

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
March 2010

A work session of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2009 at 7:00 PM at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA for the purpose of reviewing the agenda of the public meeting to be held that evening. Planning Commission members Kenneth Corti, Rick Shorin, Vincent Philomeno, Dan Kluger, Mark Clemm, Harry Phifer, and Yongli Min were present. Township Engineer Roman M. Pronczak, Assistant Township Engineer James E. Blanch, Assistant Zoning Officer William McManus, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, and Recording Secretary Michele Alifano were also present.

1. Review of Ordinance #4-228 – 137 Stenton Ave., LP.

Mr. Rieker provided some background information stating that when the Day School property was first zoned R-5 Residential, had it not been for the IN Institutional District zoning already in place, a recommendation would have been made that the site be included in the R-5 Residential District.

Mr. Pronczak stated that the R-5 Residential Zoning District is the most stringent district in that it allows for the least amount of density on a property. Also, the property in question is deed-restricted and prohibits lot sizes of less than two acres. If the property were to remain zoned IN – Institutional, there would be much more intense uses permitted including medical facilities, retirement homes, and sanatoriums, which would be allowed by right. Mr. Kluger clarified that all the surrounding properties are currently zoned R-5 Residential.

Mr. Shorin asked if Township staff had heard of any objections from the surrounding residents. Mr. Pronczak explained that some residents voiced concerns that the land should be partially preserved, but when it is revealed how the land could potentially be developed, the objections cease.

There were some questions regarding total square footage at the property, proposed development, and access issues. Mr. Pronczak stated that if the Board of Supervisors votes to approve the change in zoning, then that would lay the ground rules for how the property could be developed, but a Land Development Plan would need to be submitted to work out all details involving stormwater management, floodplain, access, roadways and other concerns.

2. Zoning Hearing Board cases.

- a. #1855-10 (Amended). This application, filed by Genisys Credit Union, is an amended request for a façade identification sign of 37.5 sq. ft. The variance

request is to allow a 2.5 sq. ft. sign that reads “24 Hour ATM”, in addition to a 35 sq. ft. sign that would read “Genisys Credit Union”.

Mr. McManus explained that the applicant submitted a permit application for the 35 sq. ft. of allowable façade signage, and the amended application is for the 2.5 sq. ft. variance for the ATM sign.

Mr. Pronczak clarified that the ATM sign was not exempt, and that it is classified as advertising signage.

Mr. Kluger asked how the square footage of the sign is determined, to which Mr. McManus responded that it is based on store frontage.

- b. #1856-10. This application is a request to allow a reduction to required lot sizes and side yards, on two separate lots. The property owner is requesting the relief because of the need to preserve historic structures located on the property.

Mr. Pronczak stated that the property owner had attended the recent monthly meeting of the Whitpain Township Planning Committee, and he was expected to be present this evening to give a presentation to the Planning Commission. Mr. Pronczak advised that the owner is not only requesting relief, but that he would demonstrate a true hardship with the request that strives to preserve historic structures located on the property. He also suggested that the Planning Commission members may want to consider giving a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board regarding this application.

- c. #1857-10. This application requests a variance from the terms of Article XXVIII, Section 160-204.D to allow the installation of an in-ground pool, reducing the 10’ minimum required separation from the principal building to 8’ at the subject property.
- d. #1858-10. This application is a request for 2 sq. ft. of sign area for identification purposes on the mailbox within the right-of-way of Township Line Road at Erbs Mill Road, to provide directional assistance for emergency services.

The members of the Planning Commission were in agreement that the Swim Club is in need of identifying signage for the benefit of emergency services vehicles. Mr. McManus stated that the lettering will be placed on the mailbox, which is located in the right-of-way.

Mr. Shorin commented that in the event that the road must be widened, or there is damage of any type to the mailbox, it will be the responsibility of the applicant to move or replace the mailbox.

- e. #1859-10. This application is a request for the installation of three directional signs to assist visitors to the Chestnut Hill Hospital Women’s Center, which is located in Dublin Hall in Sentry Park West.

Mr. Pronczak explained that the request is unique in that the patients that visit the Center are not regular visitors to the facility, and the location of the office is difficult to find once inside the office campus. The request is for signage of a non-commercial nature which would assist visitors in finding the location.

Mr. Shorin agreed that the directional signs are a necessity, but he expressed concern that the signs be consistent with existing signage at the location.

Mr. Rieker stressed that the signage being requested is non-commercial in its text.

- f. #1860-10. This application is a request to allow a 14’ x 16’-8” addition to the rear of the house which would decrease the minimum required rear yard from 50’ to 44’-10” at the subject property.

The work session adjourned at 7:30 PM, at which time the Planning Commission members left for the public meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Alifano, Recording Secretary

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 2010

The third meeting of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission for the year 2010 was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2010 at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA. Chairman Ken Corti presided with Commission members, Vincent Philomeno, Rick Shorin, Dan Kluger, Mark Clemm, Harry Phifer, and Yongli Min present. Township Engineer Roman M. Pronczak, Assistant Township Engineer James E. Blanch, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, Assistant Zoning Officer WilliamMcManus, and Recording Secretary Michele Alifano were also present.

Chairman Ken Corti called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. The members of the Planning Commission introduced themselves to the members of the public that were present.

1. Approval of minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Philomeno, seconded by Mr. Kluger, to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2010 meeting of the Planning Commission. The motion passed 7-0.

2. Review Ordinance #4-228, an Ordinance amending the Official Zoning Map of Whitpain Township to rezone a tract of land located at 137 Stenton Avenue, owned by 137 Stenton Ave., LP, and further identified as Tax Block 21, Unit 63, Montgomery County Tax Parcel No. 66-00-06835-00-2, consisting of 29± acres, from its existing classification of IN-Institutional District to the new classification of R-5 Agricultural/Rural Residence District.

Present for the applicant: Leigh Narducci, Esquire

Mr. Narducci was on hand to provide an overview of the proposed project, which involves rezoning a 29 acre piece of land from its current classification, which is IN-Institutional District to the new classification of R-5 Agricultural/Rural Residence District. He advised that the surrounding properties are zoned R-5, and it was a possibility that the buyer may build his own residence on the land. Mr. Narducci stated that the buyer/applicant was not seeking to subdivide the property. If the land was to remain classified as IN-Institutional, it would permit more intense uses on the property. Mr. Narducci also advised that the property is deed restricted to prohibit residential development on less than two acres.

Planning Commission comments:

Mr. Clemm inquired about the buyer of the property, and Mr. Shorin asked if there was any intent to subdivide the property, to which Mr. Narducci responded that the owner,

Mr. Bud Hansen, plans to build his own home there. Mr. Narducci stated that a prompt decision is desirable because the house is currently being marketed for sale as an IN-Institutional property, subject to any of those applicable uses.

Mr. Kluger asked if all existing structures would be removed from the property, in the event that Mr. Hansen was to decide to subdivide. Mr. Narducci replied that each home built on the property would have to maintain its own two acre parcel.

Public comments:

Mr. Robert Gaffney, 5 Devonshires Court, asked if the deed restriction truly limits building lots to a minimum of two acres. Mr. Pronczak explained that the R-5 Zoning District requires minimum lot sizes of 80,000 sq. ft.

Ms. Jane Kenney, 1 Stenton Avenue, expressed her concern that the R-5 Zoning District allows for clustering of homes. Mr. Narducci explained that the deed restriction on the property is not a part of Township regulations, and therefore it is not waiveable. The R-5 Zoning District may allow clustering, but the covenant prohibits it. Mr. Pronczak stated that the clustering option is included in the regulations to allow a developer to concentrate housing on a portion of the lot, and in turn preserve buffers, open space, or other important features.

Ms. Karen Rowan, 1 Stenton Avenue, asked how many buildable lots would there be if there is no clustering, with the two acre minimum. Mr. Narducci stated there would be between 8-10 buildable lots.

Mr. Craig Mills, 1551 Butler Pike, urged the Planning Commission to approve the change in zoning.

There being no further comments or questions, a motion was made by Mr. Shorin, seconded by Mr. Min, to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the Change in Zoning from "IN" Institutional to "R-5" Agricultural/Rural Residence District. The motion was passed 7-0.

3. Zoning Hearing Board Applications.
 - a. #1855-10. Application filed by Genisys Credit Union as tenant of the property located at 1510 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA, 19422 for a variance from the terms of Article XXVI, Section 160-191.D(2) and Zoning Hearing Board Decision No. 232-73, to allow a 2.5 sq. ft. façade "24 HR ATM" sign in addition to a 35 sq. ft. façade identification sign increasing

the maximum façade sign area from 20 sq. ft. under Section 160-191.D(2) increased to 35 sq. ft. under Zoning Hearing Board Decision No. 232-73 to 37.5 sq. ft. based on a 20 ft. wide store frontage at the subject property. The zoning classification of the subject property is “C” Commercial District.

Mr. Kluger noted that the applicant was not present to answer questions about their amended application at tonight’s meeting, or at the previous month’s meeting. Mr. Pronczak stated that the applicant was made aware of the Planning Commission’s recommendation of denial of the original application that was submitted in February, 2010. The Planning Commission members were in agreement that an explanation of the variance request would have been helpful, although it is only a 2.5 square foot “ATM” sign that is need of relief.

A motion was made by Mr. Kluger, seconded by Mr. Philomeno to recommend that the Zoning Hearing Board deny the subject application, because there appeared to be no justification for a sign larger than 35 square feet to accommodate the ATM, and there was no one present to represent the applicant and answer questions regarding the application. The motion passed 5-2. Mr. Clemm and Mr. Min abstained from the vote.

- b. #1856-10. Application filed by S. Edgar & Karen David, as owners of the property located at 740 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422 for the following relief at the subject property:

Lot A

- 1. Variances from the terms of Article V, Section 160-17 and Article XXVII, Section 160-203 reducing the minimum required side yards from 45’ to 32’ and 45’ to 26’ and reducing the minimum required aggregate side yards from 100’ to 58’.
- 2. Section 160-19 and Article XXVIII, Section 160-204 reducing the minimum required rear yard from 75’ to 33’.

Lot B

- 1. Variances from the terms of Article V, Sections 160-14 reducing the minimum required lot area from 30,000 sq. ft. to 23, 438 sq. ft. and reducing the minimum required lot width from 150’ to 130’.
- 2. Article V, Section 160-17 and Article XXVII, Section 160-203 reducing the minimum required side yard from 45’ to 29’ and

reducing the minimum required aggregate side yards from 100' to 74'.

The zoning classification of the subject property is "R-1" Residence District.

Present for the applicant: Mr. S. Edgar David

Mr. David provided a brief overview of his plans to renovate and preserve the historic structures on his property. He displayed photos of the layout of both lots, and he explained that he is seeking variances that would allow renovation to the barn located on the property, which would then become the main residence. He also explained that there are two entrances to the property, which would remain in place and he explained that impervious coverage on the property would decrease, while green space would increase.

Although relief is being sought for smaller lot sizes, Mr. David stated that the adjacent Village Circle community has set a precedent for smaller than required lot sizes, and he has the support of his surrounding neighbors. Letters from the neighbors were provided for the Planning Commission.

Planning Commission questions:

In response to a question posed by Chairman Corti, Mr. Rieker stated that the house and the barn are both Class II Historical Structures.

Mr. Clemm inquired about the use of the cottage on the property, to which Mr. Pronczak responded that the cottage is an existing accessory structure that does not require relief.

Mr. Min inquired about the necessity to subdivide the property, to which Mr. Rieker responded that the zoning regulations do not permit two principle residences on the main lot.

There being no further comments or questions, a motion was made by Mr. Shorin, seconded by Mr. Min, to recommend that the Zoning Hearing Board approve the subject application. The motion passed 7-0.

- c. #1857-10. Application filed by Joseph A. & Tina M. Rinaldi, as owners of the property located at 1120 Silo Circle, Blue Bell, PA, 19422 for a variance from the terms of Article XXVIII, Section 160-204.D to allow the installation of an in-ground pool reducing the 10' minimum required

separation from the principal building to 8' at the subject property. The zoning classification of the subject property is "R-7" Residential District.

Chairman Corti called for any comments or questions from the Planning Commission or Township staff. There were none.

A motion was made by Mr. Phifer, seconded by Mr. Shorin to remain neutral on the subject application. The motion passed 7-0.

- d. #1858-10. Application filed by Whitpain Greens Swim Club, as owner of the property located at 1776 Erbs Mill Road, Blue Bell, PA, 19422 for variances from the terms of Article XXVI, Section 160-191.B and Section 160-191.G to allow 2 sq. ft. of sign area for the Club's name on its mailbox within the right-of-way of Township Line Road at Erbs Mill Road to provide directional help for emergency services at the subject property. The zoning classification of the subject property is "R-2" Residence District.

Present for the applicant: Mr. John Heiland, President, Whitpain Swim Club
Mr. Greg Fox, Vice-President, Whitpain Swim Club

Mr. Heiland provided some information regarding the request, stating the need for some type of identification on the mailbox in the event that an emergency vehicle would need to find the location.

Chairman Corti asked about the size of the intended signage. Mr. Heiland stated that the request is simply for lettering on the mailbox, but that the Swim Club had previously been cited by Code Enforcement for placing the lettering without obtaining a variance.

Mr. Fox asked the Planning Commission if it was allowable to place a sign under the mailbox. Mr. Rieker advised that any request for a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board should be as specific as possible, and Mr. Pronczak explained that it could be problematic getting approval for an off-premises sign in a residential area.

A motion was made by Mr. Clemm, seconded by Mr. Phifer, to recommend that the Zoning Hearing Board approve the subject application. The motion passed 7-0.

- e. #1859-10. Application filed by Chestnut Hill Hospital, as a tenant of the property located at 1777 Sentry Parkway West, Dublin Hall, Suites 110 &

120, Blue Bell, PA, 19422 for a variance from the terms of Article XXVI, Section 160-191.F to allow a new 30" x 23" (4.79 sq. ft.) directional sign on the internal ring road closer to the entrance off of Township Line Road and to increase the size of two (2) current directional signs from 19" x 16" to 30" x 23" (4.79 sq. ft.) which is in excess of the two (2) sq. ft. directional signs allowed per street at the subject property. The zoning classification of the subject property is "AR" Administrative/Research District.

Present for the applicant: Ms. Joanne Rosenbaum, Administrative Director,
The Women's Center of Chestnut Hill Hospital

Ms. Rosenbaum explained that there are two satellite offices located at 1777 Sentry Parkway, an OB/GYN practice, as well as an Imaging Center, that have been there for two years, which patients have a difficult time locating upon entering the office park.

Mr. Rieker asked if the signs would be double-sided, and he advised that the application should be amended to clearly indicate that type of design. No additional relief would be required.

Mr. Shorin emphasized that the signs should be placed in a manner that does not obstruct sight lines.

A motion was made by Mr. Clemm, seconded by Mr. Kluger, to recommend that the Zoning Hearing Board approve the application, subject to the applicant meeting all Township requirements relating to signage. The motion passed 7-0.

- f. #1860-10. Application filed by Kelly Schweighauser, as owner of the property located at 1642 Daws Road, Blue Bell, PA, 19422 for variances from the terms of Article VII, Section 160-36 & Article XXVII, Section 160-204 to allow a 14' x 16'-8" addition to the rear of the house decreasing the minimum required rear yard from 50' to 44'-10" at the subject property. The zoning classification of the subject property is "R-2" Residence District.

Chairman Corti called for any comments or questions from the Planning Commission or Township staff. There were none.

A motion was made by Mr. Phifer, seconded by Mr. Shorin to remain neutral on the subject application. The motion passed 7-0.

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There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Mr. Clemm, and seconded by Mr. Shorin to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Shorin, Secretary