

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**SPRINGFIELDTOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**May 15, 2012**

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 7:01 PM, with the following members present: David Sands, Bob Gutowski, James Mascaro, Joseph Devine, George Schaefer, Steve Schagrin and Mary Holland. Mandy Helwig and Angela Murray were absent this evening. Rob Dunlop Staff Liaison, and Commissioner Tom Bell represented the Township and Jean Holland represented the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) this evening. Minutes: Minutes of the May 1, 2012 meeting were read. Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by M. Holland and seconded by Jim Mascaro - Motion approved unanimously.

**Lloyd Estate- “Laverock Hill”**  
**1777 E. Willow Grove Ave., Laverock**

**Ross Weiss, Esq.**  
**Bud Hansen**  
**Hansen Properties, Inc.**

Ross Weiss started the presentation by relaying the history of the property which the Hansen group has been involved with since 2007. The Applicant had previously presented a sketch plan on 2/7/12 for the proposed development of the 42.4 acre estate which is located both in Cheltenham Township and Springfield Township. The property history has included many different development plans for the portion of tract located in Cheltenham Township. The Applicant originally had no plans to preserve the Manor House, but after discussions with Cheltenham Township and Neighbor Groups they were asked to incorporate the existing buildings and the stone wall along Willow Grove Ave into their plans. Over the last few years the plan has overall decreased in density. Their goal is to have an overall development plan for the property which will be acceptable to both Townships and the neighbors.

After hearing the input from the neighbors and the PC at the 2/7/12 PC meeting the applicant has prepared the following materials for tonight’s meeting:

- Fiscal Impact Study
- Stormwater management conceptual plan
- Sanitary sewer conceptual routing plan
- By-right yield plan – “AA” residential zoning - 32 single-family detached dwellings
- Conceptual Site Plan based on application of “AAA-AQ” residential zoning
- Conceptual Site Plans (2) based on application of “CRD” residential zoning

Since the current zoning in Springfield Township is “AA” residential the applicant will be requesting a change of zoning in the future to allow more density. The “CRD” residential plans showed what the applicant thought was the best development plan for the property with a total of 156 townhouse units over the total tract area. The Mansion would be converted to professional offices and the out buildings near the mansion would be converted to residential use. Mr. Weiss indicated that the applicant would comply with all Township Code requirements for stormwater management, landscaping, sanitary sewers and steep slopes present on the property – these issues will be thoroughly dealt with in future submissions. After this presentation Mr. Weiss asked for input from the PC.

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**Jim Mascaro** asked if the dwelling units were going to be condominiums? Mr. Weiss replied that the units were intended to be fee simple with a Homeowners association. The exterior maintenance would be performed by the HOA.

**Bob Gutowski** stated that in the past the PC has recommended changes in zoning that include increases in residential density when there are benefits to the community. One of the greatest needs that we have as a community is the preservation of open space. The applicant should look at the “AAA” residential ordinance to see how the property might be developed under the “AAA” option for townhouses as used in the plan for the Piszek tract.

**George Schaefer** inquired if the applicant could speak to the community benefits that are incorporated in the current plan. Mr. Weiss stated that the preservation of the Mansion was a large community benefit achieved by the current plan. Economically the only way to preserve the Mansion is to get a change of zoning in Springfield Township that would allow higher residential density.

**Mary Holland** declared that during both sketch plan presentations there has been some discussion of open space in connection with the townhouse plan for the property. This discussion by the applicant treats every area of the property not covered by a building or roadway as open space. This is not a proper interpretation of the Township’s position on open space, because open space is meant to be areas left in an undeveloped condition, or improved for community benefit- especially recreation facilities.

**Joe Devine** asked if the units would be 3 bedroom townhouses, and what would be the likely price of a typical unit? Mr. Weiss stated that most units would be 3 bedroom, some 2 bedroom units might be included after more market research. The anticipated price point would be \$325,000 for the average unit.

After PC commentary Chair Gutowski invited residents to comment on the proposed sketch plans:

### **Michael Harkins – 1799 E. Willow Grove Ave., Laverock**

Mr. Harkins stated that he lives in the property between the Lloyd estate and rt. 309. He fears that changes to east drive in the plans presented would effectively eliminate his access to Willow Grove Ave. He believes that the 12,000 sq. ft. pond on his property accepts the drainage from up to 20 acres of the Lloyd estate – this pond would be overwhelmed by the run-off from the plans shown tonight. Ross Weiss replied that when the fully engineered plans are ready to be presented that all of Mr. Harkins issues would be resolved regarding stormwater and access, also sanitary sewer would be available so that the existing cesspool on the property that accepts the sewage from the Mansion could be de-commissioned.

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**Andy Cohen – 704 Falcon Dr., Glenside**

Mr. Cohen inquired about the widening of Willow Grove Ave. to accommodate the increased traffic load that the 156 additional dwelling units and the office use in the Mansion would generate. Mr. Weiss replied that Hansen Properties has already had a preliminary meeting with Penndot about the widening project. Penndot believes that the widening will be feasible to improve the road with to center turn lanes and partial deceleration/acceleration lanes at both projects entrances.

**Scott Laughlin – 1681 E. Willow Grove Ave., Laverock**

Mr. Laughlin indicated to the PC that the distance between the edge of roadway at Willow Grove Ave. and the brick retaining wall on the Lloyd estate is approximately 6'. So that he doesn't see how it would be possible to maintain the wall and widen Willow Grove Ave. to install additional lanes.

**Ivan Sweets – 8001 Fenton Rd., Laverock**

Mr. Sweets spoke regarding his concern that the selective widening of Willow Grove Ave. would cause additional traffic congestion an area that already sees heavy traffic during rush hours.

**Mary Harkins - 1799 E. Willow Grove Ave.**

Confirmed that traffic congestion and accidents, due to the changes in elevation and a curve in the roadway in the area near where the east access for the property would be located is a very urgent concern for the neighbors. Mr. Gutowski asked for a show of hands from those who confirmed the traffic congestion and frequent accidents in the area – practically all of the thirty neighbors in attendance confirmed the potentially dangerous situation.

**Charles Bishop – 8400 Newbold La., Laverock**

Mr. Bishop shares the concerns about traffic in the area in general, and asked if Ranch House La. would potentially be used as an additional access for the proposed development. Mr. Weiss indicated that in some early plans for the property Ranch House La. was used as an active access, but after hearing the concerns of residents along Newbold La. the current plans show only an emergency access at the end of Ranch House La.

**Cleve Mair – 1713 Newbold La., Laverock**

Mr. Mair asked for clarification for the issue developing the property with the presence of steep slopes. Mr. Weiss stated that the property is more difficult to develop than one that would basically be flat, but that does not mean that the engineering issues cannot be resolved. The applicant will comply fully with the Township Zoning Code regarding steep slopes, and the Township Saldo regarding all engineering issues that those slopes cause. Chair Gutowski emphasized that all develop issues cannot be addressed in an early sketch plan, but Township review of a land development application would include all of these issues.

**Bob Elfant – 7812 Froebel Rd., Laverock**

Mr. Elfant opined that the proposed density for the new development was entirely inappropriate. It would cause a definite change in character for the surrounding community. He also stated that the differences in municipal/school taxes between Springfield and Cheltenham would cause the townhouses in Cheltenham to be of much lower quality and/or size to account for the higher taxes. Mr. Weiss replied that the issue of relative municipal tax burden is not something that a developer can change – it is not a land use issue, and as such is not under the purview of the PC.

**Scott Laughlin – 1681 E. Willow Grove Ave., Laverock**

Mr. Laughlin feels that the applicant has stated that the main community benefit of the current 156 unit plan is the preservation of the Mansion. But, all appropriate historical context for the Mansion is lost if the gardens are not preserved - the formal gardens would be replaced by the parking for the office use in the Mansion. He also feels that the office use in the neighborhood is a troubling precedent for a neighborhood that is now low density residential without any service by public transportation. Since our discussion started in its early phases with a discussion of age-restricted residential use there should be some other compensation for the community other than the preservation of a single house stripped of its proper historical setting.

**Stacey Wyman – 540 Twickenham Rd., Laverock**

Ms. Wyman agreed with the other residents regarding issues of density and traffic. She asked if the Township must accept a plan that includes density similar to the Stotesbury Townhouse Development for the Lloyd estate? Chair Gutowski answered an appropriate change of zoning for the property would be according to the judgment of the Board of Commissioners with the advice of the PC.

**Joel Prilstein – 1778 E. Willow Grove Ave., Laverock**

Mr. Prilstein voiced his opposition to the plan because it constitutes a radical change of character for the surrounding community. He believes that the Laverock community would be harmed by such a development – townhouses and office complexes are completely out of place at the Lloyd Estate.

**Scott Martin – 8111 Cadwalader Rd., Laverock**

Mr. Martin asked if the estate would lose all of its mature trees during the development of the property? Chair Gutowski explained that the PC works very hard with applicants to maintain existing mature, healthy trees wherever possible. But if trees were removed they would have to be replaced on a basis of two new trees for every one removed per Township Saldo.

After all residents had a chance to comment on the plans Chair Gutowski asked the PC members if they could provide the applicant with final observations on the revised sketch plans:

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**Mary Holland** repeated her opinion from the February meeting that the proposed residential density is not appropriate for the Lloyd estate because of its distance from any commercial district, its lack of service by public transportation and the physical characteristics of the property. She felt that the applicant was trying to use the preservation of the Mansion to get increased density – something she finds reprehensible.

**James Mascaro** declared that the plans do not have enough engineering detail to make any proper recommendations. The sanitary sewer plan will be one of the most important elements because without sanitary sewer service the plan is completely un-workable. He also felt that the inclusion of the office use was not appropriate.

**Joe Devine** emphasized the lack of detail was a problem for giving any valuable input to the applicant.

**David Sands** feels that the steep slope issue has been underestimated by the applicant. There are areas of the property with 20%, or more slopes that are depicted with townhouse groups and parking areas. The applicant would be better off developing some of the more level sections and incorporating the steep slope portions into true open space.

**George Schaefer** stated that the planning situation is weird for this property because the Springfield Township side is zoned appropriately with low density single family houses while the Cheltenham Township side allows an age-restricted high density development. He would like to see the Commissioners, staff and planners of both municipalities working more closely together on the plan to come with something that is of benefit to the Laverock community. The density of the 156 unit plan does not achieve that benefit for the Laverock community. He asked for more alternatives from the applicant.

**Tom Bell** explained that Commissioners and Managers from both Townships have met to discuss the plans going back years, although he has not yet had the chance to participate in the discussions. He sees many trade-offs that have to be evaluated: high density in Cheltenham vs. low density in Springfield, value of Mansion vs. razing all buildings on the site. Many factors will go into a good decision about the future of this property.

**Steve Schagrin** commented that steep slopes seem to make this site one that will be physically difficult to develop. The roadway issues will be under the oversight of PennDOT since it is a state highway. The property probably will be developed in the future – we should continue the conversation between developer, neighbors and Townships to find the best plan for this property. While we talk we should remember the importance of compromise in finding the best plan.

**Bob Gutowski** agreed with what Mary Holland stated earlier. He voiced disappointment with this plan and felt that it was unimaginative. He recommended that the applicant look at the possibilities that included in “AAA” zoning as well as “CRD” zoning. One of the greatest needs that exists in Springfield Township is the need for open space preservation. While I think it is a worthwhile goal to preserve the Mansion I don’t think that the Township should turn its back on other concerns. He thanked both the applicant and residents for engaging in a polite discourse on a subject that often can get emotional.

**Old Business**

**Revised Township Approved Plant Material List**

Chair Gutowski asked if any PC members had comments regarding the revised Plant Material List. George Schaefer stated his opposition to including hemlock species on the list because this species is subject to a aphid like insect infection in our area (hemlock wooly adelgid). Bob Gutowski explained that there are treatments for this type of infestation. The hemlock is still a valuable species within our region. Hearing no more discussion Chair Gutowski moved the acceptance of the revised Plant Species List. This motion was seconded by Joe Devine and approved by a vote of 6 yeas and 1 nay.

**BOC Update**

Considering the late hour, Commissioner Bell stated that the only matter of interest he would like to share with the PC was the advertisement of the hearing for the change of zoning of the Boorse tract on June 13, 2012. The hearing will take place immediately after the adjournment of the June BOC business meeting. At the May 1, 2012 PC meeting the planners voted unanimously to recommend that the BOC not approve the change of zoning for the Boorse tract from “AAA-AQ” age-qualified to “AAA-AT” age-targeted.

It was agreed that Jean Holland and Jim Mascaro would appear at the June 11, 2012 BOC workshop meeting to explain how the PC used the “Emerging Trends and Critical Issues” document to gain public input during the early phases of the Township Comprehensive Plan Update process.

At 9:25 a motion to adjourn was made by Dave Sands and seconded by Joe Devine. This motion was approved unanimously.

R. Dunlop