

MINUTES OF MEETING
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
March 17, 2009

The Springfield Township Planning Commission (PC) held its semi-monthly meeting on the date noted above.

Chairman Bob Gutowski called the meeting to order at 7PM, present were Angela Murray, George McDowell, Joe Gerber, David Sands, James Mascaro and Joseph Devine

Commissioner Doug Heller and Rob Dunlop the Staff Liaison represented the Township and Jean Holland represented the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) this evening.

Minutes

Minutes of the March 3, 2009 meeting were read. A motion to approve was made by Joe Gerber, seconded by Jim Mascaro and approved unanimously.

Traditions of Springfield, LLC
350 Haws La., Flourtown, PA

Robert Gundlach, Esq.
Nelson Hartranft, Jr.
Dawn H. Snyder
Rick Stoneback, P.E.

Applicant presented a preliminary Subdivision/Land Development Plan to subdivide the existing 10.1 acre Harston Hall Nursing Facility property at 350 Haws La., Flourtown, PA. The subdivided parcel is proposed to be consolidated with the .34 acre lot located at 402 Haws La., Flourtown, PA to create a 4.73 acre lot upon which the Applicant proposes to construct a 123 unit, 138,368 sq. ft., four story "retirement home" with 67 parking spaces. Attorney Gundlach provided an overview of the project and a history of the Hartranft family's involvement with this property which dates back to the 1960's when Nelson Hartranft, Sr. renovated the original manor house to use as a "nursing home". Eventually a large addition was created to the original facility. When the complex was sold to Genesis Eldercare, Mr. Hartranft retained an option on the portion of the land which he is now seeking to subdivide and develop. The new "retirement home" facility will contain 123 dwelling units as well as common areas for dining, recreation and some limited personal services. No provision for assisted living would be offered, and Mr. Gundlach and Mr. Hartranft were specific when they noted that no medical supervision would be provided.

After the overview the discussion turned to the issue of off-street parking for the facility. Attorney Gundlach referred to the Traffic Impact Assessment produced by David Horner, P.E. which noted that the peak demand for parking spaces is noted as 50 spaces, while 67 spaces will be provided. Of the 67 spaces 25 will be allotted to residents.

Joe Gerber replied to this assertion by stating that if 123 units are provided 123 parking spaces should be provided. If all these spaces are not used by residents this would provide for an adequate reserve that can be utilized by visitors.

Mr. Gundlach & Mr. Hartranft rebutted that the type of facility that they are proposing would be for residents who would be at the point in their lives when they would agree to give up their cars. Indeed this facility represents a new stage in senior living – which has become a four stage process. This process moves from active senior housing (typically 55 and above communities), to

the “retirement home” phase, to an “assisted living” phase and finally to a skilled Nursing facility. The developers would agree to place a restriction on the deed which would only allow 25 spaces to residents on a “first come, first served” basis. Several PC members voiced concerns that this would be a difficult process to administer, as well as determining which residents were capable of keeping their cars as they got older. Mr. Gundlach replied that the staff would have sufficient training to handle these challenges.

Angela Murray asked Mr. Gundlach if any of the similar facilities in Lower Merion Township (specifically Beaumont and Waverly Heights) had been visited to assess to what extent residents maintain cars. Mr. Gundlach replied that those facilities did not correspond to the new concept under which the Traditions of Springfield was being developed. Ms. Murray disagreed with this statement and felt that the applicant had agreed to visit these facilities when they presented their sketch plans for the development.

Joe Slapinsky, 910 Harston La., Erdeneheim, PA stated that he is intimately acquainted with a similar facility – Traditions of Hanover located in Bethlehem, PA where all residents of this 114 unit complex are offered the opportunity to bring their cars with them when they move in.

Judy Patitucci, 101 E. Wissahickon agreed with Mr. Slapinsky, and noted that all facilities of this type that she is acquainted with (most notably Gloria Dei/Luther Park facility in Willow Grove, PA) offer a much larger provision of off-street parking.

Celia Dougherty, 910 Bent La., Erdenheim, PA said that the most important issue regarding this development was that there would be no provision for long-term care at the facility. It would not be sensible for residents to be expected to give up their cars to enter a facility without long-term care. She inquired of the applicant whether or not there was any connection with the existing Harston Hall facility for the provision of nursing care. Mr. Gundlach replied that Genesis Eldercare had not taken any position in reference to this application.

Richard Metz, 910 Bent La., Erdenheim, PA stated that his main objection was the destruction of the woods that are currently located on lot #2 of this plan.

Joe Slapinsky spoke again stating that the biggest concern for the neighbors was the intensity of the development, and the lack of adequate land area for a building of this size. Joe & Gretchen Slapinsky, Celia Dougherty and Richard Metz presented two letters to the PC, dated 12/8/08 & 3/17/09, and signed “Neighbors of Harston Hall and 350 Haws Lane” that laid out the objections of the neighbors of the proposed development.

At this point in the discussion Angela Murray made a motion to table the subdivision & land development applications of Traditions of Springfield until the Zoning Hearing Board had made the decision regarding the zoning petition of the applicant. This motion was seconded by James Mascaro. After a great deal of discussion, the PC voted 5-2 in favor of tabling the applications. Mr. Gundlach opined that this was not a fair decision by the PC regarding his client’s applications. Ms. Murray replied that tabling is a common procedure, and warranted in this case because of the potential impact that a zoning decision could have on the size and configuration of this facility.

Bob Gutowski next made a motion that the PC should continue to discuss only the subdivision application of the applicant. This motion was seconded by George McDowell and, after a brief discussion, was not carried with a vote of 5 against, and 2 for continuing the discussion

Board of Commissioner Update

D. Heller

Com. Heller updated the Commission on the continuing discussions of the BOC regarding the Riparian Ordinance. The Commissioners have reached a consensus of opinion regarding this ordinance, they are now ready to tie the requirements of the riparian buffer to the land development/ subdivision process. By activating the provisions of the riparian ordinance through the subdivision/land development process owners of existing homes that back onto a corridor would not be required to take any new steps at the time that the ordinance goes into effect.

There being no more discussion, a motion to adjourn was put forth by David Sands and seconded by James Mascaro. The motion was approved unanimously and the session adjourned at 9:10 PM.

The next PC meeting shall be April 7, 2009.

R. Dunlop