

**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
June 1, 2021**

The Springfield Township Planning Commission met in a regularly scheduled meeting at 7:03 P.M., by way of a Zoom Digital Broadcast. Present at the meeting were Ms. Helwig, Ms. Murray, Ms. Blankin, Mr. Devine, Mr. Mascaro, Mr. Gutowski, Mr. Schaefer and Mr. Quill. Also in attendance were Commissioner Baird Standish, Mr. Aaron Holly, Community Planner from Montgomery County Planning Commission and Mark Penecale, Director of Planning & Zoning.

Approval of the Minutes:

The minutes of the May 4, 2021 meeting were approved.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Standish informed the Planning Commission of the presentation made by Natural Lands Trust to the Board of Commissioners last month and the services they could provide to the Township. The Appeal to the Actions of the Zoning Officer filed by the owner of 7914 Cheltenham Avenue for the operation of a sober living house was discussed and the continued date for that hearing was announced. Commissioner Standish briefed the Planning Commission on the revisions made to the classification of our parks and the effect this will have on use and permitting of the parks. The Planning Commission was informed of the grant obtained by Mr. Ford for improvements to Mermaid Park. In closing the Commissioner briefed the Planning Commission on several ongoing traffic related issues within the Township.

Old Business:

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business:

The owner and applicant for the properties located at 380 & 402 Haws Lane presented a rendering and proposed layout of 41 townhouse units on the 4.79 acre site zoned within the Institutional District of Ward #4 of Springfield Township. The applicant presented the sketch and stated that the 41 units are proposed to be two story construction, with a basement level two car garage. Due to the topography on the site the units would have walkout basements and appear to be three story units. Each unit would contain three bedrooms and 2.5 baths. Each unit would have parking for two vehicles within the garage and two additional surface parking stalls. The development as a whole would have 24 additional parking spaces to be used as overflow parking. The applicant is proposing to install a connective walking trail to connect the development to the adjoining school property and Haws Lane. This presentation was provided by Mr. Christopher Canavan, Mr. Brian Halligan and Mr. Bradley McClearly.

The Planning Commission questioned the applicant and provided the following comments:

Mr. Gutowski stated that the proposed use was not permitted within the current zoning district and asked if the zoning issues would be addressed by way of the zoning hearing board, a zoning text amendment or a zoning overlay? Mr. Gutowski would like to know what affect this proposed development would have on the balance of the Institutional Zoning District. He believes an inventory of the existing uses within the district would be helpful. He stated that there is no mass transit service within close proximity to this site. He is in favor of the proposed connective trail, but believes that the “mass” of the proposed project on Haws Lane is too intense. He suggested to reduce the number of units fronting on Haws Lane and consider a greater front yard setback to allow for more flexibility in the plantings that will be required.

The question was raised concerning the conversion of garage space into either storage area or additional living space. The applicant stated that a conversion of this type would be prohibited by the Home Owners Association Agreement. In addition, all common areas would be maintained by the HOA.

Mr. Quill asked what range the units would sell for? The answer was starting at \$580,000.00 to \$625,000.00.

Ms. Helwig asked if the units would be staggered to off-set the solid wall look of a five or six unit structure. The answer was yes and this would be done with architectural off-sets that would stagger the depth of each unit. In addition, elevated decks will be added to the rear of each unit.

Ms. Helwig asked who the target buyer is. The response was that these units appeal to first time buyers and those looking to downsize from the standard single family dwelling and reduce the weekly maintenance on a property. The applicant stated that a development of this type does not appeal to couples with children of school age. He stated that a study done by Montgomery County Planning Commission shows that a development of this type only generates .2 school age children per unit. Ms. Helwig asked if the rendering had been shared with or reviewed by the STEMS “Springfield Township Emergency Management” group. The answer was not at this time.

Mr. Devine asked for an explanation of the on-site parking and the placement of the 24 overflow parking stalls provided. Mr. Canavan stated that location of the 24 overflow spaces may change as the plan is developed, but that they wanted to show the overflow parking and it was placed in what is currently projected to be open areas.

Ms. Blankin stated that she is in favor of a townhouse development and believes that the mixture of residential options is a benefit to the community. In addition, she would like to see a plan for the open space and what existing vegetation is proposed to be removed and what is proposed to remain.

Mr. Gutowski stated that other townhouse developments within the Township are different and pointed out that those sites have greater lot areas, the density is less and the development is not on top of the street frontage.

Ms. Helwig asked how the zoning related issues with this proposal would be addressed. Mr. Halligan stated that they are exploring several different options that would involve either a zoning text amendment, zoning overlay or an application to the zoning hearing board.

Public Comments:

Mr. Robert Stodola, 309 Haws Lane, stated that the zoning related questions are very hard for the lay person to understand. Residents that do not deal with this on a regular basis do not know the difference between a zoning text amendment and a zoning overlay. He also believes that list of the current uses along Haws Lane would be beneficial in the review of this proposal.

Mr. Mark Marfara, 120 Azalea Way, stated that he in favor of residential development instead of the Life Care Facility use that was proposed for this site.

Mr. Richard Metz, 910 Bent Lane, stated that he wants the woodlands to remain untouched. He stated that many trees on the site are over 100 years old and he would like the property owner to donate the ground to the Township or School District. He believes that this proposal has caused separation within the neighborhood.

Ms. Carol Lockard, 1202 Wakefield Road, stated that she believes that the existing structures at 402 Haws Lane have historical value and the projected number of children that this development would generate for the School District is under estimated. She believes that the two play areas located on the school property next to this development will attract families to this project.

Mr. Michael Comroy, 411 Haws Lane, stated that there are existing sanitary sewer flow issues on his neighbor's property and believes that the development of this site will increase the issues. He stated that there is a sanitary sewer easement that runs through both his and his neighbor's property.

Mr. Michael Varzally, 120 Haws Lane, asked if there was an elevation drawing that better depicted the 35 foot setback and the rise of the proposed building. No additional renderings were available. He asked what the square footage of the units would be. The applicant stated the units would be between 2,000 and 2,400 square feet.

Mr. William Zager, 35 E Wissahickon Avenue, stated that he is opposed to the density and does not believe that the projected number of school age children is correct.

Ms. Linda Zager, 35 E Wissahickon Avenue, stated that she is opposed to the density and does not believe that the projected number of school age children is correct.

Ms. Anna Dhody, 1202 St Clair Road, asked if a wildlife study has been completed on this site and asked why the applicant would not consider a conservation easement for the properties involved. A wildlife study has not been completed and conservation easement is not being considered.

Ms. Shawn Riangold, 1306 Church Road, asked if a traffic study has been completed and wants to make sure that the intersection of Church Road and Haws Lane is included. She stated that this intersection is unusable at certain times of the day. She asked what the time frame would be if this project was to be approved. Mr. Canavan stated that he would project a 18 to 24 month buildout for this site.

Ms. Marjorie Forgione, 423 Suffolk Road, asked why the prior plan for a 107 bed, four story high life care facility was still valid. She stated that she likes the life care facility plan better as there would be less traffic and more green space. She would like to know if this approved, what would stop the developer from purchasing the Hasston Hall tract and building more townhouses there. No answer was provided.

Ms. Ellen Stevenson, 18 Rose Lane, stated that she is opposed to any development due to the loss of green space, global warming and the density is just too great. She stated that Township has already lost open space to the Falcon Hill Development and the Reserve at Creekside Development. Please note the Reserve Development is within Whitemarsh Township.

Ms. Elizabeth McNamara, 1211 Greenhill Road, stated that she is opposed to the development due to the density, the increase in traffic and storm water run-off. She asked is the proposed units have first floor master suites. The units do not have first floor master suites. She believes this development would not suit empty nesters due to the number of stairs and all the bedrooms being on the second floor. She would also like to know if 41 units is the real number.

Mr. Eric Lukas, 408 Suffolk Road, stated that these units look more like rowhomes than townhouses. He claims this rowhome look is not a look the residents likes. In addition, he stated that parking on Wedgewood Road is impassible when the school has events.

Mr. James Belcher, 203 Haws Lane, stated that he is in favor of development within the existing township codes. In addition, he stated that the traffic on Haws Lane has increased greatly and invited our Police Department to use his driveway to view the speeding issues and those that do not stop at the stop signs.

Ms. Betsy Wallace, Chestnut Hill Local, asked what an overlay is. Mr. Penecale explained the difference between a zoning text amendment and a zoning overlay.

Mr. Michael McCann, 208 Suffolk Road, stated that traffic is a major issue and 41 additional homes will only compound the problem. In addition, he stated that when the school has an event parking within the neighborhood is a problem that needs to be addressed development or no development.

Mr. Michael Kolodan, 1007 Frazier Road, stated that he is opposed to the development due to his belief that buildings are too high, the density is too great and the development needs more open space. He also stated that traffic is a major problem.

Mr. Robert Hardner, 1204 Wedgewood Road, stated that 20 townhouses on Haws Lane would be too many and that the front of these buildings are too close to the street. He also does not believe that the projected number of school age children generated from this development is correct and claims it is too low. He stated that Springfield School District is a top school district and that is a major factor for younger families in purchasing a home.

Ms. Vivian Funchion, 136 Haws Lane, stated that traffic on Haws Lane is a major issue. The frontage of these proposed units is too much and the developer should add more green space. She claims that storm water run-off from this development will be a problem and that Haws Lane is a "river" when it rains.

Ms. Susan Stout, 8103 Hull Drive, thanked the developer for the presentation given tonight. She believes that the asking price is too high and would like to see a mixture of residential dwelling types.

The Chair asked if any additional commentary has been received. Mr. Penecale relayed that he was in possession of several emails that has been received, many containing commentary and questions have been addressed at this meeting. Ms. Helwig asked that these letters be shared with the developer to make sure the concerns listed within the emails could be addressed. In addition to the public comments and questions, the comments of Mr. David Sands, Planning Commission Member, concerning the over development of the site have been added to the file and have been forwarded to the developer.

This meeting generated 79 viewers in our ZOOM format.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 P.M.

The Planning Commission will meet again on June 15, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted
Mark A. Penecale
Director of Planning & Zoning