

**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
November 16, 2021**

The Springfield Township Planning Commission met in a regularly scheduled meeting at 7:02 P.M., in the Boardroom of the Springfield Township Administration Building, located at 1510 Paper Mill Road, Wyndmoor, PA 19038. Present at the meeting were Ms. Murray, Mr. Gutowski, Mr. Sands, Mr. Devine and Mr. Schaefer. Also in attendance were Commissioner Baird Standish, Aaron Holly, Community Planner from Montgomery County Planning Commission and Mark Penecale, Director of Planning & Zoning.

**Approval of the Minutes:**

The minutes of the October 19, 2021 meeting were approved as submitted.

**Old Business:**

There was no old business to discuss.

**Commissioner's Report:**

Commissioner Standish informed the Planning Commission that the Board of Commissioners had met with Mr. Jay Overcash concerning the redevelopment of 1108 and 1110 Willow Grove Avenue. Mr. Overcash presented a plan for the demolition of the existing buildings on the sites and the construction of 13 townhouse units. This plan will be submitted to the Planning Commission as a Sketch Plan at a future meeting. In addition, the Commissioner informed the Planning Commission that the Board of Commissioners are no longer in opposition to the Zoning Hearing Board application filed for the installation of oversized signage at 1331 Ivy Hill Road. The proposed signage will still require Zoning Hearing Board relief, but has been reduced in size to the point that the Board of Commissioners will no longer oppose the application.

**New Business:**

Mr. Robert Gutowski was the acting Chairperson for this meeting and announced that there were two applications on tonight's agenda. He informed those in attendance that there were sign-up sheets located on the table by the door for those that wish to speak on any of the agenda items. He also informed those in attendance of the basic rules the Planning Commission must follow.

**PC1:** This was the application of LaSalle College High School, located at 8605 Cheltenham Avenue, Wyndmoor, PA 19038. The application was presented by Christen Pionzio, Esq. Ms. Pionzio stated that the proposed addition will house the existing David's Program and will not increase the student population or require the hiring of any additional teachers. The David's Program provides specialized instruction for those students in need. The addition is proposed at 7,000

square feet and one story in height. The proposed addition will be connected to the existing educational building. The David's Program currently operates in several available locations on the campus. The proposed addition will allow for a dedicated space for the program to operate and provide the students direct access to the space without the need to exit any of the existing building. Ms. Pionzio informed the Planning Commission that the plan as proposed will require Zoning Hearing Board approval. Any increase in useable building space requires on-site parking and this proposal does not include any change to the existing on-site parking count. Ms. Pionzio also informed the Planning Commission that this type of addition will require a full Land Development submission to include review by the Planning Commission, Montgomery County Planning Commission, the Township Engineer and approval by the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Gutowski asked about any increase in impervious coverage or vehicle access.

Ms. Pionzio informed the Planning Commission that there is no vehicle access to the proposed addition and that other than walkways to connect the buildings and existing parking areas, there is no additional impervious coverage proposed.

Mr. Gutowski questioned how many trees would be removed to allow for the construction of the proposed addition.

Ms. Pionzio responded that only several small in-fill trees would need to be removed and that the proposed addition is a distance from the existing tree canopy.

Mr. Gutowski asked if the applicant has prepared either an elevations plan or if a floor plan was available for review.

Ms. Pionzio informed the Planning Commission that the design of the building has not been completed and that the renderings presented are the intentions of LaSalle College High School. The proposed building will be "State of the Art".

Ms. Murray asked if a schedule has been determined for the construction or the completion of this proposed building.

Ms. Pionzio responded that the David's Program is in operation at this time and that between the Zoning Hearing Board and Land Development approval processes, it did not make sense to set a time line at this point.

Mr. Schaefer asked if the applicant could provide a list of any additional variances needed or if there was a prepared list of waivers that would be requested.

Ms. Pionzio stated that no additional Zoning Hearing Board relief would be required, other than the dimensional relief for the on-site parking and that the plans have not progressed enough to determine what, if any waivers would be requested.

Mr. Thomas Harvey, 8500 Cheltenham Avenue stated that there is an ongoing noise issue stemming from an existing ground mounted air handler.

Ms. Pionzio stated that the unit has been serviced and found to be in fine working order.

Mr. Gutowski offered a recommendation that the applicant over-engineer the proposed on-site stormwater management system, protect as many of the existing trees as possible and pay special attention to the lighting on this site. He stated that all light fixtures should have recessed lighting sources and there be no over spill lighting outside the occupied area.

**PC2:** This is the application of MEH Investment, LLC and 380 Haws Lane, LP for the properties located at 380 and 402 Haws Lane, Flourtown, PA 19031. This application was presented by Mr. Brian Halligan, owner of MEH Investment, LLC. Mr. Halligan presented a plan of a single, three story building, 42 feet in height and consisting of 69,510 square feet. The proposed building would be a by-right use within the Institutional Zoning District and be occupied by Haven Behavioral Health. He stated that the building would contain 88 beds and the development would supply 98 on-site parking stalls. He informed the Planning Commission that the placement of the proposed building was determined by the required setbacks. He stated that Haven Behavioral Health is currently located in Philadelphia and Reading. The Philadelphia facility would relocate to Haws Lane.

Mr. Gutowski asked if anyone from Haven Behavioral Health would be available to answer questions that may arise over the use or operation of the building.

Mr. Halligan stated that no one from Haven Behavioral Health was available tonight and he has a meeting scheduled with them next week. In addition, he stated that any questions raised tonight, he will obtain answers to and supply those answers at a future meeting.

Mr. Gutowski asked if Haven Behavioral Health is a for-profit or non-profit business.

Mr. Halligan stated that he believes they are a for-profit operation.

Mr. Gutowski asked how the on-site parking was calculated.

Mr. Halligan informed everyone that the proposed on-site parking count complies with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. In fact, we have supplied 10 additional on-site parking stalls over what is required.

Mr. Devine asked if the agreement with Haven Behavioral Health is a lease or a purchase agreement.

Mr. Halligan stated that both options are available to Haven Behavioral Health, but the goal is for them to purchase the property at some point,

Mr. Schaefer asked what services Haven Behavioral Health offer.

Mr. Halligan stated that they provide short term and long term care and housing for those with mental disorders.

Mr. Devine asked what the average stay is and if Haven Behavioral Health treats addiction issues.

Mr. Halligan stated that he did not know.

Mr. Schaefer asked from what areas the residents of this proposed facility would be from.

Mr. Halligan stated that in his meetings with the proposed tenant, the names of the facilities that they receive referrals from, he did not recognize. Mr. Halligan added that what makes this location ideal, is the setting. Haven Behavioral Health is interested in a stand-alone building, as the sole occupant of that building. They like the amenities of the site. He informed the Planning Commission that Haven Behavioral Health would like a building of 73,000 square feet, with a minimum of 96 beds.

Mr. Gutowski asked if Haven Behavioral Health provided out-patient services.

Mr. Halligan stated that he believes it will be in-patient services only.

Mr. Gutowski asked if the proposed building could be moved back to allow for a deeper buffer to shield the single family dwellings across Haws Lane.

Mr. Halligan stated that the proposed building is at the setback line now and that any adjustment would require Zoning Hearing Board relief. In addition, he informed everyone that this plan has to remain as a by-right-plan.

Mr. Gutowski stated that every plan requires waivers of some sort and that this plan will have to take into consideration that there is no public transportation service to this site. No train station within walking distance. The applicant needs to understand the impact this development will have on light pollution and noise in this area. Mr. Gutowski asked if either the applicant or Haven Behavioral Health would be providing transit service to the site.

Mr. Halligan stated he has not discussed these issues with Haven Behavioral Health. In addition, he stated that these matters would have to be addressed as the plan advances through the engineering and design of a formal plan submission.

Mr. Gutowski asked if there has been a tree survey completed.

Mr. Halligan confirmed that study is underway and informed everyone that the report has not been completed at this time.

Mr. Gutowski asked if the plan would include a walking trail or some type or joint use of the woodlands area by the public or school district. Mr. Gutowski stated that outdoor classroom space is always in high demand. This site sharing property lines with two different schools would be ideal.

Mr. Halligan stated that those type of amenities have not been discussed with Haven Behavioral Health.

Mr. Penecale asked if the development of this site for this use would include any outdoor recreational areas. He pointed out that the facilities he is aware of have at the very least an outdoor patio with benches and chairs.

Mr. Halligan stated that there would be some sort of outdoor area for the residents of this facility.

Ms. Shanta McCoy-Jones asked what level of services would be offered by Haven Behavioral Health. She also asked what the make-up of the residents would be. She also has concerns about the displacement of the existing wildlife on this site if the property is developed.

Ms. Elizabeth McNamara asked what the level of security would be for this facility as the proposed development shares a property line with an elementary school and another school property. She has questions about the operation of the site and not the layout. Her concerns center on outpatient services and rehab nature of the proposed use. She questioned the 24 hour operation of the proposed use.

Ms. Megan Fitzpatrick stated that she has a design background and understands the land development and zoning process. She stated that this plan is a sham and staged to obtain the residential zoning this developer wants. She stated that a compromise should be reached between the developer, the residents and the Township that would allow for residential development and open space being set aside.

Mr. Erich Lukas stated that Haven Behavioral Health's own webpage states that they provide drug and alcohol rehab, as well as both in-house and out-patient services. He stated that this is not a good idea next to an elementary school.

Mr. Richard Metz stated that the applicant is presenting a fraud and the plan presented is the worst case scenario put forward to scare the residents into allowing residential zoning. He stated that the property should be purchased and kept as open space.

Ms. Susan Hoffman stated that she has concerns about stormwater runoff, traffic and the safety of the children. She believes that the property should be purchased by the Township or School District and remain as open space.

Mr. Michael Reynolds stated that traffic is very bad now on Haws Lane and at certain times of the day, attempting to gain access to Church Road is impossible. Any additional traffic volume will only add to the problem.

Mr. Michael Grothusen stated that this is not a good location for a rehab facility that offers both inpatient and outpatient treatment of alcohol and drug addictions. He cited the unknown level of security for this facility, the location of the elementary school and number of children that walk to and from school each day.

Ms. Michele Patton stated that she is very concerned about the location of the two schools and added that she would prefer the site be developed residentially.

Mr. Kevin Dougher stated that he is in favor of seeing this site developed for residential use.

Ms. Sarah Benton stated that she does not care what type of residences are built and believes that this plan is a “scare plan”. She would like the site to remain open space.

Mr. Halligan stated that this plan is real and after the negative feedback he received on the two proposed residential developments, he is left with the option of developing this site for an institutional use as permitted by the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Lisa Wall asked about a plan for 30 townhouses.

Mr. Halligan stated that any type of residential development will require a change in zoning on the properties and to date, that type of change has not been supported by the Board of Commissioners. He has already submitted a plan for the development of 41 units and 36 units. Both plans were not well received.

Commissioner Standish stated that a plan for the development of 30 townhouse units has not been submitted to the Township for review.

Ms. Elizabeth McNamara asked what the process would be to review a 30 unit townhouse unit proposal and what was involved in the review.

Commissioner Standish stated that the applicant would have to submit the plan and a review just like the one we are having tonight, would be scheduled. He invited the residents in attendance to come to the next Board of Commissioner’s meeting and voice their opinions and concerns. In addition, he stated that this is the first he is hearing support for the development of this site for residential uses.

Mr. Penecale explained the difference between a sketch plan and a formal land development submission. He also explained that a sketch plan, like the one submitted tonight, does not involve the Planning Commission issuing a formal recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Eric Seiferth stated that he is pro behavioral health, but does not support this development. He would like to see the site developed for residential use. He also stated that he takes offense to the personal attacks on the developer and believes they are uncalled for.

Ms. Ellen Stevenson stated that she wants the woods to remain and called all the proposals unacceptable.

Ms. Joan Parson stated that there are some very good options for this site that have not been considered and would like to know what happened to apartment development that was age restricted at 55 and over.

Mr. Daniel Painter stated that the carriage house has real historical value and should be maintained and worked into whatever the final proposal is for this site.

Mr. Halligan explained that he had offered the properties to both the School District and the Township at one point and for several reasons, neither was interested in purchasing the properties. He stated that he has now submitted three different plans and all have met with opposition. He explained that this is not a practice that will continue. This site will be developed and something will be built there. He stated that he is still willing to work with the residents and the Township, but that the development of this site must move forward.

Mr. Gutowski explained that all of the emails received by staff would be added as an attachment to the minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

The Planning Commission will meet again on December 7, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted  
Mark A. Penecale  
Director of Planning & Zoning