

BUCKINGHAM TOWNSHIP

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PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA

JANUARY 8, 2020

Call to Order 7:30 p.m.

1. Annual Reorganization of Planning Commission
 - Appoint Chairman
 - Appoint Vice-Chairman
2. Consideration of approving draft Planning Commission minutes of August 7, 2019.
3. Consideration of recommending Preliminary Approval of the **“Covenant Church – New Parking Lot”** Land Development plan dated “Revised 11/26/19”, Township File LD 2019-01, Tax Map Parcel #6-10-007, 4000 Route 202, proposing a new parking lot, plaza space, and associated stormwater facilities, 1.94 Acres to be developed; total parcel size 24.74 acres, located in the R-1 Zoning District, with an extended review period expiration date of March 31, 2020.

Buckingham Township Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Buckingham Township Planning Commission was held January 8, 2020 in the Township Building, 4613 Hughesian Drive, Buckingham, Pennsylvania.

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| Present: | Andrea Mehling | Chairperson |
| | Patrick Fowles | Vice Chairperson |
| | Rebecca Fink | Member |
| | Dr. Marc Sandberg | Member |
| | Louis Spadafora | Member |
| | Glenn Thomson | Member |
| | Dan Gray | Township Engineer |
| | Louis Rosanova | Bucks County Planning Commission |
| Not Present: | Erling Salvesen, Jr. | Member |

Mrs. Mehling called the regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Annual Reorganization of Planning Commission
- Appoint Chairman
- Appoint Vice-Chairman

Mr. Fowles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Spadafora, to appoint Andrea Mehling as Chairman. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Mehling made a motion, seconded by Mr. Spadafora, to appoint Patrick Fowles as Vice-Chairman. The motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of approving draft Planning Commission minutes of August 7, 2019.

Mrs. Mehling made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fowles to approve, as most recently presented, the draft Planning Commission Minutes of the August 7, 2019 Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of recommending Preliminary Approval of the “Covenant Church – New Parking Lot” Land Development plan dated “Revised 11/26/19”, Township File LD 2019-01, Tax Map Parcel #6-10-007, 4000 Route 202, proposing a new parking lot, plaza space, and associated stormwater facilities, 1.94 Acres to be developed; total parcel size 24.74 acres, located in the R-1 Zoning District, with an extended review period expiration date of March 31, 2020.

Mr. Joe Lanzetta, Applicant, Mr. Larry Rankin, Church Elder, Mr. Glenn Harris, Design Engineer and Mr. Thomas Knab with Renew Land Development Solutions and Mr. Robert Gundlach, Fox Rothschild, LLP, were present to discuss the revised plan for “Covenant Church – New Parking Lot”.

Mr. Gundlach said this project was before the Planning Commission six months ago when it was reviewed and commented upon, they have made adjustments and plan clean-up, and are present to discuss the revised plan.

Mr. Harris provided an overview of the plan, pointing out on a drawing the original church, the new building addition recently completed, existing parking areas, and the proposed 77 space new parking lot currently under consideration.

Mr. Harris said all stormwater management matters commented on in Knight Engineering's January 6, 2020 review letter are workable to be resolved.

Mr. Harris said they had received the Landscape Review Committee's letter dated December 12, 2019, met with Ms. Manicone and received suggestions to improve the plan. He said they had since developed a re-worked plan, removing plants in and around the backside to accentuate planting materials at the entrance, and designed larger, stepping of heights plant selections. Mr. Harris said they had sent the Landscape Review Committee a copy of the concept. Mr. Harris displayed a colored landscape plan, accentuating the evergreens and plantings through the entrance to help screen the parking area from the entrance view. The plan also shows the HVAC equipment and dumpster area in an enclosure behind 6' high solid fencing.

Mrs. Mehling questioned the movement of plants, and Ms. Manicone explained that the ordinance for parking requirements specifies a hedge and deciduous plant material around the perimeter of the parking lot, however considerations due to snow removal and storage, and lack of need to buffer internal site areas, makes the buffering pointless. Ms. Manicone recommended the applicant request a partial waiver, use the funds along with remaining funds in the Phase 2 project escrow, to bump up plant material upfront, create heavier buffering more strategically located, and keep the open view across the meadow internally.

Mr. Gundlach commented on the following items in Knight Engineering's January 6, 2020 review letter:

1.8 – Regarding design of the parking lot entrance drive and proposed trash enclosure entrance.

Mr. Gundlach said this is a “will comply” with a partial waiver to be requested as recommended by Ms. Manicone and to increase plantings along the front. Ms. Manicone clarified her comments were provided for a concept that was discussed earlier this week, however she has not reviewed a plan for the image shown this evening of the building with suggested plantings, and Mr. Gray asked that it be submitted to the township for review.

2.4 and 2.5 – Regarding side yard setback requirements and buffer areas, Mr. Gundlach said these are both “will comply”.

3.4 – Waiver requested from Section 9.17.A.12 of the SALDO, requiring off-street parking areas to be located to the side or rear of buildings.

Mrs. Fink said she does not support this waiver. She stated that from a planning point of view, reminding everyone at the onset of this plan 20 years ago the church said it would comply with the landowners respect for the tree line along Route 202 and along Mechanicsville Road, that she believes the parking does not belong in the proposed location as it is too close to the tree line and could be located elsewhere on the property. Mrs. Fink stated the Planning Commissions' role is to

uphold ordinances and planning, and that maintaining natural resources of the township is their job.

Mr. Gundlach replied the church has spent thousands of dollars engineering the location of this parking, it is a shorter distance from the new entrance, they are respecting the trees, will develop underground stormwater management, and are working with the Landscape Review Committee to beef up the landscaping.

3.7 – Waiver requested from Section 9.37 of SALDO requiring submission of Transportation Impact Study. Mr. Gundlach said they are not proposing additional buildings. Mr. Harris said they are requesting a waiver request in the sense of the required traffic study, however will submit a level of service study. Mr. Gray clarified that means they will analyze the entrances in and out of the church facility to be sure there are no traffic issues, rather than looking at the entire area and its potential impact at intersections. Mr. Gray said in his opinion of the original traffic study which included a larger study of the surrounding area, the impacts of this project should be relatively minor, with the greatest impact expected at the entrances, especially during special church services. Mr. Lanzetta confirmed during anticipated heavier attendance times they have a police officer present, they put out cones, flashing red lights and flares. Mr. Lanzetta said they also have parking lot attendants.

Mrs. Fink questioned if the level of service study would include operations beyond the weekend services, such as schooling. Mr. Rankin replied they only have a small pre-school during the day, not a full school.

Mr. Gundlach pointed out they plan to add 77 parking spaces, bringing the total to 475 parking spots. He stated there is no new building associated with this parking lot, however those 77 spaces will provide a better opportunity, eliminate overparking/double parking, and accommodate reasonable projections in the future making for a successful church available for the community.

Mr. Gundlach stated all other items in the Knight Engineering letter are “will comply”.

Mrs. Fink noted #18 regarding the plans not providing any proposed lighting for the building façade. Mr. Gray clarified this comment was to confirm there is no proposed illumination of the building. Mr. Knab said there is lighting at the entrance doors, and parking lot lighting will be as little as possible. Mr. Knab said the lighting will comply with Knight Engineering’s recommendations.

Mr. Gray noted that due to the utility plan septic plan and the possible need to shift the sewer tank, the lot may lose one parking space. Mr. Knab confirmed they would keep the ADA space, but shift down one.

Mrs. Fink noted a wetland delineation report was not submitted. Mr. Knab replied the report is in progress and an updated report will be included in the next submission. Mrs. Fink said she would need to see that prior to making a recommendation on the plan. Mr. Harris said the update does not change the delineation, rather has to do with methodology and how they arrived at the information. Mr. Gray clarified if the wetland delineation changes, the entire parking lot plan changes. Mrs. Fink said that was her concern.

Mrs. Fink questioned item 2.2 under cursory comments of stormwater management report, regarding the revised stormwater calculations not adequately evaluating the impact of the Phase 2 changes. She asked what does “will comply” mean to this comment? Mr. Knab said they would be meeting with Mr. Gray and their stormwater engineer next week for a clear resolution of this item, and either they will comply with Knight Engineering’s recommendation or they will need to re-evaluate. Mr. Gray clarified that a concern during was created during Phase 2 when the building roof drains were reconfigured and directed some runoff from the roof areas away from the infiltration facility during Phase 1. In conjunction with the Phase 2 Change Order, the church proposed to convey the diverted roof runoff into the stormwater facilities being proposed during Phase 3, thus meeting the original volume reductions. To date, the calculations still needed adjustments to verify that the volume reductions were met. Mrs. Fink asked if this would impact the tree line. Mr. Harris stated he did not think the underground basin would have a bearing on the trees because it will sit 2-7’ lower than the bottom of the root zone for the evergreen trees. Mr. Harris suggested if there are concerns relative to wetness in the swale migrating toward those trees they could put in a seal of some type, such as bentonite.

Mrs. Mehling said the Planning Commission is very concerned about saving the tree line along Route 202, stating she was on the commission 20 years ago when this project began, and the owner said they were providing a financial incentive to the buyers if they would agree to protect the tree line. Mr. Harris shared Mrs. Mehling’s concern, saying that he confirmed the canopy line of the trees and will modify the plan with the current dimensions. Mr. Harris said the trees are part of the identity of the church and they feel they are doing everything appropriately. Mr. Rankin said they would do whatever engineering is necessary and will not encroach upon the health of the trees.

Mr. Knab confirmed all items in the December 12, 2019 Landscape Review Consultants letter are “will comply”. Ms. Manicone clarified that some of the comments in her letter reviewed plan notes, which now require conversation and a final plan to be prepared. Ms. Manicone said they need to determine the size of the materials and confirm that the necessary funds are still escrowed in Phase 2. She said at this time there is not an approved landscape plan. Mr. Gundlach said it is the plan “to be revised” to address the Landscape Review Consultants concerns.

Mrs. Fink stated item #4 in the Landscape Review Consultants letter, regarding the tree protection area, concerned her. Ms. Manicone said as discussed earlier this evening, she has questions on the piping arrangement behind the tree line now switching to an open swale and end wall. Mr. Gray said in order to get the most water away from the trees and root balls, they may be able to leave the grade between the curb and tree protection zone as is (not broaden out the swale). Mr. Gray said bentonite stops water from all direction, and could create a back-up, where he would prefer to see the swale tightened up and drainage designed so there is no standing water. Mr. Gray said this is an engineering issue that he felt the church could address.

Mr. Fowles stated he is conflicted about this plan, because as one of the planning priorities is to minimize impervious surface in the township, this is creating a parking lot that may be needed for 2 days a year and empty 363 days. Mr. Fowles said he is conflicted about the need for the additional parking lot as there are other parking spaces that can be used, but are not because people do not want to walk a distance. Mr. Fowles said he would like them to return when this parking is actually needed nearly every Sunday.

Mr. Gundlach requested consideration of the length of time and expense it takes to obtain land approvals, stating this project began in 2016 at the Zoning Hearing Board. He said church projections over the next 5 years predict a continued 10-20% growth. Mr. Fowles replied he understood, however this parking lot area was chosen for convenience and put in a very sensitive area, which wouldn't have been the case if the parking lot was proposed at the other end of the parcel. Mr. Gundlach said human nature is to park at the nearest convenience, and agreed they need to work on directing the members to fill existing spaces and not double park.

Mr. Thomson expressed frustration at the attendance data that was submitted in response to the Planning Commission's previous request. He said it was impossible to analyze as it was a paper with attendance in total, not by service, with an average. Mr. Rankin said they did have this information broken down by service, but that was not submitted. Mr. Thomson said this presents a credibility issue.

Mr. Spadafora recalled at a previous meeting the gentleman who owns the adjacent property was present, and said he was fine with additional parking on the property as long as it was not placed at the top of the parcel closest to Mechanicsville Road and that he doesn't see it. Mr. Spadafora asked if any of the other neighbors had commented. Ms. Manicone added she was present at that meeting, and viewed the site the next day, and thought the neighboring property could be buffered if the parking lot was placed near his property.

Mr. Gray suggested to the Planning Commission that if they believed the parking lot should not be in the location as being reviewed on this plan, they should make that clear so the applicant could make the decision to move forward without support or to work towards a solution. Mr. Gray said the engineering comments issued in his review letter were items that could be addressed by the church's consultants; however, the applicant deserved an honest opinion of where they should be heading.

Mr. Fowles asked if this project was before the Planning Commission prior to the Zoning Hearing Board, and Mr. Gray said the project was discussed briefly by the Board of Supervisor's before going to the Zoning Hearing Board, and noted that the Applicant required a variance for impervious surface regardless of the parking lots location on the parcel. Mr. Gray said the Zoning Hearing Board's approval made a condition of the increase in impervious surface to place the parking lot near Route 202. Mr. Rankin said letters were sent to the neighbors for the Zoning Hearing Board meeting, and neighbors were in support of the Route 202 location.

Mr. Gundlach confirmed they will provide the Planning Commission with all requested information, and work with the township consultants on all concerns stated in the review letters.

Mr. Rosanova, Bucks County Planning Commission, said all of their comments and concerns were addressed in the Knight Engineering, Inc. review letter, and discussed during this meeting.

Mrs. Fink made a motion to reject the "Covenant Church – New Parking Lot" Land Development plan dated "Revised 11/26/19", Township File LD 2019-01, Tax Map Parcel #6-10-007, 4000 Route 202, due to the following reasons:

- because the Planning Commission does not see the need for additional parking due to the lack of well-presented attendance data to show the need;
 - because there is no need for parking in this location;
 - lack of detail on the swale design under the Landscape Review Committee;
 - lack of a plan being available for review by the LRC showing the front entrance.;
 - lack of a transportation level of service study including Route 202 and Mechanicsville Road;
 - lack of updated wetland delineation data; and
 - lack of a stormwater management plan that has been reviewed by Knight Engineering, Inc.
- There was no second to the motion.*
There was no vote on the motion.

The Planning Commission, Township Engineer and Mr. Gundlach discussed several possible motions and potential outcomes of each possibility.

Mr. Fowles made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Mehling, to table the “Covenant Church – New Parking Lot”, Land Development plan dated “Revised 11/26/19”, Township File LD 2019-01, Tax Map Parcel #6-10-007, 4000 Route 202, pending a decision by the Board of Supervisors regarding the proposed location for the new parking lot, due to the Planning Commission having concerns about the justification for this parking lot along with the more serious concerns that the parking lot should not be located between the evergreen trees bordering Route 202 and the recently expanded church section. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fowles made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Mehling, to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 10:00 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lori Wicen.