

WHARTON PLANNING BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 23, 2015

The Special Meeting of the Wharton Planning Board was called to order with Acting Chairman Roger Steele reading the Open Meeting Statement as required by law.

ROLL CALL was taken and the following members were present, Mayor William J. Chegwiddden, Councilman Thomas Yeager, Mr. Roger Steele, Ms. Charlotte Kelly, Mr. Jared Coursen, Ms. Jennifer O'Malley-Dorr, and Mr. Patrick O'Brien. Also present were Attorney Alan Zakin, Planner Jessica Caldwell and Secretary Patricia Craven. Excused was Chairman Loury, Mr. Mark Harris and Mr. Peter Rathjens. Engineer Christopher Borinski arrived after roll call.

The approval of the bills was next. A Motion was made by Charlotte Kelly and Seconded by Thomas Yeager to approve the bills. YEA – 8 NAY – 0

The approval of the March 10, 2015 Planning Board Meeting was next. A Motion was made by Jared Coursen and Seconded by Roger Steele to approve the minutes.

YEA – 6 NAY – 0 ABST – 2 (Yeager, O'Brien)

Next on the agenda was the review of 2 Proposed Redevelopment Area Plans. Planner Jessica Caldwell addressed the Board. She handed out new revised plans for the Green Tent Company Redevelopment Plan, dated 6/23/15.

Planner Caldwell explained to the Board that both of these plans were sent from the Borough Council to the Planning Board for their review. After this meeting the plans will be sent back to the Council to be adopted essentially as zoning ordinances for the 2 areas. This meeting is the Boards chance to review and give any input before it goes to the council. It will only come back to the Planning Board again if there are any major changes by the Council.

The first plan is the Green Tent Company Redevelopment Plan for Block 1319, Lots 1 and 1.01. It is currently a rehabilitation area and is different than a redevelopment area in that a rehabilitation area can have redevelopment plans done for them. The redevelopment plan essentially acts the same except the rehabilitation area does not have the same powers or the redeveloper in terms of pilots or long term tax abatements. The Borough can still enter into redevelopment agreements with a redeveloper and this will still establish the zoning for the site.

The Block and Lots cover about 1 ½ acres and fronts on N. Main St, Washington St. and Kossuth St. It is a very important piece of property, it is a gateway into the Borough. Right now it has a fence around part of it and then the Green Tent site. The site is located in the Central Business District. That district was recently expanded as part of the Master Plan reexamination process to bring this site into the Central Business District which would add additional development and promote both mixed, residential and commercial use. This plan solidifies that but also tries to make the site a little more marketable in terms of adding additional residential capacity on the site.

She pointed out the Conceptual Elevation Plan on page 5 as well as the Zoning Map on Page 6. One of the goals of the Master Plan is to provide different housing types and densities and balanced housing supply, which this plan does. It also fosters the commercial areas by providing additional residential. Downtowns are especially supported by residential that are within walking distance. On page 9 she went over the permitted uses, the area and bulk requirements as well as additional zoning regulations. The permitted uses are the same as in the Central Business District but they have added multifamily dwellings as well. They established parking standards which are the RSIS parking standards for multifamily. They required all the parking be either underneath or behind and screened from the street. She went over the Buffer and Landscape requirements. They require Street Trees along Main Street and the CBD. As far as Mobility Regulations they require access primarily off of Kossuth St. and Washington Street with no curb cuts along Main St. She also talked about sidewalks, crosswalks and the Rail Trail. They have some Building Design Standards which talk about how to unify the architectural elements and correlate those with the CBD. The building will front onto Main Street, They are also encouraging architectural design elements on the roof such as clock towers, cornices and dormers. They have street lights requirements that correlates back to the Master Plan and the street lighting that is currently on Main Street. She went over the permitted signage. As far as Design Standards for Site Plans they refer back to the design standards in the ordinance.

There is no property acquisition anticipated by this Redevelopment Plan so there is no Relocation Plan necessary.

Planner Caldwell took questions from the Board. She stated that the property is 1 ½ acres and is 2 lots that will become 1 lot so it will meet the standards. The property can be joined by deed.

Attorney Zakin explained that the Redevelopment laws are intended to advocate for the highest and best use of the property in underutilized areas. They are trying to maximize the use and encourage development that is viable in these times. Office and Warehouse uses are no longer viable as we have heard from previous applicants. This is something that would create jobs, increase the tax base and patronize the town businesses and is well utilized in this plan.

Mayor Chegwiddden agreed with Attorney Zakin and gave a little history of this area.

Planner Caldwell stated that this is consistent with the Regional Master Plan and the State Plan in terms of this is where development should be directed. It makes sense and bolsters an existing community and the existing downtown.

Planner Caldwell explained that the Board is to review the plans, provide any comments and then refer it to the Borough Council for their consideration. The Borough Council will adopt the Redevelopment Plan which becomes the zoning for this site. She stated that there is a developer interested in the site who is here tonight, which speaks to the marketability of what they are proposing. Mayor Chegwiddden stated that there is no need of acquisition of the property because they have a willing partner.

Attorney Zakin stated that the Council will take into account any comments from the Planning Board and then they will draft the final resolution.

Acting Chairman Steele stated that the property is a key spot in the Borough. He sees this as a benefit to the Borough and a positive for the struggling downtown.

Planner Caldwell stated that she had heard that Avalon Bay is full which shows that this type of residential use is in high demand and bringing something similar to that, closer to the downtown is a benefit. She also heard that people are walking from Avalon Bay to our downtown, which is great and this would even be closer. From a planning aspect having a residential close to the downtown is key to keeping the businesses going. If for some reason the residential project does not go through this Redevelopment Plan was designed for multiple permitted uses and will still be viable for the downtown.

The meeting was now open to the public and closed.

A Motion was made by Thomas Yeager and Seconded by Brian Bosworth to recommend this Redevelopment Plan to the Mayor and Council as presented. YEA – 8 NAY – 0

Next on the agenda was the LE Carpenter Site Redevelopment Plan Amendment. Planner Caldwell gave out color copies of the plan to the Board. The plan is the same plan that was emailed to the Board.

Planner Caldwell stated that the Redevelopment plan was adopted in 2 phases. The amended plan covers Phase II which is the L.E. Carpenter Site, Block 301, Lot 1 and Block 801, Lot 3, and is shown on page 3 of the report. The L.E. Carpenter Site, Block 801, Lot 3 was designated as a superfund site. It was primarily cleaned up and most of the contaminated soil was removed and the monitoring is ongoing. The current plan has a Municipal Overlay District which was intended to include a Municipal Facility with some open space and recreation. The Borough has decided not to go forward with the Municipal Complex so the Municipal Overlay Zone is no longer applicable and the plan has been amended. They are proposing an Economic Development Overlay Zone which is intended to be a jobs producing type of zone with uses such as office, light manufacturing, light industrial, warehouse uses, light industrial flex space, research laboratories and commercial recreation uses. The underlying I-1 Planned Industrial Zone is more of a heavy industrial zone. In order to implement the benefits of the Redevelopment area they would need to conform to the Economic Development Overlay Zone. This Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Borough's Master Plan.

As far as amending the Redevelopment Plan the existing uses are obsolete and the amendment is necessary. The amendment is looking to provide jobs and employment types of facilities. They are also permitting commercial/recreation facilities. Commercial indoor recreation facilities are a big thing now. On the L.E. Carpenter site they are looking at the rehabilitation of existing buildings as part of the Redevelopment Plan and on the other site it would be mostly redevelopment.

Planner Caldwell went over the permitted uses on page 8 of the plan and area and bulk requirements on page 9. She stated that the property will also front on the proposed North Main Street Extension that the County is proposing, which will make the property more viable. The Mayor added that the County is planning on knocking down the building this year. The road is designed and approved. Planner Caldwell spoke about the additional zoning regulations on page 9 and went over the established Parking Standards on page 10. The parking will be behind the buildings and buffered. Shade trees are required along the frontage. She went over the Mobility

Regulations, Building Design Standards, Lighting and Signage. Any developer would have to come before the Planning Board with a site plan.

Planner Caldwell explained that the signage is a little more minimalistic than the current sign ordinance. She also stated that the superfund site is Block 301, Lot 1. The other lot can be developed but not to residential standards. Mr. Steele asked why eating establishments were not a permitted use. Planner Caldwell explained that the thought process for this area was to be more of an employment area for the downtown rather than having residential or commercial; particularly because of the struggling nature of the downtown they did not want to add more commercial at this point. They did permit restaurants as an accessory use. So if you had a recreational facility you could have a restaurant.

Mayor Chegwiddden gave a brief history of the adjacent Block 903, Lot 2. The back part of this lot is used for trailer storage. There was also a discussion about liquor licenses, brew pubs, the Air Products site and the proposed cut through road proposed by the County.

Engineer Borinski stated that the Borough is putting in real brick crosswalks and suggested that this be included in the redevelopment plans. The Mayor agreed.

More discussion followed about the proposed cut through road and traffic.

The meeting was open and then closed to the public.

A Motion was made by Thomas Yeager and Seconded by Brian Bosworth to recommend to the Mayor and Council that they adopt the 2 Redevelopment Plans as presented with the addition of real brick crosswalks to be included in both plans. YEA – 8 NAY – 0

A Motion was made by Thomas Yeager and Seconded by Roger Steele to adjourn.
YEA – 8 NAY – 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Patricia M. Craven - Secretary

Ken Loury - Chairman