

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, April 19, 2023 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 Wednesday, April 19, 2023. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included Tom Kelso, Chairman; Judy Hendrixson, Vice Chairman; members Jill Macauley and Michael Kracht. Others in attendance included Stephanie Mason, Township Manager; Judy Stern Goldstein, Gilmore & Associates; Jennifer Herring, Board of Supervisors Liaison.

Not in attendance was member Robert Repko.

The meeting officially began at **7:00 pm**.

Public Comment

N/A

Review of Minutes

On motion of Ms. Hendrixson and seconded by Mr. Kracht, the March 22, 2023 minutes were unanimously approved as prepared.

Sketch Plans Scheduled for Discussion

1796 S. Easton Road – Sketch Plan

On behalf of the buyer for 1796 S. Easton Road, attorney Kellie McGowan and engineer Kristen Holmes presented a sketch plan for the property. The area is known as the 1776 Shopping Center but is addressed 1796. The proposal is for an E-13 car wash use at the strip center portion of the site, which is permitted by special exception of the Zoning Hearing Board. While the entirety of the site is under contract, the 7-11 and Midas are not part of the redevelopment at this time. The project anticipates improvements along the frontage of 611 and with direction from the Township's comp plan and corridor studies, the project is a good candidate for the gateway into the Township. Two specific criteria that are required are 1) a water recycling facility and 2) the stacking of waiting cars. They are currently analyzing options for water recycling and are planning to stack 34 cars where 6 would be required.

Ms. Holmes described the location of the site, which backs up to Neshaminy Creek, and noted that they would not be encroaching on the riparian corridor. She further described access to the site, which would maintain full access off Edison toward the 7-11 and full access on 611 toward the Midas. The plan includes additional access at the southern portion of the site, and provides an internal drive between the car wash, Midas and 7-11. The car wash itself would have a one-way circulation with three automated kiosks that would feed into a single car wash line. The car wash would then open to a vacuum area. She added that some zoning relief would be needed with regard to setback requirements and the limitation of the riparian corridor, which presents a very tight building envelope. Additional zoning relief would be in regard to already existing non-conformities.

Ms. McGowan went into further detail regarding variances needed. These would involve relief for the rear setback line, some parking conditions with regard to non-conforming conditions, and the impervious calculation with regard to net buildable area. She noted that this is a smaller building than what currently sits at the site. She added that this is only a sketch plan at this time, and they are not requesting any action from the Planning Commission.

Mr. Kelso requested a review of the flood plain and asked if the existing building had ever been flooded.

Ms. Holmes showed the site with the flood plain overlay and noted that the asphalt line is approximately 10 feet from the creek. It is unknown at this time whether the building has ever been flooded.

Mr. Kelso added that they should look closely at the flood potential.

Ms. Hendrixson asked for an explanation of why three payment kiosks and so many vacuums would be needed.

Ms. Holmes explained that the number of kiosks helps to expedite the payment process and helps with queuing and stacking of cars. The business model includes these features for optimum efficiency and to ensure no backups to the operation. This is a similar model to others in the area.

Ms. Hendrixson noted that reducing the number of kiosks and vacuums could get them out of the floodplain in the back.

John Moran, was present to speak on car wash design and operations, replied that one of the kiosks is a member only lane, allowing them to expedite the process. In addition, from an operations standpoint, three kiosks allow for backup should one of them go down. As for the number of vacuums, the potential for this site is that it could be very busy, and the number of vacuums fits that analysis, especially for peak usage.

Ms. Hendrixson noted that while reducing impervious, being so close to the flood plain, it is still a lot.

Ms. McGowan said that they are working on it but understand the point made.

Ms. Herring asked if they would be looking at the traffic issues in this area.

Ms. McGowan replied that they have already started the traffic study process and wish to improve the access points. This will be heavily driven by the review from PennDOT.

Ms. Macauley referenced another car wash further south on 611, where cars often spill out onto 611.

Ms. McGowan explained that this was part of the reason for the excessive stacking included in this project. They want to avoid any stacking on 611.

Ms. Holmes noted that the right turn lane at the entrance to the car wash is meant to get cars out of the travel lanes of 611.

Mr. Kelso asked how critical the southern entrance is.

Peter Spisszak from Traffic Planning & Design noted that without it, anyone trying to get into the site would be backed up at the signal at Edison Furlong. The southern entrance pulled cars off 611 before reaching the traffic light. He further added that this will all be flushed out with the PennDOT review.

Mr. Kelso noted the Township's goal of pedestrian access within the village and brought up a multiuse trail that had been previously planned there with the County.

Ms. McGowan replied that this has been looked at and adding sidewalks in the area is certainly possible, but the span of the bridge in that area is prohibitive as far as accessing the park. It was noted that the trail could be placed within the flood plain at the back, rather than on the edge of the highway.

Ms. Macauley asked if permeable pavers had been considered.

Ms. Holmes explained that they had not worked through the design for stormwater management yet, but that with the load of traffic they might not be suitable for the space.

Ms. Macauley noted that there are some new innovative surfaces out there used at places like amusement parks, and these could be investigated.

Ms. Hendrixson added that the Planning Commission is also concerned about environmental initiatives and asked about the canopies over the areas of the car wash, suggesting the possibility of solar.

Ms. McGowan said that there is a range of canopies being looked at and this will be considered.

Ms. Herring asked about the environmental concerns so close to the creek.

Mr. Moran provided an overview of how the water recycling system works and explained that there are underground concrete tanks to hold the water. Impact to the creek would only occur if a tank were to leak.

Ms. Herring further asked what happens to the wastewater, and if the chemicals used were biodegradable.

Mr. Moran explained that this property is attached to the sewer system so water will be discharged to the sewers after it is treated. Furthermore, sediments at the bottom of the tank will be pumped out. He noted that the chemicals used by the car wash are biodegradable.

Mr. Kelso asked about the possibility of adding EV charging stations.

Ms. Holmes explained that this may not be a location to provide adequate time for charging.

Ms. Goldstein asked if the vacuums are accessible without paying for a car wash.

Ms. Holmes said that the intent is that the vacuums are for customers but added that the vacuums at the front of the site would be accessible without paying. This is tough to avoid.

Ms. McGowan noted that they are looking forward to getting zoning together and being back before the Planning Commission.

280 N. Broad Street – Continued Discussion

Ms. McGowan, the attorney for the developer, noted that a previous sketch plan had been brought before the planning commission about two years ago. She introduced developer Jason Duckworth, from Arcadia and Ryan Bailey from Penrose, who would be a new partner on the project. The proposal has evolved into a multi-generational, mixed income residential development. It would contain market value townhomes as well as attainable apartments that would be marketed to seniors and veterans.

Mr. Duckworth provided details about the existing conditions of the site, currently zoned LI, and provided an overview of the walkability and proximity to various amenities. Of the total size, 0.8 acres rest in the Borough, and approximately 3 full acres rest in the Township. He also provided an overview of the previous sketch plan, which was determined to have too great a density and said that the new plan would reduce that density.

Mr. Bailey provided an overview of the senior housing component. They are proposing 60-70 single occupancy units, age qualified at 62+, for incomes less than \$47,000, and marketed to veterans.

Mr. Kelso asked about the number of townhomes proposed.

Mr. Duckworth said it would be in the 20-30 range.

Mr. Kelso noted that the density here would be greater than the densest area of the Township. He noted that they want to look at the whole district when making zoning changes.

Ms. McGowan remarked that the previous sketch plan included 217 units. At the high end, this plan would include approximately 100. She noted that to provide attainable housing in Central Bucks at a property like this, the density is going to be naturally higher. She added that working with Penrose and their different development type, this pulls the focus off density as there are fewer vehicle focused residents. Further, this site is unlikely to be improved for industrial purposes.

Mr. Bailey added that the walkability of the site, proximity to the DART, park, retail, etc. is fitting for residents who are less frequent vehicle users. He noted that these are green and energy efficient buildings, with on-site management and maintenance. They also offer supportive services for residents and access to community programs.

Mr. Duckworth added that the traffic analysis suggests an imperceptible impact to North Broad Street.

Ms. Hendrixson noted the parking lot at the rear of the site and asked about the possibility of parking underneath the building.

Mr. Bailey replied that this would be a more expensive option, and the goal is attainability. He said that they see the need to cover the parking areas and will think about that, including the possibility of a solar option.

Mr. Duckworth remarked that this is a pre-sketch plan at this point, so they appreciate all comments, and will be considering alternatives.

Mr. Kracht asked how the attainable housing component would be controlled.

Mr. Bailey replied that there would be a 40-year deed restriction on affordability and age requirements, with built in tiers of affordability.

Ms. Herring asked if the age restriction is a requirement, noting that attainable housing is needed in the Township for the younger workforce as well.

Mr. Bailey explained that 62+ makes it more competitive when applying for tax credits necessary for attainability.

Ms. Herring added that some of the largest employers in the Township are the hospital and school district and that attainable housing would help to keep the workforce in this area.

Mr. Bailey replied that they would love to look at sites for this purpose in the future.

Mr. Kelso asked what would keep this from being classified as contract or spot zoning.

Ms. McGowan said that they are looking for the creation of a use. They are working through the density discussion, and with an understanding of what they want to accomplish, will work with the Township on how it can be achieved.

Nancy Santacecilia asked if the plan included green space or an area for pets.

Mr. Duckworth replied that 20% of the courtyard area is planned to be green space, and they are also considering the inclusion of a dog park. In addition, there is some room against the woodlands for green space, but also a park across the street that offers a lot of that as well.

Patricia Murphy asked if the townhomes have garages and who they are expecting to buy them.

Mr. Duckworth said that the townhomes have 2-car rear entry garages. The homes would be sold at market value, likely to smaller households with younger children and babies. They are expected to be in the \$600,000 range.

Plans Scheduled for Discussion

N/A

Items Scheduled for Discussion

Zoning Options in the C2 District – Options for Adding Residential Uses – Continued Discussion

Mr. Kelso asked to move this discussion to the next meeting.

Adjournment

With no other business, and on a motion by Mr. Kelso, seconded by Mr. Kracht, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaitlyn Finley
Office Manager, Code Enforcement