

**LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION**

November 15, 2010

The Lower Pottsgrove Township Planning Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, November 15, 2010. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair, Frank Cebular, at 6:30 p.m. and the following were in attendance:

Frank Cebular, Vice Chair
Nicholas Hiriak
Ronald Dinnocenti
William Wolfgang
Anthony Cherico

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager
Chad Camburn, Bursich Associates, Inc.
Joseph Nixon, MCPC

REORGANIZATION

A motion was made by Mr. Wolfgang, seconded by Mr. Cherico, and unanimously approved by a 4-0 vote, to elect Mr. Cebular Chair of the Planning Commission.

A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Wolfgang, and unanimously approved by a 4-0 vote, to elect Mr. Hiriak Vice Chair of the Planning Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Wolfgang, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote, to approve the minutes of September 20, 2010.

ACCEPTANCE OF NEW APPLICATIONS

A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Cherico, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote to accept Application #2006-05A, an Amended Lot Consolidation/Land Development Plan for Buchert Ridge Community, Inc. – Phase IIA.

OLD BUSINESS

Berean Bible Church Zoning Application: proposal to construct an approximately 11,000 square foot gymnasium addition onto the rear of the church on 12.33 acres on East High Street/2600 Sky Top Drive in the R-3 Residential District. [Plans prepared by Wil Hallman Retirement Development, dated 10-06-2008, and consisting of one (1) sheet].

The application was represented by Pastor Bill Neitz, engineer John McMenamin, and Wil Hallman.

Pastor Neitz explained that the current facility does double duty as a gymnasium and church, which requires a lot of set up and take down time. The new facility will enable the church to remain set up as a church, while enabling the Church to continue its recreation program. The gymnasium is currently used three nights a week by children who use transportation provided by the Church. He added that the typical Sunday attendance is 300 people and 500 on Christmas and Easter. The 224-vehicle parking lot is plenty large enough for the Church's current needs.

Mr. McMenamain explained that the applicant has submitted a zoning application which requests relief from §250-36. Exterior Lighting Regulations and §250-64.F., which requires a 15 foot buffer along property lines.

Mr. McMenamain presented plans that showed the existing lighting plan and plans showing the number of lights that would be required to meet the lighting requirements. Under the existing lighting plan, 64 of the parking spaces meet the Zoning Ordinance's lighting standards of 0.2 footcandles. Five additional lights would be required to meet the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Wolfgang inquired about the cost of each light. Mr. McMenamain said the lights would cost about \$5,000.

Mr. Hallman stated that representatives of the neighboring Sanatoga Ridge would not like to see additional lighting at the Church. He said there are lights from Sanatoga Ridge that do spill onto the parking lot at the Church so it is not entirely dark.

Mr. Cherico asked if the Church would be expanding its service to the community. Pastor Neitz stated that the addition would be to make the programming easier on the staff, rather than expanding its programming. It would also give the Church an opportunity to improve the worship area. If the Church's services expand or increase, they would add lights as necessary.

Mr. Cebular asked how safe the facility is to use at night. Pastor Neitz stated that the facility has not had an issue in its 30 years of operation.

Mr. Camburn said he is very reluctant to support a variance for safety reasons. He said it would be possible to prepare language with specific conditions to give to the Zoning Hearing Board to aid in making its decision.

Mr. McMenamain stated that the Church would consider indemnifying the Township.

Action: A motion was made by Mr. Wolfgang, seconded by Mr. Hiriak, and carried unanimously by a 5-0 vote to support the applicant's request for relief from the zoning requirements provide that Township staff provides appropriate conditions to protect it from safety issues and create triggers for requiring the applicant to provide additional lighting.

Mr. McMenamain addressed the issue of the buffer area, stating that he is not exactly sure exactly what kind of relief he should be asking for – specifically because he wasn't sure what the landscape buffer should look like.

Mr. Hallman stated that 30 years ago, he worked with neighbors of the site to see what type of buffer they would support. Most property owners did not want a buffer because they "expanded" their yards into the Church property and did not want it taken away. Mr. Neitz said that at the request of the Township, he sent letters to all the property owners in 2008 requesting their comments/concerns with regard to the proposed project. He said he received three responses – two were positive and the third expressed concerns with regard to stormwater runoff.

Ms. Elliott suggested that the applicant request relief from the requirement to provide a 15 foot buffer along the entire property line and ask that the specifics be taken care of at the land development level since the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance is much more specific about the contents of the buffer.

Action: A motion was made by Mr. Dinnocenti, seconded by Mr. Wolfgang, and unanimously approved by a 5-0 vote to support the variance for a buffer and state that the specifics of the buffer be handled through the land development process.

NEW BUSINESS

(#2006-05A) **Buchert Ridge Community, Inc. – Phase IIA**, *Amended Lot Consolidation/Land Development Plan*, proposal to consolidate six lots and the create 45 units: four singles, one triple, and 39 garden apartments and community center in a 68,200+/- sq. ft., four-story building; a 3,830+/- sq. ft. indoor pool/pool house; a 700 sq. ft. landscape shop; an 800 sq. ft. maintenance shop; five carports with 23 parking spaces; a two-story, 16-car parking garage; and an 80-foot long, second-story pedestrian bridge, on 5.96 acres at 2011 Buchert Road [Parcels: #420000693003 (Block 010, Unit 022), #420000694002 (Block 010, Unit 023), #420000697008 (Block 010, Unit 024), #420000700005 (Block 010, Unit 025), #420000703002 (Block 010, Unit 026), and #420000700104 (Block 010, Unit 039)] in an R-2 Residential District [Plans prepared by Hallman Retirement Neighborhoods, 2461 East High Street, Suite M-12, Pottstown, PA 19464, dated 09-15-2010, and consisting of twenty-two (22) sheets] Plan was previously approved Resolution #717-A on June 2, 2008, and proposed the consolidation of six lots and creation of two 750 sq. ft., four-bay garages; a 400 sq. ft. maintenance building; and 38-units: three singles, one twin, 2 triples, and 27 garden apartments and community center in two three-story attached buildings consisting of 49,500+/- sq. ft.

The application was represented by the applicant's representative, Wil Hallman, and the applicant's engineer, John McMenamin.

Mr. McMenamin and Mr. Hallman discussed the zoning review letter from Ms. Elliott dated November 10, 2010. Of particular note were the following issues:

- Mr. McMenamin stated that he would like to measure the 50 foot buffer along Buchert Road from the existing curblin. As a result approximately eight parking spaces would encroach into the buffer. Mr. Camburn explained that the original zoning order was vague in defining what was meant by buffer so he suggested the applicant determine a workable measurement that could be applied to this situation.
- While not a zoning issue, the size of the bus turnaround was discussed because if it is determined inadequate, altering its size would have an impact on other aspects of the design that would require zoning relief. Mr. Hallman said he was in contact with the bus company, which has stated that a 100 foot diameter would be adequate for drivers to navigate. Mr. Camburn said that his software does not agree. Mr. McMenamin suggested a demonstration, possibly at the Berean Bible Church parking lot, to determine if it is possible.
- Mr. McMenamin said approximately 104 parking spaces are required, taking into account two spaces per unit. According to the ordinance, spaces in front of garages are not permitted, which reduces the number of official parking spaces that can be provided. Mr. McMenamin said he would like to reduce the required parking spaces per unit from 2 to 1.5 spaces.

Mr. Dinnocenti said that he felt the applicant was not being specific enough in its requests for relief; nor was it providing enough information to help the Planning Commission make a recommendation.

Mr. Wolfgang said he felt the zoning review was very detailed and questioned whether the project was being micromanaged. Ms. Elliott said that because this project is being done in a zoning district where the special needs of age-restricted projects is not accounted for (having been permitted by a use variance); they are working backward, in a sense, to create zoning parameters for the site. The detailed review was done in an effort to identify as many issues that may arise as a result of this project and define boundaries that both the Township and the applicant can live with. She added that it is the goal of Township staff to flesh out some of these details now so they are recorded in an official document, such as a zoning order, to help guide

administration of the project in the future – particularly when all of the parties responsible for working on it are no longer with the Township.

Mr. McMenamain asked the Planning Commission about their thoughts on the height of the building. Mr. Cebular said he would like to see the rear elevations of the building, trees, etc. prior to making any recommendations with regard to building height or other relief related to that area of the building.

Action: No action was taken on this project. The applicant was asked to generate a letter that more succinctly summarized the relief requested and provide better supporting information, such as rear building elevations to help the Planning Commission with its recommendation.

Haines & Kibblehouse LED Billboard Sign

Ms. Elliott said she learned just prior to the meeting that H&K withdrew their application to install an LED billboard on their property located on South Pleasantview Road that fronted Route 422. She stated that such a sign is not permitted in the district.

Action: It was a consensus of the Planning Commission that it did not support the H&K application.

LAMAR Advertising LED Billboard Sign

Ms. Elliott explained that LAMAR Advertising currently has a billboard on Route 422 at Porter Road. The billboard is a tri-sided moveable copy sign that changes every five seconds. LAMAR received zoning relief in 1999 to permit such a sign; however, since they would like to replace the sign with an LED sign, it would be considered nonconforming to the new ordinance passed in 2007. All nonconforming signs, according to the ordinance, are required to be brought into conformance.

Action: It was a consensus of the Planning Commission that it would like the Zoning Hearing Board to require applicants to meet the criteria of the new sign ordinance with respect to LED signs and billboards.

GRADING PERMITS

None.

AUTHORITY BUSINESS

Buchert Ridge Community, Planning Module Component 4-A: Applicant postponed this piece of business until a more appropriate time.

PLANNING & ZONING

None.

COMMENTS

Mr. Wolfgang asked if applicants would provide the Planning Commission with waiver request letters prior to the meetings to help the Planning Commission have a summarized list of waivers being requested for a project.

Mr. Wolfgang also asked if it would be possible to receive Planning Commission packet information sooner than the Friday before the meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for ***Monday***, December 20, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager