

MINUTES
UPPER SAUCON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, October 6, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
Township Municipal Building
Outdoor Meeting

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Falcone called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Members Present: **Samantha Falcone, Chair**
 Gerry Anthony
 Dennis Aranyos
 Rod Chirumbolo
 Bryan Macfarlane

Staff Attending: **Trisha Lang, Secretary/Director of Community Development**
 Thomas Dinkelacker, Township Solicitor
 Kevin Chimics, Township Engineer

Board of Supervisors Meeting Actions

Ms. Falcone identified the Board's conditional approval of the Estates at Saucon Valley Subdivision Plan and the Lawler/Hermany Lot Line Adjustment Plan at their September 14, 2020 and September 28, 2020 meetings.

Minutes

The minutes of the September 1, 2020 meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved. Commission members Anthony and Aranyos abstained due to their absence at the September 1, 2020 meeting.

Subdivision and Land Development Reviews

Sketch Plan Review - Route 309 Commerce Center - #2020-06

Representatives for the applicant included Jason Engelhardt, Vice President of Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc., Rob Hoffman of Transportation Planning and Design, Inc., and Jim Preston, legal counsel with Broughal & DeVito, L. L. P. Chairperson Falcone began the discussion by identifying the obligation for the developer to obtain conditional use approval for the proposed development and raised a concern regarding the ability of the developer to adequately address the provisions of Section 905 of the Township's adopted Zoning Ordinance. Attorney Dinkelacker was then requested to provide an update on the status of the Curative Amendment filed by the developer in 2019. Attorney Dinkelacker reported that the appeal of the decision by the Township was currently in Commonwealth Court, with a decision expected perhaps in early Spring 2021.

Mr. Engelhardt provided a brief overview of the sketch plan and Attorney Preston indicated that the plan was submitted in an effort to get feedback from the Planning Commission. Other information provided on behalf of the applicant included acknowledgement of the intent of the developer to seek to reduce the amount of parking provided on the site as well as a report of the expected traffic impact. Mr. Hoffman reported an estimated increase of 6000 Average Daily Trips from the project with the addition of 520 new trips in the AM Peak hour and 592 new trips in the PM Peak hour. Mr. Engelhardt stressed that not all of these trips are truck trips and that no trucks would be permitted to access E Valley Road.

Comments and questions provided by Planning Commission members included the following:

- the truck terminal proposed as part of the project is more than 2X the size of the Aldi truck terminal
- there are no truck stops or driver accommodations in the area to fulfill the needs of the added volume of truck traffic
- E Valley Road is not able to accommodate an increased volume of truck traffic
- the project appears to call for 62% of the site to be impervious – this will exacerbate the flooding issues on Route 309 and on E Valley Road.
- the location of proposed manufacturing facilities adjacent to residential development in Sunrise Valley is too intense/aggressive
- cut-through traffic on Courtney Road will compromise the safety of children in the neighborhood
- what measures will the developer take to demonstrate that the use will not contribute materially to air pollution as set forth in Section 484?
- the traffic on Route 309 is already overwhelmed by trucks
- what are the social costs of the proposal and how will they adversely impact fire and police services?
- what are the impacts to traffic, including walkers and bikers on E Valley Road?
- concern for flooding of the Saucon Creek and the impact of salt laden runoff directly from the site
- the landscape berm along E Valley Road is not adequate to hide this development or lessen its impact on the residential development (Sunrise Valley).

Comments received from the public included the following:

- Mr. Largay **4344 Allegiant Street** voiced his outrage at the proposal.
- Mr. Karahsher Sidhu **3578 Stonegate Drive** spoke about the designation of Route 309 and Center Valley Parkway as the deadliest intersection in the Lehigh Valley and expressed his concerns for the “downfall of the community” and “lower housing prices” as a result of the proposed development. Mr. Sidhu complimented the existing cornfield and the beauty of E Valley Road.
- Ms. Valerie Barber **5185 Majestic Drive** asked about the number of bays accommodated by the proposed truck terminal and what intersection improvements will be made
- Ms. Renee D’Amico **3593 Stonegate Drive** indicated that she was insulted by the fact that no representative of Kay Lehigh, LLC was in attendance. She suggested that the neighbors were not against the previously proposed residential development of the site but were uncomfortable with the amount (1200) of units that were included in that plan.

Ms. D'Amico indicated that she was disappointed that no compromise had been proposed and that she could support residential development of the site – just not high density residential development

- Ms. Kelly Bedics **3355 Courtney Drive** expressed concern about cut through traffic on Courtney Drive and reported that the flooding from the recent hurricane that closed Route 309 resulted in trucks “flying” through her neighborhood. Ms. Bedics also commented on the lack of shoulders along E Valley Road
- Ms. Patty Minguillon **3542 Sunnyside Road** identified that she was not opposed to a 55+ residential community being located on the site. Ms. Minguillon also noted that she was opposed to a direct connection to Courtney Drive due to the impact on the safety of the children and a fear of lower property values.
- Mr. Joe Zitarelli **4965 Springwood Court** identified himself as a resident of Sunrise Valley and raised concerns about whether the proposed development was reflective of the intent of Mr. Stabler who purchased the property and ultimately gifted it to Lehigh University.
- Ms. Judy Krasnicke **4537 E Valley Road** raised concerns about the impact of the impervious coverage on the watershed including pollutants entering the Saucon Creek and the potential for increased flooding. Ms. Krasnicke recommended that the Township consider development of a Stormwater Authority in order to extract fees based on impervious coverage and to use the fees to improve stormwater management issues and fix drainage problems in the Township.
- Ms. Joan Slota **3880 E Hopewell Road** raised concerns about trucks on E Valley Road and the amount of impervious coverage. Ms. Slota indicated that the Township did not need a fancy new hotel, office space, or a medical office building. In addition, Ms. Slota asserted that the Township did not need a bank or a truck terminal. Additionally, she indicated that E Hopewell and E Valley Roads could not accommodate any additional traffic.
- Ms. Meri Dickey **3475 Courtney Drive** identified herself as a resident of Sunrise Valley and asked who would be responsible to address noise complaints about the proposed use and raised a concern about additional vehicle accidents due to the increased traffic.
- Mr. Mike Pera **3590 Sunnyside Road** indicated that vehicles “fly” through his neighborhood, that there is too much traffic on the road and that there will be too much traffic generated by the proposal, and that he does not want the street connection.
- Mr. Pat D'Amico **3593 Stonegate Drive** made an appeal to representatives of Kay Lehigh, LLC to understand that the current conversation had become adversarial due to the developer’s approach and that there is a willingness to consider an alternative plan for residential development.

Public Comment

None

Discussion

Draft update to Comprehensive Plan

Chairperson Falcone provided a brief introduction including some observations about information contained in the Plan relating to housing diversity and affordability.

April Showers of JMT, Inc made a presentation highlighting the contents and issues covered in the draft of the update to the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Showers provided power point slides to detail the topics covered in each Chapter of the Plan.

Commission members were provided an opportunity to ask questions about the content and recommendations provided by the Plan. Chairperson Falcone summarized the previous comments provided by Mr. Bloeser at the September 1, 2020 Commission meeting but there was no additional input from the Commission.

The discussion was opened to the public. Comments received included concern that availability of the draft Plan on the Township website had not been advertised in the newspaper and a concern about how much time it was taking to finalize the Plan and begin implementation of the recommended actions.

No action was taken by the Commission. Commission members will continue their review of the Plan and it is anticipated that a recommendation will be made at the November 10, 2020 meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 10, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.