

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORKSHOP MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 2016

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Workshop Meeting on Thursday, October 13, 2016, in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 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: Dave Kraynik, Township Manager; Sally Slook, Assistant Township Manager; Joseph McGrory, Solicitor; Rob Loeper, Township Planner; Kyle Brown, Associate Planner; and Casey Moore, Traffic Engineer, McMahan Associates. Supervisor Erika Spott was absent.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS:

Chairman Jenaway reported earlier this evening a zoning workshop was held to discuss various zoning districts and was followed by an Executive Session to discuss litigation.

DISCUSSIONS:

UPDATE ON THE TRAIRS/GIS PROJECT, RESULTING IN IMPROVED TRACKING OF PUBLIC WORKS SERVICES

Mr. Kraynik stated staff has been working with McMahan Associates for the past year on the web-based software solution McMahan has developed known as TrairTM. This software provides instant access for citizens to log into a portal for various public works data such as progress of leaf collection, snow removal, street sweeping, etc. which will be updated in 15-minute intervals.

Casey A. Moore, P.E., Vice President and Regional Manager, McMahan Associates, introduced Brian Berdel, CSM, Chief Information Officer, McMahan Associates, who is the lead developer of the Trair module asset management system.

Mr. Berdel provided a brief overview of Trair and discussed some of the different modules that are in the early phases of implementation and the capabilities of the software in the management of day-to-day operations. He focused on the GPS module where the public portal comes into play in what is called Operations Centrl. GIS data is integrated with GPS data. Plow routes, leaf collection routes, and street sweeper routes are in the system ready to be

accessed as needed. As an example, when a winter storm occurs an event is started in Traisr and all the plow routes are loaded within the system. When an event starts all the roads are white and as trucks plow over a street segment the roads turn green.

In response to Mrs. Kenney's question, Mr. Berdel said there is a sensor in the GPS device indicating when the plow is down as well as when there is actual sweeping or leaf collecting occurring. The road maps are color coded to determine what has been done. If the township gets a call indicating a plow has not been down a certain street, it will be possible to click on any road segment and view the history of a particular road which will indicate every pass the truck makes.

Mrs. Kenney asked if outside contractors will have sensors. Mr. Kraynik responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Berdel reviewed the various public maps and what the public will be able to see when they click on a link for snow emergency routes, snow plow map, etc. It was noted Upper Merion Township will only show the public the final cleanup after the snow has stopped.

Mr. Berdel pointed out Traisr can also update road closures in red as well as associated detours on a separate map.

Mr. Moore mentioned one of the goals is to educate the public how they can view the maps 24 hours a day as needed for various events thereby reducing calls to the township. The educational effort will be accomplished with newsletters, social media and other methods of communication the township will utilize to roll out Traisr. McMahon will be working with the Public Works Department as time goes on and as situations evolve Traisr will be customized to add other functions as needed.

Mr. Waks asked when Traisr will go online. Mr. Kraynik responded it is going online before the leaf collection program starts. Mr. Kraynik stated the Public Information Office will start the education process.

Mr. Ed O'Brien, Public Works Director, stated public works staff has been doing a lot of work with McMahon. He has received street sweeping, traffic signal maintenance, and sanitary sewer mapping. They did not discuss parcel and easement ID's as yet. Mr. O'Brien indicated staff are using traffic signal work orders in the system now and they will be doing the same with sanitary and storm sewers. Vehicle maintenance will be using the system to track maintenance and just about everything that is done in the Public Works Department will be touched by Traisr.

Mrs. Kenney asked how Traisr will be able to help with the stormwater

study that will be done. Mr. Berdel responded they have the standard DEP outfall inspections form built into the system already although it has not been implemented for Upper Merion as yet. He added that can be done at any time. Mr. Berdel indicated they have full MS-4 tracking capabilities in the system and reporting. He said they have clients not only doing outfall inspections but anything related to MS-4 can be collected digitally in the field. The system is updated automatically. Digital mapping, forms, reports and inspections are all in one place and readily available at the end of the year when reporting is done.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there is any pushback from those that are used to paper and pencil. Mr. Berdel responded in the affirmative and said for the most part 80% of the people find it easy to use.

Mrs. Kenney asked who will be using the tablets out in the field. Mr. O'Brien responded about five managers will have the devices.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there will be training for all the staff. Mr. Berdel responded McMahon has been back quite a few times for training and has met at least once a month with public works since this process started in January.

Mr. Philips asked if Traisr can indicate where a truck has been or where it is going. Mr. Berdel responded the system has that capability.

Mr. Jenaway asked about the code enforcement legacy data. Mr. Berdel responded they provided a demo for staff.

Mr. Jenaway asked about the other communities that have Traisr in this region. Mr. Berdel identified several surrounding municipalities that have already implemented Traisr.

Mrs. Kenney asked for a demonstration of something practical as filling in a form. Mr. Berdel provided a demo of a work order for a traffic signal.

WOODSPRING SUITES PHILADELPHIA KING OF PRUSSIA, LLC, 651 PARK AVENUE, CONSTRUCT A NEW 4-STORY HOTEL BUILDING, APPROXIMATELY 49,880 SQUARE FEET 2,046 ACRES, KPMU ZONING DISTRICT

Hercules W. Grigos, zoning counsel for the project, introduced Scott W. Bixler, AIA, Woodspring Hotels and Frank Montgomery, traffic engineer. He indicated they met with township officials over the summer to present their plan for the site which is located at First and Park Avenue. Mr. Grigos indicated Woodspring Suites is an extended stay hotel, which is a permitted use in the KPMU – King of Prussia Mixed Use District. The applicant's position is the unique physical characteristics of the property, namely the triangular shape, create an unnecessary hardship which prevents development of the property in

strict conformance with the provisions of the zoning ordinance. Mr. Grigos said the applicant's team worked hard to figure out how to minimize waivers and variances during this process. The plan was designed to maintain the minimum front setback planned for First Avenue and make sure parking stalls were an appropriate size. He indicated variances would be needed for loading space, number of parking spaces and the parking setback on Park Avenue.

An unidentified member of the applicant's team provided a summary of the different plan iterations. Originally the building was in the center of the site with 9 by 18 parking spaces and 24 large drive aisles. In order to comply with the parking stall size requirement the plan was revised from a four-story building to a six-story building which was pushed towards the back of the property. This plan generated a lot of variances [the plan was revised back to a four-story building]. After a couple of meetings with Eric Goldstein, King of Prussia Business Improvement District, it was recommended the applicant comply with the 75 foot maximum front setback.

Mr. Bixler stated the applicant meets the 75 foot front setback off of First Street. There are 112 parking spaces and 126 are needed. A perpetual shared parking agreement has been obtained with the neighboring property (SunGuard) for an additional 15 parking spaces.

With regard to the loading zone, Mr. Bixler said the only time there is anything larger than a standard pickup is when equipment is delivered. The side yard setback requirement along Park Avenue is 25 feet and the applicant is at 10 feet because of the depth of the parking stalls. He noted a lot of landscaping is needed.

Mr. Bixler provided some background on Woodspring Hotels. Some renderings were shown and it was noted the applicant is somewhat flexible on the exterior since different jurisdictions have different requirements. The interior design is similar across the country.

Mr. Bixler said after changing the direction of its extended stay hotel in the last two years Woodspring's national average is a little over 85% occupancy. Ideally, Woodspring rents by the week. Their base clientele are people in occupations requiring 10-16 week stays and they do not have to rely on nightly rentals.

Mr. Bixler indicated the four-story extended stay hotel will be a stick frame building with 2 by 6 wall construction, concrete floors and completely sprinkled throughout.

Mr. Jenaway asked about meeting rooms. Mr. Bixler responded they do not have large meeting rooms. He said one of the things that Woodspring allows to keep their costs down and have the lower rate is they do not have a lot of

ancillary space, although they have increased the lobby size dramatically. They do not have a restaurant, but they do have a snack area and each of the rooms has a refrigerator, a three burner cooktop and microwave.

Mr. Jenaway provided observations on the experience in Upper Merion with extended stay. He said there is an extended stay where some clientele come with pickup trucks and trailers; they are not people who come in a rental car and stay for three days. They come for three or four weeks and park a trailer creating parking issues not just taking up spaces but contributing to congestion occurring within those spaces. Mr. Grigos responded that was a fair point and it is something that could be discussed, possibly as a condition, in land development.

Mr. Jenaway asked why the decision was made not to do a six-story building. Mr. Grigos responded in going higher it changes the setbacks and generates more variances. In going higher you cannot go with a stick frame and steel is more expensive. Also, they could not get to the maximum setback and do six stories. Going back to the four-story generated less variances and they were able to accomplish the proximity to First Avenue.

Mr. Jenaway asked for more clarification about the perpetual agreement regarding parking. Mr. Grigos responded it would be an easement with the land not a lease. He said it is a lot more expensive to get the perpetual easement.

Mr. Waks stated there have been situations where extended stay begins to function as de facto apartments and asked for a definition of "extended stay." Mr. Bixler responded extended stay is a concept where people stay on average between three and four weeks. It is possible to manage the operational process without having 35 or 40 staff. When focus groups are asked what they could do without and what they would like within an extended stay concept their response is they would like to cook in their room and it is not necessary to clean their room and make their bed every day. Mr. Bixler said Woodspring is not an apartment use and by code they are an R-1 use which is a transient use and their average stay across the country currently is 21 days.

Mr. Grigos stated Woodspring has no intention of turning the extended stay into an apartment building. Extended stay is more expensive than getting an apartment with fewer amenities.

Mr. Philips pointed out it is not just about Woodspring it is about who the property is sold to. He reiterated Mr. Waks' point that there have been instances where extended stays morph into apartments.

Mr. Grigos stated the applicant will do anything reasonable and offered assurance that the applicant has no intention of converting to an apartment. Mr. Bixler commented it is going to be very difficult to get anyone to address this

because it is a permitted use and all that can be done is deny a concept.

Mr. Philips asked if there a way to do something in the covenant saying it cannot be used as apartments. Mr. McGrory responded a covenant would not be the best approach and asked if the applicant would agree as a condition of zoning approval that it not become an apartment complex. Mr. Grigos stated Woodspring has no intention of operating an apartment complex. Mr. McGrory said it would not affect the title and just be tied to zoning. Mr. Grigos commented if a future owner were to try to run this as an apartment there would be a code enforcement action rather than litigation. Mr. Bixler stated the applicant is not going to change this use to an apartment but understands as far as trying to get something tied in [to zoning].

Mr. Waks asked how many children are at the typical Woodspring extended stay. Mr. Bixler responded not very many since most people are there for job-related purposes. Mr. Waks commented his question was prompted by the potential impact on the school district.

A discussion followed about certain occasions when families might want the extended stay for such things as relocation, house burnout, etc.

Mr. Jenaway asked if there are multiple bedroom units or just one. Mr. Bixler responded just one.

Mr. Waks asked for clarification about Mr. Bixler's statement that this concept is very profitable and they have flexibility in exterior building materials. Mr. Bixler responded by flexibility is meant they need to discuss what the requirements are and they need to understand what would work and what would not work. Mr. Waks said Mr. Eric Goldstein is present at this meeting and would like to comment. Mr. McGrory noted as part of the zoning approval there is an architectural review from the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Grigos said the applicant welcomes the opportunity to have everyone's input.

Mrs. Kenney asked if the six-story building would have had 123 rooms, the same as the four-story building. Mr. Bixler responded in the affirmative. Mr. Grigos pointed out it would have been a more narrow building.

Mrs. Kenney asked for an idea of the price points. Mr. Bixler responded he estimated somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400 to \$500 a week, but was unsure of the amount and could check with some of the operators.

Mr. McGrory asked how the supervisors felt about the shared parking compared to the parking variance request. He pointed out if the shared parking is granted it negates the need for a variance. Two supervisors were okay with shared parking and two supervisors had concerns for the long term.

Mr. Loeper observed one of the things regarding shared parking that works in helping the balance is the office peaks during the day and the hotel peaks at night.

Mrs. Kenney asked about the pedestrian connectivity if someone is utilizing shared parking. Mr. Bixler described the walkway connection although it was not marked on the map.

Mr. Jenaway asked if there is a provision in the agreement that parking spaces will be within "X" number of feet walking distance. Mr. Grigos responded he believes the easement has specifically designated spaces for Woodspring's use as well as a walkway across.

Mr. McGrory asked about the 10 feet versus 25 feet [off-street parking setback] and what Woodspring can do in the 10 feet with additional buffering or screening that would provide the same benefit of a 25 foot setback. Mr. Bixler responded landscape could be provided the full width as well as lower landscaping to buffer the front of automobiles. Mr. Grigos said Woodspring would do anything reasonable and is willing to work with the Board of Supervisors, township engineer and township staff on buffering and landscaping to make sure that it is better. Mr. Bixler said things like berms could be helpful as well as lighting along the sidewalk.

Mr. McGrory engaged Mr. Bixler and Mr. Grigos in a discussion regarding the best way to proceed procedurally.

Mr. Jenaway stated he likes the idea of lighting and a berm in that it would provide a visual effect going up the hill. Mr. Bixler commented it would be something that would be a little serpentine.

A discussion followed regarding the workshop agenda after which Mr. Kraynik indicated Woodspring could be placed last on the agenda for November 3rd. Mr. McGrory stated their information as indicated in their procedural discussion would be required ahead of time.

Mr. McGrory summarized the condition would be architectural review by the supervisors and a condition of zoning that it would not become an apartment complex. Before the zoning hearing a landscape plan at least for the 10 foot setback area with review and approval by the Board of Supervisors for that area, and that the building be 75 feet no more or less from First Avenue.

From the Public:

Eric Goldstein, KOP Business Improvement District, expressed opposition to the granting of variances and design waivers to allow the extended stay use to occur. He stated the township does not need to grant variances and design

waivers because it is a difficult lot since the applicant could select a different lot. Mr. Goldstein stated should this project move towards approval he would ask the supervisors to insist that exterior products represent long term quality and durability and that the guidelines in the SALDO be adhered to. Mr. McGroby stated he is proposing the addition of a condition to the zoning which carries much more “teeth” to have architectural review.

Mark McKee, planning commission, commented on the setback from the roadway and said it is not just to buffer the parking area but to make this a walkable space with public amenities.

COLONIAL ELECTRIC/BRIGHT LIGHTS: 485 S. HENDERSON ROAD.
DEMOLITION OF EXISTING OFFICE/WAREHOUSE AND CONSTRUCTION
OF NEW 8,000+SF LIGHTING SHOWROOM. 1.4 ACRES/LI

Mr. Rob Loeper, Township Planner, discussed a development plan for a property located at 485 S. Henderson Road. Utilizing the aerial, Mr. Loeper pointed out features on the 1.4 acre parcel in the LI District. The current non-conforming building is beyond its useful age and currently has no stormwater management. The owners of Colonial Electric/Bright Lights propose to move the showroom from the current location to a new building. The new building will be basically the same size about 8,000 square feet in approximately the same location. Asphalt will be removed from the site which will result in a 20% reduction of total impervious. In addition, best management practices will be provided for stormwater management. Parking will remain in the front as well as on the side. An easement is shared with Fairmount Athletic. The owners are under some time constraints since the current landlord is not willing to extend their lease.

After responding to a few clarifying questions from the supervisors, Mr. Loeper indicated the applicant’s engineer will be submitting the engineered plan for review by the township engineer and will be going before the planning commission. He indicated possible Board of Supervisors consideration in November or December.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Board, it was moved by Mr. Waks, seconded by Mr. Philips, all voting "Aye" to adjourn the meeting. None opposed. Motion approved 5-0. Adjournment occurred at 9:43 p.m.

DAVID G. KRAYNIK
SECRETARY-TREASURER/
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: