

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting – Held via Zoom

March 22, 2021

Meeting Minutes

The Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular Meeting was held at 7:00 pm, Monday, March 22, 2021. This meeting was held via Zoom. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included Judy Hendrixson, Chairman; Gregory Reppa, Vice Chairperson; members Tom Kelso, and Ted Feldstein. Others in attendance included Jen Herring and Nancy Santacecilia, Board of Supervisors Liaisons; Sinclair Salisbury, Director of Code Enforcement; and Stephanie Mason, Township Manager.

The meeting officially began at 7:02 pm.

Review of Minutes

On motion of Mr. Kelso and seconded by Mr. Feldstein the March 22nd minutes were approved with corrections.

Public/Commission Comments/Presentations

No public comment.

Plans Scheduled for Discussion

280 N. Broad St. – Continued Discussion:

Jason Duckworth of Arcadia Land Company and Kellie McGowan, counsel to Arcadia were present for continued discussion regarding 280 N. Broad Street. Mr. Duckworth mentioned that they previously presented two versions of their plan, and he requested feedback from the Planning Commission before moving ahead further.

Ms. Hendrixson expressed concern over the number of units in the plan as it would be high density for this area. She believes Doylestown Borough is also concerned about this. She further noted that the Township parcel is the least desirable as it is right next to the sewer treatment plant. Ms. Hendrixson raised the question of maintaining more of an industrial application, with residential units toward the front of the property where views are more attractive.

Mr. Kelso expressed concern over spot zoning and said that if this plan moves forward, they should look at the entire zoning district and apply changes to the district, rather than just the single parcel. In addition, he noted that increasing density could not be supported unless it is part of a public improvement overlay zone.

Ms. McGowan questioned the spot zoning issue and asked if the Planning Commission would be inclined to do something like what Doylestown Borough has been doing with an overlay across Broad Street on the Calkins property. This would not change the zoning of the parcel but there are performance, density, and architectural standards that are more site specific. Mr. Kelso clarified that the increase of density is traded off by the developer making certain improvements within the township. This is expected from the developer.

Ms. McGowan said they will explore density, and that the developer is not as concerned with the number of units but will work with the township to figure out the number that works.

Ms. Hendrixson questioned the appropriateness of this use for the parcel and suggested that it may make more sense to keep with current zoning and commercial development. Ms. McGowan suggested that with an eye toward commercial, they are limited to more intense defined industrial uses. She further suggested that the developer could go to the Zoning Hearing Board to address the zoning. Mr. Kelso did not recommend taking this to the ZHB as it strips the Board of Supervisors of their authority.

Mr. Reppa inquired about the density proposed at the Intelligencer site. He expressed concern about whether this Broad Street corridor could accommodate the increase in traffic. He suggested that this issue needs to be studied before more can be added on. He further questioned whether apartments are marketable there.

Mr. Duckworth explained that, regarding the Borough property, they would not entertain a proposal until a comprehensive traffic study was complete. He recognizes that this area must be looked at holistically. As for density, there are 32 units per acre proposed on the Borough site, and at a similar height to what he is proposing. To follow up on the changing nature of Broad Street, he has a sense that eventually the other properties will convert in this way. He understands that the property at Doyle and Broad Streets is under lease agreement, and the nearby Chem Fab property has serious environmental constraints that this property does not have.

Ms. Mason explained that a treatment plant will soon be placed on the Store and Lock property for the Chem Fab site, and that there is a ton of flood plain on that property, so there are constraints. She also asked if the developer had done site capacity calculations under the current Township ordinance. Mr. Duckworth said they had not yet done the calculation. Ms. Mason suggested that the site capacity calculation may reveal a smaller net buildable area. Mr. Duckworth agreed that they would do the analysis but may need relief from some standards. Ms. Mason clarified that this is commonly required by the Planning Commission because it puts into perspective how far off the plan would be from the current ordinance.

Ms. Santacecilia asked for the number of units proposed at the Intelligencer building. Mr. Duckworth suggested that it was around 231 – 232.

Ms. Hendrixson questioned what two properties of this type would look like within this area. Mr. Duckworth concurred that they should look at the whole area and what is adjacent. He further

expressed that he has encountered properties like this elsewhere, that are ripe for redevelopment, and that consumers typically accept some of the tradeoff because of the proximity of amenities.

Ms. Hendrixson commented that not all this area will change.

Mr. Duckworth mentioned that they are also exploring the idea of making the units rental apartments, without the scale of the Intel building. They would still provide a mixed-use element, but there would be less traffic impact. He further noted that there are some challenges with the geometry of the site because it is narrow and deep.

Ms. Hendrixson noted very positive comments regarding the architecture of the plan.

Mr. Kelso noted that even though adjoining properties may not develop at the same rate, there could still be an opportunity for integrating properties and finding other opportunities through that corridor.

Mr. Duckworth explained that some of their research found a scheme to have Atkinson continue through Tri Partners property to Avenue A and explained that it is conceivable down the road that they could be connected. They would also be interested in future connection points when those areas are redeveloped.

Mr. Reppa encouraged that the developer continues with limited industrial, and the uses allowed. He suggested more intense use on the borough side, with less use on the township side.

Mr. Duckworth expressed that they would also like to preserve the riparian corridor and would want people to enjoy the environmental element in this area.

Ms. Santacecilia cited the Belvedere properties nearby and suggested this could be another idea for development of the area as these properties are highly sought after. Mr. Duckworth said that they are working on a small project on North Main Street and have studied comps in Belvedere. He expressed that they are attractive comps for them as a developer. He also suggested that North Broad may be better for rental properties with certain types of adjacencies.

He left the meeting indicating that he would do some further study and come back in the future.

Items Scheduled for Discussion

Code Review - Status:

Ms. Hendrixson opened a discussion regarding the status of the current code review.

Ms. Mason confirmed that the ordinances were all approved in January regarding Subdivision and Land Development and Zoning. Mr. Salisbury said that he was pleased with the ordinances being passed and is waiting for them to be incorporated into the Township Code. He had nothing else for the Planning Commission at this time.

Future Topics for Discussion

Mr. Kelso suggested that it is more important at this time to continue the discussion of the County property at Almshouse Rd and 611. He said the County is working on their RFI.

Ms. Mason clarified that they have drafted an RFI and are having it reviewed by others at the County before it comes to the Township. There is no timeline yet for this property.

Mr. Reppa asked what portions of the site they are looking at. Ms. Mason explained that it is the area where old Neshaminy Manor is located between the Health Department and the old County Planning Commission building on that side of 611.

Ms. Hendrixson brought up the shopping center across the street that is being underutilized.

Mr. Reppa asked the group if they knew of any models of redevelopment that might provide a model for this area.

Ms. Hendrixson brought up an area through Wayne, PA that might be of some interest, where they have done a mixed-use development at an old shopping center site. This could fit in discussion, and she agreed to investigate this a little more. She further suggested tying the area of the shopping center into the County property and Turk Park area somehow.

Mr. Kelso suggested a newly developed property in Upper Dublin as a good example regarding the previously discussed Broad Street site. He also suggested that Ms. Mason reach out to the developer at the old Sears site and that they keep that dialog going as well. Mr. Kelso commented that Bruce Toll might be a good resource for redevelopment of the Broad Street property as well.

Ms. Herring questioned what the zoning was at the Neshaminy Manor site. Ms. Mason clarified that it is zoned as institutional.

Ms. Santacecilia asked whether the hospital might be interested in the property. She also suggested that it could be a good area for an athletic facility that could accommodate tournaments. This would bring in tourism and commerce. Mr. Kelso also suggested throwing the Turk Park property into the mix and questioned purchasing or extending the lease of the property.

Ms. Mason expressed that this is a large area that will have a major impact on the view scape. Traffic at Almshouse will also be greatly impacted.

Ms. Santacecilia also suggested that DelVal might have an interest and could be a potential partner.

Ms. Hendrixson said that we may get more information on this property for the next meeting.

Zoom vs. In Person Meetings

Ms. Mason also raised the question of whether to continue Planning Commission meetings via zoom or bring them back to in-person meetings. Zoom can still be an option even if the meeting is held in person, although this hybrid option can be difficult.

Ms. Hendrixson suggested that by May the Planning Commission may be able to meet in person.

Ms. Mason informed the group that Don Page, a longtime Township resident and former member of the Planning Commission passed away at the age of 96. She added that the wife of Marty Brooks, a current member of the Environmental Advisory Council and passed away. She offered condolences to both the Page and Brooks families.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, April 26, 2021 at 7 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kaitlyn Finley
Secretary, Code Enforcement