

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, October 25, 2021 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, October 25, 2021. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included Judy Hendrixson, Chairman; Gregory Reppa, Vice Chairman; members Tom Kelso and Ted Feldstein. Others in attendance included Judy Stern Goldstein, Planning Consultant, Sean Torpey, Township Engineer, Stephanie Mason, Township Manager, Sinclair Salisbury, Director of Code Enforcement, and Nancy Santacecilia, Board of Supervisors Liaison.

Absent: Jill Macauley

The meeting officially began at 7:11 pm.

Review of Minutes

On motion of Mr. Kelso and seconded by Mr. Feldstein, the September 27, 2021 minutes were approved with corrections on *page 4 under Sketch Plan 405 Edison Furlong Road 7th paragraph add after property applicated noted they were not interested in locating a tank on the property.*

On motion of Mr. Feldstein and seconded by Mr. Reppa, the minutes from the joint Planning Commission/EAC meeting on September 27, 2021 were unanimously approved.

Public/Commission Comments/Presentations

None.

Plans Scheduled for Discussion

Doylestown Hospital Amended Final Land Development Plan – Children’s Village

Ms. Goldstein recused herself from this project.

Kellie McGowan, representing Doylestown Hospital and Kris Reiss from Boucher & James presented an amended final plan submission for the rebuild of Children’s Village, which was destroyed by last year’s tornado. The plan proposes an expansion from 19,000 sq ft to 33,000 sq ft. The building would include various wings, some reconfiguration of access, a second floor, and some additional parking. Doylestown Hospital also appeared before the Zoning Hearing Board and was granted variances for previous hospital development. They appeared in front of the Zoning Hearing Board this month as well and received verbal approval for variances being sought relative to a recently changed floodplain.

Mr. Kelso asked what the flood elevation was from the last storm.

Mr. Reiss said he did not know.

Ms. McGowan explained that prior to new mapping, the existing building was conforming. The new proposed building would comply except for the change in the map. Further, review of stormwater management is in process by the Bucks County Conservation District. She added that shoreline variances for a man-made pond and an increase of impervious coverage from 62 to 68% were verbally granted by the ZHB. The final two variances relate to the 611 Bypass. Two setbacks apply; 40 ft front yard, whereby a minor roof overhang extends into it, and a 64 ft setback to an arterial road, whereby 37.5 feet will be proposed. Frontage is a heavily wooded area, where there is minimal impact to the bypass.

Mr. Reppa asked why the building is almost doubling in size. And added, is this just for hospital employees or the public as well?

Ms. McGowan answered that Children's Village is open to hospital staff and the public. The old building did not meet newer regulations for childcare regarding area and access. The new building will provide increased area and open space in the center, as well as a second floor, possibly to be used by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit.

Mr. Reiss added that the proposed increase is approximately 38%, up to an additional 120 students and 12 staff.

Mr. Kasner from Doylestown Hospital, who is the architect on the project added that the BCIU would have 20 kids per classroom, times 6 classrooms, with two staff in each, equaling 120 students and 12 staff total. The max age would likely be kindergarten.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if an elevator was proposed for a two-story structure.

Mr. Kasner said yes, and that there could be students utilizing the building of various disabilities.

Ms. McGowan added that the building would be fully ADA compliant.

Ms. Santacecilia asked how students would exit in an emergency.

Mr. Feldstein added that in the event of a power outage and elevators may not work, how would they get students in a wheelchair out of the building?

Ms. McGowan explained that a safety plan would be developed and required based on state regulations, although that plan is not available at this time.

Mr. Feldstein then asked if the hospital would rent the space to the BCIU.

Ms. McGowan replied that discussions are ongoing, and they are looking to line up for the upcoming school year. They are moving as quickly as possible to get the kids relocated back in the building.

Ms. Hendrixson asked where on the plan the drop-off and required parking are located.

Ms. McGowan explained that in prior hospital expansion, there was excess parking, and that with what is newly proposed in this project, they will meet the requirement.

Mr. Reiss added that there are two drop off areas, the primary being in front, as was the current drop off. Other than some modifications to improve efficiency, it will stay mostly the same. A second drop-off area is primarily for the BCIU. It includes another loop with four ADA spaces. He then reiterated that with the additional spaces they are in compliance with the zoning requirement.

Ms. Santacecilia asked what the timing is in and out?

Ms. McGowan said that is unknown at this time.

Mr. Feldstein added that as a former IU employee, there could be kids there all day, resulting in a steady stream of traffic and parents. He said that he is not sure 4 ADA spaces is enough.

Ms. McGowan replied that this is not unlike what the current operation experiences as far as scheduling.

Mr. Feldstein then said that because IU students are entitled to busing, bus traffic could increase need tremendously.

Mr. Reppa added that upon looking at the increase in students, with parking at the hospital not being great right now, he is not sure this could work.

Ms. McGowan said no parking issue was identified prior to the tornado. The reason the plan has been designed this way is to accommodate additional students. The hospital believes these are critical services, and they are seeing this as an opportunity to fill a need in the community. They have gone through studies and believe this is a feasible alternative. Most redevelopment has been at the front of the hospital, whereas this is at the back, less active area. This would also utilize the access road as a means of getting in and out of Children's Village.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if the main access would be off of Shady Retreat, and not the main hospital entrance.

Ms. McGowan said you can get to it from Shady Retreat and make right by the helipad to have a straight access to Children's Village.

Ms. McGowan then added that there has been a lot of internal discussion about operations, but that this is also a C4 zoning, and the proposed building is in the same general footprint, with a slightly different configuration.

Ms. Santacecilia asked if the EAC has looked at the plan yet.

Ms. Mason said they will need to complete a review by their next meeting.

Ms. McGowan then added that professional review letters have been received, and that generally, all letters are a will comply. They have only one waiver request for providing a traffic impact study. A full study was done in 2016-2017, and the hospital has since completed upgrades to access. They do not believe a full study is warranted for the rebuild of an existing building.

Mr. Feldstein asked if the plan includes consideration for buses coming in.

Ms. McGowan said they do not have that information right now, although there are buses coming in already.

Ms. Santacecilia asked how the buses would come in.

Ms. McGowan said bus access could be from either way, but that timing may determine best route.

Mr. Reppa asked if there is a long-range plan for the vacant land up against Limekiln near the Shady Retreat entrance. He asked why not locate it over there and leave this area for possible hospital expansion.

Ms. McGowan explained that a large number of hospital employees take advantage of Children's Village, and it is very important to them, especially at critical times. This stresses the importance of having it on the main campus. She added that the planning for this use and this building does work into how the hospital views expansion.

Mr. Kelso raised the question of whether it is appropriate to call this an amended final plan, and whether they can amend a plan this old.

Ms. McGowan clarified that they amended the most recent plan for development of the hospital from 2016-2017 where Pavilion 3 and Cardiac Services expansion occurred. They have done this before on other projects, rather than start from the beginning. This does not add land or propose a different use. She added that there is a level of discretion involved, but that the proposed scope of improvements does not rise to the level of a full new base layout.

Mr. Kelso suggested calling this a preliminary/final land development plan.

Ms. McGowan said they would defer to the Township and Township Solicitor.

Mr. Kelso expressed concern over setting a precedent here.

Ms. McGowan said that in addition to other plan review letters, they would be compliant with use, and there are no SALDO issues.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if they are still waiting on any review letters.

Ms. Mason said only the EAC review form the Township is outstanding.

Ms. McGowan added that they have submitted the proposal to the Bucks County Planning Commission but have received no comments yet.

Ms. Santacecilia asked how the Planning Commission felt about the increase in impervious from 60 to 68%.

Ms. McGowan explained that they have already received verbal approval for a variance from the ZHB relative to the increase in impervious.

Ms. Santacecilia emphasized her concern over the safety piece in an emergency.

Ms. McGowan said that she does not want to speculate, but that there are state standards regarding space, special needs, etc. In addition, the physical footprint has been expanded to comply with current code and area requirements as needed by children.

Ms. Mason suggested that if conditional approval is granted, any of these questions will have detailed responses.

Ms. McGowan confirmed that a full safety plan will be determined.

Mr. Reppa expressed reluctance over the parking issue, during drop off and pick up. He also asked if the parking garage is at capacity.

Ms. McGowan responded that the garage is not at capacity on a daily basis.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if there is related to this, a drop off lane, where cars can still get around. Will traffic stop there?

Ms. McGowan said there are two lanes there, and that this is an issue that Children's Village has managed since the 1980s. In addition, many staff park and then walk children down, etc.

Mr. Feldstein asked if the hours would change.

Ms. McGowan said she is not aware of any changes. She also agreed to find out how the buses would be coming in.

Ms. Hendrixson requested that in lieu of a traffic study, a flow diagram be provided for the traffic/pick-up/drop-off and parking.

Mr. Kelso then requested this be presented when they go to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Kelso made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the BOS approval of land development for Children's Village, with the understanding that the applicant agrees to address comments provided at this point by the letters from Michael Baker and Pennoni, and the applicant will provide a required safety plan for the structure. The Planning Commission supports the traffic study waiver with the understanding that the applicant will look at traffic circulation and parking for discussion with the BOS. In addition, the applicant will provide a parking plan reviewing current loops and availability of parking throughout the complex, and outstanding approvals must be received. Lastly, approval is contingent upon the final decision by the Zoning Hearing Board.

Ms. Hendrixson clarified that this is an amended final land development plan.

Mr. Kelso added that this is approved as a preliminary final land development plan, not an amendment to the 2016-17 plan.

Mr. Reppa seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Items Scheduled for Discussion

Ashbridge at Furlong – 537 Plan Amendment

Mr. Benner, representing the applicant, explained that the matter before Planning Commission is statutory in nature as part of the project. A condition was set forth that the Supervisors withhold final approval pending action by DEP approving planning modules. The planning module is underway, and is now before the Township to pass on to DEP. The basic act 537 plan module calls for revisions because the area is mapped for onsite systems, but as part of the stipulation, the project is to be served by public water and sewer.

Mr. Blue, who is overseeing the engineering associated with the design of the sewer system added that the design includes a pump station at the southwest corner of the property. They are also working with BCWSA to address some technical concerns.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if the pump station is adjacent to the neighbors.

Mr. Blue responded that it is designed with two forced mains that carry the majority of the flow to a pumping station as outlined on the plan and the force main carries the lion's share of flow.

Ms. Hendrixson clarified that she is concerned about noise from a generator or other machinery at the pump station.

Mr. Blue explained that there would be no noise from the pump station itself. The only noise would be from a generator in the event that power was lost. The generator would be exercised one day per week around 10 am for 10-15 minutes.

Mr. Benner added that the design engineer said the generator would be below water level and will not be heard any more than 25 feet away. It would also be housed in a sound enclosure that will mitigate the noise.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if the generator would be located within 25 feet of the property line.

Mr. Blue said that this plan does not have the details of the generator, but that it likely would be 100 feet or more off the road to the pump station on Rogers Rd.

Mr. Kelso asked who will own and operate the pump station.

Mr. Blue said BCWSA.

Mr. Kelso then asked for an update as to whether BCWSA has signed off on their plan or ensured capacity.

Mr. Blue responded that they have ensured capacity, and they are addressing some other comments they have regarding the plan.

Mr. Kelso asked about the low-pressure line and who would have ownership.

Ms. Mason responded that it would be dedicated to BCWSA, in a similar way to other similar projects.

Mr. Blue added that this project will also be adding fire protection where there isn't now, with eight new fire hydrants.

Mr. Kelso asked where they are in terms of publishing the required notice.

Mr. Blue said once everything is signed, they will publish the notice, but it is premature at this time.

Mr. Kelso clarified that the supervisors can't take action until 30 days after the public notice.

Mr. Benner asked what information are you specifically looking for?

Mr. Kelso clarified that they are looking for a will serve letter from DTMA, BCWSA's sign off for capacity, and then for the public notice to go in the newspaper. He added that there is a mistake on the plan on page 65; the PA historical commission notes still reference the CVS Shopping Center, which is out of date.

Mr. Benner said that would be corrected.

Mr. Kelso also requested that the minutes from this meeting be attached to the planning module. He made a motion that the Board of Supervisors move forward once the outstanding information has been received.

Mr. Feldstein seconded.

Motion carried 4-0.

EAC Join Meeting Follow Up

Mr. Reppa expressed that it was very enlightening, and he gained understanding and perspective as to what they do and what their goals are.

Ms. Hendrixson said she was pleasantly surprised and enjoy it as well. It was great to talk about the volunteer efforts for these areas, which is a great approach to take, and is very positive for the community.

Mr. Kelso asked about a property that had been left off the open space map, located off the 202 Parkway at Lower State Road.

Ms. Mason said it is usable space farmed by DeVal. The discussed the area with the Bucks County open space board and received authorization for a community garden some time in the future.

Mr. Kelso asked if it was acquired with county money.

Ms. Mason said yes, and that there are restrictions on it, but the community garden has been authorized. It hasn't happened yet due to cost, but this area is definitely restricted from development.

Mr. Reppa began a discussion regarding receiving paper copies of plans because the electronic versions are difficult to read for the larger projects. Ms. Mason requested that if anyone wanted paper copies going forward to let her know.

Ms. Santacecilia asked what the next steps would be for how the EAC, and planning commission would work together.

Ms. Mason said they should first start with an ordinance and the planning commission can have the consultants start to draft it. The other item regarding the naturalization of basins, there will be a meeting with the EAC to do a presentation for staff in November, where they can prioritize the properties.

Ms. Goldstein suggested creating a subcommittee with the EAC and planning commission.

Ms. Santacecilia added that it could include a supervisor as well.

Ms. Hendrixson asked for a volunteer for the subcommittee.

Mr. Reppa said that he could possibly participate.

Ms. Hendrixson suggested that they start with one meeting to talk about ordinance issues and then plan to identify properties to start with.

Sketch Plans Scheduled for Discussion

N/A

Additional Comments

Ms. Hendrixson reminded the group that there is a site visit on October 29th at 3 pm at 405 Edison Furlong Road.

Mr. Kelso identified a couple issues at 405 he would like to look at, regarding homes in the wooded area. The location of the driveway and properties adjacent to it. And trying to preserve the integrity of the estate. It is somewhat contradictory to what was discussed with the EAC.

Ms. Hendrixson said this could be discussed with the applicant, and that they would be looking for a deed restriction so the properties couldn't be subdivided further.

Mr. Kelso said the applicant didn't seem interested and that they can't force a deed restriction.

Ms. Goldstein added that they can make requirements for the remainder of the site.

Ms. Mason said under ordinance this be a cluster option with open space instead of large lots.

Ms. Goldstein suggested that the goal of the applicant is to maintain an estate feeling with large lots.

Ms. Mason said the goal is possibly to subdivide and then sell lots to individual builders.

Ms. Hendrixson reminded the group that the Bucks County Planning Commission is holding two meetings to inform the public about Bucks 2040, October 27th at Lower Makefield, and November 16th at Warrington.

Ms. Santacecilia said that she met the new Parks & Rec Director for the county and suggested possibly reaching out to her.

Ms. Mason said that she is new in the position and making the rounds.

Adjournment

With no other business or comments, the meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kaitlyn Finley, Township Code Secretary