

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2021
7:00 P.M.

THE MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM AND STREAMED ON FACEBOOK LIVE

A. GENERAL FUNCTIONS

1. Call to Order: 7:02 p.m.

2. In Attendance:

Philip Weber	- Absent with prior notification
Robert Lepley	- Present
Kim LaBrake	- Present
David Kuhns	- Present
Joseph Pampanin	- Present
Don Werkheiser	- Present
Maria Diaz-Joves	- Present

Also in Attendance:

Cathy Hartranft, Michael Corriere, Bryan Smith, Tom Rieger, Kris Russo, and Angie Thiede.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

A. February 9, 2021

Motion made by Don Werkheiser, seconded by Kim LaBrake, to approve the February 9, 2021, meeting minutes as written. Motion carried 6-0.

B. REVIEW & DELIBERATION- NONE

C. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

1. 30 Bachman St. (Q7NW3D810715) Land Development Sketch Plan submittal:
Presented by Exchange 21 LLC, 1177 6th St. Whitehall, PA. Property is located in the Industrial District. Submission discussion and recommendation to ZHB for 2 variances (use and height regulations).

Greg Berg, Engineer- The applicant is proposing a four-story elderly housing building that contains forty units. The property is zoned Industrial but is surrounded by Mixed and R-2 Zoning Districts. Industrial uses bring more truck traffic. We feel elderly housing is more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The narrowness of the surrounding streets would also make it hard for truck travel. This area is very walkable

so there would not be much traffic. Residents would have an option to get food deliveries from the Manor. There would be limited staff on-site since it is apartments.

We did receive the comments from the fire department regarding concerns with maneuvering the fire apparatus to the site. The applicant is willing to provide 10 foot of right-of-way to widen Furnace and Oak Streets around the property. By doing that, we will lose 8 parking spaces. There are currently 57 parking spaces and we are only required to provide 18 parking spaces. We would also investigate modifying the curb islands.

The height variance request is to provide 10-foot ceilings in the units and to allow for a pitched roof.

Mr. Werkheiser inquired about the leases that Main Street businesses had for parking on the property.

Mr. Atiyeh- We want to be neighborly and would allow them to use some of the overflow parking if available.

Mr. Russo- I was able to locate the parking agreement leases for the dental office and salon. They were leasing 13 parking spaces on a yearly basis.

Mr. Corriere- Usually if there is a change in ownership, the new owner honors the current lease but also can choose not to renew it.

Ms. LaBrake asked if there would be full kitchens in the unit?

Mr. Berg- Yes, each unit would have a full kitchen and a washer and dryer.

Mr. Pampanin inquired if there would be an age restriction?

Mr. Atiyeh- Yes, the units would be age restricted. Age 62 would be the minimum age to rent a unit.

Mr. Pampanin questioned why the applicant is going for variances versus requesting a zoning change to either Mixed or R-2?

Mr. Atiyeh- It is more work and takes a longer time to get rezoning.

Ms. Diaz-Joves does not think that creating an industrial use on the property would be a hardship. There are a lot of other places in the Borough where industrial and residential uses coexist without issue. Industrial uses would also bring jobs to the Borough. The Borough has enough elderly housing.

Mr. Atiyeh disagreed and stated that the LVPC Master Plan is seeking more elderly housing.

Mr. Kuhns thinks a residential use would be good for the site but feels there should be more green space.

Mr. Atiyeh- In order to get funding for elderly housing, the building must have a minimum of 40 units which does not allow for more green space on this lot.

Mr. Smith- Access to the site will be addressed by Chief Maguire's comments; however, Oak and Furnace Streets are still narrow beyond this site. Traffic circulation remains a concern. There is also a significant grade change on the property that the applicant will need to address. Sidewalk installation and stormwater management will be addressed during land development.

If Planning Commission recommends that the Zoning Hearing Board grant the variances, they should include adding the Fire Chief's concerns as part of the recommendation.

Mr. Atiyeh- I am thinking of installing a partial basement for storage and recreation areas to address the grade change.

Mr. Yardumian- The fire department's other concern is the sharp corners and correction will create a loss of on-street parking on West Thomas Avenue and Bachman Street.

Mr. Rieger- There were some online comments concerning guest parking, the tight space for the building, and the amount of construction materials still stored at the Manor site.

Mr. Atiyeh- We were going to begin construction on another building at the Manor but COVID hit. Construction will hopefully soon begin. We are looking to relocate the trailers to another location.

Ms. LaBrake would like to see the property rezoned to an R-2. She was also having a hard time with the fact that the building was not designed specifically for that lot and was a duplicate of a building at the Manor.

Ms. Diaz-Joves does not feel there is a hardship with the industrial zoning and that there are still too many items that need to be changed to make a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Motion made by Maria Diaz-Joves, seconded by David Kuhns, to recommend denial of the use variance 450-15A1, Industrial Zone

Roll Call:

Ms. Diaz-Joves- Yes

Ms. LaBrake- Yes

Mr. Kuhns- Yes

Mr. Werkheiser- No

Mr. Lepley- No

Mr. Pampanin- Yes

Motion carried 4-2.

Motion made by David Kuhns, seconded by Maria Diaz-Joves, to recommend denial of height variance 450-15E, Maximum Building Height.

Roll Call:

Ms. Diaz-Joves- Yes

Ms. LaBrake- Yes

Mr. Kuhns- Yes

Mr. Werkheiser- No

Mr. Lepley- No

Mr. Pampanin- Yes

Motion carried 4-2.

D. OLD BUSINESS- NONE

E. NEW BUSINESS- NONE

F. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Don Werkheiser, seconded by Robert Lepley, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kris Russo