

AGENDA ITEMS

Higher Rock Partners, LLP – Conditional Use Application

Higher Rock Partners, LLP – Subdivision and Land Development Preliminary/Final Plan Approval

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

December 7, 2017

The November 16, 2017 meeting of the Montgomery Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chairman Jay Glickman. Commission members in attendance were: David Fetzer, Ellen Reynolds, James Rall, Steve Krumenacker, and Michael Lyon. Also present: Candyce Fluehr-Chimera, Bruce Shoupe, Marianne McConnell, Stacey Crandell, and Kevin Johnson of Traffic Planning & Design.

Pledge of Allegiance

The minutes from the November 16, 2017 meeting were approved as submitted on a motion made by Michael Lyon and seconded by Ellen Reynolds.

Public Comment: none

Higher Rock Partners, LLP – Conditional Use and Subdivision & Land Development Preliminary / Final Plan:

The applicant's legal counsel, Bob Brant, presented an overview of the proposed project to the Planning Commission. The project received Zoning Hearing Board approval with regards to dimensional variances and signage relief for some of the proposed tenants. The Board of Supervisors at their November 27, 2017 meeting approved the proposed Text Amendment. The public hearing for the Conditional Use application to permit the proposed project and their uses is scheduled to be heard on December 18, 2017 by the Board of Supervisors. The application for Subdivision and Land Development is also scheduled for the Board's December 18, 2017 meeting.

The proposed project includes the extension of Witchwood Drive from Stump Road connecting to Bethlehem Pike / Route 309, a Wawa with gas station, Citadel Bank with drive-thru, Wendy's with outdoor dining, a 3-story office building, small retail strip, and an expansion of the existing garden center / nursery. The applicant stated that the project could comply with all of the comments received on review letters by the Township Consultants. The applicant has made Twenty-seven technical waiver requests. Most of the waivers requested are dimensional and engineer in nature. The Consultants provided comments for each waiver requested.

The applicant's Engineer, George Hartman of Bohler Engineering, also presented an overview of the project. Mr. Hartman discussed the proposed significant traffic improvements including the new traffic signals at Stump Road and Bethlehem Pike due to Witchwood Drive extension, the widening of along Bethlehem Pike, and the widening of Stump Road on the eastside of Bethlehem Pike. Mr. Hartman stated that the Township's consultant, Traffic Planning & Design, has been involved in roadway and traffic improvements for this project. A sanitary sewer pump station is also designed for this project capable of handling up to 50,000 gallons per day.

Planning Commission Chairman, Jay Glickman provided some background information for those members that did not attend the November meeting. He advised the members that the waivers requested are to be approved by the Board of Supervisors. The PC members had some questions regarding the following items / waiver requests:

The applicant requested to substitute columnar Red Maple as opposed to installing Oaks. Boucher & James did not support this request. However, the Planning Commission agreed with the applicant that the proposed substitution being columnar in nature may be better than what is required due to the location of the trees.

The applicant requested a waiver from the maximum grades allowed at intersections and stopping areas. Applicant requested this waiver due to the 50 foot elevation change on site from Stump Rd to Bethlehem Pike via Witchwood Drive. If the applicant flattened part of the roadway (Witchwood Drive extension) at the intersections, than the other section of the road would be much steeper. The Commission questioned the reason for the requirement and how would it affect the site when they are waived? Kevin Johnson, Traffic Planning and Design explained that the request decreases the slope in other areas of the roadway in order to avoid a bottoming out effect for vehicles traveling into and out of the site. He also stated that adequate site distances for traffic would be provided. Due to the elevations of the existing site, the Planning Commission had no concerns to these waivers requested.

The applicant requested that the requirement to screen from view the proposed trash enclosures. The PC agreed with Boucher & James not objecting to this request as long as the evergreen buffering around the dumpster pads shown on the landscape plan remains in place.

The Commission discussed some points made in the Montgomery County Planning Commission review letter in regards to the comments on pedestrian access, crosswalks, sidewalks, and connections within the development. Sidewalks are currently proposed on one side of Witchwood Drive. The applicant says adding a crosswalk is feasible from office building or bank to Wawa, but it may not be the most desirable situation due to slopes and grades on the site. Kevin Johnson stated that the ADA standards must be met if accessibility is provided, however a waivers of this requirement may be accomplished utilizing the existing PennDOT standards heck into this further with PennDOT. However, the 50 foot elevation difference on the site makes the ADA design challenging and some things may not be able to be provided.

The MCPC review letter also discussed the jug handle and driveway B. The MCPC is recommending that driveway B should be removed from the plan. Kevin Johnson explained that there are a lot of benefits to eliminating jug handle at Stump Road including eliminating some signage along Bethlehem Pike, but it would be very costly to do so. (The Township would request the speed limit be reduced to 40 mph along Bethlehem Pike to keep continuity along commercial development from English Village to 5-Points) The Commission asked why the installation of driveway B into the site was proposed because it adds another access point off of Bethlehem Pike. The applicant stated that PennDOT requested the installation of driveway B. They felt that the added access point would alleviate bottleneaking on Witchwood Drive with left and right turns into the tenant pads as soon as you enter the site off of Bethlehem Pike. Driveway B would reduce the bottleneaking on Witchwood Drive within the site, similar to the drive at Barnes and Noble further north on Bethlehem Pike.

The applicant stated that they presented approximately 30 designs to PennDOT. All of the designs led back to the current Witchwood Drive extension location and connection onto Bethlehem Pike.

The Commission members had no further questions for the applicant in regards to the Higher Rock Project and therefore made the following motions:

1. On a motion made by Ellen Reynolds and seconded by Jim Rall, the Planning Commission recommends approval of the Conditional Use application subject to the reviews and recommendation of the Township Consultants and PennDOT. All members were in favor of the motion.
2. On a motion made by Steve Krumenacker and seconded by Michael Lyon, the Planning Commission recommends the Board of Supervisors approve the Subdivision & Land Development Preliminary / Final Plans subject to the reviews and recommendations of the Township Consultants and PennDOT. All members were in favor of the motion.
3. On a motion made by Jim Rall and seconded by Steve Krumenacker, the Planning Commission recommends the Board of Supervisors approve the PADEP Sewage Planning Module subject to all agencies evaluation and reviews. All members were in favor of the motion.

Supervisor Meeting report: none

Other Business:

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm

The next meeting will be held on January 18, 2018 in the Montgomery Township Municipal Building. Reorganization is scheduled on the agenda.