

North Coventry Township Planning Commission

March 18, 2009

Meeting Minutes

The March 18, 2009, meeting of the North Coventry Township Planning Commission was called to order by Jay Kline at 7:06 P.M. Members in attendance: Jay Kline, Dennis Gallino, David Mariano, Robyn Seto, William Gardiner and Pat Washburn. Also in attendance were: Ed Latshaw, P.E. Township Engineer; Kevin Hennessey, Township Manager; Larry Sager, Township Solicitor; Chris Washburn, Chairman Open Space Review Board; Andy Paravis, Chairman Board of Supervisors and Carol Gilligan, Recording Secretary. The Pledge of Allegiance opened the meeting.

P. Washburn moved to approve the February 18, 2009, meeting minutes as submitted. D. Mariano seconded the motion. Motion carried with a unanimous approval by Planning Commission members.

APPLICATIONS

North Coventry Township Camp Fernbrook

Bill Conner, Conner & Smith, presented subdivision plans for the 40-plus acre tract located on St. Peter's Road. The property is being subdivided into four lots, a 35.8 ac open space parcel, 2.4 ac site for possible future road department facility, 1.2 ac lot containing the Caretaker Residence and a .7 ac lot containing the Tenant House. No additional land development or disturbances are proposed. The purpose of the subdivision is to define non-open space land for grant acquisition and possible sale of one or more of the existing residential dwellings. E. Latshaw asked about the water and sewer systems. Mr. Conner responded that he believes that each lot has onsite sewer and water and that he will apply to DEP for a non-building planning module waiver. Review letters from Township committees and engineer were not available; therefore, the subdivision plan was tabled until more information becomes available. There were no other comments.

North Coventry Commercial, LP

The North Coventry Commercial, LP (NCC) Conditional Use application was presented for discussion. Andrew Cantor told the Planning Commissioners that he believes the Board of Supervisors could waive the required 100-foot setback, citing Section 903.F.2. A waiver from the Board of Supervisors was not provided and the issue remains unresolved. Andrew Miller, Barry Isett & Associates Inc., Consulting Engineer and Surveyors, presented his revised plan depicting 263 paved parking spaces, with a reserved parking area of 65 additional spaces. The area designated for the reserved parking was in question. The area had to be placed in reserve for parking in the future. Nothing else can be built on this reserved parking area. The Applicant was questioned how a Special Exception to allow areas of the site to be placed in reserve for future parking needs would resolve their zoning issues or why additional parking spaces would be needed in the future.

The revised plans depict a 3 story hotel with 19,000 square feet per floor with no changes to the restaurant pad site. The number of hotel rooms was decreased by 13 which allowed parking reductions around the Knox property and Rt 100 with an increase in the size of islands within the parking lot. Buffer and screening is still not provided around the perimeter of the parking and the required parking setback is not provided. P. Washburn asked if there was space provided for amenities such as a swimming pool, gym, workout areas, outdoor tennis courts, etc. The future hotel guests would continue to have a long walk to the proposed restaurant. Questions arose about the PECO lines and gas lines. The gas lines easement is now shown on the plan, north of the wetlands, as 75 feet east of the property line. Williams Transco gas pipeline allows for maximum 5 foot trees/scrubs on a property, while PECO's maximum is 15 feet.

Viewsheds for the adjoining residential neighborhood were discussed. Buffer areas were increased and a low berm was provided. J. Kline pointed out that the viewshed profile provided for the western Knox dwelling was incorrectly shown. The elevation used to determine the vantage point was improperly set at least ten feet too low. A correct viewshed for the Knox property would have shown that only the first floor of the hotel would be sparsely buffered and the revised layout would not provide any screening for many residents within the neighborhood. The probability that a three story hotel can be adequately screened remains in question.

Discussion continued on parking, landscaping screening and buffering, signage and building architecture. The applicant stated that the hotel will have no dining facility or banquet facility; a continental breakfast would be provided for the guests. The hotel would be comparable to a Sheraton Four Points with 540 square feet per room, with rooms being 12 x 29 feet. Management of the NCC continue to state their concern that without being granted conditional use of this property their hands are tied and no definite usage could be presented. They can not give any defined exterior image or speak for a hotel franchise without knowing who the franchise will be. The Planning Commission responded that they were not willing to recommend approval without architectural review and proper screening. The Commission reiterated that the building should comply with the architectural guidelines of the Gateway Master Plan on all four sides.

A summary was given by Solicitor Sager showing that before support for zoning issues are brought before the Board of Supervisors, a number of engineering issues needed to be addressed . Landscaping, parking, berm heights, natural resources need definition and calculations, steep slopes, Supervisor setback variance, Individual versus Shopping Center size classification are issues still on the table and holding up advancement of this project. Lawyers for NCC and the township were awarded a brief recess to privately discuss the major factors needing resolution to move forward.

After the brief interim meeting between the attorneys from the township and the North Coventry Commercial they reentered the meeting. Both the Planning Commission and North Coventry Commercial group agreed to spell out the conditions acceptable to ensure everyone is on the same page. Both parties agree that they need a well planned program that will serve both the land and the community. North Coventry Commercial will

provide architectural drawing of a hotel design they believe that they can sell to a franchisee. The design objectives and recommendations of the Planning Commission will be submitted to the NCC group prior to the next meeting, hopefully in enough time to respond accordingly. There were no further comments.

ADMINISTRATION

The Planning Commission reviewed a zoning ordinance amendment for the Well Head Protection Overlay District. The amendment modifies the permitting and reviewing officer for this chapter to the Township Zoning Officer. **R. Seto moved to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the amendment be approved.** D. Mariano seconded, motion carried unanimously.

GVF Transportation had appeared at the March 4, 2009 workshop to discuss the benefits of membership in their organization to the Township. At that meeting, a lengthy discussion and question and answer session ensued. Cost would be \$1,000/year. It was felt that this would be money well spent considering the many traffic related issues and projects underway within the area, including 422 Master Plan, Pottstown Bypass improvements, regional rail plans and implementation of the Gateway Master Plan. **R. Seto moved that the Planning Commission recommend to the Board that the Township join GVF Transportation.** D. Gallino seconded, motion carried unanimously.

LTL's review of the proposed Timber Harvesting ordinance amendment was discussed. The Commission was in agreement with all suggested revisions proposed by LTL. It was agreed that the term "Legal Holiday" should be defined to use the ten standard federal legal holidays. J. Kline will make the recommended changes to the draft document and forward it to the Solicitor for review and comment.

EXTENSION MOTION

Rosewarne/Miller Crossing has requested an extension until September 30, 2009. **P Washburn moved to recommend to the Board of Supervisors the requested extension be granted, but requested that the Chairman include in his memo to the Board that this application was submitted in 2004 and there has been no activity over the last 13 months.** W. Gardiner seconded, motion carried unanimously

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Commission, **D. Gallino moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 P.M.** W. Gardiner seconded; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Gilligan, Recording Secretary