

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the February meeting

February 15, 2022

Members Present

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

Township Personnel Present

John Weller, Planning Director
Justin Smiley, Township Planner
Pam Gural-Bear, Interim Township Manager

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mark Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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 18, 2022. (McKeeman/Glisson)

ACTION: Passed, 4-0-1 (with Ms. McGarrity abstaining)

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

IV. PLANS

1. Commerce Pursuit Capital

Address: 50-60 W. Boot Rd.

First Review: Sketch Plan

Request: Construction of a 57,620 sq.ft. personal care facility

In attendance on behalf of the Applicant were attorney John Jaros; John Westrum and Michael Myers from Westrum Development Co.; and Steve Sauselein, civil engineer from E.B. Walsh & Associates.

John Weller provided an overview of the proposed project and explained that as an informal Sketch Plan, no motion is required by the Commission. The project proposes construction of a 148-unit personal care facility on a tract comprising three lots totaling 6.59 acres located along the south side of W. Boot Rd. abutting both Boot Road Park and the Banbury Shops shopping center. The site includes the historic Greenway Cottage, which is to be retained. In February 2012, the Board of Supervisors approved a conditional use application to allow construction of additions to Greenway Cottage and for placement of a new sanitary sewer line through the precautionary and prohibitive slopes. While this project was never built, the conditional use approval remains in effect.

The proposed project generally complies with the Zoning Ordinance with a few minor exceptions. Conditional use approval is required to allow construction of a non-residential building with more than 20,000 sq.ft. of floor area, placement of a sanitary sewer line within prohibitive slopes, and construction of an otherwise allowed structure on precautionary slopes.

A Sketch Plan allows the Applicant the option of seeking reviews from Township consultants or just Staff. This Applicant requested reviews from both Theurkauf Design and Planning for landscaping and planning and Commonwealth Heritage Group for historic preservation. Staff noted that the project as shown will eliminate multiple accesses onto Boot Rd. in favor of one access at a signalized traffic light, provide new sidewalk connecting Boot Road Park to the Banbury Shops, and preserve Greenway Cottage. Items of concern include possible Zoning violations regarding building height and parking setback, access drives intruding into required buffer areas, the maximum number of residents, the impact upon emergency service providers (ambulance service particularly), and compatibility with the existing neighborhood.

Mr. Jaros stated that the concerns noted in the consultant reviews could all be resolved. John Westrum provided an overview of the history of the Westrum Development Co. and presented architectural renderings. Mr. Westrum described the proposed facility as a “cruise ship without water” that will include facilities for independent living, personal care (assisted living), and memory care. The accommodations will be rented, avoiding the high entrance fees often required by retirement communities. Onsite amenities will include medical services, a gift shop, dining area, a theatre, and a fitness center. With the growing population of seniors who wish to be close to their adult children and grandchildren, Mr. Westrum said the facility will fill a need in the area.

The facility will accommodate up to 170 residents. Proposed parking for tenants and staff will be located mostly underground; not all tenants will have cars. With private snow plowing, landscape maintenance, and trash service, Mr. Westrum maintained that municipal services will not be impacted, and tax revenue will be 17 times what the property generates now. On-site trained medical staff and nurse call systems will minimize the impact on EMS providers.

Concerns to be resolved through further discussions with Staff and consultants include:

- the proposed building height of 41.6’ vs. the 35’ limit established by the Zoning;
- bringing the parking setback from the building into compliance with the Zoning; and
- intrusion of access drives within the required buffer areas. The plan provides the required 25’ buffer next to the park but not the 50’ buffer required next to the Banbury Shops. The Applicant intends to provide additional plant material in consultation with Theurkauf as support for a waiver request from the width requirement.

Jeff Glisson asked if there would be a walkway from the facility to the sidewalk to Wawa. While not shown on the plan, Mr. Westrum said there would be. The plan documents that the fire lane can circle the entire building without violating the impervious coverage limit; the fire lane will be partly asphalt and partly semi-pervious.

Regarding the roof height, Mr. Weller noted that the building height bonus provision in Zoning Ordinance does not apply to this zoning district; however, a final determination on the building height will depend upon the design of the roof (pitched or flat). The Applicant will explore this in more detail with Staff to determine if a variance will be needed from the Zoning Hearing Board.

The Applicant will explore relocating the twelve parking spaces that violate the parking setback requirement; the plan is over-parked by about sixteen spaces.

Trash will be enclosed and located in the delivery sections of the plan.

There are no issues with sewer capacity.

Stormwater management will be a combination of surface and subsurface in the north central part of the lot, subject to soil testing indicating that this location is suitable.

Mr. Kumbhardare recommended that the Applicant provide data on the number of EMS calls made from other facilities. The Applicant will provide the addresses of other facilities constructed in the nearby area that members can visit.

Mr. Gordon asked about a sidewalk to the Park. Mr. Westrum agreed, noting that the residents of the independent living section and family members are likely to engage in both active and passive use of the park.

Mr. Weller outlined the next steps for the Applicant. If it is determined that variances are needed, the Applicant will make an application to the Zoning Hearing Board but may also proceed with Conditional Use simultaneously (with risk should the variance not be granted). Land development review will follow conditional use approval.

Ms. McGarrity thanked the Applicant for presenting the Sketch Plan in such detail, noting that it helps to identify the issues.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Weller announced that the Township will be hosting members of the local business community on Thursday to hear their opinions and receive feedback on the Exton Crossroads area. This event will be similar to the one held previously for residents but will focus on business concerns.


PennDOT has indicated that the construction of a third northbound lane on Pottstown Pike as identified by our Route 100 Congestion Mitigation Study will be nominated for the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

There are currently no plans ready for review at the March 1 Planning Commission meeting; the Township's Public Works Facility will be on the March 15 agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



John R. Weller, AICP
Director of Planning