

WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

Minutes of the second September meeting

September 20, 2022

Members Present

Mark Gordon, Chair
Dan Cote
Jeff Glisson
Ray McKeeman
Andy Wright

Township Personnel Present

Caroline O'Connor, Assistant Township Planner
Pam Gural-Bear, Interim Township Manager
Ted Otteni, Township Engineer

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mark Gordon 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 6, 2022. (Cote/Wright)

ACTION: Passed, 4-0-1 (Gordon abstained)

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

IV. PLANS

1. CPC Westrum

Address: 50-70 W. Boot Rd.

First Review: Subdivision/Land Development

Request: Consolidation of 3 lots into 1 lot and construction of 150-unit personal care facility.

Michael Maier of Westrum Development Co. and Steve Sauselein, PE, of E.B. Walsh & Associates, were in attendance. Mr. Maier described the project for a 150-unit personal care facility to be located along the south side of W. Boot Rd. between Boot Road Park and the Banbury Shops shopping center. Two existing buildings on the tract will remain. Parking is proposed both above and below ground. Access to the site will be from Darlington Dr. with emergency access from Boot Rd.

The project required conditional use review due to its size and to allow the disturbance of steep slope areas. The Planning Commission reviewed the conditional use plan on May 31 and July 19, 2022. The Board of Supervisors conducted a conditional use hearing on July 27, 2002, and on September 14, 2022, the Board approved the Decision and Order with fourteen conditions. John Weller's memorandum dated September 16, 2022, advised that six of the fourteen conditions remain unmet.

Mr. Sauselein addressed Staff concerns, including the request to provide a 4-foot-wide grass strip between the proposed sidewalk and the Boot Rd. cartway. The Applicant agreed to revise the plan to provide the strip but noted that this will put more of the sidewalk on their lot (i.e., outside the right-of-way) and that the impervious coverage is already near the limit. Mr. Otteni suggested a waiver from this limit if necessary to accommodate this change.

A second outstanding issue was trash disposal. Mr. Maier advised that much is recycled, but there is an enclosure at the garage entrance that will handle all trash from the personal care facility. For the two outbuildings, small containers on concrete pads will be wheeled out on trash day.

Discussions are ongoing with management of the Banbury Shops regarding the need for a grading easement for the sanitary sewer line and retaining wall.

In response Andy Wright, the Applicant stated that they will comply with condition #7 regarding the evergreen buffer along the eastern side of the site; they will work with Staff to develop a satisfactory long-term maintenance plan for the emergency access drive, as required by condition #11.

Chairman Mark Gordon asked for public comment and there was none. The Applicant will revise the plan and resubmit in time for the November 1, 2022, Planning Commission meeting.

2. **Whitford Property (Wawa)**

Address: 401-403 W. Lincoln Hwy.

First Review: Subdivision/Land Development

Request: Reverse subdivision/lot consolidation of 2 lots into 1 lot. Demolition of existing Sunoco gas station and land development of Wawa convenience store with fuel service.

In attendance on behalf of the Applicant were attorney Michael Gill; Greg Richardson from Traffic Planning & Design; Michael Spiegel from Wawa; Peter Karakelian of Whitford Properties; and Ryan Whitmore with Landcore Engineering.

Mr. Gill provided an overview of the project to demolish the existing Sunoco/Welsh Automotive building and a portion of the existing office building located on W. Lincoln Hwy. and then construct a 5,585 sq. ft. Wawa convenience store and gas station. Mr. Gill advised that in a hearing before the Zoning Hearing Board relief was granted to exceed the 50% limit on expansion of a non-conforming use. The Planning Commission reviewed the conditional use application on March 15, 2022, and the Board of Supervisors granted conditional use approval on June 8, 2022. This is the Applicant's first appearance before the Planning Commission for the land development application.

Mr. Gill reviewed outstanding issues:

- improvements to the bus stop located along Lincoln Hwy. - The Applicant has contacted SEPTA and is waiting for a response.
- Whitford Rd. resurfacing - Mr. Gill maintained that Primrose Day Care did not contribute to resurfacing and left the road in an undesirable condition. Mr. Otteni explained that Primrose did contribute to the additional traffic lane. Mr. Otteni said the Township knew the Wawa project was coming that would it necessitate additional utility cuts, driveway cuts, etc. Mr. Gill said the Applicant will look further at the matter.
- License plate readers - Mr. Gill said this would cost the Applicant \$80,000-90,000. Detective Sergeant McCloskey said the Township is only asking for 4 cameras at a cost of \$2,000 each, or a total of \$8,000. He said the cameras help solve crimes for Wawa as well as the surrounding community. Mr. Gill will share his estimate with the Township and look further into the matter to determine the discrepancy and differential in pricing.

Mr. Otteni's August 31, 2022, review suggested a dedicated left-turn lane on Waterloo Blvd. for the driveway into the site. Mr. Richardson said there are numerous other ways to get into the site but agreed to work with the Township on the matter. He noted that PennDOT might not want the lane shortened. It was suggested that the Township could submit a striping plan to PennDOT at a later time if needed.

Mr. Whitmore addressed the comments in the Theurkauf review concerning the parking lot and building façade landscaping. He explained that there is a meter pit in one of the islands, but the other island does contain the required tree. Moving the meter pit would be problematic as it relates to all other utility services that will tie into the building. Providing a parking lot island in the northwest corner of the site was discussed during the conditional use review, and it was determined that it would create access problems and limit movements in the loading dock area. The Commission previously advised that safety was more important than landscaping.

The plan does not provide the required 25-foot perimeter buffer from the stormwater basin on Waterloo, but the Applicant is working with Theurkauf to resolve this matter.

Referring to the SSM review letter dated August 31, 2022, Mr. Gill said that comments 46, 49, & 50 are “will comply” items, but they will need relief from some of the lighting regulations (comments 45, 47, & 48). Mr. Spiegel said the proposed lighting levels address safety concerns with a 24-hour a day operation. He added that LED fixtures direct light more precisely, minimizing light spillage. Mr. Gordon said he has no issue with the lighting as long as the Applicant works with the Township on color.

The Applicant proposed an easement for sidewalk to be located outside of the right-of-way. The sidewalk will be for public use but located on private property. Mr. Otteni said the Township generally does not accept sidewalk easements. The parties will discuss the matter further.

Mr. Wright asked what the negative would be with a dedicated left turn lane from Waterloo Blvd. Mr. Richardson said the interaction of vehicles in a short stacking distance is problematic, and said he is trying to avoid a backup of vehicles at the traffic light. Mr. Richardson said he will continue to discuss the matter with staff and consultants.

Chairman Gordon asked for public comment and there was none. Mr. Otteni noted that Township plans called for an additional southbound lane on Whitford Rd. This should be discussed further with Mr. Weller. The Applicant will return to the Commission for further review.

3. Weston Property

Address: 1400 Weston Wy.

Second Review: Sketch Plan

Request: Two options for residential development. Option 1 is a carriage home community of 129 units; Option 2 is a mix of carriage homes and single-family dwellings with 96 units.

Denny Howell of D.L. Howell & Associates, and Tom Kessler, developer, were in attendance. The Applicant appeared before the Commission on August 16, 2022 and received feedback from both Commission members and neighboring residents. The previous design featured 102 lots for single-family detached dwellings. The Commission agreed that the proposed density was incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood; they also had concerns about the limited open space and the proximity of some of the units to the pipeline easements. The attending residents agreed that the density was excessive and expressed concerns about the lack of playgrounds, the proximity of some units to the US Route 202 expressway, and the effects of stormwater runoff, noise, and light pollution.

It noted that the R-1 zoning district allows for cluster-type development whereby the lower density would be preserved but with smaller individual lots. The Applicant agreed to meet with neighboring residents before returning to the Planning Commission. This meeting occurred on September 13, 2022 with representatives of 20 to 25 households. Commission member (and neighbor) Ray McKeeman attended that meeting.

The Applicant has revised the plans based on feedback received from the Commission and the neighbors and is presenting two options tonight. The Applicant is still in the Sketch Plan phase, so no formal action is required from the Commission. The Applicant chose to proceed with just a Staff review, so no consultant reviews are provided at this time.

Both Options provide larger setbacks from the pipeline easement, from US Route 202, and from the homes along Amstel Way. Both plans also preserve four of the existing structures. Option 1 proposes 129 townhouse units in a “carriage home” configuration (i.e., maximum of 3 dwellings per structure), and Option 2 proposes a combination of single-family homes and carriage homes for a total of 96 new dwellings. Both options show a multi-use sports field in the northwest section of the site. Mr. Kessler said this was done to show the size of the space, but after hearing concerns about noise from active play, he agreed that future plans will show this area as more passive recreational space.

There was discussion about the road network. Mr. Otteni encouraged the Applicant to consider having vehicles from the development utilize the signalized intersection at Old Phoenixville Pike to go west, as signalized intersections are always safer.

Mr. Wright asked how the zoning process would proceed. Mr. Kessler said that would be up to the Applicant’s attorney, but he proposed an overlay.

All Commission members preferred Option 2.

Chairman Gordon asked for public comment.

Resident Edward Gorrie said the proposed development would be impossible given the deep ravine in the area and added that at least 5 acres of land would be deforested destroying the wildlife habitat. Mr. Kessler responded that the area can be re-graded and the water in the ravine is not a State water way. Mr. Gordon said the Ordinance allows for development, and the project would address current off-site stormwater runoff.

Josephine Kinney, resident of King Rd., said she was not invited to the discussion the developer had with adjacent neighbors that took place on September 13. She expressed concerns about the proposed density, the loss of trees, and the deer population currently living in the wooded areas. She read a passage from the Township’s Development by Design document and said she doesn’t understand how the current R-1 zoning can be changed.

Steve Kusar, resident of Whiteman Way, asked why the Township was even considering such a development, stating that he does not feel it’s compatible with the adjacent neighborhood of single homes on one acre lots.

Joe Curran, resident of Whiteman Way, echoed Mr. Kusar’s comments and said it makes no sense to add even more residences, apartments, traffic, and roadways. He maintained that doing so is risking the property values of existing homes.

Mr. Kessler explained that Weston is gone, and the property will not sit there vacant. Mr. Gordon explained that there is no market for office space, and the existing Weston buildings are falling into disrepair. Mr. Gordon said Chester County is one of the fastest growing counties with a pent-up development demand.

Resident Vince Ou expressed concerns about the proposed stormwater basin impacting his home. Mr. Gordon confirmed that soil evaluations will be required, and that Conservation District and State regulations must be satisfied: these regulations do not permit water to be taken from one watershed to another.

Jim Krause, resident of Tulip Dr., asked how water from storms will be managed. Mr. Kessler said there will be infiltration beds behind the homes. Currently the water runs uncontrolled, but with the proposed development, the water will be detained and infiltrated. Proposed homes were setback from the property line even further to allow more room for stormwater management.

There was a general consensus that Option 2 was the preferred plan. The Applicant will focus on this going forward and draft a zoning amendment.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ms. O'Connor said the October 4 agenda will have a review for a salon at 321 N. Pottstown Pike/Coeway Lane. The Bank of America project will not be returning until the October 18 meeting.

When asked about the current vacancy on the Planning Commission, Mr. Kumbhardare said the Board is currently considering candidates.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



Caroline O'Connor
Assistant Township Planner