

NEW HOPE BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

-Minutes-

May 4, 2020

7:00pm

Borough Municipal Building
125 New Street
New Hope, PA 18938

I. 7:00 PM Regular Meeting

Members of the New Hope Borough Planning Commission in attendance included Chairman Keith Voss, Howard Savin, Jason Apuzzio, Paul Atkinson, and Peter Meyer.

Borough representative in attendance include: Zoning Officer Tracy Tackett, Borough Engineer Karen MacNair, P.E, and Borough Manager Peter Gray.

Present for 385 W. Bridge were Edward Murphy, Esquire, Joe Blackburn, Esquire, Justin Geonnotti.

Present for River Walk Eric Goldberg, Keith Boyd, and Evan Sowers.

Members of the public: Patricia and Greg Harlen, Fred White, and Shawn and Christine Thompson.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Voss called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

B. Review of Minutes

Mr. Apuzzio moved; seconded by Mr. Meyer, to approve the March 2, 2020 New Hope Borough Planning Commission meeting minutes. MOTION passed 5-0.

Mr. Meyer moved; seconded by Mr. Savin, to approve the April 6, 2020 New Hope Borough Planning Commission meeting minutes. MOTION passed 5-0.

C. Old Business

1. Preliminary/Final Land Development Application from Gateway to New Hope for 385 West Bridge Street

Applicant Presentation: The Applicant revised their plan to address Planning Commission issues raised during previous meetings. Mr. Murphy provided an overview of the review process and the last plan version.

The Applicant presented the original plan submittal compared to the current submittal. Key changes include the following.

- Elimination of entrance from Old York Road.
- Reduced the amount of paved area to 62% (50% allowed) and the number of parking spaces from 207 to 155 spaces, allowing an enhancement of landscaping around the perimeter of the site.

- Addition of additional landscaping and a berm along Old York Road to buffer the proposed use from neighbors.
- Addition of a shelter at the front of the lot near W. Bridge Street to accommodate patrons waiting for the shuttle to take them to the hotel.
- Stormwater management is an improvement for the property. The stormwater management does not flow toward Old York Road, but rather exits at the northeast corner of the site in a more concentrated manner.

Review Letter Discussion:

- **Gilmore & Associate, Inc.-** Applicant will comply with comments of latest review letter. Engineer noted that the stormwater outlet will be more concentrated than previous.
- **Building Code Official-** working with Code Official on classification of use and parking and ADA compliance.
- **Conservation District-** received minor comments. Will comply.
- **Zoning Review-** Zoning officer noted that the Applicant needs to address the tree removal standards because there are multiple trees on the site that are 15 inches or greater. An arborist assessment will be required.

Suggested consideration of a loop valet circulation using Windy Bush Road and Sukan Road to reduce impact to neighborhoods in the Borough. It was recommended the PC discuss the waivers being requested, in particular, the waiver for sidewalk being requested.

- The Applicant indicated that the slope at the northeast corner of the property falls off steeply past the property, which would be a problem for sidewalk extension beyond the property. They do not want to build a sidewalk to nowhere. Applicant does not have an issue providing the sidewalk along the frontage. The Applicant asked if the neighbors or the PC felt the need for a sidewalk on Old York Road. Neighbors did not see a need for a sidewalk on either side of the property.
- The Applicant stated they have reached out to an arborist regarding the trees.

PC Discussion

- Mr. Voss noted he likes the berm at the rear of the property. Wants to make sure that if the sidewalk is not installed now, that there is at least adequate right-of-way. Applicant indicated there is adequate right-of-way width available for a sidewalk. They are offering the ultimate right-of-way to PennDOT, but not sure if PennDOT will accept it.
- Discussed landscaping plan. Mr. Meyer expressed concern about the size of the landscaping and the effectiveness of the buffering given the upward slope toward the rear of the site. The Applicant indicated that because they pulled-back the parking the visibility should be minimal.

Applicant suggested they would provide a perspective of the view into the site with the landscaping.

- Mr. Meyer suggested the Applicant consider reversing the internal traffic flow to minimize traffic conflict between the site and traffic on W. Bridge Street. The Applicant is willing to alter traffic flow and will look into this possibility.
- Driveways- the Applicant is not proposing to alter the driveway within the PennDOT right-of-way.
- Valet route discussion- The Applicant showed a route down and back through town via Stockton and New Street. The Applicant was asked to consider a loop route utilizing Windy Bush Road and Sungan Road as a return route from the hotel to parking lot. The Applicant will look at the loop alternative.
- It was suggested that the left turn from Ferry to W. Bridge should be avoided.
- Applicant reported they intend to have 2-3 vans with a capacity of approximately 16-20 per van. Concern was expressed about the narrowness of New Street relative to use by passenger vans.
- Applicant was asked to consider if a portion of the proposed route is owned by Riverwoods.

Public Comment

- Greg Herlan appreciates the elimination of the entrance from Old York Road, the addition of berm, landscaping, and stormwater. Asked what the plan is for adjacent house. Applicant indicated they continue to use the house as housing for actors from the Playhouse. The long-term plan is still to construct a hotel on the subject property.
- Neighbor asked if there was fencing proposed. The Applicant responded no fencing is proposed. The plan is to remove the fence along Old York Road.
- Where are the eight trees to be removed located? They are scattered around the property.
- The Applicant continues to look for other parking alternatives in the area.
- The expectation is that the valet service will not be 24 hours.

Recommendation

A motion was made by H. Savin, seconded by J. Apuzzio, to recommend approval of the plan as proposed, with all the waivers as requested. APPROVED 4-1. Mr. Meyer voted no expressing concern about the two-way valet route through the Borough and opposition to the waiver request from the sidewalk.

D. New Business

- 1. River Walk Preliminary Subdivision and Land Development at 157/169 N. Main**

Applicant Presentation

Applicant presented the site plan. The project is located at 157/169 N. Main Street. Each of the properties currently has a single-family dwelling, both of which are proposed to be demolished. The site is proposed to be redeveloped with four lots each containing a twin dwelling, for a total of eight dwelling units. The property has some non-shade trees proposed to be removed and the property is located within the regulated floodplain. The submitted plan shows one single entrance to serve all the units. The location of the entrance is proposed to be located 3-4 feet north of the existing entrance. According to the Applicant, the pavement would open up along the front of the property in front of the units to accommodate parking for all the units. All the units are proposed to have two car garages. Landscaping along the front is proposed to contain shade trees and a hedge row. The Applicant proposes connection to all public utilities. Stormwater is tricky because it flows to the back of the property. The plan proposes underground storm system along the front of the property to discharge into the system within N. Main. The units will be elevated to meet floodplain requirements.

Review Letter Discussion:

- **Gilmore & Associates, Inc-** Applicant has review the engineer comments with the Borough Engineer and believes they can address the comments.
- **Zoning Review-** The Applicant indicated they have reviewed the zoning officer letter and given the identified variances that would be needed, the Applicant developed an alternative layout with four separate driveways to eliminate most of the variances identified, except for the pavement within 5 feet of property line.

PC Discussion

- The issue of paving across property lines to accommodate the proposed development was discussed. The Applicant suggested they could request a waiver from the requirement to provide spill-over parking on-site, since there is on-street parking available. This may eliminate the need for variances.
- It was asked if it is possible to move the units back further. The Applicant indicated more fill would be required because the property drops down in the back. It would also result in additional impervious surface. A PC member suggested they may not get support for a waiver from the requirement to provide the required parking on-site.
- The buildings as proposed are 100 foot back from the curb. The current house is about 30 feet back from the curb.
- The housing units are the same housing units as the units recently constructed on Old York Road. The Applicant is willing add some additional building variation.

- Due to the required elevation for floodplain, the Applicant was asked about the height of the buildings. The Applicant indicated they would not exceed the allowable height.
- The Applicant is working through engineering issues.
- The Applicant was asked if they are losing parking spaces with the alternate layout (four driveways). The engineer indicated there is currently seven on-street spaces along the frontage and they are able to maintain the same number of spaces.
- A PC member expressed concern about the height of the building and their scale with the neighborhood. The Applicant indicates the height will be similar to the new houses across the street. The Applicant is willing to provide some variation to the design to help it fit in with neighborhood. Primary concern is the mass and the number of units. It was noted that the existing units in the neighborhood step up to the height rather than have full height at the front of the building.
- It was recommended that the Applicant double-check the new height standards to ensure the proposal is compliant.
- It was recommended the Applicant look at the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to redevelopment in residential neighborhoods.
- The Applicant was asked about the landscaping proposed along the front and the view from the Towpath. They were also asked if they would maintain the connection to the Towpath and if it would be available to the public, or just be private. The Applicant proposes street trees and a hedge screen on either side of the driveway. They propose pillars at the entrance. It is anticipated that the planting along the front would provide a screen for the garages and the paved area. For the rear they intend to remove the bamboo and plant trees in the rear of the property. They intend to keep a connection to the Towpath for the residents of the development that would be maintained by the HOA. The Applicant suggests they will vary the façade material.
- A PC member asked if any of the garages could be turned to provide façade variation. This is challenging due to the narrow width of the proposed lots.
- The Applicant indicated that rear parking is a problem because of the stormwater management.
- Concern was expressed about the idea of having to walk past an eight-foot tall hedge for the entire frontage. The PC would prefer variety in the vegetation. The Applicant indicated the hedge would be about twelve feet behind the sidewalk.
- PC requesting more details about the variety of the development. In particular, elevations and renderings.
- Discussion about the preferred driveway arrangement continued. PC was open to the different driveway alternatives as long as the building elevations and landscaping variation were desirable. It was suggested maybe stakes could be put out at the site to give a sense of placement.
- The Applicant was asked if they could do fewer units. The Applicant indicated the economics are driving the number of units.

Recommendation

- Motion by P. Meyer, seconded by J. Apuzzio, that failing to get an extension, the Planning Commission recommends denial. 5-0.

E. Public Comment

- Residents of the twins on Old York Road spoke positively about their satisfaction of the housing units.

F. Adjournment

Mr. Meyer MOVED; seconded by Mr. Savin to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:30 PM.