

AGENDA ITEMS

BJ's – Five Points Plaza
Conditional Use - Integral
County Comprehensive Plan 2040

cc:	R. Birch	K. Johnson
	M. Fox	Sewer Authority
	J. McDonnell	F. Bartle
	J. Walsh	B. Shoupe
	C. Chimera	E. Reynolds
	L. McGuire	M. Beatty
	J. Glickman	K. Amey
	J. Goldstein	J. Trump
	J. Rall	S. Krumenacker

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

March 20, 2014

The March 20, 2014, meeting of the Montgomery Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Jonathan Trump at 7:30 p.m. In attendance were Commissioners Jay Glickman, Steven Krumenacker, Leon McGuire, James Rall and Ellen Reynolds. Commissioner Michael Beatty was absent. Also present were Bruce Shoupe, Director of Planning and Zoning, and Candyce Fluehr Chimera, Supervisor Liaison.

The minutes of February 20, 2014, were approved as submitted.

There were no public comments.

The first item on the agenda was a presentation for a BJ's Wholesale Club to be located at Five Points Plaza. Robert Brant, attorney, and Gregory Elko, engineer, were present to discuss this plan. Mr. Brant explained that they would be utilizing the former American Signature Furniture store. They would renovate and expand the existing structure. Mr. Brant stated that the existing store was approximately 7,900 square feet and the new store would be 8,900 square feet. The back wall of the building would remain the same. They have obtained a long term lease with the property owners. Mr. Kerns further advised that the applicant received relief from the Zoning Hearing Board on November 13, 2013, for building height, signage, building coverage, above ground diesel storage tanks, and for permitting automobile accessory sales and tire sales within the S-Shopping Center District. He also stated that they had met with neighbors of the site and that they felt that many issues had been worked out and that the residents were satisfied. Several residents were present at this meeting. The residents agreed that it had been a productive meeting, but just wanted the Township to be aware of what was discussed so that the applicant would keep all of their promises. Mr. Kerns advised that what had been agreed upon at that meeting would be done by the applicant. Mr. Elko

presented the plan for the BJ's store. He stated that the entire shopping center is approximately 45 acres and is adjacent to commercial on one side and residential on another side. He stated that the plan was to renovate and expand the existing structure. They would enhance the existing landscaping and bring the lighting into conformity with the current standards. Mr. Elko advised that they had received the review letters from the Township consultants and would comply with most comments. However, due to the nature of the plan, there were numerous waivers that were being requested. The following is a list of the waivers and reasoning for the request as presented by the applicant:

1. Section 205-10.H.(6)(e) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that in the case of shopping centers having frequent truck deliveries or pickups, the circulation pattern for service vehicles shall be physically separated from automobile parking areas and parking access driveways. The current design requires service vehicles to utilize a parking access aisle for maneuverability. Also, the two (2) proposed parking spaces at the southeast corner of the building are located in the loading dock area.

Response: a waiver is requested for the following locations:

- a. There are six proposed parking spaces located in the vicinity of the loading dock area along the eastern wall of the building. These parking spaces are designated as "employee parking only" spaces, will contain accompanying signage stating "Employee Parking Only" and are necessary for BJ's operations. The man door / grade door entrance area is the only location where BJ's employees can enter the building. Locating parking adjacent to this entrance is not only convenient; it allows BJ's employees who work in the Club during "off-hours" a safe, physically close and well lit area to park their vehicle. These spaces are not permitted to be used by customers.
 - b. There are two proposed parking spaces located in the vicinity of the service area at the southeastern corner of the building. These parking spaces are also designated as "employee parking only" with the accompanying signage and are necessary for BJ's operations. These spaces are not permitted to be used by customers.
2. Section 205-10.H.(7)(b) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that off-street parking spaces for the physically handicapped be a minimum of 12 feet wide. The accessible parking stalls have a proposed width of 8 feet.

Response: The proposed 8 foot wide accessible parking stalls comply with current ADA requirements.

3. Section 205-17.A.(3) – A waiver is requested from the requirement for paving thicknesses of commercial car parking areas.

Response: the Applicant is requesting to use the pavement section design as specified in the site-specific Geotechnical Investigation that was performed for the project for the Standard Duty Pavement. The Geotechnical Investigation produced a stronger pavement thickness than the Township requirement.

4. Section 205-25.A.(4)(b) – A waiver is requested from the prohibition to provide parking along storefront driveways.

Response: the Applicant is requesting a waiver to allow accessible parking spaces along the front of the store. These spaces are convenient to persons with disabilities to more easily maneuver themselves and their shopping carts to and from their parked cars, rather than having their route of travel to cross the storefront driveway. Furthermore, the grades in the parking lot exceed ADA regulations and preclude the placement of these spaces at any location in the main parking field. Through coordination with Traffic Planning and Design, in response to their review comment #2 from their March 10, 2014 review letter, we have proposed a modification to the plans to provide five accessible parking stalls along the storefront which have adequate sight distances from vehicles approaching from both directions along the storefront driveway. Refer to the attached sketch titled "Sight Distance Sketch" dated 3/20/14.

5. Section 205-17.A.(5)(b) – A waiver is requested from the requirement for paving thicknesses of the alternative for commercial driveways and loading areas.

Response: the Applicant is requesting to use the pavement section design as specified in the site-specific Geotechnical Investigation that was performed for the project for the Heavy Duty Pavement. The pavement section in the Geotechnical Investigation results in a higher strength section than the Township's alternate requirement.

6. Section 205-25.B.(1) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that for safety, efficiency and appearance, parking lots shall be divided into units of not more than 150 parking spaces each.

Response: The existing parking lot including the location of the access drives on all sides of that lot which exist on the north side of the building is an existing non-conformity that does not meet several of the requirements listed for which a waiver is being requested. Accommodating these requirements would add a significant amount of unnecessary reconstruction work in the entire parking lot and would result in the loss of a significant amount of parking spaces. The Applicant is proposing to maintain the existing parking arrangement, and install landscaping improvements to the existing parking lot which will supplement the existing landscaping in and around the parking field. Furthermore, the Applicant is proposing replacement of the site lights to bring the site lighting for the parking lot into conformance with the ordinance. The current existing arrangement, with the Applicant's proposed landscaping and lighting and enhancements, continues to allow for a safe and efficient parking arrangement in the existing parking lot north of the building.

7. Section 205-25.C.(1)(a) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that the parking area be divided by continuous islands perpendicular to the parking spaces every 186 feet with the divider islands a minimum of 25 feet wide.

Response: see the response to item #6 above, the justification for this requirement is the same as for that item.

8. Section 205-25.C.(1)(b) & §205-52.D.(1)(i) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that one additional large landscaped area (1,800 square feet minimum) be provided per 250 parking spaces to provide attractive focal points within the parking lots.

Response: see the response to item #6 above, the justification for this requirement is the same as for that item.

9. Section 205-25.C.(2) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that a minimum of 25% of the area between the curblineline of the storefront driveway and the principal buildings be landscaped with ornamental plant materials, including flowering and evergreen trees and shrubs.

Response: see the response to item #6 above, the justification for this requirement is the same as for that item.

10. Section 205-52.D.(1)(c) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that a maximum of 15 parking spaces be permitted in a row without a landscape island of 15 feet in width. This island shall contain not less than 290 square feet of planting area.

Response: see the response to item #6 above, the justification for this requirement is the same as for that item.

11. Section 205-52.D.(1)(g) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that for any land use where the total number of parking spaces exceeds 100, the parking area shall be divided by continuous islands perpendicular to the parking spaces every 124 feet

Response: see the response to item #6 above, the justification for this requirement is the same as for that item.

12. Section 205-52.E.(1) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that one shade tree, one ornamental/flowering tree, and four deciduous and/or evergreen shrubs be required per 100 linear feet of street frontage.

Response: There are no improvements proposed along or near the property frontages; street planting already exist along those frontages.

13. Section 205-78.C.(1)(f) – A waiver is requested from the requirement that preliminary plans contain tentative grades to an existing street or to a point 400 feet beyond the boundaries of the subdivision.

Response: The Applicant provided grades within the limit of disturbance and surrounding area and provided an Area Map.

The applicant further noted that the previously requested waiver from Section 205-10.H.(6)(c) is no longer needed since they agreed to the recommendation from Gilmore Associates to add a note to the plan which states: "Service vehicles shall enter and exit the loading area only during off-peak hours."

The consensus of the Planning Commission was that they felt that this was a good plan for the area. It was felt that BJ's and the Shopping Center had really tried to do a good job of answering the residents' concerns and were willing to take action to assure that items would be addressed. Those residents in attendance seemed pleased with the response they received. After some further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Glickman, seconded by Mr. McGuire, to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that this plan be approved, subject to satisfactory compliance with all comments of the Township review agencies. The motion further recommended that all waivers be approved. Motion carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation of the Conditional use application for Integral Development Associates. Mitchell Russell, attorney and owner, was present to address this application. He advised that they wished to lease the building previously occupied by Lane Furniture, located at 976 Bethlehem Pike, to The Tile Shop. They had obtained a 10 year lease. Mr. Russell advised that this was located within the HLI-II - Highway Limited Industrial II District, which allowed for specialty retail. He further advised that they would not be requiring any additions to the building or any changes to the existing parking fields, landscaping or loading areas. This would be considered a specialty retail store, which is permitted in the HLI-II District as a conditional use. Mr. Russell stated that this would be a store for homeowners and not contractors. They expected approximately 20/30 customers per day. The consensus of the Planning Commission was that this store would be a good addition to the Township and that it did fit the description of specialty retail. A motion was made by Mr. Glickman, seconded by Mr. Krumenacker, to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that this conditional use application be approved. Motion carried unanimously.

Next on the agenda was a discussion of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan 2040. The County had asked for input regarding their themes and goals. The Members of the Planning Commission had reviewed the plan prior to the meeting and felt that the plan themes and goals were very inclusive. They would be in support of the plan. A motion was made by Mr. Glickman, seconded by Mr. Rall, to notify the Montgomery County Planning Commission that Montgomery Township Planning Commission is in support of the Comprehensive Plan 2040 Themes and Goals. Motion carried unanimously.

The next meeting of Planning Commission will be held on Thursday, April 17, 2014.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Marita Stoerrle
Development Coordinator/
Recording Secretary