

**Planning Commission  
Minutes  
February 5, 2024  
7:00 PM**

**Present:**

Brett MacKay  
Nancy Becker  
Ed Buonocore  
Douglas Leach  
Dennis McGeehan  
Michael Main  
Matt Chartrand

**Absent:**

Patricia Younce  
Joseph Vavra

**Staff:**

Will Brugger, Director of Planning, Zoning and Land Development  
Mary Stover, Township Engineer CKS

Supervisor Mr. Kofi Osei was present.

**Planning Commission Reorganization Nominations**

Mr. MacKay stated the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary for the Planning Commission will need to be nominated at this meeting.

Mr. Chartrand nominated Mr. Brett MacKay for Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Main seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Becker nominated Ms. Patricia Younce for Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Chartrand seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Becker nominated Carolyn Shisler for Secretary of the Planning Commission. Mr. Chartrand seconded. All were in favor.

**Approval of the December 4, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the December 4, 2023 meeting minutes, Mr. Chartrand seconded. All were in favor.

**New Business**

Proposed Zoning Map Amendment – IN District, NPSD and Montco Technical School  
Presented by Greg Heleniak, Esq, Rudolph Clark, LLC,

Mr. Heleniak introduced the team that is working on the changes and proposals for this proposed Zoning Map amendment.

Mr. Heleniak explained that North Penn High School is a non-permitted use as it stands for the R-175 and R-125 Districts in which it is located. This limits the school with what they can do for expansions, impervious coverage, setbacks, etc. He explained that a school is allowed in the IN District and it makes the use conforming and provides a clear set of regulations for options for the high school improvements now and in the future. It also helps the properties around the school by increasing the setbacks, the buffering and helps with impervious coverage, etc.

Mr. Heleniak explained they are before the Planning Commission asking for the four parcels, including North Montco Technical School, to be rezoned to the IN District.

Mr. Stephen Skrocki, CFO, explained the isolated renovations, planning of the fields, parking, and stormwater.

Mr. Heleniak explained the previous Crawford Stadium renovation and the lengths they were required to go through based on the property being in the R125 District. They needed to seek variances for many issues that would not be required if the area was rezoned to the Institutional.

Mr. Meehan asked if the radio station was zoned Institutional and Mr. Heleniak stated no. He explained there is no portion of the NPHS in the Institutional District.

Mr. Chartrand asked why this wasn't addressed 4 years ago when the land development for the stadium was presented and Mr. Heleniak stated he doesn't have an answer to the why and stated that historically the IN District has been given to the religious based schools in the township.

Dr. Bauer was unable to make the meeting and Mr. Heleniak explained he sent his regrets.

Mr. Skrocki, Chief Financial Officer, explained the referendum for NPHS renovations that was previously presented was defeated by vote and now they are moving forward with a plan B. He explained this is a much scaled down version of the original plan. The proposed changes are now about 7,000 additional square feet. They still plan on moving the transportation area off site as they will be using 24 modular units and a staging area for the renovations. A full-scale renovation plan of the high school was presented, and Mr. Skrocki explained they are looking forward to moving the bus garage off the premises so that traffic will go to another site. The radio station will remain as utilities. The soccer fields off of Snyder Road will remain. Mr. Skrocki explained the neighbors stated they do not want to develop the fields.

Ms. Becker stated the neighbors have experienced more flooding after the stadium renovations and she is leery of more impervious coverage for this project.

Mr. Heleniak stated they will comply with all the stormwater management requirements with this plan. Ms. Becker asked about the hill and mountain on site and Mr. Heleniak stated there were no plans yet to remove it. He also explained they are working with neighbors regarding any water issues.

Mr. Skrocki stated they met with property owners to hear all their concerns and get their feedback. It is very important to them, and it is the first they are hearing from Bridal Path, Meadow Glen, and Chatham Village, but they will note it.

Mr. McGeehan asked about the parking areas and Ms. Becker wanted to know about the baseball fields remaining the same. Mr. Heleniak explained under the current plan the baseball and softball fields will stay where they currently are.

Mr. Main asked about the required parking and if the parking requirements stay the same. Mr. Heleniak said yes and explained that parking goes with the use and not the square footage. Mr. Main reviewed the drawings and noted they will be short 1 space per 2 students. Mr. Heleniak addressed the parking situation and agreed they will be short, but it will come closer to the requirement.

Discussion regarding parking and the school falling short of the parking requirement. The plan presented tonight does improve the ratio to 2.3 per student. 100 staff members will go off-site, which will help them to come closer to the requirement.

Mr. Main agreed that with the zoning change the applicant will have plenty of impervious coverage. Mr. Heleniak stated with the existing conditions they looked at the impervious surface per acre and looked at the zoning. For both R175 and R125 they exceed the maximum impervious surface. He went over the next plan, Plan B, and looked at what is current and what is proposed. Under the existing zoning, all the improvements would not get approved for each district. Mr. Heleniak explained if they were rezoned to the IN District for all parcels, they would comply with the zoning impervious conditions and some of the impervious may be decreased with taking the transportation facility away.

Mr. Heleniak discussed storm water management and showed the areas on the approximate areas on the map for the basins. There was a discussion regarding connectivity.

Mr. MacKay asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Matt Chartrand made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to approve the rezoning map amendment of The North Penn School District High School and the North Montco Technical Career School and the four parcels in the R175 and R125 Districts to the Institutional District. Mr. Leach seconded. Ms. Becker opposed. All other members were in favor.

### **New Business**

Proposed Zoning Map Amendment – Limited Industry (LI) District & Use E9-Place of Worship  
2060 Detwiler Road Holding Company, LLC

Presented by – Mr. Bill Dion

Mr. Dion explained he is seeking a zoning map amendment asking for E9 place of worship in the LI District and he explained the thought process behind this as follows proposed change.

He met with staff a few months ago and described the new way for some places of worship and them taking over existing spaces and utilizing them for worship instead of building a new structure. Mr. Dion explained this was done in Hatfield and Skippack Township. He believes it is a benefit by going into an existing facility under a lease and making some modifications to the building. He stated that for a property owner it is beneficial to fill spaces that they are not able to get tenants to occupy. Mr. Dion stated there is now a church in the Plymouth Meeting Mall.

Mr. Dion referred to the applicant presenting tonight and explained they will utilize the building and the parking that exists. The place of worship/church use would be times when the office use is not in use.

Mr. Dion showed on the map what is across the street from this site and showed the Walnut Meadows Community, which is south of the property. He stated the building itself is 132,000 square feet and the proposed space for the church to lease is 18,000 square feet. He explained there would be a tenant fit out to modify the inside and create the Keystone Fellowship Church. The existing offices would remain.

Mr. Dion did a parking analysis and submitted it to the Township showing 535 spaces that exist and with the proposed use of the 7,500 square feet for the church and offices, 300 spaces would be required.

Mr. Dion went over the CKS Review letter and said all the comments were well received. Mr. Chartrand stated he agreed with what Mr. Dion has outlined and agreed with the low impact it creates. Mr. Chartrand appreciates the idea of this proposed use.

Ms. Stover showed all locations on the zoning map where the LI District is located and would allow the use E9 if the map amendment is approved. She went over the language proposed, which includes residential districts and institutional districts.

Mr. Dion explained this change would not grant relief for lot area or height. Mr. Dion explained for existing structures to be converted, the underlying zoning district and its required impervious coverage would apply. It would not give them a bonus for impervious coverage. It would just not penalize.

Discussion regarding re-development in the LI District. Ms. Stover stated she does not think this is clear and Mr. Dion agreed and stated they would define it more clearly. Mr. Dion explained the proposed ordinance will be tightened up to make it narrower.

Mr. MacKay agreed he would like to see the proposed wording and ordinance tightened up and Mr. Dion agreed. Mr. MacKay stated he feels it needs some work. Ms. Becker agrees.

Mr. Main asked about parking, and wanted to know if it increases it. Mr. Dion stated it reduces it. Mr. Dion explained the square footage that would be used as office space and what spaces will be needed on Sunday worship day.

Mr. Chartrand feels they must plan for worst case scenario; if it converts back to office, they don't want to reduce the parking. He believes tightening things up is a good idea and then look at it again at the next meeting.

Mr. Dion asked if they would recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors, Mr. Chartrand asked if they feel the CKS letter captures the concerns then they could recommend with those conditions. Mr. MacKay would like to see them redo it and come back and they will give the recommendation.

Mr. Dion stated they will work on changing the draft and present it again to the Planning Commission. He stated the worship center is excited to be in Towamencin. The Planning Commission members feel this will work.

### **Old Business:**

Township Comprehensive Plan - Meeting #2, Simone Collins  
Presented by Peter Simone

Mr. Simone listed the schedule for the upcoming meetings and explained they had the first public meeting, and it was a success and good things came up. He went over a summary of Meeting #1, which was January 18, 2024.

Mr. Simone went over the housing and zoning needs for the changing markets and uniting all of the changes.

Mr. McGeehan stated the connectivity plan could be a uniting goal and Mr. Simone agreed.

Mr. Simone showed the Public Opinion Survey and went over the questions and stated they have 127 responses to date. Mr. Simone went over the results and explained the survey hit a certain demographic. He would like younger people to take the survey and said that the more responses they can get, the more valuable.

Mr. Simone reviewed the top 10 issues from the survey and results for why people moved here. There was a discussion regarding long-term plans for retirement and the possibility of downsizing in our township.

Mr. Simone discussed the results for places people work and the percentage of people who work from home, who are retired or who work in the township and out of the township.

Mr. Chartrand stated a lot of the questions could be lumped together. He is focusing on people who work in the township at 12 percent. Mr. Chartrand believes it is an amenity and a curse because of the turnpike entrance and assumes a lot of people feel the same way and choose this area because of the ease with which to get to other places and work.

Mr. Simone showed on the map the data and the numbers so far are much greater for people who live in the township and work outside the township.

Mr. Chartrand stated a lot of people do funnel through here and if there are going to be commercial areas, they need to give people a reason to stop.

Mr. Simone explained from a developer standpoint it is difficult to determine what the market will support.

Mr. Buonocore noticed from time to time that there is an internal conflict and recognizes that this is a commuter township. He explained on the other hand, they discuss that they want people to walk to places and make sure we can walk everywhere. He feels, for the most part, the ideas are in serious conflict, and he fears part of the problem is trying to force the village complex in this world where everyone drives somewhere else to work and maybe that is why the village isn't getting done.

Mr. Simone agrees that this does happen, and it depends on the part of the day and the need to drive where needed or possibly walk out to dinner, etc.

Mr. Buonocore sees it as a reason why things don't hurl forward. Whatever does end up getting built has to be supported in dollars and the businesses that are closed at the shopping center are closed because of dollars. Mr. Main feels we have the opportunity with the Village Overlay but where the dollar comes into play, the comprehensive plan can help drive that with new ideas.

There was a discussion regarding shops and restaurants that will people want and warehouses and their uses. Mr. Simone stated that with the comprehensive plan, the zoning needs to be flexible to match the changing markets. Mr. Simone explained he just finished an office to residential conversion in Whitpain Township and sometimes turning old office buildings into other things is a great way to go.

Mr. Chartrand agreed and felt that the comprehensive plan cannot work if it is only geared toward one developer. Mr. Simone agreed and stated that PSDC could sell his land to another developer at any time. Mr. Chartrand stated that the Planning Commission members have been flexible with zoning for this developer. Mr. Chartrand feels the developer has a lot of options.

Mr. MacKay agrees the Planning Commission has been very flexible. Mr. Simone explained that he was not suggesting the Township has not been flexible, but it is more about continuing to understand the market and being flexible to the needs of change.

Mr. Chartrand stated there are areas to accommodate all the uses that could be viable. He went over what uses were presented previously for the areas that PSDC wanted to develop at different times. He feels it needs to be a business or restaurant where people would want to stop at the exit and attract or capture people on their way home.

Discussion regarding a walkable town center as an option. Mr. Simone stated that timing is also important and working on what is feasible now and in the future.

Discussion regarding development, the village and the concept of new urban villages.  
Mr. Simone explained the walkable portion of this is about the option to walk to places if desired. We have some residential areas that exist, and they cannot walk to many places.

Mr. Simone explained that incentives are in the form of more density, more height, apartments, etc. and now is the time to have conversations with farmers and their land. The Township will need to work with the owners and allow them to make money on their land.

Ms. Becker stated this is what happened in the past with Fischer's Park and Kibbler Meadows. Mr. Simone explained that Freddy Hill Farms may be somewhere to start a conversation about preserving the heritage of it as open space.

Mr. Simone showed the last few slides regarding intersections and widening the roads, etc. Mr. Simone went over the focus groups. They would include Institutions, Youth & Student Sports, Businesses, and Seniors.

Mr. Simone will send this information to the Planning Commission members and ask for updates and then get a draft letter to go out to these groups for a meeting.

Mr. Simone went over the dates for the upcoming meetings, focus groups and finance committee meetings.

Mr. Simone stated they will return in May for more reports and another presentation.

Ms. Becker asked how many people took the survey and stated she took the survey, and it was very easy.

Mr. MacKay asked how we get the ball rolling to get the discussion started with Freddy Hill. Mr. Simone said that he would make some suggestions.

### **Additional Business:**

Mr. MacKay asked Mr. Brugger for any new updates.

Mr. Brugger explained that Mattress Warehouse was moving forward and explained some of the back areas of the shopping center that need to be fixed. He stated PSDC will be before the Board of Supervisors on February 14, 2024 to explain the shopping center and the new goals. Mr. Simone will be there to propose what to do with 75,000.00 for some improvements. Discussion regarding the sign they came up with at the gateway.

Mr. Chartrand would like to discuss or hear about other options and stated he will be at the meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. MacKay asked if there were any other issues. Hearing none, Ms. Becker made a motion to adjourn at 9:17 PM, and Mr. Main seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Shisler  
Towamencin Township  
Zoning and Code Enforcement