups.

Mr. Weisbecker noted that they are concerned over the noise at the facility.

Dr. Weis said that they do not anticipate additional noise but are cognizant of the neighbors' concern.

Mr. Weisbecker then asked if an evergreen buffer could be added to shield their line of site from the greenhouses on the property.

Dr. Weis said they can certainly do that.

Mr. Reppa asked what the hours of the doggie daycare are.

Dr. Weis said the drop-off hours are between approximately 6:30 am and 9:30 am, and pick-up hours between 3 pm and 7 pm.

Mr. Reppa suggested that the numbers be pinned down a little more since they are seeking a waiver on parking.

Ms. Hendrixson added that anything added as a sound buffer certainly helps as well.

Dr. Weis said that they are always looking at ways to reduce the noise and he has had sound engineers out to work on it. He said that trees do help a little but not a lot. He added that he is still considering some sort of padded sound absorbing material.

Mr. Feldstein asked how many days a week they are operational.

Dr. Weis replied that they are open 6 days per week, possibly 7 in the busy summer months, but added that they haven't had Sunday hours since 2019. If there is demand, they could do that. The lodging, however, is 365 day a year.

Items Scheduled for Discussion

County Model Alternative Energy Ordinance

Ms. Hendrixson began the discussion of the County ordinance.

Mr. Reppa explained that the EAC made comments on the ordinance, but that they were heavily regulatory. He thought a concept that would be more encouraging rather than bureaucratic would be more beneficial and incentivize developers. He added that technology is changing in regard to energy and energy uses, so we should look at something more futuristic.

Ms. Goldstein noted that the bureaucratic things cost money, and this may not be the best way to encourage developers. That should be the goal.

Ms. Goldstein added that the EAC had a great presentation regarding the park and recreation building and have studied alternate energy issues. These are good questions to ask during the Land Development process. The BCPC model ordinance is not the solution to this.

Ms. Goldstein added that Mr. Salisbury would like to redo the Green Points ordinance as well since some code requirements have changed. There have only been a handful of people who have taken advantage of the ordinance to date.

Ms. Hendrixson added that they would like to see an education component and that they can join forces with the EAC to promote rather than regulate.

Ms. Goldstein suggested that EAC reviews could be beneficial for land development plans.

Mr. Wood said that when he was the EAC liaison they didn't review subdivision/land development plans for more than landscaping and the use of native trees/shrubs. He further mentioned that without Don Richardson and Marty Brooks the EAC doesn't have the volunteers to take this on now.

Ms. Mason added that this could be a lot for the EAC.

Ms. Hendrixson said they can continue to look into these things, but possibly use an incentive model rather than an ordinance.

Mr. Wood offered that the goal for the County is to have a code across municipalities rather than piecemeal ordinances.

Adjournment

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaitlyn Finley
Office Manager, Code Enforcement