

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MARCH 2016

A work session of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at 6:15 PM at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA for the purpose of reviewing the agenda of the public meeting to be held that evening. Chairman Kenneth Corti presided with Commission members Richard Shorin, Penelope Gerber, Tory Meitner, Bradley Tate, Otis Hightower and Edward McLaughlin present. Township Engineer James Blanch, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, Assistant Zoning Officer William McManus and Recording Secretary Karen Dolga were also present.

The work session started early to accommodate a 7:00 presentation of the Whitpain Township Comprehensive Plan.

1. Review of a Land Development Plan for 1710 DeKalb Pike. This application involves the renovation of the existing building, parking lot and driveway access modifications on the site, which is on the east side of DeKalb Pike between Township Line Road and Swede Road. Access to the site will be from DeKalb Pike. The property is located entirely within the C- Commercial Zoning District.

Mr. Blanch gave a brief background of the proposed plan noting it has been discussed previously. He mentioned the latest revision accommodated circulation changes within the parking lot, allowed for bigger parking spaces, pulled the retention wall back, changed the dumpster location, and allowed for 12' between the building and parking spaces. Mr. Blanch stated once the Route 202 reconstruction and widening work is done the entrance will be perpendicular and not angled. He added the property owner is proposing the plan in order to keep the lot viable once the 202 work is complete. In addition, Mr. Blanch mentioned the property owner wants to have a dental tenant and the PennDOT start date scheduled for March 2017 has been pushed back one year.

2. Presentation of the Whitpain Township Draft Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Commission discussed the Comprehensive Plan Draft. Mr. Blanch and Chairman Corti were members of the Committee. The committee started working on the plan in early 2014. The highlights of the plan included supporting multi-modal transportation, roads, trails, and mass transit and linking plans to larger County plans. The Plan stresses natural resource protection specifically parks and tree canopy coverage, and historic protection and four villages in the Township: Centre Square, Blue Bell, Broad Axe, and West Ambler. The Planning Commission also discussed the viability of adding SEPTA routes within the Township specifically along Skippack Pike, a potential bike share program, and making a trails plan an exhibit to the plan.

Mr. Hightower asked if the Boys and Girls Club in West Ambler was included in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Blanch responded no, stating that the plan is still conceptual.

3. Review of pertinent planning issues.

There were no pertinent planning issues to be discussed.

The work session adjourned at 7:00 PM, at which time the Planning Commission members left for the public meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William McManus". The signature is written in a cursive style.

William McManus, Recording Secretary

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MARCH 2016

The third meeting of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission for the year 2016 was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA. Chairman Kenneth Corti presided with Commission members Richard Shorin, Penelope Gerber, Bradley Tate, Otis Hightower, Tory Meitner and Edward McLaughlin present. Township Engineer James Blanch, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, Assistant Zoning Officer William McManus and Recording Secretary Karen Dolga were also present.

Chairman Corti welcomed the audience to a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Whitpain Township Comprehensive Plan Committee. The Planning Commission sat in the audience to listen to the Whitpain Township Draft Comprehensive Plan.

Supervisor Melissa Murphy Weber introduced the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Supervisor Fred Conner noted the meeting was the fifth town hall meeting. He added that the planning effort started in 2014 and the committee was a team of teams. Supervisor Conner mentioned the plan still had to be adopted and then implemented and in the process the well-attended town halls and online surveys were a roadmap.

Guest speaker, Dr. Wayne Huss, Professor at Gwynedd-Mercy University, spoke about the history of the Township from 1701 to the present explaining the Township's heritage. He mentioned that originally Whitpain Township was a prosperous farming area with diverse religious and ethnic groups. Dr. Huss added that three of the four current villages developed early on, Centre Square, Blue Bell, and Broad Axe had craft industries and an inn. He mentioned the population was steady in the 1700s and grew in the 1800s. He stated by 1950 there were nine new communities. Dr. Huss stated that from 1950 on the Township witnessed rapid population growth fueled by suburbanization.

Dr. Huss commented that apart from the Battle of Germantown during the Revolutionary War the Township has been peaceful. He mentioned that the loss of farmland and open space has been the most distressing issue even as productive office complexes, corporate centers, and shopping centers have been added. Dr. Huss added that thankfully a lot of historic structures have survived and are officially recognized.

Peter Simone, Landscape Architect at Simone Collins, said each town hall had a speaker with a specific emphasis, open space, economic development, etc. He mentioned that surveys revealed traffic is a big concern and residents also want better streetscapes, walkability, and bike-ability. Mr. Simone stated that the Comprehensive Plan should emphasize walking and bike trails. He added that the four-village concept was an organizing principle for the Comprehensive Plan, specifically looking at zoning in the villages to promote mixed uses and enhancing multi-modal transportation. Mr. Simone suggested that the Comprehensive Plan Committee should be a standing committee even after the plan is adopted. He also mentioned that the committee should meet twice a year to increase implementation of the plan.

Mrs. Gerber asked if the Township could make its own list of historic buildings. The Committee responded that the Township has their own list.

Chris Allen, 210 Huntsman Lane, suggested the Township adopt new measures to track retail, office, and open space per resident and these measures should be tied to tax policies. He added that businesses should pay more taxes for the increased costs of police, sewer, and traffic, summarizing that the tension between residents and non-residents has to be measured.

Supervisor Conner replied the Township was built out and recognized Mr. Allen's comments as a bigger macro-issue. Roman Pronczak, Township Manager, added that developers currently pay traffic and sewer impact fees.

John Schneider, 1462 Manor Lane, commented that as a Landscape Architect he was disappointed with the recently approved electronic billboard and felt it will have negative impacts. Supervisor Conner replied that there were two full public hearings on the billboard, one adopting the ordinance and another for the conditional use. He explained the Board of Supervisors was acting in their authority to approve the ordinance and conditional use, and it was better for the Township to have some leverage and input into where billboards go and their appearance instead of having them forced on the Township. Mr. Schneider asked who's going to control the light and glow of the billboard. Supervisor Weber replied the ordinance does control light and glow.

The members of the Planning Commission and Township Staff moved from the audience to the dais and introduced themselves to the public that were present.

1. Approval of minutes.

Chairman Corti called for any comments or questions on the February meeting minutes from the audience. There being none, Mrs. Gerber made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hightower, to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2016 meeting of the Planning Commission. The motion passed 7-0.

2. Review of a Land Development Plan for 1710 DeKalb Pike. This application involves the renovation of the existing building, parking lot and driveway access modifications on the site, which is on the east side of DeKalb Pike between Township Line Road and Swede Road. Access to the site will be from DeKalb Pike. The property is located entirely within the C-Commercial Zoning District.

Present for the applicant: Dr. Harry Randall, Dream Dentistry
Joseph Estock, Engineer

Mr. Estock provided a brief summary of the application explaining PennDOT's Route 202 reconstruction and widening project was the reason they needed the land development. He further added PennDOT's plans will reduce the site's required parking and the land development will address parking and traffic circulation on the lot. Mr. Estock noted the odd angled entry into the site is temporary until the PennDOT work after which the entry will be aligned better for circulation. Chairman Corti clarified and Mr. Estock confirmed that there would be two access points for the site and not three. Dr. Randall added that he would prefer not to construct a sidewalk before the PennDOT project because most likely PennDOT will have to remove it. Mr. Blanch explained that the PennDOT project was supposed to start in 2017, but has been pushed back to 2018; and in 2018 work will probably start near the intersection of Routes 202 and 73.

Chairman Corti called for any additional comments or questions from the audience. There were none.

There being no further comments or questions, a motion was made by Mr. Tate, and seconded by Mr. Shorin to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the Land Development Plan for 1710 DeKalb Pike conditioned upon the applicant addressing concerns in the Township Planner's and Township Engineer's review letters. The Planning Commission commented that the requirement to install sidewalk should be deferred until PennDOT improvements are complete. The applicant should be bound to install the sidewalk in the event it is not installed as part of the PennDOT improvements.

The motion passed: 7-0.

3. Pertinent Planning Issues

There were no pertinent planning issues.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Mrs. Gerber, and seconded by Mr. Tate to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Shorin, Secretary