

**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
February 4, 2025**

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. Helwig, Mr. Sands, Ms. Murray, Ms. Blankin and Mr. Devine. Also in attendance were Commissioner Peter Wilson, Marguax Petruska from Montgomery County Planning Commission and Mark Penecale, Director of Planning & Zoning.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes:

The Planning Commission approved the minutes from the January 21, 2025, meeting.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Wilson informed the Planning Commission that the Board of Commissioners have scheduled a meeting for Thursday, February 6, 2025, with a start time of 5:30 p.m. The meeting was scheduled to allow for discussion on what action the Township may take now that a decision has been rendered on the "Thin Blue Line Litigation".

New Business:

Prior to the start of the presentation, Ms. Helwig provided those in attendance with an overview of what was being requested this evening. She also explained that land development subjects, such as traffic, stormwater runoff and density, would not be discussed. Ms. Helwig informed everyone that if this request is approved by the Board of Commissioners, a land development plan would be submitted and issues such as those listed above would be addressed.

PC1: The Planning Commission was presented a Change of Zoning Request filed on behalf of the Wyndmoor Hose Company for the property located at 1103 Willow Grove Avenue, Wyndmoor, PA 19038. The applicant and owner have requested that the zoning of 31,000 square foot site be changed from the B-Residential District to the B-1 Business District. The zoning change request was presented by Joseph C. Kuhls, Esq., and Jay Overcash "Developer". Additional information pertaining to the Fire House was presented by Robert Krandel "Fire House Member".

Mr. Kuhls presented the request for the change of zoning and the reasons the applicant felt that the request should be considered. He stated that from Traymore Avenue to Southampton Avenue every property on the northwestern side of Willow Grove Avenue is zoned within the B-1 Business District, except for 1103 Willow Grove Avenue. This property is zoned within the B-

Residential District. He stated that the requested change of zoning makes sense and meets the adopted desires of the Springfield Township Comprehensive Plan and Montco 2024 Plan developed by Montgomery County Planning Commission.

Mr. Kuhls explained the process for consideration of a change of zoning request. He stated that the Springfield Board of Commissioners are under no obligation to consider this request. However, at the November Board of Commissioners meeting this request was presented and the applicant was given approval to present the request to the Springfield Township Planning Commission. No matter what the recommendation of Planning Commission is, this request will still be on the Board of Commissioner's agenda on February 12, 2025, for either a denial of a hearing or a motion to advertise a hearing date.

Mr. Overcash provided a description of the rendering that was submitted with this request. He explained that the plan is to construct 14 new dwelling units to the rear of the property that share a property line with Wyndmoor Avenue. A new three-bay fire house would be constructed with frontage on Willow Grove Avenue and a three-story multi-family building at 1103 Willow Grove Avenue would be erected. He stated that the plan would also include on-site parking, a community garden, a dog park and a community playground. He stated that he would commit to a residential development only in addition to the new fire station.

Mr. Kuhls stated that if the change of zoning request is approved, a land development application would have to be submitted. In addition to the land development application, the proposed multi-family building would require a special exception from the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Kuhls added the entire process would require multiple public meetings and take eight to ten months to complete.

Ms. Helwig asked if the applicant had met with the surrounding neighbors prior to tonight's meeting. Mr. Overcash stated that he has met with Mr. Smith and has not met with any of the other adjoining property owners. Ms. Helwig asked why he has not met with any of the other neighbors. Mr. Overcash stated that he believed that the Board of Commissioners directed him to meet with Mr. Smith and not the balance of the neighborhood.

Mr. Devine asked the applicant why a change of zoning application was filed and not try to obtain the required relief through the Zoning Hearing Board process. Mr. Kuhls stated the Zoning Hearing Board process allows for appeals that can prolong the process by years. Mr. Kuhls also stated that he believed this direction is "Cleaner". No additional information was provided.

Mr. Overcash stated that the development regulations are different from zoning district to zoning district. He added that in his opinion, the B-1 Business District made sense for this property.

Ms. Helwig asked Mr. Kuhls why the rendering was not submitted with the request for a change of zoning. He stated that the rendering was shared with the Board of Commissioners and that the neighbors were fully aware of the rendering. Mr. Kuhls stated that the rendering was made available once it was requested.

Ms. Helwig asked why plots of the existing properties and zoning were not provided. Mr. Kuhls stated that he felt since we were the planning commission those documents would be readily accessible.

A question was raised about the ownership of both the single-family dwellings and the multi-family building. Mr. Overcash stated that they would not be rental units through him. However, once the units are sold, he cannot control what the owner does with it.

There was also a question raised concerning the application and how long the Fire Company has been in negotiations with Mr. Overcash. The follow up question was why the neighbors have not been informed that any of this was being considered. Mr. Robert Krandel stated that he is a member of the Fire Company and that different options have been discussed since 2018. He stated that the Fire Company has met with several different developers and that the plan being discussed is at least the 20th concept plan.

Mr. Krandel stated that the existing fire house was constructed in 1967 and is very outdated by today's standards. The proposed new fire station would have three bays, the design would allow the bays to be pull-through. There would be a second story that would allow for showers, a bunk area, office space and a training room.

Ms. Blankin stated that she was very happy to see members of the Fire Company present at this meeting and thanked them for their service to the community. She also thanked the residents in attendance for taking time out of their schedules to attend tonight's meeting.

Ms. Jennifer Gatens, 7600 Cheltenham Avenue, is a member of the Dog Training Facility currently on the property and she thanked the Fire Company for allowing them to operate from the property for the past 20 years. She stated that they have 172 members in her group, and they hold an average of 34 classes a week. They will seek to relocate within the Wyndmoor area.

Mr. James Novak, 14 Wyndmoor Avenue, stated that he is not in favor of the change of zoning request. He is a 30-year resident of Wyndmoor Avenue, and he believes that the proposed single family semi-detached dwelling proposed to be constructed behind his home will dwarf the rancher he lives in. He is also concerned about noise, light, traffic and flooding. Mr. Novak also informed the Planning Commission that water pressure is a major issue in the neighborhood.

Mr. Brett Altman, 8216 Ardmore Avenue stated that he is in favor of the proposed change in zoning application.

Mr. Edward Welch, 8001 Southampton Avenue stated that he is not in favor of these special meetings. He is concerned that if the property is changed to B-1 Business District, a commercial use will occupy the first floor of the multi-family building. He believes no changes should be approved and that a new fire station is not required. He stated that he is a past member of the Fire Company, and the existing building should be renovated. Mr. Overcash stated again that he would agree to the condition of any approval that the development be limited to residential uses

only, except for the new fire house. Mr. Welch asked what other developers have been met with and are those plans available for review. The question was not answered.

Ms. Helwig asked if the applicant planned a reverse subdivision in connected with the land development plan when submitted. Mr. Kuhls stated that a reverse subdivision would be involved, but no decision has been made about how the fire house tract of ground would be deeded.

Ms. Jane Kennedy, 1108 Pleasant Avenue stated that Mr. Overcash's current development across the street is a mess. She made note of the broken and blocked sidewalks and curbing, the mud and debris on Queen Street and the condition of Queen Street. She also has issues with the dust and noise from the current development.

Mr. David Smith, 8004 Southampton Avenue asked if the Planning Commission considers the right of the developer verses the interest of the neighbors. He stated that property is developed and has current uses. He stated that there is no need for additional development. He cited the strain on existing utilities and public services. He is a 30-year resident of Wyndmoor. He stated that he views the existing church and the fire house as community service uses and not businesses. He stated that there is already an abundance of empty housing units on Willow Grove Avenue. He pointed out that Mr. Overcash has failed to sell the township units currently under construction and it has been a year or more. He stated that the existing fire house and the open space serve as a buffer to the homes on Southampton & Wyndmoor Avenues.

Ms. Alexandra Klinger, 7811 Elm Avenue, stated that she is the president of Springfield Township Open Space Committee and a member of the Environmental Advisory Committee. {I have been informed that the Springfield Township Open Space Committee is not an official Township Committee and that Dr. Klinger attends the EAC meetings , but is not an appointed member}. She stated that Mr. Overcash and the fire house should have been required to meet with the neighbors prior to this meeting. She believes that the group would serve the community better if it remained open space. She asked the Planning Commission to explain the process and what happens from this point moving forward.

Ms. Helwig explained that the Planning Commission is an advisory committee and that no matter the recommendation is, it will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners, it is the Board of Commissioners that will decide whether this request moves forward or not.

Mr. Neil Phillips, 16 Wyndmoor Avenue stated that he is not in favor of this proposal and believes it will have a negative impact on the neighborhood. He stated that Mr. Overcash's view of Willow Grove Avenue may not be shared by the balance of the neighborhood. He stated that the only reason the zoning change has been requested is to increase density.

Mr. Lee Rightley, 8003 Southampton Avenue stated that he is opposed to any change in the zoning and believes that the increase in density would have a negative impact on the neighborhood. He stated that it is his opinion that the neighborhood can't handle the increase

in traffic, flooding, noise and additional drain of public utilities. He is opposed to rental of any additional units in the area.

Mr. Michael Carver, 928 Pleasant Avenue stated that he believes this is a very bad idea and claimed that density has doubled along Willow Grove Avenue in the last 20 years. He offered the development of 900 Willow Grove Avenue, 910 Willow Grove Avenue, 1108/1110 Willow Grove Avenue and now these properties.

Ms. Josephine Comfort, 30 Wyndmoor Avenue stated that it is already very difficult to access Willow Grove Avenue from Southampton Avenue. Having this entire development exit onto Southampton Avenue will only increase the problem. She believes a traffic signal will have to be installed at Southampton and Willow Grove Avenues.

Ms. Karolyn Sarsfield, 1017 Pleasant Avenue, does not believe there is a need for a new firehouse. She is upset that the community has not been involved in the discussions for the development of this project. She stated that it is her opinion that showers and a bunk quarters are not needed. She also stated that any traffic study that would be submitted will be flawed as they are always skewed to benefit development.

Ms. Charlene Picchi, 8100 Southampton Avenue asked questions about the need to have an access point on Southampton Avenue. Mr. Robert Krandel stated an access point on both Willow Grove Avenue and Southampton Avenue permits the proposed new fire house to have drive through bays. He stated that this is much safer for both the fire personnel and the fire equipment.

Ms. Helwig asked if there were any other questions or statements from those in attendance. There was none.

Ms. Marguax Petruska from Montgomery County Planning Commission stated that this request is in line with Montgomery County's 2040 Vision Plan for Montgomery County.

Mr. Kuhls thanked that Planning Commission and those in attendance for their time and consideration this evening.

Ms. Helwig asked if there was a motion. Ms. Murray made a motion with two conditions. One, the applicant is required to meet with the surrounding neighbors prior to the Board of Commissioner's formal hearing on this request. Two, that the three-story building proposed to be at the corner of Willow Grove and Southampton Avenue be limited to residential use only. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sands and was passed by a vote of four in favor and one opposed.

There was a motion made to adjourn the meeting at this point. The motion was seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:53 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted
Mark A. Penecale
Director of Planning & Zoning