

**Planning Commission
Minutes
April 5, 2021 VIA ZOOM
7:00 PM**

Present:

Brett MacKay
Douglas Leach
Joseph Vavra
Dennis McGeehan
Nancy Becker (in-person)
Patricia Younce
Ed Buonocore
Matt Chartrand

Staff:

Carolyn Shisler, Asst. Zoning & Planning Officer
Jennifer Guckin, Director of Community Planning and Code Enforcement
Mary Stover, Township Engineer CKS

Roll call via zoom 7:00 PM – The above named were present.

Reorganization for 2021

Ms. Becker made a motion to nominate Mr. Brett MacKay as Chairman. Ms. Younce seconded and all were in favor.

Ms. Becker made a motion to nominate Ms. Patricia Younce for Vice Chairman. Mr. Vavra seconded and all were in favor.

Ms. Becker made a motion to nominate Ms. Carolyn Shisler as Planning Commission Secretary. Ms. Younce seconded and all were in favor.

Approval of the July 13, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Ms. Becker made a motion for approval of minutes for July 13, 2020 with one change on page 8 to reflect Mr. Vavra's statement that he abstained and his family utilizes the applicant's firm. Mr. Vavra seconded. All were in favor. Mr. Chartrand abstained.

New business

LD 821 Caracausa Building and Development, Inc. – Belfair Square 16 unit Townhouse
Community on Welsh Road, Sketch Plan
Presented by Dave Caracausa - Real Estate Broker Caldwell Banker and owner of the tract
Paul Yaskowski - Engineer for this project, Urwiler and Walter Engineers

Mr. Caracausa explained the location of the project and the surrounding properties and their uses. He gave a presentation of the proposed development. Mr. Caracausa had a revised sketch plan that he presented to the Planning Commission which included sidewalk along Welsh Road, more

internal sidewalks, and some additional landscaping. He presented architectural drawings of the proposed 4 unit townhouse buildings. Mr. Caracausa also explained there is Township open Space abutting the property. He stated without the ROW it is just shy of 4 acres and said there is public water and sewer available. Mr. Caracausa stated the land is currently vacant and explained the new zoning overlay district RBP – and that zoning district started to allow a more broad use of the property. There is one piece of this project that is still zoned MRC and doesn't fall under the overlay of RBP.

Mr. Caracausa showed a diagram of quad style townhomes.

He looked at the road frontage and planned a single entrance onto Welsh Road with the idea of wanting to create an ideal point of access for an entrance with 2 twelve foot travel lanes to allow access if needed. Mr. Caracausa feels this creates a nice aesthetic appeal on Welsh Road.

Mr. Caracausa explained that this a berm is planned on the Welsh Road side and landscaping to create a nice appeal to the surrounding residents. They also checked the buffering. They are proposing a 25 foot B Buffer around the surrounding perimeter that backs up to Gristmill. This would mean an additional 120 plantings. They are also willing to put sidewalks on Welsh Road to connect to other sidewalks in the future.

Mr. Caracausa stated to the rear/extreme rear of the property toward Gristmill there will be 25 foot buffering and the parking area. Mr. Caracausa explained that after speaking to the Gristmill neighbors, they plan to add some fencing along the Gristmill side. They also plan 1 acre of open space. He explained the Gristmill neighbors would like to see this open space be recorded and maintained by either an HOA or the Township if they took it over.

Mr. Caracausa showed the quad style townhouse and stated it is more of an upscale planning of townhouses. He stated each unit feels they are an end unit with the way they are laid out and have 2 front elevations and no rear elevation. A slide was shown of the front elevations.

Mr. Caracausa explained the harmonious front that feels like a twin. He said he has had great success with this product.

Mr. Caracausa feels this is what buyers are looking for today. He explained the last part of the concept is what they want to create with the HOA to maintain this community and to ensure the landscaping, storm water and trash will all be maintained continuously.

Mr. Caracausa stated when they go through the zoning requirements they meet or exceed all requirements and the only place they need relief is on density. The current RPB District allows 3 units per acre this plan proposes 4.

Mr. Caracausa did not address the comments in the review letters specifically. He indicated that they would address all of the issues when fully engineered plans are submitted.

He explained the review letters stated they support the plan. Mr. Caracausa stated there is nothing in the review letters they cannot conform to.

Mr. Caracausa met with neighbors from the Gristmill Development and addressed their concerns. He explained one of the issues was storm water and he and the engineer have gone over the plan and said they can effectively control all storm water for this project.

He addressed noise control and the buffering, as well as fencing so; that people cannot pass through the Gristmill properties. In regards to trash, he explained the HOA will work with a trash company so there would be no noise issues there.

Mr. Caracausa feels the duration of project for this community will be started and completed in approximately 18 to 24 months.

Ms. Guckin asked if the Planning Commission members had questions or comments for this project.

Ms. Younce asked if the project had garages.

Mr. Caracausa explained they are proposing carports and Ms. Younce asked how many people per unit is the project including spaces and carports for and Mr. Caracausa said about 3 per unit.

Ms. Younce asked what the plan was for overflow if someone has a party as this property is not located for any spill off on side streets.

Mr. Caracausa feels it can be handled on site and explained the buyer profile to be single people, newlyweds and potentially empty nesters. He anticipates half occupied by singles and feels 3 spaces per unit is more than enough to service this community.

Ms. Younce referred back to the party example and asked will the individual homeowners have markings for each of their spaces and if the owners had a party would they know where to park.

Mr. Caracausa replied that there are 14 carport spaces that will be marked and they could create designated spaces for the other unit. He said they could designate an area for visitor parking.

Mr. MacKay asked if anyone else had any questions or comments.

Mr. Chartrand made a comment that the portion for storm water management appears to be heavily wooded. Mr. Caracausa stated there are a lot of pine trees in that area and he would not call it heavily wooded. Mr. Yaskowski explained it is a partially wooded property with a lot of dead ash trees and other dead trees that need to be removed.

Mr. Chartrand was just wondering and commenting on whatever they need to take out he would hope they would put back in the buffering and also take into consideration to save any mature trees in the storm water management area. Mr. Caracausa agreed they will save any tree they can and he feels some of the other uses would clear many more trees than his plan will.

Mr. Chartrand said overall he appreciated this proposal and feels it is a good one and would like to see it move forward.

Ms. Younce mentioned the Montgomery County review letter had many suggestions and asked if they are you willing to do all of their suggestions, especially the sidewalks, landscaping and pathways from parking areas to homes, as well as the tree covering in the parking area. Mr. Caracausa stated he did add some trees in the parking area, an outside gathering area and they will look at some areas for park benches as well. He explained he would like to save that for when they get into more detailed drawings.

Mr. Chartrand mentioned the fact that the Gristmill community did not wish to have connection.

Mr. Caracausa said this is correct; they want to be separate and asked for the fence and also mentioned there are no walking paths in their rear yards.

Mr. Chartrand explained he was trying to think of paths going to any open space on Gristmill. He feels there aren't enough connectivity for residents.

There was a discussion regarding what the neighboring properties would like.

At the end of the discussion, Mr. Caracausa asked if the Planning Commission would support a text amendment for the density of the townhouses. The Planning Commission was hesitant to say they would support a text amendment without understanding how it would impact the overall RBP

Overlay District. Some of the members of the Planning Commission did say that they liked the proposed development as presented to them.

Ms. Guckin asked if any members of the public would like to ask a question or make a comment. Mr. Stanley Jaskiewicz, a neighboring resident, asked to speak. He thanked Mr. Caracausa and stated they spoke many times over the years. His question was regarding the HOA and asked if it will be responsible for the trash. He also wanted to know if there is a thought for bonding or any other financial agreement if the trash does not get picked up.

Mr. Caracausa assured the resident that the HOA is a professional agency and will make sure the trash will be picked up on a timely manner and with a competent hauler.

Mr. Jaskiewicz asked if there will be rules about renting these units and Mr. Caracausa replied there would not be. The owners will have to abide by the rules and regulations of the HOA.

Mr. Ralph Ehinger, another neighboring resident, spoke and expressed his concern regarding the trash and odor. He also said as far as the open space and path, there is nowhere to go from open space to open space it only goes to the woods.

Ms. Colleen Payton and Mr. Andrew Payton expressed their concern regarding buffering. They wanted more information as to the maturity of the buffering. Mr. Caracausa stated within the Township ordinance for B buffering there are specific types of rules for which types of trees you can use and the diameter of the base and the height. He explained that none of them are saplings. He believes the height for evergreen trees is 4 to 6 feet. Ms. Payton stated she would be in favor of higher trees and more mature trees to provide additional buffering.

Ms. Guckin asked if the Planning Commission Members had any additional comments.

Ms. Guckin stated to Mr. Caracausa that he mentioned Zoning Relief. She asked if this is to the Zoning Hearing Board or for a text amendment. Mr. Caracausa explained he plans to go for a text amendment and asked the Planning Commission Members for a recommendation to the board.

Mr. Chartrand stated that once the amendment is prepared they will review it and recommend it at that time.

Ms. Younce explained that they won't know if we agree until they see the text amendment.

Ms. Guckin stated that the Planning Commission would like to see the specific wording and to see how that might affect the entire area and not just this property.

Mr. Caracausa explained the size of the other properties and that this one is the only property of this size. He feels they can create an amendment that will not impact other properties on Welsh Road.

Mr. Caracausa asked the Planning Commission if they felt in concept was he on the right tract and Mr. Chartrand stated yes. Mr. MacKay said he agrees and stated in that respect told Mr. Caracausa to go ahead and write the text amendment. Mr. Caracausa thanked the Planning Commission.

New Business

LD 823 PSDC - 1758 Allentown Road - Preliminary/Final Land Development for Chipotle Restaurant and Mattress Warehouse.

Presented by John Anderson, Cornerstone Consulting Engineer

PSDC has been before the Township regarding this property and the SKF property at 1758 Allentown Road. Mr. Anderson stated this area is in the ELO Overlay Zoning. He explained it connects to LI to SC Districts and also has C- commercial entity.

The ELO District allows for a larger development behind the strip center to the back of the previous Genuardi grocery store.

Mr. Anderson presented the applicant is proposing a Chipotle and a Mattress Warehouse and the location will be basically on top of the current Boston Market pad site. Mr. Anderson showed an aerial view of the shopping center and explained the aerial. Mr. Anderson stated the current projects and renovations that are being done to the buildings on this site. He also explained the old Sears building will now be a Planet Fitness.

Mr. Anderson showed the placement of the current pad sites. He showed a rendering of the current existing conditions and the landscaping, as well as the parking areas.

Mr. Anderson showed the new plan and an enlargement showing the developed new pad. Mr. Anderson stated Chipotle usually does not have a drive through or a pick up window. In this case, however, they are proposing a pick up lane. This lane is strictly for pick up for previously ordered food. He explained the car stacking. Chipotle feels they will only need 3 to 5 car stacking and Mr. Anderson stated they are providing almost double of the requirement. Mr. Anderson showed a proposed outside seating area and the proper buffering from parking. The back of the building would be trash enclosures, etc.

Mr. Anderson stated they will change the parking to keep circulation around the building flowing. Mr. Anderson wants to head off an issue raised by CKS and MacMahon in their review letters which stated it would create a conflict with the parking area where the unloading and loading area is and trash enclosure. Mr. Anderson showed a slide of a solution to this concern and feels it addresses their concern.

Mr. Anderson stated he can go through the review letters. But before that, asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Chartrand made a comment. He said he likes the scenario that they laid out for the trash enclosures, etc. He feels this gives a more defined space of where to enter the drive through from. Mr. Anderson stated it allows a reduction of impervious coverage. Mr. Anderson explained it would increase the impervious coverage allowing more buffering in other areas with this proposal.

Mr. MacKay agrees this is a better layout and he agrees with Mr. Chartrand. Mr. Chartrand wanted to make sure there is no menu board located in this area. Mr. Anderson stated that is correct. He added there is just a clearance bar and various detectors that are in place to notify the pick-up area. But it is strictly for pick up only.

Mr. Chartrand explained he was just putting his engineer hat on and suggested they soften the turn behind the Chipotle and perhaps another space could be picked up for parking. He also mentioned he appreciated the landscape area. Mr. Anderson thanked him.

Ms. Becker wanted to clarify if this is just a take-out or did it have eat in opportunities and Mr. Anderson stated seating will be available inside with ordering options, etc.

Mr. MacKay asked if any other Planning Commission members had any other comments or questions. Not hearing any comments he asked Mr. Anderson to go ahead with the review letters.

Mr. Anderson went through each of the review letters indicating that they would comply with the majority of the comments. He did state that the largest fire truck that they typically use to evaluate access to a site cannot maneuver through the internal project area. Mr. Anderson said he would work with the Fire Company to determine if a smaller truck could be accommodated internally. Mr. Anderson stated they are requesting five waivers as follows:

- Waiver of the requirement for a 30 ft. wide access drive
- Waiver from the required 10 ft. wide planting strip for the parking area since only 7.5 ft. is available between the ultimate right-of-way and the edge of the parking area.
- Waiver from the requirement for 4" caliper trees in the parking areas. 2-1/2" caliper trees are proposed.
- Waiver from the requirement of perimeter landscaping of the parking areas. It was stated that the required quantity of plantings would be provided throughout the plan rather than along the perimeter of the parking area.
- Waiver from the requirement for a traffic impact study.

Mr. MacKay asked the Planning Commission if they had any questions for Mr. Anderson or any further comments. Ms. Becker mentioned that when this development was happening there was a promise there would be an access from the shopping center to the Veterans Memorial park (Tennis Lukens Cemetery) in the back area. Mr. Anderson stated this is correct. He will show this on the plan.

Mr. MacKay asked if anyone wanted to make a motion.

Mr. Chartrand made a motion for preliminary and final approval to the BOS with the 5 waivers requested above, as well as subject to the review letters from CKS Engineers dated March 29, 2021, Montgomery County dated April 1, 2021, Gilmore & Associates, Inc. dated April 1, 2021, McMahon Associates dated March 29, 2021, Keystone Municipal Services dated April 2, 2021 and the Suburban Lighting Consultants dated March 12, 2021.

Ms. Becker seconded.

All were in favor.

No one abstained.

Ms. Guckin followed up reminding the Planning Commission that the Delp Drive project will be coming back to the May Planning Commission and also the public storage facility on Wambold will be doing an expansion.

Mr. Vavra made a motion to adjourn at 9:03 PM and Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Shisler
Towamencin Township
Planning Commission Secretary/ Asst. Zoning & Planning Officer