

MINUTES OF THE
EAST COVENTRY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 17, 2022
(Approved September 21, 2022)

The Planning Commission held their monthly meeting on Wednesday, August 17, 2022. Present for the meeting were Walter Woessner, Kathryn Alexis, Larry Tietjen and Paul Lacon. Lance Parson was absent. Also present were Mark Hosterman, Township Solicitor and Rick Tralies, Township Planner. Brady Flaharty, Township Engineer was absent.

Mr. Woessner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the pledge was recited.

MINUTES

Mr. Tietjen made a motion to accept the minutes as presented for July 20, 2022. Mrs. Alexis seconded the motion. The motion carried with a 4-0-0 vote.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Liz Willow, 683 Ellis Woods Road, gave the Planning Commission members a letter regarding her thoughts on the proposed development on Fricks Lock Road.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

Consideration of Review of Preliminary/Final Major Land Development Plan for 1730 New Schuylkill Road – DROOGS MMA and Jiu Jitsu

John Anderson, Cornerstone Consulting, said this is an existing commercial property that has a 6,000 square foot building, twelve (12) parking spaces in the asphalt area and a large gravel area for additional parking. They want to change the use of this facility to an MMA Jiu Jitsu facility which is a permitted use. It was also indicated that they are required to have 24 parking spaces. The applicants are asking for a waiver to utilize the gravel area for parking. They would stripe the parking spaces out front in the asphalt and reconfigure the gravel area for the additional parking and would reduce the impervious coverage. The handicap parking space would be on the side of the building and they would concrete that space. The owners of the property are Daniel O'Neill, Emily O'Neill, Cathryn Millares, and AJ Discianni who are professional martial artists. They are very excited to bring a family oriented martial arts facility to the area. A discussion ensued on their hours of operation and the anticipated size of the classes. Mr. Anderson discussed the review letters from the Township Consultants and also reviewed the new waiver list. Regarding the Historic Resource Impact Study, Mr. Tietjen said he will put this project on the next Historical Commission agenda so they can review and discuss the request for a waiver. Mr. Tralies said there should be more defined walkways or safe places to cross in the parking lot to make it safer for pedestrians.

Mr. Hosterman said the next steps would be to revise the plans and would need to resubmit to the Township by August 31, 2022 in order to be on the next Planning Commission meeting which is September 21, 2022. If all goes well there is a possibility the Planning Commission could make a recommendation for a resolution to go to the Board of Supervisors.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Informal Presentation of a Proposed "Villages & Shoppes at Fricks Lock", Route 724 and Fricks Lock Road

Jackie Erickson and Joan Hodges were present from Artisan Land Company to give an informal presentation on the proposed Villages & Shoppes at Fricks Lock. Ms. Erickson said they are

100% committed to the property and the project and that they will be closing in the early fall on the property. She said the property is in the C-1 zoning district and that besides the mixed-use plan, they do have two (2) other plans that are by-right uses which are residential and warehouses. Ms. Erickson is asking the Planning Commission for their feedback on whether they should continue in the direction they were going in regarding the mixed use of the property or should they move in the direction of the by-right uses. Ms. Erickson is asking whether the Township is looking to support the mixed-use or is it more appropriate for them to just look at the by-right uses. Discussion continued regarding the traffic improvements. A lengthy discussion ensued. Mr. Tietjen asked about their vision of the commercial part of the property. Ms. Erickson said the commercial part they would own. They would work with the Township on appropriate type of tenants for the commercial part. They will not be deterred if there is not an ability to get a liquor license. Mr. Hosterman said that it is a big hurdle to get a referendum to repeal the dry Township status. The Planning Commission members like the mixed-use concept but obviously there is a lot that would need to be worked out. A discussion ensued regarding the rear load garages for the twin homes. Mr. Tralies said he feels the mixed use is a good concept but the plan needs to be tweaked. Mr. Tralies also stated he feels the Township Consultants, members of the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors and the developer should walk the site together.

Review of Brush, Weeds, Grass and Dumping Ordinance

Mr. Hosterman reviewed the Brush, Weeds, Grass and Dumping Ordinance and said there is a small component in the ordinance that involves the SALDO. A discussion ensued. Mr. Hosterman will make the minor changes that were discussed. It was asked why a pile of chips is not allowed. Mr. Tralies said that a pile of chips takes too long to break down so it's best to spread them around.

Mr. Woessner made a motion to recommend the Brush, Weeds, Grass and Dumping Ordinance go to the Board of Supervisors for adoption after the changes are made by Mr. Hosterman. Mrs. Alexis seconded the motion. The motion carried with a 4-0-0 vote.

Historical Commission Update

Nothing to report at this time.

Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Tietjen moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 pm. Mrs. Alexis seconded the motion. The motion carried with a 4-0-0 vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kutsch
Secretary

Planning Commission, EC Twp, 8/17/2022
From Liz Willow, 683 Ellis Woods Road.

CITIZEN
COMMENT
17 AUG

First, I need to appreciate the work of our planning commission members, past, present and future. It's not easy and often thankless to see 10, 25, 100, even 500 years into the ever changing future, which very recently, has changed quite a bit. **Thank you.**

Others here today and at future meetings, may give specific arguments about this particular zoning issue; school capacities, traffic, environmental or historical issues, water or sewer supplies, bar/restaurant liquor licenses, proximity to the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant (They will be hearing the turbines 24/7) and other impacts. I believe any zoning changes made after much thought and deliberation, can be either less restrictive or **more restrictive.**

Fricks Lock Villages and Shoppes, as currently proposed, contains 240 housing units, predicted to market for \$400,000 to \$500,000. I would like to see homes with smaller footprints at a more reasonable cost to attract **future middle class taxpayers** which would also help with affordable housing for the children and grandchildren of this community as well as newcomers. After all, who do you think will be doing the actual building of this project? Or supporting it afterwards?

I would also like to see, instead of a pair of sports fields donated to the township, a **community garden** for the benefit of the future residents. There are models and resources out there for community gardens and this would better echo the historical agricultural flavor of the rich soils in this township. Do you remember how many greenhouses there used to be around here? There are still quite a few. Also, the Parks, Recreation, and Conservation committee is working with the OJR school board on planning additional sports fields on the grounds of the former East Coventry Elementary School.

The school bus loading/transportation center is also a good idea. There is fantastic access to the Schuylkill River Trail which will enable citizens to access towns, parks and other mixed-use communities via foot or bicycle, from Philadelphia, past Reading, to Pottsville.

This proposal is also close to the Schuylkill river itself, maybe even a little too close. I believe those of us already living along waterways need to consider 500 year floodplain delineations before any new construction so I hope these planners do the same. **Stormwater management should also have extra precautions built in because of this proximity to the Schuylkill River.**

Waterways and the open space along them provide important wildlife corridors and habitat for resident and migrating birds, animals and fish, along with the plants and insects that support them. Unfortunately, Open Space no longer has a low maintenance alternative. It needs to be managed in order to keep invasive and competing species in our environment controlled. Please keep these things in mind as you consider our futures. Zoning changes to accommodate these developers may be **opening the door** for similar projects all along the 724 and Schuylkill river corridors.

Thank You.

Liz Willow