

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2016  
7:00 P.M.

A. GENERAL FUNCTIONS

1. Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. In Attendance:

Matthew Milliren	- Present
Philip Weber	- Present
Kim LaBrake	- Present
Francene Drake	- Present
Joseph Pampanin	- Present
Maria Diaz-Joves	- Present

Also in Attendance:

Kris Russo, Bryan Smith, Cathy Hartranft, and Michael Corriere, Esq.

4. Minutes of Previous Meetings

A. November 9, 2015

Motion made by Joseph Pampanin, seconded by Kim LaBrake, to approve the November 9, 2015, meeting minutes as written. Motion carried 6-0.

B. REVIEW & DELIBERATION

1. Reorganization

Motion made by Kim LaBrake, seconded by Francene Drake, to nominate Philip Weber as President. Motion carried 7-0.

Motion made by Francene Drake, seconded by Maria Diaz-Joves, to nominate Matthew Milliren as Vice-President. Motion carried 6-0.

Motion made by Matthew Milliren, seconded by Kim LaBrake, to nominate Joseph Pampanin as Secretary. Motion carried 6-0.

2. 16-PC-01: Pennsylvania Venture Capital Inc., 1177 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Whitehall, PA. Applicant has submitted an application for site plan approval at 1033-1063 Front Street. Applicant is seeking a special exception use to convert existing apartments into an assisted living facility. Property is in the Mixed District.

Mr. Hart presented copies of the plan to the Commission.

Mr. Hart- We are here to present plans to construct a pedestrian bridge connecting from the upper floor of the Manor to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the apartment building. The clearance under the bridge is greater than 26 feet. We spoke with Dewey Fire Company and that is more than enough room for their equipment to fit. We are here for site plan review to go to the Zoning Hearing Board for a special exception to use the building for assisted living. The plans that were handed out show modifications to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the apartment building including common activity area, common dining area, and the bridge connecting the two buildings.

Mr. Smith- Saucon Valley Manor is looking to convert the apartments to assisted living. This is a permitted use by special exception and will require them to go to the Zoning Hearing Board. They are before you for recommendations. The site has a reduction in parking spaces. To connect three of the parcels would require a land development which would come back before Planning Commission and then to Council for approval. Mr. Hart noted that he did speak with the Authority regarding the water/sewer. Mr. Smith requested a letter in writing from Dewey regarding the clearance.

Mr. Smith- Are there any modifications being done to the Manor building?

Mr. Hart- There are not. A window will be removed to create the door. The structural engineer will begin looking at that shortly and then it will go through the third-party inspection process. There will be two piers on either end so we won't need to support it from the existing structures.

Mr. Pampanin- Do the plans include conversions to all floors?

Mr. Hart- We may leave some apartments on the lower floor for couples. The 4<sup>th</sup> floor has the most modifications with the state required common activity and dining areas. As part of our inspections, we will need approval from the fire company and will need them do their own inspection of the bridge.

Ms. Diaz-Joves- Is the apartment building empty?

Mr. Hart- No. As tenant's leases expire, they will not be renewed.

Ms. Diaz-Joves- So for a time it will be mixed use?

Mr. Hart- Yes, for a little.

Ms. Diaz- Joves- Are there other buildings going on the campus?

Mr. Smith- There are approvals for additional spaces. The lot where additional spaces can be developed will not be combined with the other three parcels.

Ms. Drake inquired about an elevator.

Mr. Hart noted that there is already an ADA compliant elevator install in the building.

The apartments were originally planned to be condominium units with separate owners and separate tax bills. After the purchase, Mr. Atiyeh will own all units. We will need to maintain the units for financing reasons but can create an agreement that they all go together.

Mr. Weiner- The main unit is the Manor. Another unit is the parking lot. The third unit was sold to Mr. Selvaggio. The fourth unit covers everything else and will be kept as currently existing. There are agreements between Saucon Trust, Saucon Valley Manor, Mr. Atiyeh, and the new company that allow for the elevated walkway to pass over multiple units. If any of the units are sold, the walkway will need to be removed.

Ms. LaBrake inquired about meal preparation.

Mr. Hart- Meals will be prepared in the Manor, plated, and taken over to the common dining area.

Mr. Smith- Some units will still have personal kitchens.

Mr. Hart- Yes, some will have limited appliances but not likely any stoves.

We have the potential for 62 beds with each bedroom being capable of holding 2 beds. There is no increase in the amount of rooms, only rearranged.

Ms. Drake questioned the use of the balconies.

Mr. Hart- The balconies won't be removed but provisions will be made that the doors cannot be opened. There will be a fire rescue area on all floors.

Ms. Diaz-Joves- Is it possible for all future buildings to be assisted living?

Mr. Smith- Yes, but they would require approval. There would not be an issue since the required parking is less.

Mr. Hart- There is already approval for 96 residential units. The market is not there to support that. Originally, the idea was that the condos would sell. The apartment building was doing ok but Mr. Selvaggio was willing to sell so we are going to try the additional assisted living. The Manor is at capacity and we are receiving continued requests for people to move in.

Mr. Weber noted that he would like to see a completed master plan instead of just doing it in pieces.

Mr. Corriere advised that tonight's meeting is just to discuss the limited issue of the special exception and not the whole picture.

Mrs. Hartranft- In July 2013, you were granted conditional approval to erect 36 units. What is the status of that project?

Mr. Hart- It is on hold.

Mrs. Hartranft- There is still the issue of outstanding fees due to the Borough in the amount of \$96,000.00 which will need to be paid before permits are issued for this project.

Also, there is an unimproved roadway behind the apartments and residents have been looking to the Borough for snow removal. This is however a private road.

Mr. Smith- Since it is private, the developer is responsible for the snow removal.

Attorney Weiner will speak to the grounds crew and have it taken care of.

Mr. Hart also noted that both buildings already have a sprinkler system and the bridge will have one installed.

Ms. Olson- Wilkens inquired about the impact on traffic and real estate value.

Mr. Weiner- The building will remain as is and should have no effect on property value. The amount of traffic will be less due to the use switching to assisted living.

Motion made by Joseph Pampanin, seconded by Matthew Milliren, to recommend to the Zoning Hearing Board that the special exception change to assisted living be conditionally approved based on Engineer's letter dated January 11, 2016, and to review all previous Zoning Hearing Board variances granted for all of the properties. Motion carried 7-0.

3. Discussion/Review of Façade Improvement Program

Mrs. Hartranft- The Borough applied for Community Investment Partnership Grant and we were awarded for façade improvements. The Borough staff will administer the grant with the Planning Commission being charged with reviewing the applications. Northampton County has already approved the policies and procedures. We have not received the final contracts from the County. The Borough will host a program and explain the procedure to the community. Interested parties will need a letter of intent and an application. The total grant amount is for \$50,000.00. It is a one for one match up to \$10,000.00 and a two for one match for streetscape.

The Planning Commission recommended having a few meetings during the presentation time.

4. Discussion /Recommendation of Adding “Savings Clause” to Zoning Ordinance, Created Section 450-17.3.

Mr. Corriere- I did research into what happens if a use is not specifically listed in the Zoning Ordinance. The Borough would need to look to see if there is something similar listed. A Savings Clause can be added to the ordinance whereby if it is not in the ordinance and there is nothing similar, it will either be considered a special exception or a conditional use.

Motion made by Matthew Milliren, seconded by Joseph Pampanin, to recommend that Council proceed with the Savings Clause and to make it a conditional use for Council to approve all uses not listed in the Zoning Ordinance. Motion carried 6-0.

5. Discussion on Adding Bed & Breakfast as a Special Exception Use in All Zoning Districts Except R1 and R2.

Mr. Russo- I had someone express interest about opening a Bed & Breakfast in town. It is not listed as an exception and is only permitted in the trail overlay district and not in the Town Center which is where they expressed interest.

This item was tabled until the next meeting for the Commission to think of what districts a Bed & Breakfast would fit in.

C. OLD BUSINESS- NONE

D. NEW BUSINESS- NONE

E. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Matthew Milliren, seconded by Joseph Pampanin, to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kris Russo