

WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the second January meeting

January 17, 2023

Members Present

Ray McKeeman, Chairman
Dan Cote
Jeff Glisson
Mark Gordon
MaryFrances McGarrity
Andy Wright

Township Personnel Present

John Weller, Planning Director
Caroline O'Connor, Asst. Planner
Pam Gural-Bear, Township Manager
Justin Smiley, Capital & Special Projects Manager
Ed Culp, Interim Public Works Director
Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ray McKeeman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Commission observed a moment of silence to honor our veterans and first responders.

II. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes for the meeting of January 5, 2023. (Gordon/McGarrity)

ACTION: Passed, 6-0

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment on items not on the agenda.

IV. PLANS

1. West Whiteland Township Public Works Facility

Address: 121 Valley Creek Blvd.

First Review: Land Development

Request: Construction of a new facility to accommodate the Township Public Works Department.

John Weller provided an overview of the project, noting that the Township previously planned to build this facility on the adjacent property at 215 Valley Creek Blvd. The Board of Supervisors approved a conditional use application for that project on November 23, 2021, and the Planning Commission recommended approval of the land development plan on March 15, 2022. The Board since decided to relocate the facility to the present lot, which it is larger and less environmentally constrained. Because the site design is the same as the earlier plan, and the new location is immediately adjacent, the Township will review the conditional use application and land development plan concurrently. The only new feature of the current plan is a ground-mounted solar array, which is allowed as an accessory use in all zoning districts.

The site is in the Office/Laboratory (O/L) zoning district and is also eligible for development according to the provisions of the Institutional overlay district (IN). As Zoning Officer, Mr. Weller has determined that the project complies with all Zoning standards except for the required minimum setback from drive aisles; the project engineer has stated that this will be adjusted to comply.

Mr. Weller advised that the plan will meet all of the conditional use criteria once it is revised to increase the building setback from the drive aisle to comply with the Zoning and to provide additional landscaping to mitigate the impact upon the St. Paul's Church campus, as recommended by the Historical Commission on January 9, 2023.

Jack Robinson, PE, of JMR Engineering and Lisa Thomas, RLA, of Glackin Thomas Panzak were in attendance to present the project. Mr. Robinson stated that the Applicant will comply with all consultant comments and then reviewed some of the requested waivers:

- Because infiltration is not possible on the site, a waiver is needed to allow the managed release concept (MRC) approach for stormwater management.
- A waiver from the requirement to document tree removals and to calculate compensatory requirements, since the proposed tree plantings exceed what is required.
- A waiver from the sidewalk requirement is requested in the interest of discouraging the public from entering the site, for reasons of safety and security. The Commission previously discussed this issue and agreed that a waiver was appropriate.
- A waiver from the requirement to provide a landscaped buffer from the adjoining property of the Philadelphia Electric Company due to the extent of existing landscaping.
- A grinder pump will be needed, so a waiver to allow low-pressure sanitary sewer force main is requested.

There was general discussion regarding the landscaped buffer along the perimeter of the church campus. Ms. Thomas said the existing buffer is dense and additional landscaping will be provided. Mr. Gordon felt additional screening may be needed at the northeast corner to shield the solar array from the church property. Mr. Glisson did not feel this would be necessary due to the slope of the site. Ms. Thomas suggested larger low-level shrubs that would not shade the solar array as taller trees might. Mr. Gordon suggested a condition be added to the motion for approval such that the landscaping be evaluated again when the solar array is constructed, and any visual impact to the church property be addressed with additional screening. Andy Wright added that much of the existing hedgerow is on Township property and should be preserved if the existing landscaping dies. Mr. Kumbhardare maintained that even in winter when leaves are off the trees, the site is not visible from the church property; Mr. Gordon disagreed. Mr. Robinson and Ms. Thomas both indicated that larger, low-lying native shrubs would shield the array from the church property better than taller trees because of the drop in grade. A condition will be added to the motion to address the issue.

Mr. Robinson said then continued reviewing various consultant comments:

- McMahon letter - paragraph #2. The Applicant will comply and modify the existing median island to provide a left-turn lane into the site from southbound Valley Creek Blvd.
- SSM letter - paragraph #26. A landscaped island is required for every 15 parking stalls. The Applicant is requesting a waiver from this requirement. Mr. McKeeman expressed support for the waiver.
- SSM letter - paragraph #36. A waiver is requested to allow a berm narrower than 8 feet within the stormwater management basin. SSM and Commission members expressed support.
- McMahon letter - paragraph #6. McMahon suggested a secondary access, but it was pointed out that connecting to the St. Paul's Church access drive was problematic due to the pipeline easement. Mr. Wright noted that the nature of the use made this less critical, and Mr. Weller observed that this was a recommendation, not a requirement of any ordinance. Members agreed that no secondary access was needed.

Mr. Gordon asked if the building was large enough to accommodate the future needs of the Public Works Department. Jeff Glisson responded that there had been a careful analysis of what space was needed for the staff, vehicles, and other equipment. Mr. McKeeman said he thought the plan was well thought-out and would serve the Township well. Mr. Kumbhardare noted that the existing Public Works site on N. Pottstown Pk. will be sold and that there has been interest in combining that site with adjoining properties to accommodate development consistent with the surrounding uses.

Resident Janice Gottesfeld asked if sidewalks would be provided. It was pointed out that there is an existing sidewalk on the other side of Valley Creek Blvd. that connects to the Chester Valley Trail. Mr. Weller added that the Township did not want to encourage pedestrians here for security reasons.

MOTION: To recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the conditional use application of the West Whiteland Township Department of Public Works for the construction of a facility consisting of three buildings and a solar array as depicted on the 16-sheet plan set prepared by JMR Engineering, LLC dated December 19, 2022, with the following conditions:

1. All remaining consultant concerns shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the Township.
2. The Township shall favorably consider waivers from the following provisions of the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance ("S/LDO"):
 - a. §281-16.C(11)(a), such that the plan need not indicate trees to be removed or compensatory planting calculations, pursuant to comment #5c of the Theurkauf Design and Planning ("Theurkauf") review dated January 11, 2023, and comment #5 of the Spotts, Stevens and McCoy ("SSM") review dated January 10, 2023.
 - b. §281-31, such that sidewalks need not be provided along Valley Creek Blvd.
 - c. §281-32, such that curbs need not be provided along all paved areas, pursuant to comment #4 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.
 - d. §281-35.E, such that additional perimeter buffer landscaping need not be provided, pursuant to comment #3 of the Theurkauf review dated January 11, 2023.
This condition shall not be interpreted to prevent or prohibit approval of waivers from provisions of the S/LDO not listed above.

This condition shall not be interpreted to prevent or prohibit approval of waivers from provisions of the S/LDO not listed above.

3. The Township shall favorably consider waivers from the following provisions of the Township's Stormwater Management Ordinance:
 - a. §270-20, such that stormwater need not be infiltrated, pursuant to comment #1 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.
 - b. §270-21.D, to allow an orifice smaller than the otherwise required minimum, pursuant to comment #2 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.

This condition shall not be interpreted to prevent or prohibit approval of waivers from provisions of the Stormwater Management Ordinance not listed above.

4. The design shall be revised to accommodate the minimum distance required by §325-45.C(5) of the Township's Zoning Ordinance between the buildings and interior drives.

5. At such time that the solar array is constructed, the landscaping shall be evaluated, and additional landscaping shall be provided to establish a visual screen for the adjacent St. Paul's Church property as may be deemed necessary, pursuant to the recommendation of the Township Historical Commission and comment #1a of the Theurkauf review dated January 11, 2023.
6. The median in Valley Creek Blvd. shall be reconfigured to allow vehicles to turn left from the southbound lane into the property, pursuant to comment #2 of the McMahon review dated January 10, 2023.
7. No traffic impact fee is warranted for this project, pursuant to comment #8 of the McMahon review dated January 10, 2023.

ACTION: Passed, 6-0 (Gordon/Wright)

MOTION: To recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the preliminary/final land development plan of the West Whiteland Township Department of Public Works for the construction of a facility consisting of three buildings and a solar array as depicted on the 16-sheet plan set prepared by JMR Engineering, LLC dated December 19, 2022 (the "Plan") with the following waivers and conditions:

1. The Plan is approved as a Final Plan, pursuant to §281-10.H of the West Whiteland Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance ("S/LDO").
2. Waiver of §270-20 of the Stormwater Management Ordinance such that infiltration need not be provided, subject to the Applicant submitting satisfactory soil testing results, pursuant to comment #1 of the Spotts, Stevens and McCoy ("SSM") review dated January 10, 2023.
3. Waiver of §270-21.D of the Stormwater Management Ordinance to allow an orifice smaller than the required minimum, pursuant to comment #2 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.
4. Waiver of §270-29.A(4)(a) of the Stormwater Management Ordinance to allow a five (5) foot wide interior berms within the stormwater management facilities, pursuant to comment #36 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.
5. Waiver of §281-16.C(11)(a) of the S/LDO such that the Plan need not indicate trees to be removed or include compensatory planting calculations, pursuant to comment #5c of the Theurkauf Design and Planning ("Theurkauf") review dated January 11, 2023, and comment #5 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.
6. Waiver of §281-31 of the S/LDO such that sidewalks need not be provided.
7. Waiver of §281-32.B of the S/LDO such that curbs need not be provided around all paved areas; however, curbs shall be provided for the driveway at the intersection with Valley Creek Blvd. and at Catch Basin 6, pursuant to comments #4 and #45 of the SSM review dated January 10, 2023.
8. Waiver of §281-35.A of the S/LDO such that no landscaped buffer need be provided for the adjoining properties owned by Philadelphia Electric Co., pursuant to comment #1b of the Theurkauf review dated January 11, 2023.

9. Waiver of §281-35.E of the S/LDO such that perimeter buffers need not be provided, pursuant to comment #3 of the Theurkauf review dated January 11, 2023.
10. Waiver of §281-37.B(1) of the S/LDO such that no landscaped island need be provided in the row of 18 parking spaces.
11. Waiver of §281-41 of the S/LDO to allow the low-pressure sanitary sewer force main as shown.
12. The Plan shall be revised to comply fully with the applicable provisions of the Township Zoning Ordinance:
 - a. As required by §325-35.B(2), the outdoor storage areas shall be provided with a satisfactory fence, and where liquids are stored, there shall be a moat or berm sufficient to contain potential spillage.
 - b. The design shall be revised to provide a setback of at least fifteen feet between the buildings and the interior access drives, as required by §325-45.C(5).
13. At such time that the solar array is constructed, the landscaping shall be evaluated, and additional landscaping shall be provided to establish a visual screen for the adjacent St. Paul's Church property as may be deemed necessary, pursuant to the recommendation of the Township Historical Commission and comment #1a of the Theurkauf review dated January 11, 2023.
14. The median in Valley Creek Blvd. shall be reconfigured to allow vehicles to turn left from the southbound lane into the property, pursuant to comment #2 of the McMahon review dated January 10, 2023.
15. The design of the sanitary sewerage shall be revised as described in comments #D2 through #D5 of the Carroll Engineering review dated January 9, 2023, or as may otherwise be found satisfactory to the Township.
16. All remaining consultant and Staff concerns shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the Township.

ACTION: Passed, 6-0 (Gordon/Cote)

There was no public comment on the motions.

V. PLANNING COMMISSION CONCERNS

Mr. Gordon asked when PennDOT will be striping King Road, noting that the current situation is dangerous. Justin Smiley said it was supposed to be completed last week but was not. He has a call into PennDOT and will stay on the matter.

Mr. Wright asked if there was an update on PREIT. Mr. Weller said there was not and that he has contacted their attorney to remind him that the application expires at the end of February.

Mr. Gordon asked about the status of a hotel that had been approved for a property along Sunrise Blvd. Mr. Weller said that the land development plan received final approval in 2017, but that approval has now lapsed. Staff has met with another developer who is interested in the site, but they have yet to submit a sketch plan or a formal application.

Pam Gural-Bear reported that the Township has contacted Sunoco regarding plans for the site of the former tank farm; they responded that they have no plans for that site at this time.

Mr. Gordon asked about the status of the Ship Road Couplet. Mr. Smiley said the Township is moving forward with the permitting process and hopes to receive the Highway Occupancy Permit from PennDOT this week; he will seek authorization to advertise bids at the next Board of Supervisors meeting. It is hoped that the project will start in the spring and be completed by November 2023.

TOWNSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Weller advised that currently there are no plans for review for the February 14 Planning Commission agenda.

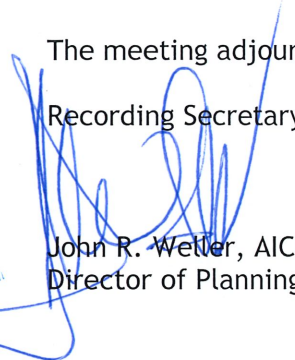
Mr. Kumbhardare reported on a tour taken of the new PennDOT facility in King of Prussia, noting that it is a “state of the art” complex.

Mr. Weller advised that Westrum has officially withdrawn their plans for a personal care facility on the site next to Boot Road Park (50-70 W. Boot Rd.), citing financing costs. The Board had approved the conditional use application in 2022, and Westrum had made one presentation of the land development plan to the Planning Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:11 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



John R. Weller, AICP
Director of Planning