

**LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes for December 17, 2007

The Lower Pottsgrove Township Planning Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, December 17, 2007. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Geoffrey Dailey, at 6:30 p.m. and the following were in attendance:

Geoffrey Dailey, Chair
Frank Cebular, Vice Chair
Nick Hiriak
Ron Dinnocenti
Mike McGroarty

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager
Susan Ebling, Engineer
Matthew Edmond, MCPC
Lew Babel, Fire Marshall

A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Cebular, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote to approve the minutes of November 19, 2007.

A motion was made by Mr. McGroarty, seconded by Mr. Cebular, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote to accept application #07-11 Specht Office Complex Subdivision & Land Development Plan for 1800 East High Street.

OLD BUSINESS

(#07-10) Checkerberry's, *Minor Subdivision*: proposal to subdivide a 37,331 sq. ft. lot into a 25,646 sq. ft. lot located at 1 Sunnybrook Road and a 12,183 sq. ft. lot located at 5 Sunnybrook Road in the LCO Limited Commercial Office District with Sanatoga Village District Overlay. [Plans prepared by Ralph E. Shaner & Son Engineering Co., with no date, last revised 10-30-2007, and consisting of one (1) sheet].

The applicants, Heather and Gary Geissler, of the Geissler Group, Inc. represented this application. Ms. Geissler discussed responses to the November 15, 2007 Bursich engineering review letter, Planning Commission input from the November 19, 2007 meeting, a letter from Ms. Elliott dated December 11, 2007, and discussion with the Township's Zoning Officer. Ms. Geissler said she was unable to provide the Planning Commission with revised plan due to unforeseen circumstances.

Ms. Geissler began by addressing parking concerns on Lot 2. She and her engineer had measured the parking lot and found that there would be enough space for one handicapped space and two or three additional parking spaces. Ms. Geissler explained that the spaces were designed to be angled to increase visibility. She provided sketches illustrating the layout. Ms. Ebling said she was concerned about the safety of cars reversing out onto Sunnybrook Road. Ms. Geissler said the lot could be designed to have one handicapped and two addition spaces if they were designed as parallel parking spaces. Ms. Geissler said she would like to avoid a shared parking agreement.

Ms. Geissler said she would install sidewalks as per MCPC's suggestion. She would also provide the right-of-way, as requested by the Township.

Ms. Geissler provided the Planning Commission with photos of the light posts she would like to install in the parking lot. There would be three, six-foot tall black cast iron posts with three 60-watt bulbs. Ms. Ebling suggested that the six foot poles may be too short to provide adequate luminosity, but Ms. Geissler should provide luminosity information to the Township for review.

The Planning Commission said it concurred with the changes Ms. Geissler made to the plans. They said they would wait to make a decision on the plan until the luminosity patterns and parking were reviewed by the Township engineer.

Action: No action was taken at this meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

(#07-11) Specht Office Complex, *Subdivision & Land Development Sketch Plan*. proposal to subdivide a four-acre parcel with a 17,951 sq. ft. office building into three lots with a total of three buildings and 46,743 sq. ft. of office space at 1800 East High Street in the LCO Limited Commercial Office District with the Sanatoga Village, Steep Slope Conservation, and Floodplain Conservation Overlay Districts. [Plans prepared by Systems Design Engineering, Inc. dated 11-10-2007 and consisting of 2 pages].

Mr. Dailey recused himself from any discussions or actions regarding this project because he has a conflict of interest with the applicant.

Dave Specht, a representative of the applicant; Don Wirt, the applicant's architect; and Kevin Mohn, the applicant's engineer, represented this application. Mr. Specht introduced the project stating that Greg Prowant, the previous Township Manager, and Scott Exley, the Township Engineer, had approached him several years ago and suggested that he pursue additional office space on this site. He believes there is a growing need for office space in the Township to support the hospital offices. He also said he has reached out to the property owners on the other side of the Sprogels Run to clean up the junk vegetation in the riparian corridor. This plan, he said would also improve the current entrance to the 1800 building, since it is a rather difficult given the grade and its proximity to the traffic light. There would be subsurface detention basins that would directly discharge to the creek since the site is constrained by the floodplain and steep slopes.

Mr. Wirt showed the Planning Commission a copy of a potential design for the buildings, stating that the building will be designed to fit in with the Sanatoga Village concept. In addition, this project will work to fit in with the SV concept by incorporating shared parking, which will improve access and site distance. He also said the buildings are planned to incorporate the steep slopes into their design so that each floor will have its own at grade entrance. He also said he believes the buildings will be raised high enough that, even though they are in the floodplain, they will not be impacted by it. Mr. Specht said he did not think there would be a flooding problem on this site since the 1800 building did not get flooded during Hurricane Agnes (the existing building is not in the floodplain).

Mr. Dinnocenti said he thought that the SV district did not allow parking in the front of the buildings. Ms. Ebling said that is correct; however, the bigger issues at this time are the steep slopes and the floodplains. The applicant would need to acquire many special exceptions and variances to support this project as it is.

Ms. Elliott also stated that is not a generally accepted practice to clear riparian buffers; rather they should be preserved to improve stormwater quality.

Mr. Edmond said that although he has not reviewed the plans, that he agrees with the comments made by Township staff and the Planning Commission regarding the steep slopes, floodplain, and village design. He said he especially supports parking in the rear and good design. He asked if any changes were being considered for the existing building. Mr. Specht said no physical changes were being considered for the building itself. Some site changes will be made to accommodate the new buildings.

Mr. Babel said he will consider fire access when the plans were further along.

Ms. Elliott said she would like to work with the applicant at the staff level since there are many significant concerns with the current layout of the site.

Action: The Planning Commission referred the project to the staff level for further work.

Buchert Ridge Community, Phase II: Grading Permit Application for Construction Entrance to Phase I

Ms. Elliott explained that the applicant, Buchert Ridge Community, Inc. had submitted a grading permit application to use the entrance to BRC Phase II as a construction entrance for Phase I so he could install the final paving for Phase I. The application said the construction entrance would be engineered to the layout and standards of the Phase II plans. All appropriate erosion and sediment control measures as approved by the Montgomery County Conservation District would be installed as well.

Action: A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Cebular, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote, to recommend approval of the Buchert Ridge Community construction entrance for Phase I at the Phase II driveway.

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning Studies

Ms. Elliott gave updates on both the 422-Sanotoga Interchange Planning Study and the Community Revitalization Plan. A draft of the Community revitalization plan was submitted to the County Revitalization Board for review. This draft is based on public comment from two meetings and the work done by the Township's Community Revitalization Task Force. The Sanotoga Interchange Steering Committee recently met and saw preliminary plans for the interchange area. The consultant presented these plans based on comments from the Steering Committee, the well-attended public meeting, and large stakeholders in the area. Another public meeting is expected to be held for this study in March.

Ordinances

Ms. Elliott reported that she has been working with Mary Morrison from MCPC on the riparian corridor ordinance. They both decided to wrap this ordinance into a natural features ordinance which would include the current floodplain and steep slopes ordinance, in addition to wetlands, woodlands, and other natural features.

Mr. Edmond reported that he and Township staff are about 90 percent complete with the new version of the R-1 Residential District. The main focus of this version is not only to preserve land, but also to preserve development rights and maintain the rural look of this area. They will also begin looking at the R-2 Zoning ordinance – it will be very similar to the current district, but with some significant differences.

Proposed Regional Plan Amendments

The Township received notice from the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee asking for the Township Planning Commission's input on proposed changes. There are two changes that would impact the Township.

The first would be to extend the Community Center designation north along North Charlotte Street to include the area bounded by North Charlotte Street, Mangers Mill Road, and Orlando Road. This area is currently identified as a Rural Resource area. The Regional Planning Committee is making this change because it believes the area, which is mostly commercial, was mislabeled in the original planning document. The Planning Commission said it would support this change.

The second change would impact the Regional Commerce Category. This change would allow residential development up to four dwelling units per acre without a master planning document. Residential development with proposed densities of five to eight units per acre would require a master planning document. Currently no residential development is permitted unless a master planning document is adopted. If planned for, residential development could occur at a maximum of eight dwelling units per acre.

The Planning Commission discussed this proposed change and agreed that it did not support the proposed change at this time. It would like the opportunity to complete its own planning study for the Sanatoga Interchange area, which is currently underway, before it makes a recommendation on this change.

There being no other business, a motion was made by Mr. Cebular, seconded by Mr. Hiriak, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for January 28, 2007 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager