

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
ZONING WORKSHOP MEETING
APRIL 3, 2014

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Zoning Workshop Meeting on Thursday, April 3, 2014 in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 5 p.m., followed by a pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Philips, Greg Waks, Bill Jenaway and Carole Kenney. Also present were: David Kraynik, Township Manager; Joseph McGrory, Township Solicitor; Rob Loeper, Township Planner.

CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS – UPDATE OF ZONING CODE

Mr. Loeper stated a meeting has been scheduled with the Montgomery County Planning Commission next week for their initial comments on the Mixed Use District. The sustainability issues will be further discussed at the Upper Merion Planning Commission on April 9. Mr. Waks suggested inviting Jaquelin Camp, Chairperson, Upper Merion Planning Commission, to the next zoning workshop and get her thoughts about the sustainability issue.

Mr. Loeper stated the Business/Office and Industrial Districts follows closely with what was done through King of Prussia District. Utilizing the aerial, he pointed out the various districts on the color-coded map.

Steve Forster, O'Neill Properties, stated a few days ago he met with the Hughes Park Civic Association with about 30 people in attendance to discuss land development concepts. He reported although it was generally well received by the residents, it was clearly communicated they did not want Renaissance Boulevard to go all the way through and they did not want any retail. Because of the competing interests, Mr. Forster told the group O'Neill is staying out of the road issue. He expressed surprise about their second request.

Mr. Loeper continued going over the map with the following comments highlighted as follows:

- SM District needs some work
- Quarry should be in Industrial since it is an extractive use.
- Big question is what to do with the river since it is Norfolk Southern property. It has been zoned Industrial because of the railroad.
- Concern expressed about difficulty of getting in and out of the parcel proposed by Piazza Group for multi-family.

- Lockheed is currently LI (Limited Industrial) and needs a closer look.
- It was noted the west campus at GSK is a portion that GSK will be vacating in the next two years.

Mr. Waks commented the residents made it clear regarding the Office Industrial portion of Upper Merion Township on Mancill Mill Road, and he does not see any reason for changing that designation.

Mr. Loeper indicated one of the issues to be worked out is the SM-1 as it affects O'Neill's properties, particularly in Renaissance, with the possibility of some additional uses, such as multi-family, medical rehabilitative, skilled nursing uses. Mr. Forster noted the civic association was very supportive of those uses.

Mrs. Kenney asked if "over 55" is included in their plan. Mr. Forster responded they did not place a restriction on housing.

Mrs. Kenney asked if this would just be skilled nursing and not continuing care. Mr. Forster responded it would be skilled nursing, but they are still working on the concept. He said there is a whole range of potential different service levels in the rehab industry and they have found that it is radically underserved in this area.

Mr. Forster indicated the residents asked a lot of questions about ambulance traffic as well as ingress and egress. He pointed out for a skilled nursing facility if someone is transported by ambulance it would be done during business hours and not with flashing lights.

Mr. Jenaway asked if it would involve overnight stays. Mr. Forster responded in the negative.

Mr. Jenaway noted one of the issues with the facility that exists on West Valley Forge Road is that it is one of the highest demand areas for the ambulance. Even though it is perceived as having medical care there 24/7, there is still a very high demand for emergency ambulance service since the people in this facility tend to have respiratory issues or some other medical malady. Mr. Forster commented they have not fully formalized their concept and would have to research what the needs are in the market. He indicated they are not looking at emergency type facilities and it would be more a Bryn Mawr Rehab or Dunwoody which are two examples they have been studying.

Mr. Loeper asked if the licensing is different at those types of facilities. Mr. Forster responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Jenaway noted it is possible to get a multiple license. Mr. Loeper commented with a multiple license it would be necessary to tie something [zoning] to the licensing requirements and if one use would be excluded it would

have to be worded in such a way that the type of license would not be allowed to go in.

With regard to multi-family, Mr. Forster stated their concept would be more apartments that would be geared to millennial's, divorcees and "empty nester" downsizers. As such there would be an "over 55" component in their apartments, but they would not be restricted to that category. As far as the rehab community, they are not looking for intensive nursing care. Mr. Forster clarified when he says "skilled nursing" he does not mean at the level where ambulances would be coming in and out. It is more a residential three or four weeks and transition back to home.

With regard to retail, Mr. Forster indicated they would be okay with excluding retail. While it was in their original draft submitted to the township, it is not a primary use for them.

Mr. Philips asked what they have at Renaissance now. Mr. Forster responded they have a little café which serves sandwiches at lunchtime during the hours of 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Mrs. Kenney asked if additional cleanup is necessary for the Superfund site. Mr. Forster responded the remedial action plan requires them to cap the site which they have done, but they will have to go back to the EPA to get a new remedial action work plan for residential use.

Returning to the retail issue, Mr. Waks asked how many people objected to basic retail. Mr. Forster responded he could not say everyone, but there was a vocal majority indicating they did not want retail.

Mr. Waks stated this is something that needs to be dealt with one way or the other. He emphasized how important it is to have the support of the public.

Mr. Philips commented he would like to see the river opened up for recreational or open space.

A discussion followed with regard to the environmental and ingress/egress issues associated with the Piazza property. McGrory suggested reaching out to the DEP to find out if there is a remediation plan because it is important to know what is in the ground in view of the proposed trail. Mr. Loeper indicated it is his understanding that several years ago it was represented that DEP had issued a remediation plan, but staff would have to go through some old files to see what is there.

The discussion continued regarding this site during which Mr. McGrory stated he wants to have an analysis with a reasonable, logical and rational basis for leaving the zoning the way it is or zoning in whatever other district is

ultimately decided. Mr. McGrory also asked about the comp plan for that area. Mr. Loeper responded he would have to look at the specifics, but he believes it might be one of the parcels that has specific guidelines. Mr. McGrory stated it is important to find out what is in the comp plan. He further indicated whatever is done from a map change perspective needs to be compared against the comp plan to make sure they are consistent and in sync, and if they are not then the comp plan needs to be changed.

Mrs. Kenney commented one of the Vision 20/20 items that was done in 2005 was development of the river front. She asked if nothing was done to the river front area and it was kept industrial if it could be changed to recreational in the future if the township would gain access. Mr. Loeper said he does not see why that could not be done.

Mr. Loeper indicated he would like to obtain some feedback on the area zoned Industrial in the South Gulph Road area between Brooks Road down to US 202. He said there are older industrial buildings that have “morphed” into other uses, but are zoned Industrial. There is also the unique situation of the single family homes on South Gulph Road. Specific commercial properties were also discussed. Mr. Waks pointed out it is also an area where feedback is needed from residents.

Mr. Waks asked the three individuals who have buildings in that area for their thoughts. Comments included:

- It is currently zoned Limited Industrial and that is the most appropriate for that zone. It would allow administrative support offices and it does not allow professional offices. In making it an office zone it would change the makeup of its current use. *Mr. Loeper commented the Commercial Industrial was the merge of some of the SM-1 and the Limited Industrial. The uses are similar.*
- We are all for an expansion of uses. These are former industrial buildings converted to office that are currently appropriate for that type of use.
- It would affect our business because if it was converted to an office use or administrative office use or office industrial rather than commercial industrial it takes away a lot of uses.
- Do not want to see our building go to Office Industrial or Administrative Industrial because it takes away a lot of uses that are perfect and we are happy with the status quo.

With regard to Lockheed, Mr. Jenaway stated they had a master plan which may or may not still be in effect. He asked if it would affect their master plan if the property is rezoned. Mr. Loeper commented he remembers when there were a series of weekly meetings with Lockheed about putting a road through their property. Lockheed was considering the possibility of more office use and were having a difficult time recruiting younger people. Lockheed was

looking at the possibility of identifying parts of their property that might be appropriate for multi-families. Mr. Loeper stated he has not had any contact with any one from Lockheed since then.

A discussion ensued about the GSK property being vacated in Swedeland in two or three years. Mr. Waks noted the very nice residential area near there and an inquiry should be made with the residents as to what they would like the township to possibly do with the situation.

The discussion returned to the river front property. Mr. Forster noted the nearby 50 acre parcel they own at the waterfront in Bridgeport which they plan to develop for townhomes and apartments. Utilizing the aerial he pointed out the location of their trail planned along the river to the end of their site. He also pointed out the location of the Schuylkill River West Trail.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there is any way to make a connection from their property to provide access to the township's riverfront. A discussion ensued during which Mr. Forster indicated that it is conceivable and various members of the group suggested ways to make that happen.

Mr. Waks asked if more discussion is needed about Renaissance Boulevard.

Mr. McGrory stated an analysis is needed of the proposed map to the comp plan to see where the discrepancies are. Mr. Forester stated he would not be happy if it remained SM-1 since it really restricts it to the office uses and vacancies are occurring there.

A discussion followed about the Drummond tract during which Mr. Philips suggested having it rezoned residential.

Mr. Loeper stated in moving forward he would like to get some feedback about the issue of sustainable buildings and take a look at the comp plans and do an analysis to show what is in the comp plan and what was in [the proposed zoning]. Some alternate scenarios can be looked at in terms of certain parcels such as the area behind the Towers and along the river as to whether to drop them out of this process and leave them alone, go back and address them later and focus attention on the areas that are really active such as the South Henderson and Church Road corridors where there would be likely pressure to redevelop.

ADJOURNMENT:

Without further comment from the Board and public, it was moved by Mr. Philips, seconded by Mr. Jenaway, all voting "Aye" to adjourn the workshop meeting at 6:38 p.m.. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.

DAVID G. KRAYNIK
SECRETARY-TREASURER/
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: