

PLANNING COMMISSION

April 7, 2016

The Planning Commission of South Strabane Township held their Regular Meeting on Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. in the Municipal Building, 550 Washington Road, Washington, PA 15301.

Present for the meeting were: Fred Pozzuto, Chairman, Vice-Chairman Paula Phillis, Joseph Kopko, Laynee Zipko, Jay Gordon and Tom Steele, Members. Also present were: John Stickle, Township Manager; Carolyn Yagle, Planning Consultant; Michael Sherrieb, KLH Engineers; Steve Toprani, Solicitor and Ellen Wallo, Recording Secretary.

Mr. Pozzuto led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC HEARING

HCB Foundry Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance-Revision to Section 245-149 RE: Mid-Rise Apartments in a C-2 Zone

Jonathan Kamin, Esquire; Andy Boyd, TSG Properties; and Patrick Cooper of Gateway Engineers were present in support of this application.

A previous application for a Text Amendment to allow construction of mid-rise apartment buildings in the C-2 Zoning District, without having to construct retail or offices on the first floor of such mid-rise apartment building, was heard at a Public Hearing of the Planning Commission on March 3, 2016. Such Public Hearing was continued until this meeting. The Planning Commission has asked HCB Foundry Attorney Jonathan Kamin to revise such proposed Text Amendment for further consideration by the Planning Commission. Such revised Text Amendment is being presented at this meeting.

Mr. Kamin stated that they petitioned the Zoning Hearing Board for relief with this issue, but the Zoning Hearing Board denied their petition and recommended this issue come before the Planning Commission.

Mr. Kamin explained that he has been working on this site since 2008 after The Foundry failed. They have established The Old Mill and have had great success with their retail offerings.

There is an area at the rear of this property that is approximately 120 feet and 20% higher than the other retail in the area along Route 19. The site was left after materials from The Foundry were moved to this area. Such site is not suitable for retail and HCB Foundry is proposing mid-rise apartments here. The issue is that the Zoning Ordinance requires retail or office space on the first floor of such mid-rise apartments and HCB Foundry has found that retailers don't feel this is a good spot for customers to come to as it can't be seen from Route 19.

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Planning Consultant Carolyn Yagle sent a memo stating that “the proposed C-2 Zoning District Text Amendment identifies specific provisions related to the placement of mid-rise apartments. All of the points of the proposed amendment are sound in terms of positive planning for the community; however, they appear to be parcel-specific. The nature of the existing C-2 Zoning District is that it presents a mixture of non-residential and residential uses. In considering this proposed amendment in context of the overall C-2 Zoning District, it is recommended that the minimum acreage be lower than the 70 acres as presented. An analysis of all parcel acreage in the C-2 Zoning District would enable for an applicable lesser minimum contiguous acreage number to be assigned (e.g. 20) that would be compatible district-wide and be able to support a mixture of residential and non-residential development within context of the zoning district’s overall purpose. It is recommended that the 115,000 square feet be converted to a percentage of the overall development; again so that it can be applied to the overall district. With the exception of potential adjustment of points C.1 and C.2 of the proposed amendment to address the above considerations all other points appear compatible to the overall district as drafted.

The Township Planning Commission should consider these elements as part of its review and any subsequent recommendation of the proposed text amendment.”

Mr. Pozzuto responded that, in response to Ms. Yagle’s memo and comments, that the minimum acreage be 20 acres to support a mixture of residential and non-residential development within context of the zoning district’s overall purpose. There was some discussion of this issue.

Mr. Kopko remarked that he is concerned that these proposed acreage amounts create a competitive advantage for certain developers. He also stated that he is concerned about the life cycle of retail developments regarding the minimum square feet of office space required.

Mr. Kamin responded that 70 acres may not be the right number for the minimum acres required, but that there should be a threshold. He also stated that minimum thresholds may be made at the time of application.

Mr. Steele stated that he is in favor of this mixed-use project, but is uncomfortable with the text amendment not covering the whole C-2 Zoning District. He does not care for this text amendment; he would have liked this item to be decided by the Zoning Hearing Board.

Patrick Cooper of The Gateway Engineers stated that the original Master Plan for The Old Mill showed apartments on the above mentioned site at the time THF took over and that the Planning Commission seemed to like such idea.

Planning Consultant Carolyn Yagle read from the C-2 Zoning Ordinance and suggested that what HCB Foundry is trying to accomplish on this plot of land might be done with a Conditional Use application to the Planning Commission including a request that the Planning Commission recommend waiving the existing requirement that such proposed apartments building have retail or offices on the first floor. There was further discussion on this matter.

At this time, Mr. Kamin stated that HCB Foundry is withdrawing their request for a Text Amendment to the Township Zoning Ordinance, revising Section 245-139, to allow mid-rise apartment in the C-2 Zoning District, without having to construct retail or offices on the first floor of such mid-rise apartment.

PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL
Old Mill Outparcel Retail

This item is for a Land Development Plan for an Old Mill Outparcel Retail Site. Patrick Cooper of Gateway Engineers, Inc., was present in support of this application.

Engineer's Comments (KLH):

206-36 The application was reviewed for completeness based on the requirements of Article VI, Section 206-36 of the township Code.

Article X C-2 General Commercial District

The application was reviewed for compliance with the requirements of Chapter 245 Zoning, Article X, Section 245-62 of the Township Code. The application, as submitted, was found to be in general compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

General Comments

1. The South Strabane Fire Chief provided comment on the accessibility of the loading area with the Township's 43' 6" long ladder truck. I am currently working with the Developer's Engineer and the Chief to resolve the access question.
2. The Township may have additional comments.
3. On behalf of the Township of South Strabane, KLH Engineers, Inc., reserves the right to amend this review and/or add additional comments when new or revised information is submitted for consideration.

Mr. Sherrieb reported that all issues requiring the Fire Chief's review have been addressed. He recommended that the Planning Commission recommend Preliminary and Final Land Development Approval.

After further discussion, Mr. Steele made a motion to recommend approval of the Old Mill's Outparcel Retail Preliminary and Final Land Development, subject to the changes agreed to by the Fire Chief being shown on the drawing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gordon and carried with Mr. Kopko voting no.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Pozzuto and seconded by Mr. Kopko, to approve the minutes of the meeting of March 3, 2016 with one correction. The motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Pozzuto made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 P.M. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zipko and carried.

Submitted by,

Ellen G. Wallo
Recording Secretary

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