

PROFESSIONAL LAND PLANNER

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PLANNER-IN-CHARGE PENNSYLVANIA
REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL PLANNER - NJ

VIA E-MAIL

December 9, 2019

TO: Whitpain Township Planning Commission
FROM: E. Van Rieker, Township Planning Consultant
RE: Township Planning Commission Meeting – December 10, 2019

Regular Session – 7:30 P.M.

1. Approval of Minutes
2. Review of a land development application for Stony Creek Elementary School Building Expansion & Alterations (LD-7-19). This land development involves the construction of a new 26,905 SF building addition, new parking areas and access driveways located at 1721 Yost Road. The property is zoned IN Institutional Zoning District.

Comment:

- See Attached Memo dated Monday, December 09, 2019.

3. Review Current Zoning Hearing Board Applications:

1. ZHB #2203-19	Ronald & Holly Flaherty (588 Bolton Place)	Floodplain
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Comments:

- *Applicant is requesting a special exception and/or is appealing a Zoning Enforcement Notice regarding a request for regrading and replacement of a retaining wall within a floodplain. The nature of this appeal is very fact specific and will require expert testimony relative to the continuation of a nonconforming activity and a demonstration of no adverse impact upon the designated floodplain. As such, this is the type of application where the Planning Commission could remain neutral and defer to the evidence submitted to the Zoning Hearing Board.*
- *I would note that the aerial image exhibits appear to be very helpful in determining a decision from the Zoning Hearing Board.*

2. ZHB #2209-19

Alex & Vania Vartanian
(1616 Winchester Drive)

Use

Comments:

- *Applicant is proposing "Dog Sitting Services to a few individuals on a daily basis whereby the dogs are contained within the house except for minimal periods during the day."*
- *This appeal raises the applicability of two defined terms within the Zoning Ordinance:*
 - *Home Occupation*
 - *No-impact Home-based Businesses*

Both of these definitions are listed at Section 160-7.B of Chapter 160.Zoning.

In my view the extensive definition of Home Occupation does not seem to include provision for the requested activity of "Dog Sitting". Day-care facilities would be the closest similar activity but this term is specifically limited to "the care of children".

In order to qualify as a No-impact Home-based business the proposal would have to comply with the definition from Section 160-7 as well as the provisions at Section 160-213. The careful reading of these provisions raise the question of whether subsections D, F and G are complied with.

For me, this application may entail the appeal for a variance subject to the testimony provided by the applicant.

3. ZHB #2224-19

480 Hileman Investments, LLC &
American Reading Company
(480 Norristown Road)

Use

Comments:

- *Applicant is requesting a special exception to utilize a portion of an existing building for warehousing and related activities in accordance with Section 160-142 G (3). In order to accommodate corporate headquarters and warehouse operations for the storage and distribution of applicant's cultural and literacy programs. The request includes the complete renovation of the interior of the office/warehouse building and certain site improvements to reduce surplus parking and help create a greening of the site.*
- *This proposal is consistent with a trend of repurposing older industrial buildings and properties for mixed uses or uses different from those originally permitted in the Industrial District. It should be remembered that the subject building and site was originally an engineering and manufacturing company known as Yarway.*
- *Naturally, in addition to revitalization of the building the steps proposed to reduce excess paving and replace these areas with landscaping and pedestrian friendly spaces*

including an exercise/walking trail are very positive steps. It should be noted that the existing PNB Bank Building and support parking and drive-thru lanes will remain intact.

- While the proposal is obviously beneficial it is suggested that a traffic impact statement be provided in order to address shipping and loading activity such as truck stacking (along the Township Line Road façade) and vehicular impact at the three existing driveways (one from Township Line Road and two existing driveways along Norristown Road).

Comments:

- *This is a residential application and typically the Planning Commission remains neutral unless the proposal has a community wide effect.*

5. ZHB #2221-19 1950 Skippack Pike, L.P.
(1950 Skippack Pike) Mini Warehousing,
Signage, Floodplain

Listed Below are Comments from Last Month's Planning Report.

- *The subject property is situated along the southerly side of Skippack Pike and is bounded by the Stony Creek Railroad along its easterly side and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension which is elevated in this area of the Township along its southerly boundary.*
 - *The property is split zoned R-2 and R-1 Residential; however, this stretch of Skippack Pike could be considered a "crazy quilt" of uses beginning with the nonconforming nursery/garden sales at Meehann Boulevard, then two institutional places of worship properties (St. John's Lutheran Church and Cemetery and Tiferent Bet Israel Synagogue) which surround the Ashford Lane townhouse community constructed pursuant to the R-3.B District. Proceeding toward North Wales Road the properties become truncated because of the Turnpike right-of-way which crosses into Worcester Township generally at the intersection of North Wales Road and Skippack Pike.*
 - *Previously, this property was used for a nonconforming industrial operation and may have previously been the subject of environmental contamination.*
 - *The properties immediately north of Skippack Pike consist of either permanent open space or land restricted by flood plain.*
 - *Because of the conditions outlined above it would seem unlikely and even inappropriate that residential uses be provided on this property. Applicant proposes a use variance to permit the construction of a three story (having climate controlled interior storage) self-*

storage facility. Historically, these types of facilities have very low traffic impacts associated with their operation, including low vehicle operation during peak periods..

- *A sign variance to permit a 50 sf identification sign is also required given that the existing zoning districts do not permit such an operation.*
- *For the above reasons I would recommend support for the zoning relief subject to the review and approval of the Township Engineering Department.*

In addition, the application has been revised to request a variance for 300 sf. of internally illuminated signage located on different areas of the building, including directional signage.

Comment:

- *In order to comment further on this request applicant should provide a sign package exhibit to quantify the number and size of these additional signs as well as their proposed location and purpose.*

4. Review pertinent planning issues.

cc:	Jim Blanch	Courtney Miller	John O'Hara
	Kent Conway	Joe Habboush	Roman Pronzak
	Ken Corti	Otis Hightower	Richard Shorin
	Joseph Fay	Cathy McGowan	Jen Gallagher
	Kurt Zintner	John Miller	

Applicants Attorneys:

- ZHB #2203-19: Marc Davis, Esquire
- ZHB #2209-19: Mark Harris, Esquire
- ZHB #2224-19: Craig R. Lewis, Esquire
- ZHB #2225-19: Walter J. Timby III, Esquire
- ZHB #2221.19: Bernadette Kearney, Esquire

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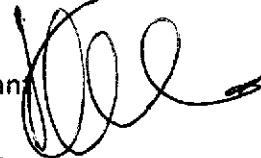
December 9, 2019

TO: Whitpain Township Planning Commission

FROM: E. Van Rieker, Township Planning Consultant

CC: Mark J. Buchvalt, PE – Applicants Engineer

RE: Stony Creek Elementary School Land Development (LD-7-19)



1. External Impacts

a. Proposed second driveway intersection with Yost Road

- A second driveway to the Elementary School site is a good idea particularly when you consider that the current property is serviced by one driveway access which includes the combination of both bus traffic and automobile traffic.
- The new plan proposes internal circulation revisions which facilitate bus stacking requirements. In so doing it raises the question of whether bus traffic should be confined to only the redesigned main driveway which is to be widened to provide an additional turn lane (two exit movements and one ingress movement).
- The new driveway proposed opposite Whitwood Drive is identified for two way movement. The interior design suggests however that this drive would basically be limited to the use of the 23 existing parking lot spaces. It makes one wonder whether this separate parking lot should be expanded in size to accommodate possible future needs.

b. Offsite draining runoff in the direction of Creek View Lane

- All of the new internal easterly driveway and most of the new easterly parking lot are proposed on that part of the site which drains in the direction of Creek View Lane. The house pads for the homes situated along Creek View Lane are

substantially lower in elevation than some of the new impervious surfaces associated with the new construction.

- It is noted that a very sophisticated storm water management system is proposed including an extensive subsurface storm water collection tile field. It appears that virtually all of the storm water runoff emanating from the new construction in the easterly portion of the property will be captured and drain to the underground storm water management system. Naturally, the Township Engineer will need to carefully evaluate this proposal.

2. Internal Planning Considerations

a. Internal driveway circulation

- As mentioned above the arrangement of the interior driveway is being “stretched” in order to accommodate daily vehicle stacking. For an active school site this is a good thing. I’ll leave the actual design and turning radiiuses to the Township and Design Engineers. Overall, with the possible exception of the parallel parking contemplated along the exterior of the easterly driveway the new arrangement seems well considered.
- It is assumed that the proposed concrete paver interconnect between the easterly and westerly driveways is intended only for emergency or occasional use. Additional signage may be required to assist the driver on the use of the interconnection.

b. Landscaping

- The existing frontage along Yost Road is comprised of a handsome stretch of pine trees, some of which will be removed as part of the new construction. It is suggested that replacement trees of a deciduous variety be considered.
- With the above comment the landscape plan (sheet 15 of 24) includes a large number of trees and shrubs consistent with the landscape requirements and will result in a general upgrade to the site subject to the following noted exception. It should be noted that Pennsylvania DCNR has placed the species of Winged Euonymus on the invasive species list of plant material. Because of this, it is suggested that applicant consider alternative shrubs in order to accomplish the perimeter buffering around the parking lots.