

MINUTES

LOWER SWATARA TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 15, 7:00 P.M.

Meeting was called to order by Chauncey Knopp at 7:00 P.M. with the following present:

Chauncey D. Knopp, Chairman
Eric A. Breon, Vice Chairman
Christopher DeHart
Leah Pearlman-Storch, Dauphin County Planning Commission
Brenda Wick, Planning and Zoning Director
Angela Yealy, Recording Secretary

Excused:

Paul Wagner
Kimber Latsha
Chris Dellinger, Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc., Township Engineer

Others in Attendance:

Matt Genesio, Campus Heights Associates Inc., L.P.
Tim Sipe, Campus Heights Associates Inc., L.P.
Matt Tunnell, GreenWorks Development, LLC.
Timothy Przybylowski, Century Engineering
Residents: Michelle Keeney
Peggy Ginnovan
Donald Burger

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Breon and seconded by Mr. DeHart to approve the Minutes of the October 25, 2012 meeting with the stipulation to include a motion that was made by Mr. DeHart to recommend approval of the Zoning Map Amendment. There was no second to the motion; therefore, the motion failed.

Motion unanimously approved.

NITTANY VILLAGE STUDENT HOUSING, PHASE 2 ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

The Planning Commission reviewed the Zoning Map Amendment at the Nittany Village Student Housing – Phase 2, prepared for Lawrence Street Partners, LP, c/o GreenWorks Development, LLC, General Partner. The request is to change the zoning district from Residential

Urban (RU) to Commercial Neighborhood (CN), to allow student housing through a Special Exception.

Matt Tunnel with GreenWorks Development, LLC., briefly reviewed their request that was made at the last Planning Commission Meeting. GreenWorks currently has three buildings on site with an agreement of sale that includes 1.4 acres to the north of the first site that has already been developed. They are looking into placing a fourth building onto this new site, and they are requesting to have this site re-zoned to CN which is how their first site is zoned. With a CN zoning change, fifty-two bedrooms could be placed into the fourth building and meet the requirements for use in a CN zone.

Ms. Pearlman-Storch reviewed the request of the zoning change which meets the strategic actions, goals, and objectives found in the Township's Comprehensive Plan. Dauphin County Planning recommends the approval of this change.

Ms. Wick stated that she received letters of support from each of the four owners that would be having their properties changed.

Michelle Keeney, a resident on Dauphin Street, stated that she opposes the student housing. She questioned what would happen to the student housing buildings down the road when the campus becomes more digital, and there is no longer a need for the physical presence of students on campus. Ms. Keeney does not enjoy the noise and states the traffic conditions are getting worse especially at the Wood Street and Main Street intersection. Students walk in the middle of the road wearing earphones and texting. They throw trash in her yard, and students have had a party on her patio. She feels the neighborhood is no longer safe, and she does not see a need for more student housing.

Mr. DeHart questioned what GreenWorks could do to direct students south onto the existing sidewalk instead of walking through the entire neighborhood.

Mr. Tunnell stated that they have not fully designed what would be built at the new site, yet the overall theme would be to add additional pedestrian ways directly onto campus similar to what was done with the first development.

Tim Przybylowski, with Century Engineering, stated that they would improve the frontage along N. Lawrence Street and create an easier walkway off the street and negotiate a new access point with Penn State that leads to the existing paved walkway.

Mr. Tunnell stated that one of the most significant issues currently is the fact that the northern section of Lawrence Street is very narrow. There is a sixty foot right-of-way in this area which would allow room for a sidewalk to be constructed.

Mr. Tunnell stated that a temporary fix before the new development would even be constructed would be to put a fence across the emergency access that is currently there. This area would still be accessible to the Fire Department, yet fenced off to the students. The fence is being fabricated now and should be received in the next several weeks. This fence will close off the entire northern section of Lawrence Street with only one gate, and the fence continues the whole way around campus.

Mr. DeHart suggested having security cameras in place to monitor this area with the new phase.

Mr. Breon questioned Matt Genesisio on what his thoughts were and how he could help in this area.

Mr. Genesisio stated that they are not the police or the parents of the students. They run good student housing facilities and have safety measures in place, but they cannot force the students to walk on the sidewalk. Complaints have been sent out to the tenants through e-mail and meetings that have been held. Everyone will receive an e-mail and text when the fence is in place stating that the northern emergency vehicle entrance has been closed. Measures are in place to counter these issues and minimize the effects on the community. Consolidated student housing is a much more positive approach on surrounding community than having them scattered throughout and affecting a larger geographic area.

Michelle Keeney commented that the students have been around for the past ten years and the concentration of students due to the student housing has made things worse.

Tim Sipe, with Campus Heights, met with the Judicial Affairs Officer for the University. Mr. Sipe sets up weekly meetings with the Chief of Police and monthly meetings with the Judicial Affairs Officer. They have found that the problems arising are not only from the tenants of the student housing but from the Penn State campus including friends and acquaintances of the tenants. They feel that by eliminating the emergency vehicle access by the campus police building and fencing this area completely, this should resolve most of the resident issues.

Donald Burger, a resident, felt that if the gate is closed, the students should be directed off of the street and toward campus.

A motion was made by Mr. DeHart and seconded by Mr. Breon to approve the Zoning Map Amendment at the Nittany Village Student Housing – Phase 2.

Motion unanimously approved.

Ms. Breon questioned when the next meeting will be held to give the residents another chance to state their opinions.

Ms. Wick stated that there is a hearing on December 5th at 6:30 for the public to discuss this plan with the Board of Commissioners.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. DeHart and seconded by Mr. Breon to adjourn the meeting.

Motion unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:



Brenda Wick
Planning and Zoning Director