

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP**

The Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township met in public hearing on Wednesday evening, April 8, 2015 at 9:30 PM in the Springfield Township Building to consider a request to amend the Zoning Code map by rezoning the Lloyd tract, 1777 Willow Grove Avenue, Laverock, from “AA Residential” to the “Cluster Residential District” zoning district.

Mr. Dailey announced that the public hearing was being held in compliance with Section 609 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to consider a request by the owners of 1777 Willow Grove Avenue, Laverock, to amend the Springfield Township zoning code text within the “Cluster Residential District” zoning district and to amend the Zoning Code map by rezoning 32.337 acres of the Lloyd tract, 1777 Willow Grove Avenue, Laverock, from “AA Residential” to the “Cluster Residential District” zoning district.

Mr. Dailey stated that the legal requirements associated with the public hearing procedure have been met and were made a part of the official record.

Mr. Dailey summarized the two ordinances and noted the proposed zoning code map amendment rezones 32.337 acres of land located on the westerly side of Willow Grove Avenue near Newbold Lane in Springfield Township, which parcel has an address of 1777 Willow Grove Avenue, and which parcel is more particularly identified as Montgomery County Tax Parcel I.D. Nos. 52-00-18508-00-7, 52-00-18511-00-4, 52-00-18505-00-1, 52-00-18514-10-9, and 52-00-18514-00-1, from “AA Residential” to “Cluster Residential District”. He also indicated the text amendments to the Cluster Residential District, Article VII B, include modifications to the allowable density, land coverage, steep slope provisions, lot size, building height definition, building separation requirements, setbacks, buffers and street widths.

Mr. Dailey called on Ross Weiss, Esq., counsel for the Hansen Group, to make a presentation. Mr. Weiss introduced Bud Hansen and Dave Sherman of the Hansen Group, Dennis Glackin, a professional planner, and Jennifer Walsh, a professional traffic engineer. Mr. Weiss provided a brief summary of the current status and history of the property. The summary included the fact that approximately 32 acres of land in Springfield Township are being requested to be rezoned to accommodate 66 new single family detached dwellings and 4 existing dwellings. In Cheltenham Township, there are approximately ten acres of land within the Lloyd tract which may accommodate 18 single family detached dwellings. Mr. Weiss noted that Cheltenham Township went through a similar zoning amendment process and recently approved the zoning amendment requests. He noted that the Hansen Group has had an application before Cheltenham Township for approximately 7 years for 216 apartment units in buildings four to five stories in height. Since that time, the Hansen Group has made several modified proposals to the two Townships, none of which were satisfactory to the Townships.

Professional Planner Dennis Glackin addressed the Board of Commissioners and provided a sketch plan of a proposed development with statistics on the number of acres and number of dwellings to be accommodated on the Lloyd tract in both Springfield and Cheltenham Townships. Mr. Glackin also provided copies of the Springfield Township zoning code depicting the Stotesbury Townhomes development which is zoned Cluster Residential District and identified the Lloyd tract, currently zoned AA Residential, and being proposed to be rezoned to Cluster Residential District. The zoning map amendment ordinance providing metes and bounds descriptions of the 32 acres in Springfield Township to be rezoned was presented. Mr. Glackin took considerable time explaining to the Board each proposed amendment to the Cluster Residential District. The amendments are in the following areas: (1) density, (2) land coverage, (3) steep slopes, (4) lot size, (5) building height, (6) yard setbacks, including treatment of the pre-existing buildings, (7) boundary setbacks, (8) buffers, and (9) right of way and street width requirements. The ingress and egress will principally be on Willow Grove Avenue in a very similar location to the existing driveway. It was noted that the Harkins family, of Willow Grove Avenue, and the Hansen Group have recorded an agreement with regard to a secondary ingress to the Harkins property and the existing four buildings on the Lloyd tract. In addition to the ingress and egress for the Harkins, landscaping will be added, access to an existing barn will be provided, fencing will be provided, and possible access to the public sanitary sewer system will be provided. Mr. Glackin presented a fiscal impact summary table estimating the potential net real estate income for both the Township and School District if the proposed development was constructed. The estimated net Township fiscal impact was an increase of \$66,394 in real estate tax revenue.

Mr. Dailey opened the public hearing to questions from the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Dailey asked if this property was ever considered by the Township for the AAA Residential Zoning District. Mr. Glackin was not certain. Mr. Gillies asked the following questions: (1) asked for confirmation that 30% of the property was required to be left in open space and their proposal provided 37% open space; Mr. Glackin believed that was correct, (2) was there a trail system proposed throughout the development; Mr. Glackin responded in the affirmative, (3) inquired as to the number of homes permitted by-right under the existing zoning; Mr. Weiss suggested that the by-right plan would yield between 30 and 34, but maybe as high as 40, but the community open space would be lost, (4) asked if the maximum number of new dwellings in Springfield would be 66; Mr. Glackin indicated that was correct, (5) inquired whether the streets would be dedicated to the Township; Mr. Weiss suggested that the public or private ownership of the streets would be a land development issue. Mr. Wilson asked the following questions: (1) asked for an explanation of the boundary setbacks; Mr. Glackin indicated that the boundary setbacks were 25 feet, and the rear yard setback would be an additional 25 feet, (2) are any improvements anticipated on Willow Grove Avenue; the answer was the improvements would be very limited but the brick wall would be retained which was of interest to Cheltenham Township, (3) inquired as to the outcome of the mansion being utilized as an event structure; Mr. Weiss noted that Cheltenham Township rejected that plan, (4) would there be any widening for sidewalks

on Willow Grove Avenue; Mr. Glackin responded to the negative but noted the need to secure a PennDOT highway occupancy permit. Mr. Dailey confirmed the width of the streets to be 28 feet and inquired whether sidewalks would be placed on both sides of the street; the response was that the sidewalk issue will be a part of land development.

Mr. Weiss introduced Jennifer Walsh, a professional traffic engineer with McMahon and Associates. Ms. Walsh indicated that she has in excess of 20 years of experience in traffic engineering. She has worked with many developers to design ingress and egress of developments, and has reviewed a variety of development proposals for this particular site. Ms. Walsh indicated that her study began with an existing conditions analysis and she built upon those conditions projecting out to an horizon of 2017. The horizon expands the surrounding area traffic with and without the development utilizing the National Trip Generation Manual utilized by traffic engineers. Ms. Walsh discussed two peak rush hours that will occur between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM as well as between 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM. Her study viewed both the traffic issues at the intersection of Willow Grove Avenue and Newbold Lane, as well as Willow Grove Avenue and the existing driveway, which is close to the proposed entrance to the development. Both intersections are currently service level "A" and will remain service level "A" at the conclusion of the development. She also evaluated the sight distance issues that might be of concern related to the brick wall along Willow Grove Avenue, and did not find a sight distance issue. Mr. Dailey asked if the traffic study considered the directional movements out of the development. Ms. Walsh projects 60% of the traffic will turn right onto Willow Grove Avenue and 40% will turn left onto Willow Grove Avenue. Mr. Gillies asked about the number of trips that would occur during the highest peak hour and Ms. Walsh indicated 90 trips were anticipated. Mr. Wilson asked if she believed Willow Grove Avenue was a safe street and whether she had studied traffic accidents in the vicinity of the proposed development. Ms. Walsh indicated that she has not done a study of the traffic accidents in the area, but believes it will be a part of the PennDOT required review process for the highway occupancy permit. Mr. Wilson asked if there would be pedestrian areas and bike areas along Willow Grove Avenue, and suggested that he believed the Willow Grove Avenue roadway was not suitable for pedestrians and bikes. Mr. Dailey inquired whether the new intersection would meet the traffic signal warrants of PennDOT. Ms. Walsh indicated they will not come close to meeting the warrants for a traffic signal. Mr. Gillies asked whether there were any attached homes as a part of the proposal. He was informed there are no attached homes, and that they are all single family detached homes. He also inquired what would occur if Springfield Township did not approve the rezoning request. He was informed that the developer would revert back to the 216 mid-rise apartment proposal in Cheltenham Township. Mr. Weiss asked Mr. Hansen if they would revert back to the 216 apartment unit proposal in Cheltenham Township if Springfield Township approves the rezoning request. Mr. Hansen said they would not. Mr. Dailey asked if the developer was a part of the joint meetings between the two Townships. Mr. Weiss indicated that the developer was not a part of the joints meetings with the townships, but did attend meetings when invited.

Mr. Dailey summarized the Springfield Township Planning Commission letter of recommendation dated March 30, 2015. The letter indicated that, after a great deal of discussion, which included comments from the neighbors of the proposed development, the Planning Commission voted 5-1 to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve the suggested amendments to the Cluster Residential District zoning district regulations, except for two points. First, the land coverage should remain at 25% maximum impervious coverage. Second, all development on steep slopes of 15% or more should remain prohibited. With regard to the actual rezoning of the property from AA Residential to Cluster Residential District, the vote from the Planning Commission was a 3-3 tie. Therefore, the motion did not carry. The letter was signed by Robert Gutowski, Chairman of the Springfield Township Planning Commission. Mr. Schaum summarized the April 2, 2015 letter of recommendation from the Montgomery County Planning Commission. The Montgomery County Planning Commission provided a background of the existing conditions of the property as well as previous proposals presented in Cheltenham and Springfield Township. The Planning Commission made comments on several dimensional aspects of the proposed ordinance, including density, land coverage, steep slopes, lot size, building height, building separation, boundary setbacks, and utilities, specifically trails and sidewalks. The Montgomery County Planning Commission recommended the approval of the proposed ordinance amendment to the Cluster Residential District provided that all issues were addressed to the satisfaction of the municipality.

Mr. Dailey opened the meeting for public comments.

Edward Koller, Shepherds Way, inquired of the traffic engineer whether a deceleration lane would be placed on Willow Grove Avenue to accommodate the development. The engineer indicated that that would be a land development issue and a part of the PennDOT highway occupancy permit review process.

Malcolm Gran, Newbold Lane, asked for an explanation as to the designated emergency access way. He was informed that it would be maintained only as an emergency access with some form of pavers for the emergency vehicles, and locked. It was noted this is a typical requirement of emergency services of municipalities. Mr. Gran made comment on the existing conditions for bikers along Willow Grove Avenue, which also caused concern for motorists to maneuver around the bikers.

Mr. Dailey indicated that the earlier comments made by Mr. Callahan of Falcon Drive will be considered as a part of the current public hearing.

Len Eisenman, Froeble Road, inquired as to the assumption that there will only be 25 school students that would live within the 66 new dwellings. He was informed that that assumption was made through the Rutgers University guidelines and is based on the number of bedrooms in the various homes. Mr. Eisenman inquired as to the two existing dwellings on the property in the area of the proposed emergency access. It was indicated that those two dwellings would be razed. Mr. Eisenman noted that during discussions

with the Township Planning Commission, there seemed to be interest in the construction of larger homes within the proposed development.

Cheryl Cutler, of Newbold Lane, indicated that her parents have lived in the neighborhood for 55 years and they are concerned with the destruction of the natural features on the property and traffic. They believe that the new development, if developed properly, should match the development within the existing neighborhood. They suggested that if it were not for the high density of housing, the various woodlands on the property would not necessarily be destroyed.

Eddie Graham, Quill Lane, questioned the accuracy of traffic studies presented by developers and suggested that utilizing national standards is not specific to the actual development. He also questioned the specific types of traffic trips such as to accommodate school children and buses coming into the development. Mr. Graham was told that there are eight trips during the peak hours into Newbold Lane currently.

Mr. Dailey inquired how many traffic studies the engineer has been involved with. She indicated she was involved with approximately 100 studies, and the studies were done for municipalities, states and developers.

Maryann Ford, Shepherds Way, asked for the estimated purchase price of the dwellings. She was told the price will be in the vicinity of \$475,000. She opined that this was merely an estimate and there would be no guarantee of the value of the homes. Ms. Ford acknowledged the appropriateness of the developer making a profit on the property but in doing so, he should not change the fabric of the community. Ms. Ford inquired as to the relationship between Hansen and the building of the development. She was informed that Hansen will remain as the developer of the site, but that they will hire a builder to construct the dwellings. Ms. Ford made comment on the need for at least a 28 foot wide road, citing the fact that Shepherds Way is more narrow making it difficult to maneuver on her street. She indicated that her informal traffic count for Shepherds Way would indicate that 17 cars leave that small development each day. She opined that there may be a sight distance problem on Willow Grove Avenue due to the actual construction and movement of the street. She noted the plans appear to provide a left turning lane into the development and inquired as to how many vehicles could stack in that area. She was informed that four vehicles could queue up in the left turning lane. In conclusion, Ms. Ford suggested the Commissioners are elected by Township residents and not developers and believes the development is too dense.

Samuel Brackeen, Newbold Lane, inquired as to the general timing of the development. Mr. Brackeen was informed that the development would generally progress as follows: (1) zoning approval, (2) engineering and engineering review, (3) subdivision/land development review, (4) PennDOT highway occupancy permit, (5) utilities, (6) construction of the development. Mr. Brackeen also expressed his concern for stormwater management. The stormwater management design and review process was explained. Mr. Brackeen inquired whether Willow Grove Avenue was safe for ingress and egress to the development. The traffic engineer indicated that access to

and from Willow Grove Avenue was not found to be an issue and, to date, they have not reviewed information on traffic accidents in the area. Mr. Brackeen suggested that sidewalks should be considered as a part of the development along Willow Grove Avenue. He suggested that with the new development, it will be more difficult to egress Newbold Lane onto Willow Grove Avenue. The traffic engineer indicated that Newbold Lane and Willow Grove Avenue intersections are currently operating as a level A, but did acknowledge that they do need a PennDOT highway occupancy permit. Mr. Brackeen concluded by suggesting there are a lot of animals in the area, and he believes an environmental impact study should be conducted as a part of the development.

Charles Bishop, Newbold Lane, noted that the traffic impact was studied on Newbold Lane, but inquired about the traffic counts on Willow Grove Avenue. He was informed that the traffic study does include counts on Willow Grove Avenue as well.

Wendy Blutstein, Hillcrest Road, remarked that the development is unusual as it involves two townships and, therefore, two school districts and the related traffic issues pertaining to the two school districts. She opined that the 216 unit, four to five story complex proposed in Cheltenham Township should not be considered a threat to be built.

Bob Henry, Whitmarsh Township, suggested that the Board of Commissioners deny the requested zoning variance.

John Naghski, Willow Grove Avenue, asked that the Board of Commissioners not approve the rezoning request and suggested that the Commissioners are elected to protect the Township residents and to protect the residents' quality of life. He noted that the zoning change would double the density as compared to the existing zoning. Mr. Naghski indicated that there are existing traffic issues on Willow Grove Avenue. He suggested that there is a need to fix the grade of Willow Grove Avenue adjacent to the development. He also indicated it is very difficult to ride a bike along Willow Grove Avenue. In conclusion, Mr. Naghski stated that he lives in Springfield Township due to the good quality of life and asked that the Board not change the zoning on the subject property.

Miss Naghski, Willow Grove Avenue, asked the Board of Commissioners to vote against the rezoning request citing the double housing density being requested, and the existing congestion on Willow Grove Avenue.

Michael Kolodner, Fraser Road, inquired as to how the homes were viewed to be "clustered", or is it simply high density housing. He opined that the 30% impervious coverage was too much. He inquired whether the housing type is the same in both Cheltenham and Springfield Townships. He was informed that the houses would be similar. Mr. Kolodner believed that the number of children estimated to live within the development is incorrect, and also believes that the traffic count seemed inaccurate.

Sara Naghski, Willow Grove Avenue, noted that the traffic engineer spoke of peak hours of traffic and suggested that all hours of traffic should be studied. She

suggested that it is difficult to get in and out of their driveway under current conditions, and stated her displeasure with the use of a threat of a different development in order that the current proposal be considered.

Adina Birnbaum, West Mill Road, asked if the threat of development in Cheltenham Township could be removed before considering the rezoning. Mr. Garrity indicated that he was not sure how that could be accomplished. He noted that the plan in Cheltenham Township is active, but research is being done to see how to accomplish what she is asking. Ms. Birnbaum suggested the need to respect existing zoning laws and those laws should be followed unless a hardship can be shown. Mr. Garrity indicated the matter before the Commissioners is a rezoning request, and not a zoning variance where a hardship would apply. With rezoning, the Board would consider more planning aspects and which plan would be better planning – the existing or proposed plan. Ms. Birnbaum stated there are always stormwater management issues with development and they need to be addressed. In conclusion, she stated that she would understand considering the rezoning if the pending plan in Cheltenham Township is still a reality.

Helen Henry, Drayton Road, noted that Willow Grove Avenue is currently a difficult street to drive on. She indicated that she likes the style of housing in her neighborhood. Ms. Henry suggested a need for trails throughout the development, and asked the Board to be cognizant of the impervious surface within the development.

Joan Parsons, Hawkswell Circle, asked for the definition of cluster housing. She was informed that the cluster housing can be single family detached dwellings on smaller lots, or townhouses, but the concept is to reduce the size of the individual lots in order to create open space. Ms. Parsons asked what the size of the garages will be. She was informed that the garages will be two car garages. She suggested that Hawkswell Circle is an example where residents may use their garages or driveways, but also park in the street and, therefore, the street width of the development is important. She inquired as to the street frontage of each house. She was informed that the lots will be approximately 50 feet wide. She inquired whether sidewalks would be installed on both sides of the proposed roads. She was informed that that issue is a land development matter.

Charles Carl, Pine Road, suggested he is active in establishing trails in communities. He noted that walkability of a community is always ranked high by residents. He knows that there is a limited right-of-way along Willow Grove Avenue, but it is important to provide pedestrian access. He asked that a right-of-way be provided through the development for the Cresheim Trail.

Ed Koller, Shepherds Way, noted that the Montgomery County Planning Commission suggested limiting the impervious coverages as part of the new development, and he is concerned that Cheltenham Township conditioned their approval to limit the development in their Township to eighteen single family dwellings.

Mr. Schaum asked for an opportunity to read into the record a letter from James Mascaro, of Oreland. Mr. Schaum read the letter. In summary, Mr. Mascaro suggested

the rezoning of the Lloyd tract from AA Residential to Cluster Residential District should not be approved. He stated that the neighborhood around the tract is one of larger lots and the planned 66 residences through the rezoning does not fit into the character of the area. He noted that at recent Planning Commission meetings, a number of residents voiced their opinions against the change, and he agrees with them that 32 residences allowed by right would be a better fit for the Township

Mr. Weiss made concluding comments which included the fact that everyone has been working on this development for a long time. The developer is sensitive to the surrounding residents and their concerns for animals, traffic, stormwater management, as well as their interest to leave the property in its current condition. With regard to overall planning perspectives for rezoning, he suggested that both circumstances and conditions surrounding the properties change when rezoning is considered. The Lloyd tract is located in two municipalities with two different development opportunities. In fact, Cheltenham Township asked for a different style of housing which is not being considered. Anything related to Willow Grove Avenue, whether in Springfield or Cheltenham Township must be reviewed and approved by PennDOT. He noted that the Cheltenham Township Board of Commissioners recently voted 5-2 to approve the rezoning of their portion of the Lloyd tract. Mr. Weiss stated that the developer purposely kept traffic off of Ranch House Lane and Newbold Lane to accommodate the local residents. He believes that in balance, the increase in housing density in Springfield Township vs. the overall density permitted in both communities currently makes for a better plan. He noted that Cheltenham Township approved their proposal without conditions and that the current plan submission in Cheltenham Township for the midrise apartments is running out.

Motion (Dailey-Gillies) carried unanimously to close the public hearing.

There being no further business, the public hearing was adjourned at 11:40 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Donald E. Berger, Jr.  
Secretary

DEB:cmt  
4/24/15