

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORKSHOP MEETING
MAY 1, 2014

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Workshop Meeting on Thursday, May 1, 2014, in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m., followed by a pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Waks, Erika Spott and Carole Kenney. Also present were: Sally Slook, Assistant Township Manager; Joseph McGrory, Township Solicitor.

CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS:

Chairman Waks reported an Executive Session was held prior to this meeting to discuss a legal matter.

DISCUSSIONS:

TURNPIKE CORRIDOR STUDY STATUS REPORT BY BRIAN O'LEARY,
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Mr. Brian O'Leary, Montgomery County Planning Commission, provided an update on the Turnpike Corridor Project which encompasses the whole corridor from King of Prussia to Horsham/Willow Grove. Seven slip ramp locations have been identified for study; two locations are in Upper Merion Township.

Mr. O'Leary discussed the current market trends and the goal to reinvigorate the office/industrial parks along the Pennsylvania Turnpike within the affected communities by modernizing existing interchanges and providing strategic new ones. Another objective is to encourage the business community to reinvest/redevelop the office/business properties and parks within the affected communities through more mixed land uses and modern zoning.

Leo Bagley, Montgomery County Planning Commission, stated the whole issue of the Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Project is predicated on the Turnpike getting All-Electronic Tolling (AET). In the last 18 months the Montgomery County Planning Commission has been working with the Turnpike, PennDOT, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and all the townships and boroughs along the corridor to plan modifying existing interchanges and where it makes sense provide new interchanges.

With regard to modification of the Valley Forge Interchange, Mr. Bagley indicated the design team of Boles Smyth Associates has been looking at how full access could be provided off the Turnpike and the Schuylkill Expressway into the King of Prussia Business Park. He said this is a doable option and they are making strides with both PennDOT and the Turnpike.

Mr. Waks asked that the Montgomery County Planning Commission communicate with the residential community in the area about this project which will help reduce residential commute time.

Mr. Waks mentioned the Road Diet proposed at First Avenue and Moore Road and asked if First Avenue one lane in each direction could handle the additional traffic. Mr. O'Leary responded the intersections at both Gulph Road and Moore Road (which is where the interchange would come out the five lane cross section) would still be needed, but the rest of the roadway going toward Allendale Road could easily work with two lanes.

Mrs. Kenney asked if it would be necessary for any additional traffic lights. Mr. O'Leary responded in the negative.

Mrs. Kenney asked for more clarification about All-Electronic Tolling. Mr. O'Leary responded there would be video recording of license plates and a bill would be issued. He noted legislation would be required in all states and may be implemented for the whole Turnpike over the next decade.

Mr. O'Leary discussed the potential Henderson Road Interchange options. One option is a roundabout option and they could also do a regular intersection. He indicated they have not received traffic volumes as yet from DVRPC and when these come in it will be determined how big the roundabout needs to be. The roundabout would provide movements in both directions on and off and east and west. The Chester Valley Trail is also being taken into consideration to get down to Henderson Road. Mr. O'Leary pointed out the Henderson Road Interchange will be a great "back door" access into King of Prussia coming from the east and will allow a whole rethinking of the Swedeland area and what that access might afford. He noted the design for the Henderson Widening of the South Gulph Road widening project has been reactivated through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that was part of the Decade of Investment. Road improvements are planned on both Gulph Road and Henderson Road over the next four to six years.

A discussion followed about the properties located near the proposed roundabout as well as proposed development near Saulin Boulevard. Mr. McGrory recommended certain notations that should be made on the township's official street map.

Mrs. Kenney asked about the timeline for the Henderson Road Interchange. Mr. O'Leary responded Traffic Modeling should be done this summer and there is a high degree of interest in Harrisburg from both the Turnpike and PennDOT to move on this.

Mr. Waks asked about the legislature. Mr. O'Leary responded the legislature needs to advance All-Electronic Tolling and there is general bipartisan interest in doing so although there are some issues to work through. Mr. O'Leary indicated currently the money is not available for this project and they are trying to line up funding. He said Public Private Partnership could be used to implement recommendations with a combination of tolls and PennDOT and Turnpike money. Funding is the first issue and then there are several years of design and right-of-way which would place possible construction by the end of the decade.

Mrs. Spott asked how the Henderson Road interchange lines up with one of the potential routes for the SEPTA High Speed Line. Mr. O'Leary responded it would all be elevated and would come along the Peco right-of-way. He said they made sure that anything that was done with one project would be compatible with the other including the Chester Valley Trail.

CONSIDER DEED RESTRICTIONS ON SALE OF TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE

This discussion was prompted by the question as to whether or not deed restrictions would preclude future Boards of Supervisors from selling parcels of open space. Mr. McGrory stated some types of open space cannot be sold depending on how it was acquired. Open space for development, for example, is a zoning requirement that exists so it cannot go anywhere even if it is dedicated to the township. It is still part of the zoning. The same applies to open space acquired with Open Space funds. With regard to open space acquired without grants and with the township's own money, Mr. McGrory said this would be a "double edged sword." While it would tie the hands of future boards, such a restriction is not desirable because the future is unknown. It is not known what financial constraints might be on the township in the future or what development proposal. The open space would be preserved in perpetuity by placing a covenant on the property; however, that covenant would have to be enforceable by some entity other than the township. If the covenant were made enforceable by just the township a future Board could decide not to enforce the covenant and sell the open space anyway.

Mrs. Kenney asked how much open space in the township has been purchased with only township funds. Mr. Greenly indicated he would check this out.

Mrs. Kenney asked if this is something that should receive additional consideration or if everyone was comfortable not having any deed restrictions on open space.

The consensus was not to act on anything as yet although it would be worth giving it some more thought. Mrs. Spott suggested finding out how much open space land is involved.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN – BONEFISH GRILL, 160 N. GULPH ROAD, KING OF PRUSSIA MALL (PLAZA), WIDEN EXISTING SIDEWALK TO ALLOW OUTDOOR DINING AREA AT FORMER TGI FRIDAYS. (MINOR PLAN, REQUEST WAIVER OF LAND DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS)

Mr. Scott Greenly, Associate Planner, stated Simon Property Group is proposing to convert the former TGI Friday's Restaurant into a Bonefish Grill Restaurant. In addition to internal alterations, an outdoor seating patio is proposed which would provide seating for 24 patrons. To accommodate the patio, the existing curb and sidewalk will be extended 10 feet into the drive aisle and match the existing sidewalk/curb at the adjacent Mall entrance. It does not affect the drive aisles. The driveway width will be 30 feet and will not affect the parking. The applicant is requesting a waiver from the official land development and subdivision process.

Mr. McGrory asked if there are any safety features associated with the plan such as bollards. Mr. Castranio responded there is going to be a 6 to 8 inch curb and a minimum of six feet will be maintained from the curb line.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there will still be an entrance directly from inside the Mall as well as from outside at the parking lot. Mr. Castranio responded in the affirmative. He said they would have a revolving door as their main Bonefish Grill feature.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there would be any greenery or buffer for the outdoor dining area. Mr. Castranio responded there is a metal railing for the patio and they will address the screening for the parking when the building plan is submitted.

A discussion followed about getting all the documents in order for consideration of the plan at the May 15th business meeting.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN – PERFECT POOCH, 200 KING MANOR DRIVE. CONSTRUCT 3,800 SF STRUCTURE OVER EXISTING PAVED AREA FOR OUTDOOR DOG PLAY AREA. (MINOR PLAN, REQUEST WAIVER OF LAND DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS)

Mr. Greenly stated the property at 200 King Manor Drive is currently zoned Heavy Industrial and is currently used as a Doggie Daycare. The applicant is proposing the construction of a 3,800 square foot building that will be attached to the existing structure. The remaining sides will have overhead doors to create an open air play/exercise yard, with the ability to be enclosed during inclement weather.

The area where the proposed building will be located is existing impervious and historically occupied by a smaller structure. The applicant is requesting the waiver of formal land development and subdivision requirements due to the minimal impact of the proposal.

Mr. Waks asked about the properties adjacent to 200 King Manor Drive. Mr. Greenly responded they are mostly heavy industrial such as an elevator company, Peco right of way and SEPTA tracks.

Mrs. Kenney asked for clarification about the proposed structure, and was informed by the applicant's representative that the proposed building will be attached on the one side in the back to the existing building, which is primarily used as a kenneling area.

A discussion followed regarding details that need to be in place for consideration at the May 15th business meeting.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN – OAK HILL PLAZA, 200 N. GULPH ROAD. WAIVER TO RESTRIPE PARKING LOT, INCREASE PARKING FROM 564 SPACES (3.5 SPACES/1000 GLA) TO 661 SPACES (4.1 SPACES/100 GLA). REDUCE STALL WIDTH FROM 9.5 FT. TO 8 FT.

Mr. Greenly stated the applicant has submitted a request on behalf of the Oak Hill Plaza property owners to restripe the existing parking lot. Built in 1983, the original plan identified 468 parking spaces. Over the years the parking has been reconfigured and at present there are 564 spaces which is under what the township code requires. The applicant is proposing to restripe the entire parking lot to create 661 spaces which would place them in compliance with the code; however, two waivers are being requested to reduce the stall from 9.5 feet to 8 feet and provide single rather than double line striping.

Mr. Thomas Austin, President and Traffic Planner, TRG Transportation Resource Group, Inc., outlined their reasons and justifications for the waivers.

Considerable discussion was devoted to the applicant's proposal to take the stall from 9.5 feet to 8 feet with single as opposed to double striping.

Mr. Austin stated the applicant does not have room to expand and noted the other option is to go off site. Mr. Waks stated that is something that should

be explored as well as the use of public transportation such as the Business Improvement District's (BID) Connector shuttle. He suggested the owners of the building be in touch with the BID about the success they have had with the Connector.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved by Mrs. Kenney, seconded by Mrs. Spott, all voting "Aye" to adjourn the workshop meeting at 8:45 p.m.. None opposed. Motion approved 3-0.

DAVID G. KRAYNIK
SECRETARY-TREASURER/
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: