

WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the first October meeting

October 17, 2023

Members Present

Ray McKeeman, Chair
Dan Cote
Jeff Glisson
Mark Gordon

Township Personnel Present

John Weller, Planning Director
Patrick Gorman, Assistant Planner
Pam Gural-Bear, Township Manager

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ray McKeeman called the meeting to order at 7:08 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 19, 2023.
(Cote/Glisson)

ACTION: Passed, 3-0-1, with Mark Gordon abstaining since he did not attend that meeting.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

IV. PLANS

1. **McHugh Group/Exton Express car wash**
Address: 347 N. Pottstown Pk.
First Review: Land development plan
Project Description: Demolition of existing office building and construction of a 4,310 sq. ft. car wash

John Weller provided an overview of the project, which will replace the existing 2-storey office building on the site with a car-wash facility. The neighborhood is generally commercial and is across Rockland Dr. from Buckman's Ski Shop, which is in a historic structure. The Township Historical Commission reviewed the plan on October 9, 2023, and determined that the project would have no adverse impact upon the historic resource; they unanimously passed a motion recommending approval with no conditions.

The Planning Commission reviewed a Sketch Plan for this project on April 18, 2023 and had concerns about the access to Pottstown Pk. The Applicant has revised the plan to eliminate that access, replacing it with a new driveway to Rockland Dr., aligned with the Buckman's entrance.

Mr. Gordon questioned how the Applicant can satisfy the zoning requirement that parking be set back fifteen feet from the building when the lot is so narrow. Mr. Brower said it does represent a true hardship but maintained that this area is part of the operation of the business and should be labeled as such on the plan. Mr. Weller agreed and noted that employee parking does meet the setback requirement.

The Commission took no action on the plan. The Applicant will revise the plan and return for further review.

2. **Mary C. Howse Elementary School**
Address: 641 W. Boot Rd.
First Review: Land development plan
Project Description: Construction of additions to the existing school

Mr. Weller described the project, which calls for the removal of a modular classroom, construction of two additions with a total area of 8,067 sq. ft., additional parking, and new stormwater management facilities. He noted that the Applicant received a special exception from the Township Zoning Hearing Board on August 16, 1995 to exceed the limits on building and impervious coverage. The Applicant has since acquired additional land such that the current development now complies with the building coverage limit but still exceeds the impervious coverage limit. The proposed development will increase the areas of both building and impervious cover, but the Zoning Officer has determined that the resulting condition will be within the limits of the relief granted by the ZHB in 1995 and is not an expansion of the non-conforming use.

A stone farmhouse directly across Boot Rd. from the school is a designated historic resource, so the Historical Commission reviewed the plan on October 9. The determined that there was no adverse impact and unanimously passed a motion recommending approval without conditions.

Outstanding concerns include traffic management - specifically how vehicles will move through the site to drop off students - the design of the new parking area, and whether sidewalks should be provided along the Boot Rd. frontage, where the Township's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan calls for a trail. The Applicant could pay a fee in lieu of sidewalk construction or provide an easement for a future trail. As the use is Institutional, there is no requirement to set aside permanent open space. The property is not within our Transportation Service Area, so no traffic impact fee is required.

Attending on behalf of the Applicant were attorney Ryan Jennings of Unruh, Turner, Burke & Frees; John Grant of Stantech; and Wayne Birster, Director of Facilities & Operations, and Damon Gonzaga, Capital Projects Manager, from the West Chester Area School District. Mr. Jennings stated that the proposed addition is long overdue, adding that it will not result in any increase to the student capacity. The proposed parking will alleviate current stacking issues and provide additional queuing space.

Mr. Gonzaga stated that the school serves 575 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. He described existing operations, showing the parent drop-off routes and bus loops. With the new parking area, vehicles will no longer have to park on the grass. Project engineer John Grant added that circulation patterns will be shown more clearly on the next submission, adding that the increased stacking space will eliminate cars backing up onto Boot Rd.

VII. TOWNSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Commission members welcomed Patrick Gorman, the Township's new Assistant Planner. Patrick comes to the Township from Lower Merion Township. Welcome Patrick!

Mr. Weller advised that the public hearing on the Zoning Ordinance amendment pertaining to the Weston Tract is scheduled for the Board of Supervisors next meeting on Wednesday, October 25, 2023.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be October 31. Due to the way the calendar falls, this is essentially the first November meeting; there will be only one other meeting in November and one in December. For the next meeting, Mr. Gorman will prepare a list of dates for the Commission's 2024 schedule based upon the assumption that meetings will continue to be the first and third Tuesdays of each month.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Recording Secretary,

John R. Weller, AICP
Director of Planning

