

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Minutes of the first September meeting

September 7, 2021

*This was a hybrid meeting with participants attending both in person at the Township Building and on-line via Zoom. Individuals attending via Zoom are marked with an asterisk.*

**Members Present**

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

**Township Personnel Present**

John Weller, Planning Director  
Mimi Gleason\*, Township Manager  
Justin Smiley, Township Planner  
Ted Otteni, Public Works Director

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Mark Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Gordon thanked the emergency services workers for their heroism and sacrifice in making more than 300 rescues in the area during recent storms.

**II. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES**

MOTION: To approve the minutes for the meeting of June 15, 2021. (McGarrity/Cote)

ACTION: Passed, 6-0.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

**IV. PLANS**

**1. Columbia Cottage**

**Address: 930-936 E. Boot Rd.**

**First Review: Conditional Use**

**Request: Construction of a 72-unit personal care facility**

The Applicant was represented by attorneys Michael Gill and Aristidis Christakis of Buckley, Brion, McGuire & Morris; Stephen Schmid of Horst Seniorcare; Ted Watson, project architect; and Andrew Eberwein of E. B. Walsh & Associates, project civil engineer.

John Weller provided an overview of the proposal to construct a personal care facility with 50 assisted-living units and 22 memory-care units. The project includes reconfiguration of lot lines to create a 6.40-acre lot for the new facility and a 1.77-acre lot for an existing multi-tenant commercial building, which is to remain. The project is on the south side of Boot Rd. near the intersection of Ship Rd. at the border with West Goshen Township. The proposed use is allowed by the Zoning under the provisions of the Institutional District overlay.

Mr. Weller noted that the project is subject to a two-step approval process: conditional use review followed by land development review. Tonight is the first discussion of the conditional use application. Mr. Weller stated that four of the conditional use criteria listed in the Zoning Ordinance have not been met, as there are outstanding concerns regarding the traffic impact study, the impact upon emergency services and natural features, and highway congestion; determination regarding the impact upon historic resources (a fifth criterion) is premature as the Township Historical Commission has yet to review the application. With these unmet criteria outstanding, Mr. Weller did not advise action by the Planning Commission this evening.

Mr. Gill said he will consult with the project team to address all consultant concerns.

Mr. Schmid said he had conversation with Good Fellowship Ambulance about projected demand for ambulance calls and provided statistics and averages for the past three years. He stated that Columbia Cottage facilities have less demand than most personal care facilities due to staffing, which includes on-site LPN's, caregivers, and medication technicians at all times; their staff-to-patient ratio exceeds State requirements. Furthermore, their facilities typically have fewer than 100 units and are at most two stories tall.

Mr. Gill said the Applicant will submit a full traffic impact study that will address the impact upon Boot Rd. The traffic report submitted previously shows that the project will generate less traffic than other permitted uses. The Applicant will also conduct a tree inventory and will provide sidewalks along the frontage. They will reach out to the owner of the adjacent Whiteland Enterprise property to see if they would allow emergency access through their property.

The proposed facility is not an independent living facility, so it is unlikely that residents/patients will have vehicles. There will be three work shifts, with the largest being between 30 and 35 employees; the night shift is less. Parking requirements have been met.

Commission members also raised the following concerns:

- As noted, the patient-to-staff ratio exceeds State requirements, but Mr. Schmid will provide exact numbers to Mr. Weller.
- The Applicant will include turning templates on the revised plans to demonstrate that emergency vehicles will be able to maneuver through the site.
- Impact of the service drive and dumpster locations upon adjacent residents. The Applicant agreed to provide landscaping to mitigate the impact of noise; they agreed to evaluate relocating the service drive but noted that there are limited options due to natural features, principally wetlands and slopes.
- Number of emergency service calls. The Applicant will contact providers who serve their other facilities for statements.
- Stormwater management. Site geology suggests that it will be possible to infiltrate all new runoff; details will be provided during the land development review phase.

Mr. Weller said he received an e-mail from a resident concerned about the proximity of the pipeline to the project. There are no Township regulations that require a setback from underground facilities.

Mr. Gordon called for public comment.

Frank Dattilo, of 1321 N. Tulip Dr., asked about the number of visitor parking spaces. Mr. Eberwein noted that 48 spaces are required, and the plan shows 68. Mr. Dattilo asked if there will be self-sustaining generators for power outages; Mr. Schmid replied that there will be generators.

West Goshen resident Thomas Mammarella\* was concerned about the impact on surrounding properties and suggested eliminating some of the parking to provide a larger buffer. Mr. Weller noted that buffer widths vary based upon the adjacent use; Mr. Gordon said that a reduction in the number of parking spaces was not advisable.

Jacqueline Swan of Ship Rd. expressed concerns about flooding on Boot Rd., the lack of a traffic signal at the intersection of Boot and Ship Rds., generator noise, and pipeline proximity. She also asked how the Ordinance was changed to allow the proposed use. Mr. Gordon briefly summarized the amendment process and confirmed that the amendment had been properly advertised.

Jennifer Schoener\* of 1249 Derry La. was concerned about stormwater and asked if West Goshen Twp. was involved in the review. Mr. Gordon said the project is governed by West Whiteland regulations, but West Goshen is free to comment on the plan. Mr. Weller said he will send a copy of the plan to West Goshen for comments.

West Goshen resident Laura Mammarella\* expressed concern about traffic at the intersection of Boot and Ship Rds. and asked about the wooded area behind her house. Mr. Eberwein responded that many of the existing large trees will remain and will be augmented with new plantings.

Douglas Whiteford of 1271 Knollwood Dr. had questions about the proposed building design and layout. Mr. Watson described the layout as two wings with a connecting common area, which they call their "Main Street," that includes a café, salon, physical therapy area, kitchen, and lounge. The design is meant to encourage residents to interact with each other rather than spending time alone in their units. The units surround open courtyards, which provide safe outdoor space. The exteriors of the building will be finished with Chester County stone and vinyl siding with various shingle patterns and is meant to appear residential as opposed to institutional. Mr. Whiteford felt the plan lacked sufficient open space and areas for residents to walk. Mr. Schmid said that most residents have limited mobility and are generally not very ambulatory. Turning templates for emergency vehicle access, lighting, and stormwater management details will be provided during the review of the land development plan.

West Goshen resident Barbara Mammarella\* felt the neighborhood needs to be aware of the impact of Alzheimer patients and asked about security provisions for the memory care unit. Mr. Schmid said that the access points will be alarmed.

Brian Bachner of 1323 Ship Rd. expressed concerns with traffic and felt that every available space in the Township was being squeezed with development.

Mike Treacy of 1275 Knollwood Dr. was concerned about noise from delivery trucks on the service drive affecting the adjacent neighborhood. He also asked if a playground was planned for the area. Mr. Gordon explained that the Commission recognizes the need to mitigate the impact of noise from the service drive and will consider the best ways to do so going forward. Mr. Weller explained that the Township does have open space requirements but not for institutional uses such as this one. Mr. Gordon acknowledged the need for parks in this area of the Township, but it will not be addressed as part of the proposed development.

Brian Whiteford asked about a pedestrian crosswalk from the shopping center. Mr. Gordon explained that mid-block intersections are dangerous without a traffic signal. Ms. Gleason\* added that the Township has discussed with West Goshen the need for a signal at the intersection of Ship and Boot Rds., but both are State roads so PennDOT must be agreeable, and there are higher priority projects in the queue.

Mr. Gordon thanked everyone for their comments and assured the public that the Commission will thoroughly study the plan and suggest appropriate conditions to mitigate the various concerns. No

action was taken on the Plan by the Commission. The Applicant will revise the plans and return for further review.

**V. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mr. Weller gave an update on the status of the ordinance amendments concerning plan submissions and the review process: the Township Solicitor had no substantive changes, so the draft has been passed on to the Chester County Planning Commission for their State-mandated review. Their comments are due September 23, so staff has tentatively placed this item on the agenda for the October 5 meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:05 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



John Weller, AICP  
Director of Planning & Zoning