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Planning Commission Meeting Minutes February 16, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Montgomery Township Planning Commission was held at the Township Building at 7:30 pm, Thursday, February 16, 2023. The members of the Planning Commission in attendance included: Jim Rall, Tom Borghetti, Jay Glickman, Steve Krumenecker, Rutuke Patel, Frank Davey, and Leon McGuire. Also present: Candyce Fluehr Chimera, Board Liaison; Alex Township Solicitor; Jim Dougherty, Township Engineer; Damon Drummond, Township Traffic Engineer; Judy-Stern Goldstein, Township Planning Consultant; Carolyn McCreary, Township Manager, and Marianne McConnell, Zoning Officer.

The regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Rall.

On a motion made by Jay Glickman and seconded by Tom Borghetti, the minutes from the September 2022 meeting were approved as submitted.

Penn Medicine Conditional Use Application C-79

Prior to the applicant's presentation, Mr. Alex Baumler, Township Solicitor, requested to address the audience advising of the role of the Planning Commission as an advisory body who hears applications and makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on matters presented to them. Mr. Baumler then read the following statement:

The Montgomery Township Board of Supervisors "Board" are committed to transparency and listening to the views of residents. The Township's review process is governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code "MPC" which mandates a thorough public process before the Township's Zoning Ordinance is amended. On January 24, 2022, Penn Medicine first presented to the Board a proposed amended use to the C-Commercial Zoning District of Ambulatory Health Care at a public meeting. The amendment Penn Medicine proposed did not change the commercial zoning of the designation of the parcel. In fact, the parcel has always been zoned commercial and hotels have been publicly approved by previous Board's that were ultimately never constructed. On August 18th, after receiving feedback from the Board and Staff, Penn Medicine refined their proposed zoning amendment and presented and received a positive recommendation from the Montgomery Township Planning Commission "MTPC" at its public meeting. On August 22nd, the Board reviewed the MTPC recommendation and voted at its public meeting to advertise and hold a public hearing on the proposed amendment. On August 26th and September 2nd, the hearing was advertised in the Reporter. Then at its September 12th public meeting, the Board reviewed the positive recommendations of the MTPC, Montgomery County Planning Commission, Gilmore Engineers, and other Township professionals and took public comment before closing a hearing and voting unanimously to approve the amendment. Thus, before the amendment was first discussed and approved seven months had passed and four public meetings had occurred in the Township. The review process is not complete, the Board at public meetings will hold a conditional use hearing and review a Subdivision and Land Development application before Penn Medicine's proposal is finalized.

Mr. Baumler then explained the process further for this proposed project. After this hearing, the application will be scheduled at a future Board of Supervisor's meeting for the Conditional Use, the hearing will be publicly advertised in the newspaper, posted on the township website, and the property may be posted as well. The public will be given advance notice in multiple ways. Mr. Baumler,

explained the party status process for the public and the opportunity for public comment and discussion towards the end of the hearing. Should the Conditional Use be approved, the Land Development application and approval process begins. Final plans are then presented to the Board of Supervisors and open for public comments as well during the public meeting or meetings.

A question arose from the audience in regards to the change of zoning for this property. The residents were advised by Judy Stern-Goldstein, Township Planning Consultant, that no change of zoning occurred. An amendment in the text of the existing zoning ordinance was completed creating the definition and new use of an Ambulatory Health Care Center. It did not change the zoning of the tract. It created a new use allowed by Conditional Use and laid out the parameters and dimensional requirements for that use. It did not change the existing building height requirements required in this zoning district.

Penn Medicine has submitted a Conditional Use application for a proposed Ambulatory Health Care Center to be constructed on a property located on Dekalb Pike at the intersection of Gateway Center Drive. The approximately 12-acre undeveloped parcel sits within the C-Commercial District. The applicant presented the proposed plan to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Greg Davis, attorney for the applicant, began the presentation with some brief background information and introduced the representatives of Penn Medicine present at the hearing.

Ms. Theresa Larivee, Chief Business Officer for Penn Medicine, described that Penn Medicine was looking to expand care and services to within the Montgomery and Bucks County area. Currently patients drive to Philadelphia to seek care and treatment. Penn Medicine wishes to provide a full spectrum of healthcare services closer to home. The proposed ambulatory care facility will provide outpatient care. There are no hospital beds, no overnight stays, and no emergency room. Ms. Larivee reviewed the proposed services including Primary Care, Women's Health, Heart & Vascular, GI/Endoscopy, Radiology, Lab, PT/OT/Speech Therapy, and an onsite Pharmacy for patients.

Mr. Kent Doss, Array Architects, reviewed the site design for the proposed 160,000 square foot building with structured parking garage. The parking garage allows for less surface parking, increased open green space areas, natural elements on the site, and increased landscaping. The applicant has provided environmental sustainability throughout the site. They are exploring renewables as well including solar and geothermal options. The site was designed to keep the main activity (drop off / main entrance to the garage) away from the abutting residential areas. The loading dock is not operating 24/7 and services 1-2 trucks per day accepting limited supplies. Mr. Doss reviewed the building elevations, sight lines, and building exterior views/renderings. The higher building elevations are stepped back as the building sits further from the property lines. Obscured / frosted glass windows are provided on the 3rd floor and below windows facing the residential properties. The fourth floor windows are clear glass for the infusion suites as these rooms are utilized for longer visits providing natural light and views for these supervised patients. The existing berm, proposed six foot privacy fence and landscaping will provide sufficient screening for the abutting residential properties. The parking garage lighting was designed to provide minimal impact while providing light for safety and security on the site. The light poles were centered in the middle of the top floor of the garage with shielded lights. The parapet wall around the perimeter was raised to six feet to allow the lights to be mounted inside the wall.

Mr. Michael Kissinger, Pennoni Associates (Engineer), reviewed the zoning compliance, engineering, and stormwater management systems on the site. The proposed project fully complies with zoning in regards to dimensional requirements, impervious coverage, green coverage, and parking requirements. The zoning allows for a maximum impervious coverage of 75% of the site, the applicant is proposing less than 45%. They are providing stormwater management facilities (basin) in the right rear corner of the site, meadow grasses throughout the site, rain gardens, and a secret garden. Green roofs are also proposed.

Mr. Johnathan Alderson, Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects Inc., reviewed the proposed landscaping for the project. He stated that landscape buffers would be provided abutting the residential as required. Meadows are proposed to wrap around the building, rain gardens are proposed, a secret garden with seating area, a walking path, sound barriers adjacent to the loading dock and ground equipment, and a six foot tall privacy fence.

Mr. Abhishek Joshi, Pennoni Associates (Traffic Engineer), reviewed the traffic study completed for this proposed project. They collected traffic counts at seven nearby intersections on Dekalb Pike and Welsh Road. They compared the traffic counts and generated rates with their Radnor location. The counts and capacity analysis fell within the required thresholds at all intersections. Improvements including preemption and timing are proposed at existing signalized intersections as well.

The Planning Commission members presented the following questions to the applicant:

1. The Township Engineer review letter mentioned a concern that the light sources from the garage would be blocked with the landscaping and recommended that the light sources be designed and located so that they are not visible off of the premises without relying on landscaping material. *The applicant responded that the proposed pole lights were reduced in height, located in the center of the parking garage, and lights were shielded. The parapet wall was raised to six feet to mount the lights inside the wall rather than on poles around the perimeter. The applicant added that all lights on the property are provided with shielded fixtures.*
2. The Fire Department review letter addressed concerns with providing access points for fire rescue at the building. *The applicant stated that they continue to work with the Fire Department to meet their needs.*
3. Are the sound barriers / gabion baskets only provided at the loading dock area? *Yes, meeting the requirements. Five sound barriers are provided on the site.*
4. Has the traffic study mitigated Township concerns, meet traffic needs, deliveries / truck traffic? Why is the loading dock big? *The applicant stated that the traffic study conducted was relative to the Radnor site and that the Radnor site was fully operational at the time of the study. The queuing concerns raised in the Township review letter is being addressed. Trying to optimize timings and provide offsite signal improvements to handle these concerns. The loading dock is designed for deliveries and includes the trash compactor.*
5. Maintenance of the landscaping? *Penn Medicine will clean up the existing invasives on the site, protect and maintain existing trees, and plant significant landscaping. They intend to have a high level of maintenance on the site.*
6. Have the mad rush time slots been considered? How is the drop-off area during peak hours? *The traffic study included am and pm peak hours. Their experience is that most patients utilize the parking garage and enter the building through the parking garage.*
7. What are the hours of operation? *The facility operates Monday through Friday, 7am to 8pm, and until noon on Saturday. No hours on Sundays.*
8. What stormwater management system is proposed on the site? *A large volume basin is proposed on site along with multiple rain gardens, and a secret garden.*
9. What are the tree sizes along the buffer at planting? *The plantings are required to provide 100% screening four years after planting. The renderings do show more mature trees. With the*

combinations of existing trees, proposed trees, the existing berm, and gabion walls; we believe this will be accomplished.

The Planning Commission members stated that the property is zoned commercial; is aware that other uses including retail strip shopping centers and hotels are permitted as well and that a previous plan proposing a hotel was approved in the past. They were also aware that this hearing was for a recommendation for the Conditional Use application and should the Conditional Use be approved, Land Development would be the next step in the process.

The Residents in attendance had the following comments, questions, concerns, and made requests in regards to the proposed project:

1. How was this location selected? (abutting residential) Why were other areas, which are vacant, not considered? Gwynmont Farms is an enclave surrounded by commercial, this site is our only buffer.
2. Safety concerns including inviting transitory populations, weekend use of the parking garage, walking paths connecting to sidewalks; had traffic concerns with drivers entering and exiting Gwynmont Farms.
3. Have the following studies been completed? Safety Study, crime statistics for the Radnor location, Welsh Road traffic study, Environmental Impact study done, Needs Assessment, and a Line of Sight Study from each abutting residential property?
4. Further drain on existing utilities and infrastructure. Is there a plan to upgrade the grid? Gwynmont Farms currently loses power frequently.
5. Were the three surroundings school district notified? What is the impact to the bus routes and pick up times?
6. What is the impact to the 202 Parkway & Welsh Road intersection? Frequent accidents occur at this intersection.
7. What is the benefit to the Township? Penn Medicine is a non-profit organization, no taxes. Will this bring revenue to the area? Will it benefit local businesses?
8. Traffic concerns were expressed including the increase in traffic and commuting times, the ability to make left turns out of Gwynmont Farms will be impacted, drivers missing the entrance into the facility will turn into the development to turn around. The neighborhood is one way in and one way out. Can a flashing light be installed along Dekalb Pike approaching Gwynmont Drive warning drivers of the entrance/exit. Traffic in the surrounding immediate areas was also a concern impacting 63 and 202 at peak times.
9. Light pollution. Were low pressure sodium or LED lights considered?
10. What type of security is provided on the site? *There is one point of entry to the building, lighting, and cameras are provided.*
11. Will there be signage on the back of the building facing residential? *There will be no signage on the back of the building.*
12. How long will construction take? *The applicant stated that generally construction takes approximately 18 months from start to finish. No blasting will occur.*

13. How long will water sit in the basin / rain gardens? *After storms, the basin is required to drain within 72 hours.*

Additional Resident Questions:

14. Does the Township Police have any concerns about this project? *Ms. McCreary read the review completed by the Police Department having no concerns at this time in regards to the Conditional Use application.*
15. Will Gwynmont Drive be extended into the neighborhood? *Ms. Stern-Goldstein stated that in previous approved land development plans, there were many discussions about the extension of Gwynmont Drive and the road did not go through. There is no proposed connection in this plan.*

The residents were advised that some of these concerns and questions would be addressed and answered during the Land Development process. Currently this meeting was for consideration and recommendation of the Conditional Use application. They were also advised that some of the studies requested by the residents, the Township cannot require Penn Medicine to do per the Municipalities Planning Code and local ordinances.

Mr. Alex Baumler, Township Solicitor, reiterated the Conditional Use and Land Development Processes, public notifications, public hearings, opportunities for public comment, and party status.

On a motion made by Jay Glickman and seconded by Leon McGuire, the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the Conditional Use application subject to Township Consultant and Staff review letters and comments. All in favor.

2023 Reorganization: The members unanimously elected Tom Borghetti as Chairman of the Planning Commission on a motion made by Jay Glickman and seconded by Frank Davey. The members unanimously elected Steve Krumenecker as Vice-Chairman on a motion made by Jay Glickman and seconded by Jim Rall.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm. The next meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on March 16, 2023 at the Township Building.