

HILLTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Hilltown Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Dave Christ at 7:00 PM and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Also present were Planning Commission members Eric Nogami, Jon Apple, Robert Sichelstiel, and Township Engineer Timothy Fulmer. Frank Henofer was absent.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – action on the minutes of the February 20, 2023, meeting – Motion was made by Mr. Apple, and seconded by Mr. Sichelstiel, to approve the February 20, 2023, meeting minutes as written. Motion passed 3-0-1 with Mr. Christ abstaining from the vote. There was no public comment.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY: None.

3. CONFIRMED APPOINTMENTS:

a) Carson Estate Trust Conditional Use: Christopher McLean, Esq., Fitzpatrick, Lentz & Bubba, was in attendance, along with Frank O'Brien, Chris Hermance, Carson, AnnMarie Vigilante, Traffic Engineer, and Shaun Haas, Langan Engineering, to discuss the Conditional Use scheduled for May 9, 2023, at 6:00 PM for the parcel located at 4518 Bethlehem Pike. Mr. Haas stated the parcel is approximately 19.66 acres, zoned HI (was previously zoned LI) and the applicant seeks to construct a 217,000 SF warehouse building with associated vehicle and tractor trailer parking spaces, along with two driveway accesses along Bethlehem Pike in the area of other heavy/light industrial uses. The project was before the Zoning Hearing Board on October 13, 2022, and relief was granted to permit the proposed building to have a maximum height of 45 feet, (subject to the review and approval of the building plans by the Fire Marshal), to permit the proposed use to have a maximum impervious surface ratio of 0.6186, and to permit a maximum area of forest disturbance of 84%. Mr. Haas noted there will be docks against the building along with trailer spaces proposed on the western edge of the property and there is right-of-way to dedicate along Bethlehem Pike to get to the ultimate right-of-way in the amount of .88 acres. Telford Borough will provide sewer and water (after escrow is received) and will serve letters have been received for energy, gas, and telecommunications. Type 1 (residential) and Type 5 (parking lot) buffers will be provided. Mr. Haas stated the applicant will comply with the comments from Wynn Associates review letter dated April 3, 2023, and Heinrich & Klein Associated review letter dated April 13, 2023, and noted the following:

3. A. The applicant included a preliminary traffic assessment intended for Conditional Use approval. In the land development phase, the application will go to PennDot for review, with the scoping application, a full impact study, and PennDot will need to review and approve a Highway Occupancy Permit for the site.

B. Type 1 (35' buffer) is proposed along the southern and northern property line, and Type 5 (15' buffer) is proposed around the parking areas.

C. The applicant will accept the extinguished lighting between 11:00 PM and 7:00 AM.

4. A. All land around the site is industrially zoned; it is heavy industrial to the north and light industrial to the west, south, and east.

B. The proposed driveways will be submitted to PennDot as part of a Highway Occupancy Permit Application, and they will abide by the guidelines.

5. Sewer is on site and water is about 1,000 ft away from the site and they believe they will have the ability to connect but do not have the will serve letters as of yet.

6. If the Conditional Use is granted, the preliminary and final land development plans will be submitted.

Mr. Haas stated the applicant will comply with the seven comments in the Heinrich & Klein Associates review letter dated April 13, 2023, and will prepare a traffic impact study and go through with the full review process when land development is submitted.

Planning Commission Discussion Items: (Mr. Fulmer clarified the proposed warehouse on Reliance Road has been withdrawn and nothing has been submitted for the warehouse near Car Sense.)

- Formal review by the servicing fire department
- Use of the warehouse buildings when they are not used down the road
- Current use is warehousing/some office
- Clarification on the Conditional Use procedures and requirements
- Access from Bethlehem Pike for trucks/cars/emergency vehicles
- Lack of demand for warehouse buildings
- Hours of operation
- Lighting
- Parking spaces
- Landscape Plan/tree replacement
- Stormwater Management
- Center turn lane

Public Comment:

Mark Geitz, 4416 Bethlehem Pike, commented on full buffer with arborvitae, rush hour traffic, water/sewer, tenants, lighting, building height, and turning lane.

Barbara Geitz, commented on tractor trailers, use of a drone to show residential properties, traffic, lighting, compliance with 35' height, portfolios of projects in Bucks County, not happy with the building.

Lauren Geitz, 4416 Bethlehem Pike, commented on the traffic, not the landscape for a 45' building, not a good plan for Hilltown, safety, lighting, and there are empty buildings all over.

June Brauer, 304 Swartley Road, commented on insane traffic and empty warehouse buildings.

Doreen Cooper, Reliance Road, commented on Deja vu of BFI from 25 years ago and it is a 24-hour operation, and compliance with noise/lights.

Barbara Geitz, commented on two parcels that will add additional trucks on the road, Waste Management traffic in the vicinity, and free trash collection for neighboring properties.

Planning Commission Comments:

Mr. Apple had no comment either way on a recommendation.

Mr. Sichelstiel commented on additional buffering.

Mr. Christ commented the Zoning Hearing Board took it out of anybody's hands regarding the height and they gave the relief of 45' height.

Barbara Geitz commented Telford and Sellersville Fire Departments did not receive the plan for review.

Mr. Haas stated outstanding items will be covered during the Land Development process.

Mr. Nogami commented on having a dedicated buffer zone on Bethlehem Pike and having the replacement trees calculated as part of the buffer requirement.

Mr. Christ commented regarding the non demand for these buildings in Hilltown, the height of the building, and the traffic on the road.

No recommendation was made by the Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors regarding the Carson Estate Trust Conditional Use.

Mr. Fulmer stated the Conditional Use Hearing is tentatively scheduled for May 9, 2023, and the public is invited to participate in the hearing.

b) 4610 Bethlehem Pike Land Development Sketch Plan: Andrew Woods, Hanover Engineering, was in attendance to present the proposed sketch plan to develop the 8.18-acre tract at 4610 Bethlehem Pike which includes construction of a 53,760 SF building, 110 parking spaces, (or alternately, a trailer parking facility), with access along Bethlehem Pike within the HI Zoning District with a manufacturing use. The project is proposed to be served by public water and sewer facilities owned by Telford Borough Authority.

Mr. Woods discussed Wynn Associates review letter dated April 3, 2023, and noted the following:

- Truck parking is also a use that is being considered for the property. Mr. Fulmer suggested the Zoning Officer should determine the actual use of the site based on use classifications of the Zoning Ordinance.
- Stormwater Management, buffering, and Open Space will be provided.
- Site capacity calculations and a Traffic Impact Study will be prepared. Mr. Fulmer discussed the additional projects that are being proposed in that proximity regarding the applications to PennDot.
- The applicant will request the cartway reconstruction/overlay, drainage improvements, cartway widening, curb and sidewalk be deferred.
- The applicant will seek approval for a Highway Occupancy Permit from PennDot.
- Parking requirements will be complied with, and the plan will be sent to the servicing Fire Department for review.
- Regarding stormwater, a 100' riparian buffer will be placed on the property line which will take care of the 2-year water quality of volume and will have a separate basin to handle rate.
- The proposed building is not proposed to go above 35 feet.
- The applicant will comply with PADEP requirements regarding the cleanup of the site.

Planning Commission Comments:

Mr. Apple stated he is in favor of the building plan rather than the parking lot plan. Mr. Woods stated the area might be a gravel parking lot until the building can be built.

Mr. Christ stated he is not negative regarding the plan as long as it is low impact for the use in that area.

Mr. Nogami clarified the stream is closer to the property line, there will be truck bays for deliveries, and there will be a natural buffer at the utility easements.

Mr. Sichelstiel clarified there is full access; right in, right out, left in, left out.

Mr. Christ stated the Comprehensive Plan noted the limited availability of heavy industrial zoned parcels in the area and this property is one of them. It would be a waste to turn it into a parking lot and it is better suited for industrial use.

Public Comment: Barbara Geitz stated the area is in a flood zone and Youells Machine shop was flooded out during a storm within the last two years.

Since the project was a sketch plan, no action was taken.

c) Hilltown Pike Partners Sketch Plan: Applicant Robert Hauser, was in attendance along with Bob Showalter, R. L. Showalter & Associates, to present the sketch plan proposed for four quad buildings (16 dwelling units total) on 4.14 acres located along the northwest side of Hilltown Pike within the VC Zoning District. The project is proposed to be served by public water and sewer facilities. Mr. Showalter discussed Wynn Associates review letter dated April 3, 2023, and noted the following:

- Performance Subdivision (Use B4) would require a variance in the VC Zoning District.
- The applicant will comply with the site capacity calculations and the tabulation of natural resources within the site.
- Relief will be sought for buffer yards that abut existing single family detached dwelling uses and buffer yard requirements for abutting parking lots.
- The open space area and the pedestrian trail will be identified on the plan along with getting PennDot approval for a Highway Occupancy Permit, and site lighting.
- Some waivers would be requested for improvements along Hilltown Pike, and Stormwater issues along Hilltown Pike will be addressed.
- A waiver will be requested for the cartway width of 25 feet, and the parking areas setback from the property lines.
- The ownership of the internal street and parking areas will be private.
- Parking spaces will be calculated, ADA parking spaces will be provided, truck turning templates will be provided at a later date, along with provisions for refuse/recycling collection, and site lighting.
- The applicant will comply with Neshaminy Creek Watershed requirements, obtaining written confirmation from NPWA/Chalfont-New Britain Township for sewer/water service to the site, and sending the plan to the servicing fire company for review.
- The ultimate right of way of Hilltown Pike within the frontage of the site will be offered to dedication to the Township as an easement and the applicant agrees to the capital contribution in lieu of recreation land dedication for each dwelling unit.
- The applicant will comply with the landscaping requirements.

Planning Commission Comments:

Mr. Christ stated his concerns is the intersection with New Galena Road and Hilltown Pike and water runoff on Hilltown Pike but the opportunity for additional rental units is something the Township could use.

Mr. Apple stated he likes not having the cul-de-sac and there is a decent amount of open space.

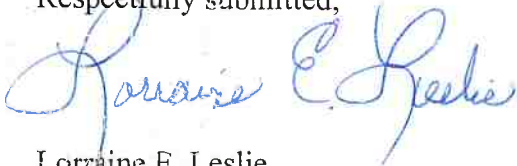
Mr. Sichelstiel clarified there is no room for a deceleration lane.

Mr. Nogami stated it is a nice variation from the typical cul-de-sac that they see and inquired if they would consider a sidewalk on Hilltown Pike. The applicant stated there will not be sidewalk in that area of Hilltown Pike.

Since the project was a sketch plan, no action was taken.

5. PLANNING: None.
6. ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS: None.
7. OLD BUSINESS: None.
8. NEW BUSINESS: None.
9. PLANS TO ACCEPT FOR REVIEW ONLY: Mr. Fulmer stated the Chambers 2-lot Subdivision will be on the next agenda.
10. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.
11. PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS: Mr. Christ stated, regarding the Carson Estate warehouse, several Planning Commission members were involved when the property was proposed for a zoning change from LI to HI for the possible transfer station. One of the arguments at the time was HI gives the Township a little more control than LI because almost everything has to be a Conditional Use or Special Exception, where in LI, there are more things allowed by-right. Going back to that decision years ago, it was a little controversial, but maybe it is starting to pay off where it is giving the Township a little more control over that property as opposed to somebody just coming in and building what is allowed by-right.
12. PRESS CONFERENCE: None.
13. ADJOURNMENT: Upon motion by Mr. Nogami, seconded by Mr. Sichelstiel, and carried unanimously, the April 17, 2023, Hilltown Township Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Lorraine E. Leslie
Township Manager/Treasurer

(*NOTE: These minutes were transcribed from notes and recordings and should not be considered official until approved by the Planning Commission at a public meeting).