

**LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes for June 16, 2008

The Lower Pottsgrove Township Planning Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, June 16, 2008. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Geoffrey Dailey, at 6:30 p.m. and the following were in attendance:

Geoffrey Dailey, Chair
Frank Cebular, Vice Chair
Ron Dinnocenti

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager
Susan Ebling, Engineer
Matthew Edmond, MCPC

A motion was made by Mr. Cebular, seconded by Mr. Dinnocenti, and unanimously approved by a 3-0 vote to approve the minutes of May 19, 2008.

ACCEPTANCE OF NEW APPLICATIONS

A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Cebular, and unanimously approved by a 3-0 vote to accept the sketch plan application for #08-02, North Charlotte Street Pottstown, LP.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

(#08-02S) **North Charlotte Street Pottstown, LP**, *Sketch Plan*: proposal to consolidate two parcels into one 7.638-acre parcel with an 84,000 sq. ft. six-tenant building and a 15,000 sq. ft. pad building, with associated lot improvements to include landscaping at 1400 North Charlotte Street in the SC Shopping Center District. [Plans prepared by Wilkinson Associates, Inc. dated 05-23-2008, and consisting of three (3) sheets].

This application was represented by George and Mike Spaeder of Rosedon Development Company, LLC; the applicant's engineer, Mike Sodl of Wilkinson Associates, Inc.; the applicant's attorney, Bill Brennan of Butera Beausang Cohen Brennan; and the applicant's planners, Joe Orsatti and Pat Stewart of Orsatti & Associates, Inc.

The applicant presented the proposed site plan and stated that they were before the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board. The applicant is planning to attend the July 15, 2008, hearing.

The applicant is proposing to divide the 84,000 sq. ft. building into one 20,000 sq. ft. section where Planet Fitness will be going, one 23,000 sq. ft. section, and four 8-10,000 sq. ft. sections. In addition, they are proposing a 15,000 sq. ft. pad site near the southwestern portion of the property.

The applicant is challenged by a site that is nearly 100% impervious with a heavily sloping topography from north to south. There are currently 548 parking spaces. The applicant proposes to reduce the number to 432 by moving spaces away from the right-of-way, introducing planting islands, and make the spaces and aisles larger. In addition the proposed pad site significantly reduces the amount of parking spaces on the site.

The applicant also plans to level the site from north to south, which will necessitate a retaining wall/slope with stairs at the southern end of the building. The grade change will also require the parking area on the southeastern portion of the site to be blocked off from the School Lane entrance. This parking, plus some of the parking in the rear, will be utilized for employee and overflow parking.

The addition of the pad site, requires the applicant to shift one of the existing drives on North Charlotte Street to the north to afford enough room for the pad site.

This proposed site plan will require four variances: §1403, reduction in required parking, §1404.5, for building coverage in excess of 20%, §1404.5, parking setbacks, and §415 landscaping. In addition, 13 waivers may be required.

Mr. Dailey said that he thought 5.5 parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of space as required by ordinance seems excessive. His preference is to maximize the amount of spaces needed while greening the site as much as possible. He asked the applicant what it thought the right number of parking spaces would be.

George Spaeder said he believed that because the health club's busy hours would be different from that of the other retail spaces; he might be able to make do with even less parking spaces than they currently show. He thought 4.1 or 4.2 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of space, which could reduce the number of proposed spaces to 410 or 420 spaces.

Mr. Edmond said that although MCPC has not officially released its review letter, he would summarize their comments:

1. Aesthetics
 - a. The County recommends more trees and landscaping along North Charlotte Street and more green space between the sidewalk and parking areas;
 - b. They are concerned about the height of the retaining wall along North Charlotte Street and School Lane;
 - c. They are concerned about sidewalk next to the retaining wall;
 - d. They would like to see building façade elevations;
 - e. They would like to see the loading zone for the pad site shielded or minimized since it is right in front of the development;
 - f. They would like to see more planting islands between the parking rows.
2. Circulation
 - a. The entrance from School lane is shallow;
 - b. They are concerned about the intersection of the access roads from North Charlotte Street and School Lane and would like to see it extended into the site more;
 - c. They are concerned about parking safety on the main entrance access drive from North Charlotte Street. There is a lot that could potentially happen there with two intersections, more than 30 parking spaces, a loading zone, and it being the main access point;
 - d. They were concerned about truck circulation;
 - e. They thought that the tenant in the 23,000 sq. ft. store would be underserved by parking;
 - f. They were concerned about the rear parking areas and who would use them.
3. Sidewalks
 - a. They were concerned that there were no sidewalks into the property or along School Lane;
 - b. They liked the addition of sidewalks along North Charlotte Street
4. Environmental
 - a. They strongly urged the Township and applicant to install stormwater management controls, such as an underground detention tank and other stormwater management BMPs.
5. PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit

- a. Because there is a change in use, more intense use, and change in driveway access points, the County said an HOP permit is required for this project.

George Spaeder responded that the lower and rear lot would be for employees and overflow parking. He also stated that most pad sites loading areas are internal, so the loading operations of the pad site, should be shielded.

Mr. Orsatti said this project is very challenging to balance the old and the new. They are trying to add as much greenery as possible on site while providing for the circulation and parking needs of the site.

Mr. Dinnocenti said he is concerned that tractor trailers will not be able to back up to access the loading area at the rear of the main building due to the radii and parking spaces that would make it difficult. George Spaeder said he thinks this will be possible and he does not think the tenants for this site would require large deliveries via tractor trailer. Mr. Dinnocenti said he was also concerned with the radius of this entrance at School Lane.

Mr. Dailey said he had concerns about the parking spaces on the north side of the North Charlotte Street main access drive (the row of 29 spaces). He was concerned that since this is the main ingress and egress into the center, that cars backing into and out of the spaces would cause a dangerous situation.

If these spaces were eliminated, then the number of spaces would be reduced to a four spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of space. George Spaeder said he did not think this would work for the site.

Mr. Cebular said he was concerned about a straight “run way” off North Charlotte Street.

Mr. Dinnocenti said he was concerned that there was no defined main entrance drive.

Mr. Dailey said he thought the applicant had done a good job with a tough site, but there is still some tweaking that needs to be done. He said he could conceptually support the variance requested, but would need some better information, preferably from the applicants parking expert that did not attend the meeting, before making a decision. He would definitely support a reduction in the number of parking spaces in support of more greenery on the site.

The other members of the Planning Commission agreed with Mr. Dailey’s assessment.

Action: No action was taken at this meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee Report

Ms. Elliott said she was not able to attend the May Regional Planning Committee; however, she and Commissioner Stephen Klotz will be presenting the Township Solicitor’s comments on the proposed amendments to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement at the June meeting.

The next meeting of the PRMPC is June 25, 2008.

Planning Studies

The Township and Consultants are still reviewing comments made by land owners, developers, MCPC and other groups on the Sanatoga Interchange Plan. Adoption of the Community Revitalization Plan is scheduled for July 24.

Public Comment

Mr. Frank Wojton asked questions about zoning on his property.

Mr. Tony Doyle asked questions about the Checkerberry's project.

There being no other business, a motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Cebular, and unanimously approved by a 3-0 vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for July 21, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager