

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
March 17, 2022

Call to Order: Chairman Steve Groff called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members: Chairman Steve Groff, Vice Chairman Garrett Weaver, Jim Nagle, Matt Parido, Andy Toms, Mary Stoltzfus, and Matt Warfel.

Staff: Amanda Hickman - Assistant Township Manager, Barry Hershey - Township Supervisor Chairman, Chuck Haley -ELA Township Engineer, Kim Yepremian - Recording Secretary.

Minutes Approval: Jim Nagle made a motion, seconded by Garrett Weaver, to approve the February 17, 2022 minutes. Motion passed 7-0.

Public Comment: none

Willow Valley Southpointe Conditional Use: Craig Smith with RGS Associates presented the Southpointe at Lakes Conditional Use modification request to the February 2019 Conditional Use decision for the expansion of the existing Medical Residential Campus. The expansion would involve a lot add-on of the former Witmer Tax Services / Doctor's Office at 271 Peach Bottom Road and the two adjacent single-family dwellings at 273 and 275 Peach Bottom Road, for a total of 3.1+ additional acres. The Witmer office building will be dual-purposed as an office for Willow Valley (north end) and a residential members' clubhouse (south end). The dwellings at 273 and 275 Peach Bottom Road will be demolished to make way for nine additional Southpointe residential units to be built around the perimeter of the expansion. The area in between the office and the residential units will be converted to a recreational area with pickleball courts, a bocce ball court, community garden, barbeque area, pavilion, fire pit and patio. The Applicants propose retention of the original office entrance off Peach Bottom Road and the current parking lot access for the employees and visitors of the Willow Valley office. The parking area will be expanded towards the east into a new lot area for the recreational uses and clubhouse. The two lots will be separated by bollards on the east end of the office lot and bisected by a new access point to/from Cultural Center Drive. A security gate placed west of this new access point will assure that vehicles entering the recreational parking lot will be residents of the Willow Valley communities. Stormwater Management Facility #3 installed for Southpointe will handle all of the runoff from the proposed expansion. The nine new dwellings will be similar in design to the other Southpointe at Lakes dwellings. Two additional off-street parking areas for guests of the new units are also proposed.

ELA has concerns over the continued use of the Witmer office access drive, as it is very close to Willow Valley Lakes (aka Cultural Center) Drive - which is not aligned with Main Street - making for a complicated traffic movement area. Craig also clarified that the recreational area will be open to all Willow Valley residents, not just Southpointe.

Discussions centered around:

- alternative access to the parking areas so that the former Witmer office accessway off Peach Bottom Road could be removed.
- the location of the security gate and possible stacking of traffic onto Peach Bottom Road.

Suggestions from Commission members included:

- moving the security gate east of the newly proposed parking lot entrance/exit for all following scenarios;
- closing the Peach Bottom Road access point for all following scenarios;
- removing the bollards to enter office lot from Cultural Center Drive and adding a sliding gate for the rec lot – office personnel and visitors won't have to go through a security gate but rec lot vehicles do;
- removing the bollards to enter office lot from Cultural Center Drive and disconnect the rec lot from the original office lot - access rec lot on the east end from the new residential drive, assuring all rec user vehicles are Willow Valley residents, as they would have passed through a security gate;
- to avoid alleged steep grade challenges towards the west end, switching the locations of the patio/firepit/pavilion area and the rec parking lot and creating lot access into the south end from the new residential drive, will again ensure use by residents only.

Craig stated that severe grade differences would make any of these possibilities difficult to execute.

The proposed expansion does appear to be consistent with the conditional use requirements, although no formal action is required from the Planning Commission.

Zoning Amendment – Retail Center Overlay District: Sheila O’Rourke, Esq., presented a zoning text amendment for creation of a RETAIL CENTER OVERLAY in the Main Street Limited zoning district on behalf of Anil & Jyotsna Jivani. The subject lots are 2504, 2506 and 2508 Willow Street Pike, which now consist of a legal non-conforming “auto service station” with a convenience store, and two single family dwellings. The subject MSL area is surrounded mostly by Commercial Highway and Office/Technology/Residential zoning districts. All lots are within the urban growth boundary. This site has been the subject of several previous sketch plans, and PennDOT has granted preliminary technical approval of the current concept sketch, included with the petition package. Hurdles to past sketch plans include the limitations on expanding a non-conforming, non-residential building and use, and the fact that the Dunkin Donuts franchise mandatory accessory drive-through is not permitted in the MSL district, but it is permitted in the CH district.

The Board of Supervisors previously tabled the applicants attempts to re-zone their parcels to CH. Among the Boards’ concern was the sketch plan at that time reflected a limited lot size for the proposed intensity of use. Spot-zoning and further expansion of commercial use were also concerns.

The proposed overlay district was written quite specifically for this location, so that it would serve as a suitable transition between commercial highway uses and office/residential uses, and it would guard against unintended consequences in other areas of the Township. Requirements for overlay eligibility of a parcel: must be in MSL and adjoin the CH district; be located in the designated urban growth area; have 300 feet of frontage along an arterial roadway; be limited to a 5,000-sf building footprint. The overlay district would allow auto service centers with convenience stores only where such uses already exist. Accessory drive-through facilities would be permitted.

The pump islands would remain, but the convenience store and two dwellings would be demolished. A new, 5,000-sf, two-story commercial building would contain a new convenience store with carry-out liquor sales, and a Dunkin Donuts with drive-thru service, on the first floor. The second story would have space for 3 offices – a wireless retailer, a barber shop, and a spa. There would be common off-street parking and stormwater management facilities.

Discussion among Commission members ensued, with the following comments provided for the record:

- The overlay is a transition zone, allowing the current long-time business to expand.
- The MPC provides legal authority for the creation of overlay districts.
- The timing of the zoning amendment does not interfere or clash with the update of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Other properties in the MSL will be opened up to the possibility of combining lots and becoming restaurants with drive-throughs.
- The Township wants to see the new sidewalks connect all the way to the sidewalks at the Members First Credit Union to the south. There was a consensus that the sidewalks would have to be installed along the northbound side of Willow Street Pike, due to a ravine in the back of the properties along the southbound lanes.
- There was discussion regarding the preservation of the six, early 20th-century, brick houses at the southern end of the strip.
- Subject area is already in a retail area, is in the urban growth boundary, and the proposed changes do not alter the character of what is already there.

No formal action is required by the Planning Commission for this application.

Community Development Report- Amanda gave a brief update on current projects:

Groff Farm Floodplain Restoration – scheduled to start on March 21st and contractor expects work to be completed this May.

Hayward Heath Development – Township public works dept will be replacing the street stormwater pipes over the next two years.

Adjournment: Matt Parido made a motion, seconded by Andy Toms, to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.