

TOWNSHIP OF WHITEHALL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

June 19, 2024

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jonathan L. Bolton, Chairman
Robin Ruhmel, Vice Chairman
Paul Geissinger, Secretary
Jason Szewczak, Member
Ann Freyman, Member
Casey Zelena, Member
Vincent Misuraca, Member

TOWNSHIP PERSONNEL

Lee A. Rackus, Bureau Chief of Planning,
Zoning & Development
Frank Clark, Keystone Consulting Engineers
Jack Gross, Esq., Township Solicitor - Absent

Meeting called to order at approximately 7:30 pm.

Mr. Bolton read the Fair Housing Statement as required.

A) SUBMISSION REVIEW:

1) INDEX #2046-24A – FELLOWSHIP COMM. – INDEPEN. LIVING APTS

3600 Mauch Chunk Road
Land Development
Zoning District: R-3A
Original Submission Date: 5/30/24
90-Day Expiration Date: 9/19/24

Scott Pasterski, KCE, MaryKay McMahon & Tom Bartek representing the applicant.

David Lear, Lehigh Engineering representing Whitehall Township as conflict engineer.

Mr. Bolton confirmed the applicant received comment letters from Ms. Rackus dated 6/18/24 and Lehigh Engineering dated 6/19/24.

Mr. Clark, Mr. Zelena & Ms. Freyman recused themselves from giving input on this project.

Mr. Pasterski stated this is a first review and would like to get feedback to incorporate into future presentations.

Ms. McMahon reviewed the proposed independent living project and the reason for the proposed expansion, including sustainability of their mission with affordable senior housing and additional revenue to assist in providing care services. They are proposing three 24-unit, 3-story buildings, as well as expanding amenities for residents.

Mr. Pasterski further reviewed project details, such as property boundaries, driveway access, parking & sidewalks. They would like a sidewalk deferral because of the steep slopes/grading issues and Penn DOT controlled frontages on Mauch Chunk Rd & Schadt Ave, and instead provide interior walking paths.

Mr. Ruhmel concurred that keeping residents away from those busy roads would be optimal.

Mr. Szewczak inquired if the public would have access to the interior walking paths, since sidewalks are accessible by the public, to which Ms. McMahon replied affirmatively.

Atty. Gross suggested they should consider requesting an easement. He stated that when the plan goes before the Board of Commissioners they will likely want to know if the walkway will be accessible to the public.

Ms. Ruhmel also mentioned they consider adding a path that would make Lazarus Market, as well as the walking path that will be included in the new Rural Road development abutting Fellowship's property, accessible.

Public water service and the privately owned sewage pump system were discussed, which should be noted on the plans.

Resident Ms. Poshefko expressed her concerns with traffic on Rural Road re: the walking path to Lazarus, as well as buffering/landscaping along Schadt Avenue.

Mr. Bolton entertained a motion to table the plan to allow the applicant time to address comments and revise plans.

Motion by Mr. Geissinger, second by Ms. Ruhmel. Vote taken, 5-0 to table with 2 abstentions.

2) INDEX #2032-23A – WHITEHALL TOWNHOMES

3229 N. Front Street

Major Subdivision/Land Development

Zoning District: R-5A

Original Submission Date: 11/30/23; Revised Submission Date: 5/29/24

90-Day Expiration Date: 3/20/24; Extension Expiration Date: 7/31/24

Mary Bachert, Bohler Engineering and Matt Sorrentino, 2nd & Front, LLC representing the applicant.

Mr. Bolton confirmed the applicant received comment letters from Ms. Rackus dated 6/17/24 and Mr. Clark dated 6/17/24

Ms. Bachert updated the project's status. They have met with the Township as well as Mr. Clark to remedy any outstanding issues.

Mr. Clark stated the stormwater issues were resolved and the Township is satisfied with the plan.

Mr. Zelena expressed concerns with the grading above the pipe going towards the foundation between units 5 & 6 and would like that tweaked.

Ms. Bachert said they will double check that.

Mr. Geissinger confirmed that there were no issues with CWSA's letter.

Ms. Bachert reviewed the requested waivers.

Mr. Bolton entertained a motion for approval of waivers 3 through 11.

Motion by Mr. Misuraca, second by Ms. Freyman.

Vote taken, 7-0 to approve waivers.

Comments were requested from Planning Commissioner members regarding sidewalk deferral request.

Ms. Ruhmel stated she would like to see sidewalks installed, based on location and similar units.

Ms. Bachert confirmed their plans to replace the sidewalk on N. Second St., keeping the sidewalk on N. Front St. and upgrading the ADA ramps. The partial deferral is requested on Center Street since they are not proposing any improvements on that side.

Mr. Bolton entertained a sidewalk deferral motion for sidewalk installation for 310 feet along Center Street.

Motion by Mr. Szewczak, second by Ms. Freyman. Vote taken, 7-0 to approve sidewalk deferral.

Mr. Bolton entertained a motion for preliminary plan approval contingent upon compliance with letters from KCE, Whitehall Township & CWSA, as well as reexamination of units 5 & 6.

Motion by Mr. Zelena, second by Mr. Misuraca. Vote taken, 7-0 for preliminary approval.

Ms. Bachert requested the plan be upgraded for final approval.

Mr. Bolton entertained a motion for final plan approval contingent upon compliance with letters from KCE, Whitehall Township & CWSA, as well as reexamination of units 5 & 6.

Motion by Mr. Szewczak, second by Mr. Misuraca. Vote taken, 7-0 for final approval.

3) INDEX #2044-24A – RIVERSIDE DRIVE RAISE GRANT

Allentown/Whitehall Twp line, North of Race Street

Land Development

Zoning District: OS-18

Original Submission Date: 6/1/23; Revised Submission Date: 4/15/24

90 Day Expiration: 8/15/24

4) INDEX #INDEX #2033-23A – TRACTOR SUPPLY

3561 W. Columbia Street

Land Development

Zoning District: OS-2A

Original Submission Date: 12/27/23; Revised Submission Date: 5/29/24

90-Day Expiration Date: 4/17/24; Extension Expiration Date: 9/18/24

5) INDEX #2012-22A – INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE FACILITY

5102 & 5104 Beekmantown Road

Land Development

Zoning District: OS-2

Original Submission Date: 10/26/22; Revised Submission Date: 5/29/24

90-Day Expiration Date: 2/13/23; Extension Expiration Date: 6/30/24

Atty. George Broseman, Alec Nahas, Bohler Engineering & Lou Pektor representing the applicant.

Mr. Bolton confirmed the applicant received comment letters from Ms. Rackus dated 6/18/24 and Mr. Clark dated 6/17/24.

Mr. Nahas reviewed the project. They are proposing a 151,200 sq. ft. building/warehouse facility. Sidewalk to be installed along W. Coplay & Beekmantown Roads, by whichever project (#2012-22A or #1998-22) proceeds first.

Mr. Clark mentioned that the drainage issues must be 'cleaned up and then we should be in pretty good shape'.

Atty. Gross asked if they had spoken with the Police Chief, since there was some confusion with the Index #. It was stated that most of the Chief's concerns relate to both Index #1998-22 & #2012-22A.

Mr. Nahas stated once they have a solidified plan, they will present it to Chief Marks to address his concerns. He also said they are still looking at the intersection of Route 145 & Chestnut Street and will be addressing, with Penn DOT, the traffic light timing issues brought up at the last meeting.

Ms. Freyman reiterated her previous concerns with tractor trailer traffic on Chestnut Street, specifically, the 'S' turns on Chestnut.

Mr. Clark identified the specific stretches of road and Mr. Nahas will look into those turns.

Mr. Pektor said they will bring in all those templates at the next meeting.

Atty. Gross mentioned the Zoning Interpretation request upcoming next month with the Zoning Hearing Board, re: the definition of Distribution Center or Warehouse, which will affect this plan.

Ms. Freyman questioned if there would be a 'gate' or a time when tractor trailers would be 'stacking up' on the road before they were able to enter the facility.

Mr. Nahas stated they would want fencing around the entire facility and have a guard shack, location dependent upon tenant. It is their intent to have the guard shack closer to the 'truck court' to allow fewer trucks on Beekmantown Road.

Mr. Bolton entertained a motion to table the plan to allow the applicant time to address comments and revise plans.

Motion by Mr. Geissinger, second by Ms. Ruhmel. Vote taken, 7-0 to table.

B) DISCUSSION ITEMS:

ZONE Allentown – Zoning Code Rewrite and SALDO Update

Ms. Rackus discussed some of the proposed changes. She asked for comments from the Commission by the end of the month.

C) OTHER:

Approval of May 2024 Meeting Minutes. Minutes approved.

D) ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.