

**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 4, 2023**

The Springfield Township Planning Commission met for their regularly scheduled meeting at 7:00 P.M., in the Boardroom of the Springfield Township Administration Building, located at 1510 Paper Mill Road, Wyndmoor, PA 19038. Present at the meeting were Ms. Murray, Mr. Sands, Mr. Devine, Mr. Schaefer, Mr. Quill, and Mr. Harbison. Also in attendance were Anne Nygard, Community Planner from Montgomery County Planning Commission and Mark Penecale, Director of Planning & Zoning.

Approval of the Minutes:

The minutes from the March 21, 2023, Planning Commission meetings were reviewed and approved.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Standish was not in attendance but did send an email to the Planning Commission stating that there is nothing new to report since the last meeting.

New Business:

PC1: The Planning Commission reviewed the request for a waiver from the Land Development Review and Approval Process requested by Saint Genevieve Church & School for the property located at 1225 Bethlehem Pike, Flourtown, PA 19031. Saint Genevieve Church & School seeks approval to install a 756 square foot module classroom on the existing fenced kindergarten playground. The property is zoned within the B-1 Business District, B-Residential and C-Residential Districts of Ward #1 of Springfield Township.

Mr. Richard Borowitz, the Facility Manager for St. Genevieve was present to explain the proposed project and the need for the temporary modular classroom. Mr. Borowitz explained that the need for the temporary classroom stems from an increase in the student population at kindergarten level. He explained that as the existing seventh and eighth grades graduate, additional classrooms will be available within the existing school building and the temporary modular classroom will no longer be needed. He stated that the proposed modular classroom will be placed over existing impervious coverage. He explained that the modular classroom is fully contained and ADA accessible. Mr. Borowitz stated that Saint Genevieve's Master Expansion Plan is still in the fund-raising stage, but that plan does not include temporary modular classrooms.

Mr. Quill asked what the existing and the projected enrollment numbers are.

Mr. Borowitz stated that the school currently has 247 students, and they are projecting an increase to 265 to 275 students for the 2024 school year.

Ms. Murray asked if there is a cap on the number of students per classroom.

Mr. Borowitz stated that there is not a hard cap, but that class size is generally between 18 to 20 students per classroom.

Mr. Schaefer asked what assurances the Township has that the proposed modular classroom will only be needed for a two-year period.

Mr. Borowitz informed the Planning Commission that the lease for the modular classroom is for two years and would expire in 2025.

Mr. Harbison asked about the need for additional parking.

Mr. Borowitz stated that it is his belief that the proposed temporary classroom would not generate a need for additional on-site parking.

Mr. Penecale reminded the Planning Commission that any increase in classroom space requires additional on-site parking, and he expects that the Zoning Hearing Board application will be submitted shortly.

Mr. Devine asked what the proposed separation will be between the existing building and the proposed modular classroom. In addition, Mr. Devine asked if the proposed modular classroom would meet the setback requirements.

Mr. Borowitz stated that the proposed classroom would be set six feet from the existing school building and that he believes the proposed placement of the modular classroom would meet the required front yard setback.

Mr. Schaefer asked if the students must leave the main building to access the modular classroom.

Mr. Borowitz confirmed that to be the case.

Mr. Barry Bargbauer, owner of 9 W. Wissahickon Avenue, stated that he is not pleased with the location of the proposed classroom. He stated that this structure will be right across from the front of his home, with no screening at all. He suggested that the proposed modular classroom be relocated to another location on the property, to reduce the impact on the neighbors.

Mr. Borowitz stated that this is the preferred location due to how close the proposed temporary classroom is to the existing school building and that the proposed location is safer for the students.

Mr. Schaefer stated that he does not like the look of the proposed modular classroom, and he has concerns that once in place, the modular classroom will not be temporary.

Mr. Quill asked the applicant if landscaping could be planted that would screen the proposed modular classroom from the neighbors across Wissahickon Avenue.

Mr. Borowitz stated that he did not believe Saint Genevieve would be opposed to planting a few trees.

Ms. Murray asked if there were any additional questions or comments from either the Planning Commission Members or those in attendance. There was none. She called for the recommendation.

A motion was made to approve the request for a waiver from the requirements of a Land Development Submission for the placement of a temporary modular classroom with the following conditions.

1. The applicant obtains the required Zoning Hearing Board relief for this proposal.
2. The placement of the modular classroom is limited to no greater than two years from the date of the permit(s) for the placement of the structure.
3. The applicant installs a landscape buffer to the satisfaction of the Township.

The motion was seconded and a vote of 6 to 0 to approve the waiver was recorded.

PC2: Mr. Mark Irwin of Buck Homes, LLC was in attendance to present the revised Sketch Plan for the development of twenty-six self-storage units on a vacant tract of ground located on Ivy Hill Road. The twenty-six storage units are proposed to be used by contractors. Mr. Irwin explained that the plan has been revised since the last presentation to the Planning Commission in November of 2022. He stated that the number of units has been reduced from 30 to 26 and one long building has broken up into seven buildings of 3 or 4 units each. An access driveway has been added and security gates will be installed at each end of the driveway.

Ms. Murray asked if the applicant had any additional information on the balance of the Planning Commission comments from the November 2022 review.

Mr. Sands asked the applicant what was proposed for landscaping and lighting as part of this proposed development.

Mr. Irwin stated that he was hoping the Planning Commission would have recommendations on what they prefer to see on the plan before he made any additional revisions.

Mr. Devine asked what the proposed hours of operation would be for these storage units. He stated he is concerned about lighting and noise during the evening and nighttime hours. There was no response from the applicant.

Mr. Schaefer asked the applicant if he has considered any other uses for this site. The answer was no. Mr. Schaefer pointed out that residential uses are a permitted use within the A-Residential District and that a use variance would be required for the current proposal. Mr. Schaefer also informed the applicant that single family dwellings could be constructed of the proposed footprints of the storage units with the dimensional relief remaining the same.

Ms. Nygard asked the applicant if he had any suggestions on how the existing topography issues on this site would be addressed. There was no response from the applicant.

Mr. Harbison asked the applicant why only three of the Planning Commission recommendations from the November 2022 meeting have been addressed on this plan. In addition, Mr. Harbison pointed out that this plan is void of any information pertaining to off-street parking, lighting, landscaping, on-site stormwater management, hours of operation, fencing and/or security.

Ms. Murray asked if there were any questions or comments from the residents in attendance.

Mr. Lastner; 1013 Hazelwood Lane stated that there are already three storage facilities located on Ivy Hill Road between Cheltenham Avenue and Stenton Avenue. He reminded the Planning Commission that the applicant was provided a detailed list of concerns at the November meeting and only three of the eight or nine items identified have been addressed. He stated that the thirty-five property owners on Hazelwood Lane do not want this type of development on the site. He has concerns regarding trash, noise, security, traffic, and the overall appearance of these units. He informed the Planning Commission that he has worked with PECO to clean up the site, have the weeds cleared and the trash removed on a regular schedule.

Mr. Jessie Lawrence: owner of 1023 Hazelwood Drive, stated that he agrees with everything Mr. Lastner had to say. In addition, he is concerned about how the use of this type of facility would be addressed. His example was "Who do I call at 2:00 A.M. when a contractor is picking up or connected snow removal equipment"?

Ms. Angle Stewart: 1002 Hazelwood Lane stated that she is concerned about the health and safety of the neighbors. She asked who would monitor what is stored in these units. She is concerned about the traffic generated by a use of this type. She stated that vehicles used by contractors are many times diesel powered and are left to idle as they are being loaded and unloaded. This adds pollution to the air. She questioned how the development of this site would affect the proposed trail.

Dr. Alexandra Klinger: 7811 Elm Avenue stated that she is the president of Springfield Open Space and that she is not in favor of this proposed development. She informed the Planning Commission that she lives directly behind the site. She believes the proposed development will have a negative impact on the proposed trail. She informed the Planning Commission that she takes issue with the fact the developer did not address most of the issues raised at the prior meeting. She has concerns about traffic and safety of the children in the neighborhood. She implored the Planning Commission to only consider residential development for this site.

Mr. Lastner: 1013 Hazelwood Lane, informed the Planning Commission that PECO has installed “No Dumping Signs” and has been sending out staff members to clean up the site and cut the grass. Last weekend, 15 bags of trash were removed from this property and PECO has someone out every two weeks for maintenance.

Ms. Murray asked if there were any additional comments. There were none. She called for the Planning Commission for a recommendation.

Mr. Quill stated that there are too many unknowns with this proposal at this time. He stated that he was not comfortable making a recommendation without the driveway access lane being usable, security and hours of operation being addressed and knowing what the proposed landscaping would look like.

Mr. Sands stated that the applicant must address the concerns listed within the Planning Commission recommendation letter from November of 2022.

Mr. Harbison stated that he does not believe that the proposed use of the site as a storage facility is the best use of the property. He also stated that he does not believe that there is practical configuration that will work for this site. This was based on the limited depth of the property.

Dr. Klinger: 7811 Elm Avenue interjected that the Planning Commission must take their responsibility seriously and protect the residents and the little open space left within the Township. She used the term dereliction of duty in referring to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Penecale took offense to Dr. Klinger’s statements and asked that she apologize for her statement. He informed Dr. Klinger that the Planning Commission Members are volunteers and have spent at least four hours reviewing this proposal between the November meeting and tonight.

Mr. Harbison suggested that Dr. Klinger listen to the recommendations of the Planning Commission members before she cast aspersions on the members.

Mr. Harbison suggested that the applicant explore residential uses for this site as mentioned by Mr. Schaefer.

Mr. Sands recommended that the safety and minimum separations requirements listed within the PECO letter dated April 4, 2023, be included in any motion made by this Commission.

Ms. Murray asked Mr. Penecale for a recap of what of the major topics discussed by the Planning Commission Members.

Mr. Penecale provided the following list:

1. The Planning Commission did not believe the proposed use was appropriate for the site considering the property is zoned within the A-Residential District.
2. The applicant has failed to address the Planning Commission's concern related to lighting, security, hours of operation, on-site stormwater management, landscaping, or grading.
3. The applicant has failed to provide any on-site parking for this proposed development.
4. The Planning Commission does not believe there is a practical configuration for this proposed use on the site, due to the limited lot depth.
5. The proposed two-way service drive is plotted as being 8 feet in width, when 24 feet in width is required for two-way traffic.
6. The proposed development requires a use variance and a number of dimensional variances.
7. The Planning Commission believes that the applicant did not explore more appropriate uses for the property, such as residential use.
8. The Planning Commission acknowledges that there are further complications due to the proximity of the high voltage lines as articulated in a letter dated April 4, 2023, from PECO Energy. These concerns required further investigation.

Ms. Murray asked if there was any additional comment.

Mr. Sands made the recommendation to include the list of items provided by Mr. Penecale. That was seconded by a number of Planning Commission Members.

The recommendation to supply Buck Construction with the comments listed above on the Sketch Plan presented for review was unanimous with a vote of 6 in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted
Mark A. Penecale
Director of Planning & Zoning