

#03-2021
WORK SESSION
February 2, 2021 – 6 p.m.

A virtual work session of the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 6 p.m. for the purpose of updating the public on several key matters and reviewing the agenda of the February 16, 2021 Supervisors' meeting. Supervisors Michele Minnick, Kimberly J. Koch, Frederick R. Conner, Jeffrey Campolongo, and Joyce M. Keller were present. Also present were Township Solicitor Michael P. Clarke, Esq., Township Solicitor Alexander M. Glassman, Esq., Township Manager Roman M. Pronczak, Assistant Township Manager David J. Mrochko, Township Engineer James E. Blanch, P.E., Police Chief Kenneth Lawson, Director of Code Enforcement Michael McAndrew, Finance Director Christine M. Bauman, Director of Public Works Thomas Farzetta, IT Director Nicole M. Leininger, Human Resources Director Kathleen Yackin, Fire Marshal David M. Camarda, and Parks and Recreation Director Kurt W. Baker. There were 58 attendees who joined the meeting, including Planning Commission members Kenneth Corti, Richard Shorin, Joe Habboush, John Miller, John O'Hara, Kurt Zintner and Natalie Macy.

IT Director Nicole Leininger gave an overview of the process for participants, then turned the meeting over to Chair Michele Minnick.

Chair Minnick began the work session by welcoming everyone and asking all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. She then called roll. Chair Minnick thanked all who were involved in the snow clearing operations, working around the clock, especially Public Works crews under the leadership of Tom Farzetta. On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, she offered thanks and appreciation to all.

The meeting continued with a Mission Moment honoring the travel soccer teams of WRA. Chair Minnick read proclamations for the U10 Green Eagles and U14 FC teams, Vice-Chair Koch covered U12 Wolfpack, Mr. Conner U17 Warriors, Mr. Campolongo U12 Cosmos and Mrs. Keller U14 Wolverines. Each team was quite successful. Chair Minnick asked Pat Bailey to say a few words on behalf of WRA Soccer. Mr. Bailey thanked the Board for the opportunity to join the meeting and speak on behalf of the WRA Board. This past fall, the teams participated in normal competition with mitigation procedures in place, which enabled all teams to be out on the field. He offered congratulations to the players, families, and volunteers for their diligence, and thanked Roman, Kurt, Mike, and other Township staff for their support. They hope to be able to bring the teams to live meetings sometime soon. He again thanked everyone for the recognition and support of the 30-plus teams.

An informal presentation was given by Ironwood Development Corporation with plans for Parcel "D", a 27-acre parcel at 795 Jolly Road in the Arborcrest development. John Kennedy, land planner, showed images of the site and explained that there are a variety of land uses bordering it including health care, Unisys, AVE by Korman and offices. The land is zoned R-E (Research and Engineering). This site is an ideal location for

transitional residential use, multi-family use, similar to the Korman site with 4-5 stories and parking underneath. A recent publication by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission indicated there is a high demand for rental housing. The proposal includes 133 units of 24-foot wide by 54-foot-deep townhouses and will utilize entry from Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike. The community will include trail connectors, a connector to Jolly Road and emergency access.

Chair Minnick asked if any Board members had questions regarding the presentation. Vice-Chair Koch asked about the number of floors, number of bedrooms, parking, and cost per unit. The townhomes will be two-story, three-to-four bedrooms, and two-car garage parking and two-car driveway parking with guest parking in various areas. Because the plan is in very early stages, the developer said it would be hard to tell, but most likely based on today's costs for a 2,500 sq. ft. unit, costs would be \$250 to \$300 per sq. ft. with a sale price of \$650,000 to \$800,000. Chair Minnick called for any other questions from the Board. Supervisor Conner said he will ask his after the Planning Commission members and the public ask theirs. Supervisor Campolongo asked about the number of units (highest and lowest) and the response was 133, the max permitted in R-3. Chair Minnick then called for questions from the Planning Commission. Planning Commission Vice-Chair Rick Shorin commented that there will most likely be more than 1.2 children per household, and these are not starter homes at \$650,000. He is most concerned about the Penllyn Blue-Bell Pike access that has been one-way for years. It is not the safest area to have that many vehicles exit and enter on a daily basis. A traffic study is needed.

Mr. Galloway of Wyndrise Drive believes this is the fifth plan that's been presented. He asked what the timeline is – five, ten years away? Christen Pionzio, Esq., attorney for the applicant, said this will be two to three years away at least, not five.

Ms. Mudambi, a neighbor of the property, agrees with Mr. Shorin about the access road as her property backs up to it and it is very narrow. If it is assumed that owners of 133 townhouses will use this as their primary entrance and exit that will be a lot of traffic. The price range is higher value than most of the R-1 properties that this is adjacent to. Korman Suites was supposed to be for corporate, short term stays and now it is apartments. Much is said about intensity and density. She asked what this really means. It was explained that the roadways and driveways will require much improvement and will not be used in their present conditions. Residential uses are discussed as density, non-residential use cannot use the same metric and therefore intensity, with many different meanings, is used. Non-residential use is definitely more intense than residential. It is unusual to have a least intensive zoning district next to a more intensive zoning district. Ms. Mudambi commented to the Board that this property is adjacent to the Blue Bell Camp, and while the future is unknown, it could also be developed as high-intensity residential.

Richard Burns of Maple Hill Drive said there is talk about easements for Deaver Drive, and asked what will be done for Maple Hill and Cedar Drives which also back up to the

access road that is five feet from the property lines. He asked what will be done to protect the bordering residents as far as safety and security. He asked if the property can be developed with single family homes on one acre instead of townhomes. Mr. Kennedy said there are a couple of issues, first the cost of the ground. The industrial-type uses are extremely popular, and the cost most likely does not allow for single family. Putting R-1 defeats the purpose of good planning sense. It would not make sense to build single family homes on 30,000 sq. ft. lots. Mr. Burns believes 600-700 new people and 300 new cars can be reduced by single family homes.

Kathleen and Reese John of Deaver Drive, bordering the property, understand this will take some time, but 130 units are a shock. Initial meetings with the developer had the buildings farther away than what is being presented this evening. There will be more children with 133 units than what was stated. As homeowners since 1982, they would want something else, possibly keeping it as green space with its current fields. Mr. John questioned if there are plans for fencing and a berm. Additionally, they asked if the two communities will be combined with the access roads. Mrs. John noted that there is much wildlife in the area, including red fox, deer, racoons, and great horned owls; our residents are not just people.

David Doll of Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike said he is not opposed to the transitional use. He suggested that the developer look into R-3B, which is similar to R-3, though with less density and could be successful. This also ties into acreage and green space. Mr. Doll also has concerns about the amount of traffic that would be utilizing the access road.

Chair Minnick again noted that this is very preliminary. All comments are welcome, but there is no plan yet.

Sheila Kursten who lives in Canterbury Park, an extension of Maple Hill Drive, pointed out that traffic will affect everything going to Union Meeting Road and Penllyn Blue-Bell Pike. She asked what is being done to put something else that qualifies under R-E, and what is being done with, the farmhouse owned by the same corporate owner. Mr. Pronczak said the purchased the farmhouse was three owners ago and they did in the event there would be a project and it would include improving the intersection of Penllyn and Stenton. With other proposals there was talk of possibly closing the connection to Penllyn Pike, though none of the plans moved forward. The residence has been sold and is no longer owned by corporate entities. Supervisor Conner added that the challenge is that Parcel D is owned by a separate owner, and owners were encouraged to work together. He appreciates Ironwood's persistence, and the plan that has evolved over time. Many concepts for development are received each month, though few make it to a public meeting. As an equitable owner, Ironwood has a right to bring a plan forward. Our residents are always well-informed, and this concept may or may not move forward.

Supervisor Conner wanted to correct the thought that Blue Bell AVE is characterized as a multi-family apartment. It is not. It is an extended stay with executive units marketed for business executives who are in town during the week and leave on the weekend, or families in transition who stay for a short time. It could change at some point in the future.

Chair Minnick thanked the representatives from Ironwood for their presentation.

The next topic on the work session agenda is a motion to pass Resolution No. 1430. Supervisor Conner asked for a quick recap. Solicitor Michael Clarke explained that Ambler Borough is attempting to create a water and sewer authority that will include Ambler and Whitpain, Whitmarsh, Upper Dublin and Lower Gwynedd Townships, all to be served by Ambler. Chair Minnick called for a motion, noting that a confirming motion will be on the February 16th agenda. Vice-Chair Koch made a motion, duly seconded by Supervisor Conner to pass Resolution No. 1430, authorizing intergovernmental cooperation with Lower Gwynedd, Upper Dublin and Whitmarsh Townships and approving joint defense and joint privilege of litigation and defense efforts in connection with intervention before the PA PUC. Chair Minnick called for any questions from the Board. Supervisor Conner suggested a recap. Solicitor Michael Clarke explained that Ambler Borough is attempting to create an authority from its water and sewer systems. The four municipalities mentioned in the resolution all are served in one way or another by the Ambler water and sewer departments. The joining municipalities have a vested interest in making sure if this authority is formed, it is formed so our residents are not damaged by rate increases as are others. Since four of the municipalities share a common interest, the joint defense agreement will coordinate efforts to share information with each other that is not discoverable by Ambler or anyone else involved in this litigation. It allows us to work together to defend/prosecute a matter and not have to turn over all of that information. The end result is that it will save money by coordinating with the other municipalities and presenting a better case in front of the PA Public Utility Commission. Supervisor Campolongo commented that this is common practice, and not anything that would suggest something bad may come our way. There were no further questions from the Board. Chair Minnick called for any public comment. There was none. She then called a roll-call vote: Vice-Chair Koch, aye; Supervisor Conner, aye; Supervisor Campolongo, aye; Supervisor Keller, aye, and Chair Minnick also voted in favor. The motion carried.

Chair Minnick then turned the meeting over to Township Manager Roman Pronczak to review the draft agenda for the February 16th business meeting.

Mr. Pronczak reviewed the preliminary draft agenda which includes a public hearing for Ordinance #4-254, an ordinance for the former Reed restaurant and bar property. Previous proposals and plans included a care component along the Skippack Pike portion of the property, and townhomes at the rear. There were concerns from our Planning Commission regarding the townhouse portion and local impacts. The latest version deals with an overlay that permits Independent/Assisted Living on 7.25 acres which are close

to Skippack Pike and the remainder of the property maintains current zoning. The focus is on the area occupied by the former restaurant and bar. Both planning commissions recommended approval.

The Consent Agenda includes approval of the Board of Supervisors' meeting minutes of January 19, 2021 and February 2, 2021, the January Voucher List, December Treasurer's Report, Resolution No. 1423 (Montco 2040 Grant Application for a ¾ mile trail system along the PECO right-of-way), Resolution Nos. 1424 through 1427 (Declarations of Emergency/February), Resolution No. 1428 (waiver of credit card fees for sewer payments for first and second quarter 2021), Resolution No. 1430 (confirming this evening's action), tax credits for volunteers of the Centre Square Fire Company as an incentive for firefighters serving the community for those qualifying and certified for their service, an agreement with the property owners of 449 Holly Drive to evaluate floodplain boundaries, approval of a tax assessment appeal for 1070 North Wales Road, extinguishment of an access agreement at 355 Brentwood Drive, a waiver request from WRA to install a new shed at Wentz Run Park, two confirming escrow releases for 334 Railroad Avenue and for 209-249 Stenton Avenue.

Also reviewed on the preliminary agenda were Resolution No. 1429 (an amendment to a previously approved plan for Wings Field), Resolution No. 1431 (approval of subdivision plans for 1870 Yost Road), and Resolution No. 1432 (signing a Master Casting Agreement with PennDOT for adjustments of manhole covers).

The Zoning Hearing Board applications are mostly residential, with one that is a residential property seeking relief to use a home as a school and day care.

The only other item possibly to be added to the agenda is a recommendation to appoint a member to the Shade Tree Commission to fill a vacancy after interviews are held.

Mr. Pronczak added that just prior to this meeting he talked with Tom Farzetta and the snow clearing operations are far enough along to be able to lift the snow emergency this evening. There were no additional items to discuss or questions regarding the preliminary agenda from the Board or staff. Chair Minnick reminded everyone that from tonight going forward this calendar year, the work session and business meetings will begin at 6 p.m.

Upon motion by Supervisor Campolongo, seconded by Supervisor Conner, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Roman M. Pronczak, P.E.
Township Manager