M I N U T E S

LOWER SWATARA TOWNSHIP **REGULAR MEETING**
PLANNING COMMISSION **APRIL 23, 2026, 7:00 P.M.**

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

Chauncey Knopp, Chairman	Don Fure, Director of Codes, Planning & Zoning
James Young, Vice Chairman	Richard Snyder, Planning & Zoning Coordinator
Dale Messick	Alexa Korber, DCPC
Howard Crawford	Jim Diamond, LST Solicitor
Joseph Formica	Mike Wood, HRG
Tonya Condran, Recording Secretary	

Others present:

Ron Paul, LST BOC	Chris DeHart, LST BOC
Matt Plant, ARM Group	Jay States, Grove Miller Engineering
Brandon Conrad, Vistablock	Jody Marmaro, resident
Rudy Marmara, resident	

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Knopp asked if there was a motion to approve the March 26, 2026, meeting minutes. The motion was made by Mr. Young and seconded by Mr. Crawford. All were in favor. Minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. NHS Middletown Parking Lot – Planning Commission File PC#2026-03. The Final Land Development and Subdivision Plan proposes to consolidate two (2) existing parcels into one (1) proposed parcel, measuring 95.02 acres. Also, said plan proposes to reconfigure the existing parking facilities, expand the existing parking facilities, create a new entrance way, and install both necessary utilities and stormwater management facilities.

Matt Plant, with ARM Group, came to the mic. He was there to present the project for FedEx Freight, which is meant to help logistics at the site. There is proposed a guard

house that is intended to have sanitary and water. They are proposing a second entrance. The existing entrance will be used for employee vehicles. The second entrance will then be used for truck traffic. He then asked for any questions.

Mr. Knopp asked for any questions from the Planning Commission and/or Township Staff.

Mr. Snyder said that there are still a few minor comments that need to be addressed. The Township Staff still has concerns with no lighting plan that has been submitted yet. Township Staff still have concerns with the security gate and how emergency services will get access through the gate. There remains some concerns about retaining walls, and the location of two fire hydrants, as requested by the Township Fire Department. So, we still have a few significant issues that need to be addressed, as well.

Mr. Plant said they do not have any issue with any of those things and they will address them to the satisfaction of the Emergency and Fire Departments. The security gate will be fully manned, but they will coordinate with the Emergency and Fire Depts. on that.

Mr. Knopp asked for any comments from HRG.

Mr. Wood said that Mr. Snyder touched on all of their major SALDO and zoning comments. As for Stormwater Management, we have several comments outstanding. In their comment response, they let us know that they will be addressing those comments in conjunction with their NPDES approval process.

Mr. Knopp asked for any comments from DCPC.

Ms. Korber felt that most of her comments had been addressed already. She asked if they would be utilizing the turn lane that already exists.

Mr. Plant said yes, they would be tying into the existing turn lane.

Ms. Korber said coming out then, people are only to turn left and go towards Fulling Mill Road?

Mr. Plant answered that they hadn't looked into directing traffic one way or the other. But given the use, they would primarily be turning left. But they will be putting up some extra signage.

Mr. Fure said he just wanted to follow up on what Ms. Korber was talking about. There is concern that a tractor-trailer will be able to make a right turn onto N. Union Street because there is a weight restriction on the bridge going towards Hummelstown. So, he feels a "No Right Turn" sign should be posted going out of that truck lane.

Mr. Plant said they would confer with FedEx on that.

Mr. Knopp asked Mr. Diamond for any comments.

Mr. Diamond had no legal comments at this time.

[Discussion ensued using the overhead projection of the site plan.]

Mr. Snyder added that currently there is bump-out curbing coming out towards N. Union Street. He then pointed out on the overhead projection where things such as fire hydrant and the water meter pit are located. He also pointed out that when you come out and turn right, you are immediately in the right turn lane for 2040 N. Union Street. So we would ask them to consider cutting back on this curb line a little. There is a good possibility they may have to move the water meter pit about 5 feet, and that would give us uniform curbline coming up N. Union Street and allow this turn lane to begin uniformly instead of having that bump-out.

Mr. Plant asked what the history is with that turn lane. Because they were looking at some of the numbers and it didn't even seem to support it for that existing use there.

Mr. Snyder added that currently there is a turn lane coming from the south to turn into here. And like I said, you come around this curbing here, it bumps out and then it immediately turns back into the site to accommodate the turn lane for 2040 N. Union Street. So, like I said, it was a consideration that we had talked to them about. Look into it a little bit further. But I figured maybe this may be the right platform to have the Planning Commission consider and openly discuss the possibility of having a continuous turn lane to service their second driveway as well as 2040 North.

Mr. Messick asked how far it juts out.

Mr. Snyder answered about 5 feet. It's from the water meter pit out to the curb, there's about five feet.

Mr. Messick said that he felt it would only make common sense that the curb stays straight, instead of jutting out there. That probably should be realigned since they're putting that new driveway in. That way it would all stay nice and straight, not only for the traffic, but also for snow removal. And he felt it would just make common sense to take care of it while it's being reworked.

Mr. Plant said that right now they weren't proposing to relocate any water valves or meter pits and sort of seems to suggest that's why it currently is that way. But again, I think. And we can look into it and go back and forth a little bit too. Again, just thinking two lanes of trucks going over versus encouraging one lane. I mean, the numbers that we're looking at don't really support the need for the turn lane either. So, making it longer, I'm not sure is warranted with the numbers we're looking at.

Jay States, Grove Miller Engineering, came to the mic. He said that he can certainly see both sides of the story. The uniformity of having a continuous lane does benefit someone getting that lane just continuing up and do one of the driveways in that section because it also serves, I think, a driveway to the south as well. But then there's also the concern, as Mr. Plant had mentioned, if you get a truck that gets in the right-turn lane, someone coming out should be informed because there are employees coming out of FedEx freight. But someone might think that the truck would be turning right into the existing driveway. There haven't been a lot of crashes along this corridor. We did a crash analysis as well. Well, there's been only two crashes in the last five years. But we can certainly look into it from an engineering perspective and see what that impacts. We looked at that building just to the north (Grocery Outlet Warehouse), we looked at the overall size of that building. It is like 500,000 square feet. We ran some trip generation. So, the turn lane right now is not even warranted. And it's more from an operational standpoint to get the trucks out of that through lane. As far as a traffic engineering standpoint is concerned, we could live with the shorter right turn lane, or it could be extended. I think we'd have to look at both benefits. Either way. Jump back to the point that came up before all the counts we did at the existing driveway, no trucks turned right out of the driveway. So, the concern was about the new driveway being an exit only to the left. We didn't have any trucks that were on the traffic counts, came out and made a

right existing. So, I don't think that would be a super impact. But Obviously I'm not FedEx Freight. I don't know what that restriction would play into their facility.

Mr. Plant said he could talk to FedEx about putting a “No Right Turn” sign coming out of their site; he is sure we could come up with some type of compromise for a right turn here.

[More discussion on the turn lanes ensued.]

Mr. Messick said that since staff pointed it out, that it should be looked into because it maybe doesn’t have much impact now but by the same token, how many years down the road, the future of the site may end up taking a little revision and then it might become a much more important item. And if it’s something that can be corrected now at minimal cost, I think it would be well worth it to take care of it now.

Mr. Knopp agreed.

Mr. Young stated that he would like to see that as well.

Mr. Plant said ok, they will continue to explore that.

Mr. Knopp asked for any other questions or comments. There were none.

Mr. Plant asked for the plan to be tabled tonight for them to work out the details.

Mr. Knopp asked for any public comment. There was none.

Mr. Knopp then asked for a motion on this plan.

- Mr. Young made a motion to table this plan.
- Mr. Messick seconded the motion.
- All were in favor.

Plan was tabled.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. Vistablock The Pond, LLC – Planning Commission File PC#2026-04. The Applicant, Vistablock The Pond, LLC, requests a Zoning Text Amendment to the Lower Swatara Township Zoning Ordinance, specifically the Commercial Neighborhood (C-N) District. The proposed Zoning Text Amendment pertains to the maximum height of the types of development which are allowed as Residential Retirement Facilities in the aforementioned Zoning District.

Brandon Conrad, of Vistablock, came to the mic to give some background. We have apartment buildings currently approved with flat roofs and what we're attempting to accomplish with this text amendment is to be able to build sloped roofs. So, this isn't increasing density. There are no additional units. The ceilings would still be at the same height. It would just be instead of a flat roof it would be sloped. And the reasons for that are primarily aesthetic and then safety and maintenance. They're less likely to leak, they're less likely to collapse in big snowstorms and they just look nicer. The rest of the town home communities, if you've seen the town homes that we've built so far, they're all sloped roofs. And so, as we look at it, we just think it would look nicer without really impacting any neighbors or anything else with the project.

Mr. Young stated that when this first came before us, you wanted ground level parking and then three stories of apartments about that, which was a non-starter for us because it exceeded 40 feet. Eventually, you came down under the 40-foot limit. Since then, we have shown some flexibility with warehouses that need to be above the 40-foot limit in order for their machinery to operate inside that. But you're saying that this will not be additional living space and that there are legitimate reasons, such as aesthetics and energy efficiency and safety and stuff like that. And that it would conform with your As-built buildings there. Am I properly summarizing what you are saying?

Mr. Conrad said yes, perfectly.

Mr. Conrad continued that when they came initially, they were seeking three different modifications to the text amendments. The biggest one is we wanted to increase density out there from 8 units to 10 units per acre. We also wanted to reduce the required parking because generally these apartment buildings don't require as many parking spaces as your ordinance requires. Then we also did the height and basically there was so much opposition to the project in total, that we decided to just do it by right what we could so that we didn't have to be delayed. Then as we got in, obviously we built Phase

One, we have Phase Two approved and can build it this way. We just think overall it is better for everybody to have a sloped roof here.

Mr. Young asked why they didn't ask to slope the roofs when he submitted the plans for Phase Two.

Mr. Conrad replied that he had thought about it for the last five years to be able to do slope roofs here, but he didn't know when the right time was. He said we really wanted to get Phase Two approved and not have any controversy. He didn't want to have a delay because if it is going to be rejected, he could just have Phase Two approved. We can just record the plan and go to building Phase Two. But if it was going to be approved then it wouldn't slow us down.

Mr. Young stated that he wanted to understand what you're proposing requires an application through PennDOT in terms of the FAA because the proximity to the airport and he wanted to ask Mr. Diamond, it's usually presumed that there'd be compliance with state law, but would we better off in the proposed text amendment to spell out that if then they would have to go through the PennDOT approval for the FAA clearance if applicable, specifically in the Ordinance? Or is it just presumed that they have to.

Mr. Diamond answered that you wouldn't have to put it in this Ordinance. They have to comply. Any of those kinds of things, that law applies regardless of what you put in here.

Mr. Conrad added that they cannot get a building permit without that.

Mr. Conrad also told the Planning Commission that as he told the commissioners last week or two weeks ago, part of our recorded plan includes a Developer's Agreement that once we're 90 or 95% occupied or completed, we have to move the electric poles underground. So, those will be addressed in due course. And he explained that was one of the learning moments for him as far as working with PPL because he doesn't want poles five feet from the apartment buildings either. So, yeah, that was a learning experience. Expensive learning experience. But here we are.

Mr. Formica asked what the overall height is and what pitch roof is he putting on?

Mr. Conrad explained that they have modeled a couple different ones, but I know we would stay under this 45ft total definition. I can email around an image at some point of what the apartment building will look like with sloped roofs vs. flat, for comparison sake.

Mr. Knopp asked Mr. Conrad if he was talking about 45 feet mean.

Mr. Conrad said yes.

Mr. Knopp said you're going to have higher than 45 feet then.

Mr. Conrad answered yes, the peak or tip of the roof will be higher than 45 feet.

Mr. Knopp asked if it could be up to 50 feet.

Mr. Conrad answered yes. The mean must be 45 feet or less. So, you are correct.

Mr. Knopp asked for any other questions or comments from the PC or Twp. Staff.

Mr. Fure added that the airport in question is actually the Capital City Airport. I did speak with some of the engineers down at HIA to get some information and help with some of the forms. And I know we briefly spoke, some of us, in comparison to Campus Heights 1, the first phase, that's a flat roof. Which looks more like a box. When you get to the second and third phases, they have like a reverse gable on those walls, and you can see the aesthetics difference between the phases. So, he didn't see an issue.

Mr. Knopp asked for any questions or comments from HRG.

Mr. Wood said that [with the extra height] there will be no additional living space up there. Also, there is probably no additional storage either. So, keep the roof trusses strictly rated for dead load and snow load around for the roofs.

Mr. Knopp asked for any questions or comments from DCPC.

Ms. Korber stated that the DCPC has not reviewed this yet, so she was speaking as herself and not as a representative of them. She said she noticed that we are talking very specifically about a very specific project that's already in the works. But, in general,

people should consider this on a District level. The change is obviously going to apply to everybody now moving forward, once it is in LST's Zoning Ordinance. So that is always something to keep in mind.

Mr. Knopp asked Mr. Fure if this was going to apply to retirement facilities only in the CN District.

Mr. Fure said that is correct.

Ms. Korber added that she saw multi-family apartments in here somewhere….

Mr. Fure added that the residential retirement facility would be for an apartment building only. This is the way they wrote that text. And we are only talking about the CN District which is here and down at Union Knoll and Campus Heights.

Mr. Young asked if the Fulling Mills Development is completely in RS District.

Mr. Fure answered yes, Fulling Mills is in the RS District.

[Discussion ensued using the overhead projector.]

Mr. Knopp asked for any questions/comments from the Public. There were none.

Mr. Knopp asked what the PC would like to do on this.

- Mr. Young made a motion that we recommend to the BOC that they approve the text amendment as proposed.
- Mr. Crawford seconded the motion.
- All were in favor.

Approved.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 7:00 P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Knopp asked for any other comments from the Public.

Rudolph Marmaro of Nissley Drive came to the floor. I have a question about where you guys are coming up with your requirements for chickens. I was reading at some of the past minutes about chicken requirements and about having 20,000 square foot minimum requirements. That's a half an acre lot. And I was wondering how many lots in Lower Swatara are half-acre or more. So, you're basically restricting the people to be able to keep chickens, except for more than half an acre, which I've got a quarter acre lot which is one of the bigger lots in my neighborhood. And that's only half of what you guys are proposing as a minimum for keeping chickens. Where if you look at the state requirements for commercial growers, you know how much space they require each chicken to have? A foot and a half square foot of space. 1 1/2 Square feet of space is what the State of Pennsylvania requires commercial growers to keep. And what you're asking for is way more than what the commercial growers have to do to keep chickens. And I've kept chickens in three cities in two different states, and nowhere has it been anywhere near as difficult as you guys are trying to make it be. I don't know if you guys don't want people to have chickens or you're just trying to say that you let them have them, but really don't, because the requirements that you guys were showing in the minutes that I read, very few people would be able to meet those requirements to keep chickens. So, I would ask you guys to ask yourselves, who do you want to be able to keep chickens? Because I could show you ways that anyone in the Lower Swatara area can keep a chicken very safely, very humanely, very cleanly, low impact, low footprint. I mean, my neighbor didn't even know we had chickens until you guys told them we did. That's how low impact I can be on keeping chickens. I mean, they didn't even know we had them. And as I said, I've kept chickens in three different cities in two different states, and it's nowhere near as difficult as you guys are making. So, I just went on to ask you guys, if you're still looking at that, I'd be happy to give you my experiences on keeping them. You can come out and where I set up my chicken coop, I could show you what I did. I can show you how other I did in other cities. But the requirements that you guys are asking for people to keep chickens is going to make it that very few people, if any, can keep them in this township. And I don't know, if you don't want them, then you're good, you're okay. But if you actually want people to be able to keep chickens, you need to be a little bit more reasonable in the requirements is all I'm asking. So that's my public comment. I'm happy to give you guys any information off site. Like I said, we've done it for a long time. We've kept them. I know what I'm doing. I know what they require. It's very minimal once you set it up. It's very minimal stuff to keep them. You don't need half

an acre to keep chickens. You really don't need that much to be safe and to be where it's not bothering other people even. It doesn't need to be as difficult. So that's my comments and questions for you guys. Thank you very much.

Mr. Knopp thanked him for his comments. He asked for any other Public Comments. There were no more.

GOOD & WELFARE

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Mr. Messick and seconded by Mr. Crawford to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:44 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Donald A. Fure, Director of Codes/Planning & Zoning