

LANCASTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 5, 2018

The Lancaster City Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, September 5, 2018, at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission Room, Municipal Building, 120 North Duke Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

PRESENT: Willie Morant, Chairperson; Eve Bratman; Jose Colon; Joshua Druce; Chris Modlin; Nelson Polite, Jr.; and Janice Stork

EXCUSED: Jon Lyons and LaGena Wright

STAFF: Paula Jackson, Chief Planner

GUESTS: David A. Smith, Sheetz, Inc.; Mike O'Brien, Oak Tree Development; Mark Stanley, McNees Wallace & Nurick, LLC; Tim Schwartz, Lancaster Fleet & Auto; Bill Swiernik, David Miller / Associates; Joel Rothschild, City Resident; Laura Proctor, Lancaster County Planning Commission

Minutes of the August 1, 2018 Meeting

Chairperson Morant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The minutes of the August 1, 2018 meeting were accepted as written.

Waiver of Land Development Plan – 1180 Manheim Pike, Sheetz

David Smith, Real Estate Site Selector with Sheetz, reviewed the site plan for a proposed 425 sq. ft. addition to the Sheetz convenience store. Because the addition is greater than the 400-sq. ft. threshold for an administrative waiver of the land development plan submission requirement, a Commission waiver of the land development requirement is necessary. Mr. Smith explained that the addition will provide an interior seating area with 30 seats for customers. In response to a question from Mr. Colon, Mr. Smith stated that no parking will be eliminated by this addition.

Mr. Druce moved that the request for a waiver of the land development plan submission requirement for the 425-sq. ft. addition be approved. Mr. Colon seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Waiver of Land Development Plan – 1211 Marshall Avenue

Bill Swiernik, Project Manager with David Miller / Associates, reviewed the site plan showing the location and dimensions of a proposed 2,255-sq.ft. vehicle storage structure superimposed over a satellite image of this 5.7-acre truck and car parking facility. He explained that the 44-ft. x 55-ft. structure is essentially a garage for secure indoor storage for 6 to 8 vehicles. The building will be constructed over an existing gravel surface. No water or sewer services will be extended to the building and no new employees will be hired to manage the garage. Property owner Tim Schwartz explained that his Lancaster Fleet & Auto business tows vehicles for the City of Lancaster. The Bureau of Police has requested a secure vehicle storage structure for vehicles involved in accident and homicide investigations. Mr. Swiernik stated that a small stormwater management project will be required for the foundation and footers, adding that there would be a minor disturbance to the existing gravel.

In questions from the Commission, Ms. Stork asked for an explanation of the arrangement with the City. Mr. Schwartz stated that Lancaster Fleet & Auto tows vehicles to the impound area on the property and that there are 10 free storage days. There is no cost to the City, and insurance companies pay the storage costs. Ms. Bratman questioned the traffic pattern for access to the garage. Mr. Swiernik pointed out the truck access and travel path on the site plan for trucks transporting vehicles to the garage from Marshall Avenue. Current access drives will be used and trucks will travel over existing paving. Mr. Morant questioned what Mr. Swiernik meant by "disturbance," and Mr. Swiernik replied that disturbance meant going below existing gravel to soil.

With no additional questions from the Commission, Ms. Stork moved that the request for waiver of the land development plan submission requirement for the 2,255-sq. ft. vehicle storage building be approved. Mr. Modlin seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Final Plan for Citygate Corporate Center - 1570 Fruitville Pike

Ms. Jackson explained that the revised plan for Citygate Corporate Center, conditionally approved by the Planning Commission on August 1, 2018, was again before the Commission for a requested modification of the condition of approval calling for removal of the driveway from Building 2 onto the main access drive to Erick Road. That condition, recommended by City Engineer Cindy McCormick, was based on her concern about conflicts in an already congested area, especially for crossing pedestrians. Because four of the original seven conditions have been satisfied, Ms. Jackson noted that the list of conditions now before the Commission has been reduced to three, with a proposed modification of the condition related to the Building 2 driveway.

Mark Stanley, attorney for the developer, stated that after August 1, communication between the project design professional and Ms. McCormick resulted in design modifications that addressed her concerns. Mr. Stanley said he discussed the approach to take with Senior Planner Douglas Smith regarding a modification of the driveway condition, since a rejection of just one condition would result in a plan denial. There was agreement with staff to return to the Commission with an updated list of conditions and a modification of the driveway condition.

Ms. Jackson advised the Commission of August 21 email communications between Alex Piehl of RGS and Ms. McCormick, whereby he transmitted to her an updated layout plan with an additional stop sign and stop bar and additional yield to pedestrian signs. Ms. Jackson noted that Ms. McCormick's email response to the updated layout plan stated, "That works." Therefore, the original condition calling for the removal of the driveway from Building 2 is proposed to be modified with the addition of the following sentence: "As an alternative to the removal of the driveway, the Applicant will work with the City Engineer to address her concerns regarding potential conflicts."

Ms. Bratman raised two design-related questions: can pedestrian accessibility north of Building 2 be improved, as the pedestrian path moves through landscape islands with curbs; and will there be a bike pathway marked with sharrows? Mr. Stanley responded that there is no intention to add pavement markings. Ms. Bratman questioned the ideal flow for bicycles. Mr. O'Brien noted that accommodation for bicycle parking will be provided and added that parking lots in his other developments have not had conflicts between cars and bicycles. He said he would be happy to review the pedestrian pathway provided there is no conflict with stormwater flow. Mr. Druce asked for clarification on sight distance for left turns and on the stormwater comment.

Ms. Stork moved to approve the revised final plan subject to the three recommended conditions. Mr. Druce seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Initial Review of Proposed Zoning Amendments

Ms. Jackson began the discussion with the topic of reducing the threshold for the conversion of single family dwellings to two and multifamily dwellings. She asked the Commission members to

refer to two pages within the packets mailed to them: the gross floor area dimensions of the homes of Planning Commission members and the Table of Permitted Uses listing the minimum square footage threshold for conversion of existing buildings to two-family dwellings and multifamily dwellings [multifamily is defined as three or more units]. The Table of Permitted Uses contains the staff recommendation to lower the threshold from 3,500 gross square feet [the total square footage of all floors, excluding unoccupied basements and attics] to 2,500 gross square feet.

An active discussion with questions and comments followed:

- There is concern about lowering the threshold, and economic cycles should be considered.
- If there is more demand for housing, why not increase the supply?
- Lowering the threshold could help achieve the Lancaster Alliance goal of 2,500 additional housing units in the City by 2030.
- The condition of rental properties is a concern.
- Can there be standards for affordability?
- The growing number of Airbnb's in the City should be analyzed.
- The requirement to provide one off-street parking space for each additional unit will be a controlling factor.
- Lowering the threshold to 2,000 square feet should be considered.
- The threshold of 2,500 square feet is preferable to a smaller threshold.

When Ms. Jackson commented that there appeared not to be agreement among members about lowering the threshold, Mr. Druce offered the following recommendation: lower the threshold for conversions to two-family dwellings to 2,000 sq. ft. and lower the threshold for conversion to multifamily dwellings to 2,500 sq. ft. All Commission members supported this recommendation.

In consideration of the hour, Ms. Jackson asked the Commission to turn to the page titled Staff Technical Recommendations. Three technical amendments are recommended: correcting a reference to the Sign Ordinance; adding a provision to one of the conditions for vending carts and trucks to cross reference the Mobile Food Truck Ordinance, thus eliminating a current conflict between the Zoning Ordinance and the Mobile Food Truck Ordinance regarding vending trucks placed in the public right-of-way; and adding hours of operation for commercial service uses permitted by right in R3 and R4 zoning districts, with hours beyond the listed hours requiring special exception approval by the Zoning Hearing Board. Commission members supported these changes. Ms. Jackson commented that discussion on proposed amendments will continue at future meetings.

Other Business – None.

Public Participation

Mr. Rothschild, who resides in the northwest area, commented that he supports the reconsideration of thresholds for conversions to apartments, citing examples of the need for smaller dwellings for members of the City population.

Adjournment

Having no further business to be brought before the Commission, Chairperson Morant adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Paula Jackson
Chief Planner