

WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the second September meeting

September 19, 2023

Members Present

Ray McKeeman, Chair
Dan Cote
Jeff Glisson
MaryFrances McGarrity
Andy Wright

Township Personnel Present

Justin Smiley, Capital & Special Projects Manager
Pam Gural-Bear, Township Manager
Brannon Tupper, Engineering & Construction Projects Mgr.
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 September 5, 2023. (Wright/Glisson)

ACTION: Passed, 5-0

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

IV. PLANS

1. Collegium Charter School

Address: 501-559 Clover Mill Rd.

Second Review: Land development plan

Project Description: Construction of outdoor athletic fields, parking areas, and related facilities for School use

Justin Smiley summarized the project, which located along the north side of Clover Mill Rd. in the General Industrial (I-2) zoning district. The plan proposes outdoor athletic fields and related facilities for the exclusive use of the School. No new buildings are proposed, but construction of a new parking lot and the grading necessary to create the athletic fields are defined as types of "land development," so land development review is required.

In order to have the athletic fields available for use by the fall of 2024, the Applicant is phasing the project: Phase I will include only the athletic fields and parking lot, while Phase II will address the use of the historic house on the property. The Township Historical Commission reviewed this plan on June 12, 2023, and issued a recommendation for approval of Phase I. The Applicant will return to the Historical Commission at a later date for review of Phase II.

Mr. Smiley noted outstanding consultant issues that should be discussed tonight include stormwater management, compensatory plantings, and sidewalk connections.

In attendance on behalf of the Applicant were attorney Aristides Christakis of Buckley, Brion, McGuire & Morris; Jeremy Maziarz, PE, of Chester Valley Engineers; Bill Duffy, Director of Operations and Facilities for Collegium; and bridge specialist Brett Coleman of Traffic Planning & Design.

Mr. Christakis advised that since their previous appearance before the Planning Commission on June 20, 2023, the Applicant has completed a trip generation analysis, which concluded that the parking is adequate for the proposed use and that the project will generate only a minimal number of trips.

Mr. Coleman said the bridge on the south side of the parcel has been deemed adequate and has been rated for emergency vehicle use.

The Applicant met on-site with Township landscaping consultant Ed Theurkauf to discuss his review comments; the Applicant agree that they will either adhere to the planting schedule or provide a fee in lieu of trees that cannot be accommodated on the site.

Regarding pedestrian safety, the Applicant presented a pedestrian access map showing how the students will move through the adjacent corporate park to this site. One new crosswalk will be constructed, and others refurbished as needed.

Mr. Christakis advised that Marita Barber, Collegium's Executive Director, and Mr. Duffy met with representatives of All-Fill since the sidewalk to the fields crosses the All-Fill property and is subject to an easement. Mr. Christakis reported that All-Fill acknowledges the easement and fully supports the project. They also discussed possible conflicts with All-Fill's delivery schedules and the timing of student use of the sidewalk, concluding that such conflicts will be minimal.

Regarding a connecting sidewalk between the Chester Valley Trail and Clover Mill Rd., Mr. Christakis said after careful consideration, the School is not in favor of allowing public access through the site for reasons of campus security. He added that major changes would be needed to widen the bridge to assure safe pedestrian access, and the School does not have the resources for that.

With the existing sidewalk ending about 300 feet west of where the driveway meets Clover Mill Rd., Mr. Christakis argued that there is currently no benefit to people west of the site, adding that a sidewalk along the north side of Clover Mill Rd. was not feasible due to the proximity of Valley Ck. The Applicant proposed to pay a fee in lieu of constructing the sidewalk.

Commission member Jeff Glisson said he recently learned that PennDOT has taken possession of the old rail line next to Amtrak to be used as the new Chester Valley Trail. He stressed the importance of having pedestrian links throughout this area to serve residents along Waterloo Blvd., at J. Creekside, and so on. Mr. Christakis said if and when this happens, the County would be in a better position to obtain permits for the necessary bridge improvements; he believes that Collegium would not object to working with the County and Township in such event, subject to their resolving the School's concern about the general public having access to School property. Mr. Duffy agreed that Collegium would likely be open to this pedestrian connection but would need to explore the matter further in the future. Mr. Wright suggested a covenant to memorialize any future pedestrian connection.

Addressing further consultant comments, Mr. Maziarz said the Applicant is in the process of scheduling a meeting with SSM to address stormwater management concerns and assured the Commission that they will be able to resolve all of them. Mr. Maziarz confirmed that there would be lights on the athletic fields.

Commission member Andy Wright encouraged the Applicant to have an evacuation plan and expressed concern for students walking through the area and sharing an intersection with Federal Express trucks and other light industrial vehicles. Mr. Duffy said the School has four safety officers and two safety

vehicles. One adult walks with the students and controls when crossings occur. In addition, Mr. Duffy said the Applicant will provide Federal Express with more information about students using the site.

Mr. Cote liked the plan and asked about the Staff's bridge concerns. Mr. Tupper said he reviewed the inspection report and all of his concerns have been addressed.

Ms. McGarrity asked about the status of the Act 319 "clean and green" covenant. Mr. Christakis said the Applicant is still evaluating this with the County and is engaged in ongoing conversations as to whether the use is permitted.

Mr. Glisson asked what improvements the Applicant proposes for Clover Mill Rd. Mr. Maziarz said the roadway is too close to the creek to allow for widening, noting that the floodplain parallels the road, and any widening would create a major environmental disturbance. Mr. Maziarz maintained that the traffic study does not warrant widening the road: new trips are minimal. Mr. Coleman determined that the amount of the Act 209 traffic impact fee for the Applicant's project is \$48,878. Mr. Tupper noted that Clover Mill Rd. has numerous deficiencies, and he would like to see the traffic impact fee go toward a rebuilding of the roadway.

Although the Commission identified a variety of concerns, there was a consensus that those concerns did not warrant making the Applicant come back to the Commission, but felt a motion conditioned on resolution of those concerns to the satisfaction on the Township was appropriate at this time.

MOTION: To recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of the Collegium Charter School land development plan conditioned on resolution to the Township's satisfaction of all outstanding issues, specifically including:

- stormwater management (to be resolved at upcoming meeting with SSM),
- compensatory plantings (Applicant met with Ed Theurkauf and will adhere to planting schedule or provide fee in lieu of), and
- sidewalks (Applicant offered to pay fee in lieu of).

(McKeeman/Glisson)

ACTION: Passed, 5-0

2. **Villas at West Whiteland**
Address: 112-120 Coeway La.
First Review: Conditional Use
Project Description: Construction of two buildings containing a total of 32 townhouse dwellings and a third building for a community center

Mr. Smiley summarized the project, noting that a hotel had been previously approved for this site, but was never built. He then reviewed five unmet conditional use criteria:

- Traffic congestion: More information is needed to determine the impact of additional traffic on the abutting roads.
- Sewer connection: The Applicant is proposing gravity connection to the existing main in Pottstown Pk., but this is not shown on the plan and would require excavation of the entire length of Coeway La., which is a private road.
- No information has been provided regarding stormwater management.
- Impact of traffic on surrounding properties: More information is needed.
- Impact of proposed development on highway congestion: More information is needed.

Mr. Smiley then noted conditions of approval for the previous hotel plan that the Township would like to preserve: the plan should extend Coeway La. to Sunrise Blvd., but for emergency use only so that the general public will not use it as a short-cut to Sunrise Blvd. from Pottstown Pk. Also, the Applicant should confirm that Mr. Schneider of 109 Coeway La. remains amenable to the improvements shown on his property.

In attendance on behalf of the Applicant were attorney Robert Tucker of MacElree Harvey, Eden Roberts of Delaware Valley Development Company, and Derek Matonti of Howell Engineering.

Ms. Roberts described the project, which will consist of two buildings containing a total of 32 units: 16 2-bedroom units, and 16 3-bedroom units. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) is providing funding, and it will qualify as workforce housing, which is urgently needed in Chester County. She then described the design as interlocking townhomes and showed a rendering. There will also be a total lot on the site, although this was not shown on the plan.

The project has already been awarded funding, with five of the units funded through Chester County Home Fund (\$750,000). Ms. Roberts reviewed the income levels to qualify for the housing and added that covenants will run for 30 years. The development will be open to General Occupancy, and it is expected that primarily families will occupy the units.

The Community Building will contain a community room, office space for the on-site manager, maintenance staff, and on-site support services.

Noting the proximity to the pipeline, Mr. Wright recommended development of an evacuation plan.

Ms. Roberts said the Applicant intends to run gravity sewer down Coeway Lane and will reach out to property owners, including Mr. Schneider, to confirm their agreement.

Outstanding issues include sewer connection details, traffic impact, and compensatory plantings. Ms. Roberts said a limited scope traffic study will be completed.

Ms. Roberts explained that due to funding commitments, timing is important. The Applicant hopes to have the conditional use hearing before the Board of Supervisors on November 21, 2023, and hopes to be able to apply for permits concurrent with the land development plan. Ms. Gural-Bear said generally this is not done, but she will discuss this matter with the Codes Department.

The Commission took no action on the plan.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Review of Act 537 Plan Special Study

Mr. Smiley summarized the Study as requested by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The Downingtown Area Regional Authority (DARA) is expanding its treatment plant to accommodate future needs and to make needed upgrades. The Study recommends West Whiteland purchase an additional 0.10 MGD per day from DARA for a total capacity of 2.023 MGD. The cost would be \$1.4 million, which will come from a combination of grants and tapping fees.

Mr. Glisson suggested that the Township didn't need that much capacity as some areas of the Township would probably never be on public sewer. Mr. Smiley said the study was based upon projected demand if the office parks and Exton Square were all fully occupied.

MOTION: To recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution approving and adopting the “Act 537 Special Study: DARA Plant Expansion” prepared by Carroll Engineering Corporation.

(McKeeman/Glisson)

ACTION: Passed, 5-0

2. Review of proposed amendments to Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map

The former Weston Solutions campus along the south side of King Rd. is currently in the O/L Office/Laboratory zoning district. Willow Hill Development would like to develop the 54-acre site for residential use, and they formally submitted a proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow their project. Their proposal is to re-zone the campus from O/L to R-1 Residential and to amend the text to add a “large tract residential cluster option” to the R-1 regulations. In addition to the Applicant’s property, Staff suggested that all of the O/L-zoned area south of King Rd. should be changed to R-1, which would include six more small residential properties. The Applicant has submitted a Fiscal Impact Analysis that was deemed acceptable by the Township’s Finance Director.

The Board of Supervisors will open the public hearing on the amendment at their meeting on October 11, 2023.

Denny Howell of Howell Engineering was in attendance on behalf of Willow Hill Development. He confirmed that the plan the Applicant will submit will be the same as that previously presented to the Planning Commission. Mr. Wright asked why the Applicant did not choose to go with the cluster provision already in the Ordinance. Mr. Howell said it was a matter of the products proposed, the lot size, crossing the pipeline, saving the historic structures on the site, all combining to yield a development that will be profitable. Mr. Wright said he understands that but does not agree with it.

Mr. Wright asked how the adaptive re-use of the historic structures will be regulated by this amendment. Mr. Smiley said adaptive re-use is regulated by a subsection of the current Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant will need to return for review when ready to renovate the historic structures. Mr. Howell said he is not sure at this time if the historic structures will be used as residences but could amend the fiscal impact analysis if needed.

MOTION: To recommend support for the proposed Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map.

(Glisson/Cote)

ACTION: Passed, 4-1 (Mr. Wright opposing)

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VII. TOWNSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS:

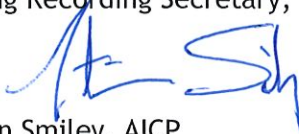
Mr. Smiley said that there is no business for the October 3 meeting, but there are two land development plans scheduled for October 17: additions to Mary C. Howse Elementary School and a proposed car wash along Pottstown Pk. near Buckman’s Ski Shop.

Ms. Gural-Bear announced that the Township has hired a new staff planner, Patrick Gorman. Mr. Gorman will begin working at the Township on October 9.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:52 p.m.

Acting Recording Secretary,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Smiley', is written over the text 'Acting Recording Secretary,'.

Justin Smiley, AICP
Capital & Special Projects Manager