

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MAY 28, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

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**1. Call to Order:**

A. Chairman Schlack called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Roll Call:**

A. The following planning commission members were present: Mr. Bodek, Mr. Endlich, Mr. Kuberski, Mr. Rutledge, Mrs. Satterwhite, Mr. Schlack, Mr. Stemple, Mr. Vibbert, and Ms. Zimmerman.

B. Additional attendees included: Ms. Jean Holland, Montgomery County Planning Commission, Mrs. Marie Altieri, Board of Supervisors Liaison, Solicitor David Onorato, Mr. John Chambers and Mr. Lonnie Manai, Township Engineer, Mr. Glen Harris, Township Landscape Consultant, Mr. Ken O'Brien, Township Traffic Consultant, Mr. Ron Smith, Township Lighting Consultant, Mr. Joseph Dunbar, Township Manger, and Mr. Michael Siegel, Director of Community Development.

**4. Approval of Planning Commission Previous Meeting Minutes:**

A. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes for April 23, 2008:

1. **MOTION** – Mr. Stemple made a motion to approve the April 23, 2008 PC meeting minutes. Mr. Endlich seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 8-0-1. Mrs. Satterwhite abstained from the vote because she did not attend the meeting.

**5. Subdivision and Land Development Reviews:**

A. S-08-02 – The American Revolution Center (ARC) Preliminary Major Land Development:

1. Mr. Tom Daly, President and CEO of the American Revolution Center, was present to provide an overview of the application.
  - a) Mr. Daly explained that their application for a museum and educational conference center was located on 78 acres of private land, adjacent to the Valley Forge National Historic Park (VFNHP). Federal regulations permit charging appropriate fees, conducting events, and the sale of merchandise, tickets and food to visitors by right on park land.
  - b) Mr. Daly remarked that this evening's meeting was for a technical review of the land development application, which is consistent with the last public presentation in September 2007.
  - c) Mr. Daly identified the various consultants working with the ARC on this plan. They are seeking preliminary land development approval for the project, and preliminary and final approval for the Trailhead Building. They have tried to comply with the comments from the various Township review letters, and have only two items that require minor waivers.
  - d) Mr. Daly introduced the ARC's Civil Engineer, Mr. Mark Seloni of Pennoni Associates, to discuss details of the plan.
2. Mr. Seloni explained that this project exceeds Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) best management practices (BMP's) with such features as porous paving, rain gardens, infiltration and a green roof. The site is zoned R2 with the Living History Overlay District (LHOD). The project is a by-right project from a building perspective, that meets or exceeds all zoning requirements.
  - a) Review of Site Plan:

- (1) Mr. Seloni identified the site location, surrounded by Pawling's Road, Rt. 422 and the Schuylkill River, and the park. This land has primarily been farmland and woodlands.
  - (2) The 110' wide PECO easement runs north to south and east to west on the property, with the 65' wide Transcontinental Pipeline easement running west to east. They have been able to incorporate these constraints within the plan with no modifications.
  - (3) Primary access to the site connects the site to the interchange at Rt. 422 and Egypt Road.
  - (4) There are a few areas of steep slopes approximately 15-25%, and they have been able to disrupt very little of these slopes. Disruption of the existing woodlands has been minimized as well, by only taking out trees necessary to create passage on the site. The site is traversed by two tributaries. There is an existing Township-owned pumping station on the site as well.
  - (5) The site plan meets all of the zoning requirements in the LHOD.
  - (6) The main driveway is proposed to be off of Pawlings Road, and will eventually be signalized.
  - (7) The museum building will be located on the southern portion of the site. Mr. Seloni reviewed the traffic flow for drop off and parking at the ARC, including the flow for buses. 589 parking spaces are to be installed. The service drive serves as an extra fire lane. Mr. Seloni reviewed fire truck access to the site as well.
- b) Utility Plan:
- (1) Mr. Seloni explained that they propose an extension from the current water main for 1-½ miles to the site. It then travels down the driveway and splits to the two sites, with fire hydrant installation as appropriate along the way.
  - (2) A new pumping station will be installed for the sanitary sewer, next to the museum. One pumping station will service all three buildings.
- c) Stormwater Management:
- (1) The stormwater management items exceed required BMP's. Part of the museum building will be buried below grade and is not visible from the landscape above. There is also a vegetated green roof, which will minimize stormwater runoff.
  - (2) The parking field is terraced, with an elevation of 150' at the top of Pawlings road down to an 80' elevation at the bottom. Rain gardens will be installed to promote groundwater infiltration, cleanse the first runoff, and be the first step in the stormwater management system.
  - (3) Parking isles are made with porous pavement to promote infiltration and create less runoff.
  - (4) At the top of the site there is a grass area to provide overflow parking for events. This will blend in with the meadow and minimize stormwater runoff to promote infiltration. Water coming off the parking lot and in rain gardens will be collected and go to a detention basin, then an infiltration pit, with water that does not infiltrate being discharged into a tributary.
- d) Landscape Plan:
- (1) Mr. Seloni provided a high level overview of the landscape plan, which is intensive and utilizes native plant species to beautify the site. They will meet all ordinance requirements for landscape and buffering. There will be bands of landscaping that blend into the building plan and are part of an interpretive walkway leading to the ARC. This will be integrated with the rain gardens and detention basins.
- e) Traffic Impact Study:

- (1) A very intensive traffic study has been completed and recommends improvements for regional traffic. There are two, six-inch binders that contain all details from this study.
- f) Mr. Seloni noted that the land development application was submitted on February 29, 2008. On April 25, 2008 they received a comprehensive review letter from the Township relating to the application, and a second round of review comments was received last week. They have responded to the reviews and will comply with almost all of the recommendations made. Mr. Seloni noted there were two items that they cannot agree to:
- (1) Improvements for Pawlings Road and Audubon Road recommended by McMahon Associates have not yet been fully investigated by the applicant's traffic consultant. They need to determine what can feasibly be implemented.
  - (2) Item 23 on the McMahon letter refers to providing a shuttle bus between the ARC and the VFNHP. They cannot agree to such a shuttle as a condition of approval.
- g) Waiver Requests:
- (1) Section 123-33 – Sidewalks – Mr. Seloni noted that the intent for all new and existing streets is not to encourage pedestrians. They have a Trailhead Building to connect to the trails and encourage pedestrians or bicyclists to utilize the trail network, which is more intensive than a sidewalk.
    - (a) Mr. Onorato questioned how pedestrians would get from the parking area to the museum? Mr. Seloni noted that they will have sidewalks in this area, but they do not connect up to the main drive. There are also two 5' wide pedestrian sidewalks that go through the parking area to the Trailhead Building. They will also provide collector sidewalks in the Conference Center area.
  - (2) Section 123-32 – Curbs and Storm Sewers – Mr. Seloni noted that to encourage the more environmentally friendly design, they have water runoff going to the landscaped areas and promote groundwater infiltration. This is not possible with curbs and storm sewers.
- h) Trailhead Building:
- (1) Mr. Seloni noted that they are requesting final land development approval for this portion of the plan. This will provide a needed rest area for people using the surrounding trails.
  - (2) They propose to maintain the existing gravel driveway at this time. Next the water main will be extended to the Trailhead Building area. A small pump will be installed for restrooms.
  - (3) Mr. Stemple asked if there were any plans for a public bus stop near this area? Mr. Seloni explained that bus service to the site would be investigated as part of the traffic plan.
  - (4) Mr. Vibbert questioned why the Trailhead Building would be opened at this time? Mr. Daly explained that this building is meant to be an integral part of the Schuylkill River Heritage Trail system, and the adjoining Perkiomen Trail. This provides a rest area for bicyclists, and there will also be bike racks for those people who want to hike in the area.
  - (5) Ms. Holland asked if there was any parking at this building? Mr. Seloni noted there are 5-10 gravel spaces proposed.
  - (6) Mr. Onorato asked if they could provide details relating to what elements are in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the plan? Mr. Seloni explained that the Trailhead Building and utility connections are Phase 1. The ARC Museum is Phase 2, and the Educational Conference Center is Phase 3.

- (7) Mr. Vibbert asked if the porous paving areas were included in open space calculations? Mr. Seloni noted these areas are counted as impervious surfaces and not open space. The ordinance requires less than 25% impervious coverage, and they only have 19%.
- (8) Ms. Zimmerman questioned how pedestrian crossings would be marked in the parking area for the main museum building? Mr. Seloni indicated they would do whatever the Township requires.
- (9) Mr. Kuberski asked if the walkways go to the ARC or stop prior to that? Mr. Seloni explained that from Pawlings Road to the ARC is 2,000'. This is like a large shopping mall. They are proposing drop off zones with shuttles, or people could walk the whole way. There is an interpretive path leading to the ARC. There is another connecting path from the ARC to the Conference Center. Mr. Kuberski asked if bicycles could park at the museum? Mr. Seloni indicated they could travel up to the ARC; he is unsure how bicycle parking would be handled.
- (10) Ms. Holland asked if there was a designated employee parking area? Mr. Seloni noted that employee parking is included in the total parking space count and not yet designated to a specific area.
- (11) Ms. Holland asked if they had applied for a Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) for the Trailhead Building? Mr. Seloni commented that this is not needed for the Trailhead building, but they would apply for it with Phase 2. Ms. Holland believes an HOP is sometimes required when there is a change of use, and recommended that they check into this.
- (12) Mr. Vibbert asked where the camping area would be located? Mr. Daly explained that while the ordinance has provisions for a campground, they do not propose a campground for general public use. This would possibly be available or re-enactors, and determined at a future point in time. It is not on the plan at this time.
- (13) Ms. Zimmerman asked if Mr. Seloni had reviewed the Township's Executive Summary? Mr. Seloni began discussing these items, most of which are will comply. He indicated they are investigating a possible bus shelter on Pawlings Road. Traffic signals are not part of the initial phase because they will not meet the warrants for a signal. There has been some talk of trail crossing warning lights as part of the HOP. They will comply with items 3-6 under Planning Director's comments.
- (14) Mr. Vibbert commented that the applicant should commit to completing the Audubon Road intersection traffic study prior to requesting final plan approval. He expressed his concern with the proposed main traffic flow from Rt. 422 through a private driveway in a shopping center, and asked if there were any agreements between the ARC and that property owner?
  - (a) Mr. Seloni noted that ARC and the property owner were working together to make improvements to the road.
  - (b) Mr. Onorato noted that all of those agreements would have to be in place prior to final plan approval, or the Township could not consider this as a viable means of access.
  - (c) Mrs. Satterwhite noted that the Planning Commission should have a copy of that agreement as well.
  - (d) Mr. Seloni noted that this would be submitted to the Township. They have done some evaluations on proposed improvements, but cannot guarantee all improvements in the McMahan review letter will be installed. They will implement what is feasible.

- (15) Mr. Stemple asked if the traffic signal and entryway would be completed prior to final approval? Mr. Seloni noted they would be in progress.
- (16) Mr. Endlich asked what traffic improvements they current plan to do?
- (a) Mr. Eric Ostinchuk, the applicant's traffic engineer, discussed potential improvements including additional turning lanes on Pawling's Road entering and existing the ARC facility. The Traffic Impact Fee is about \$500,000, so they will need to see what is feasible.
  - (b) Mr. Endlich commented that it is good to let the public know what they are planning to do, and it makes it easier for the PC to make their decision as well.
  - (c) Mr. Ostinchuk commented that they are at the preliminary planning stage and still need to investigate what is possible.
  - (d) Mr. Endlich has heard rumors of ramps on Rt. 422, and asked what the feasibility of that would be? Mr. Ostinchuk noted that had been investigated by others in the past. The first step is a point of access study for access ramps to a limited access highway. The ARC will fund the study to start this process.
  - (e) Chairman Schlack stated that all traffic studies will need to be complete and answers provided for Phases 2 & 3, but tonight they are just addressing the Trailhead Building.
- (17) Mr. Endlich asked about an old pumping station on the ARC property. Mr. Seloni noted that the pumping station is abandoned and will be removed.

3. Questions & Comments from the Public:

- a) Mr. Steven Barry, E. Mt. Kirk Avenue – expressed concerns with access to the site on Pawling's Road, using the shopping center access road, and also the ability of the Sewer Authority to handle the ARC's capacity.
- b) Mr. William Wurtz, Pawling's Circle – questioned the future position of the access road from the Oaks shopping center.
- c) Ms. Erica Sabinske, 31 Pawling's Circle – questioned the procedures for cars and buses loading to the shuttle, and how they would get people to follow the proposed route through the shopping center.
- d) Mr. Brad Barry, Wetherill Road – questioned why the various approvals were being considered when there were outstanding open issues with traffic, and why the Trailhead Building was being approved earlier than the other items. He was also interested in hours of operation for the ARC.
- e) Mr. Joe Ferraro, 12 Pinetree Drive – expressed concerns about the traffic flow and the need for an alternate entry to the ARC site.
- f) Mrs. Marjorie Nailor, Gertrude Avenue – expressed concerns about disturbing archeological findings when constructing the Trailhead Building.
- g) Mrs. Nancy McFarland – questioned if Upper Providence was aware of the proposed use of the private road for traffic, and commented that the bridge and road were inadequate for the traffic the ARC would generate.
- h) Mr. Jeff Burns, 30 Valentine Lane – commented that the open questions need to be answered, and a traffic study needs to be done. He questioned the entrance to the park area across the road from the ARC, and asked why the Trailhead Building was being approved prior to the other items.
- i) An unidentified female resident – commented that there is room at the Visitor's Center, and the ARC should be built in the Park.

- j) Ms. Suzanne Conard, Cheryl Lane – expressed concerns that the site is landlocked and an additional access point should be created. She also commented that this would place a strain on the Township’s emergency services.
  - k) Mr. Larry Loughlin, 34 Vaux Lane – asked who would maintain the roads, and who would control traffic around the existing ball fields.
  - l) Mr. Randolph Roberts, 201 Church Road – commented that he would rather see this museum and 19% coverage, than houses and 50% coverage on the site. He commented that this was a good fit for the land, and noted negotiations with VFNHP and the ARC did not work out.
  - m) Mrs. Joyce Cluley, Vaux Lane – commented that this project would destroy the land and pave over history, and that the hotel should be built in the business park. She also commented that the ARC should be in the park.
  - n) Ms. Colleen Eckman, Camille Lane – represented the Concerned Citizens of Lower Providence, and read their concerns from a letter previously submitted to the Township.
  - o) Mr. Mike Comroe, 205 Pinetown Road – commented that the Planners are doing an excellent job and will do the right thing.
  - p) Ms. Erica Sabinske, 31 Pawling’s Circle – questioned if the ARC museum and Conference Center would be constructed simultaneously, and asked about trail parking.
  - q) Mr. Brad Barry, Wetherill Road – questioned the square footage of the proposed buildings, and the impervious coverage. He commented that the decision should be delayed because the traffic study was not done and stated this should be in the park.
  - r) Ms. Colleen Eckman, Camille Lane – expressed further concerns from her letter.
  - s) Mr. Larry Loughlin, 34 Vaux Lane – had questions about the archeological survey.
  - t) Mrs. Joanne Burns, 30 Valentine Lane – commented that there should be an independent archeological survey, the projects should not be approved or worked on until the questions are addressed. She also remarked that last year they were told there would be camping for Boy Scouts.
  - u) Mr. Bill Birely, Upper Merion – questioned the archeological survey and stated the approval should not proceed until this is resolved.
  - v) Mr. Mike Caldwell, Superintendent, VFNHP – represented the park and the U.S. Dept. of Interior, and read some of his concerns from a letter previously submitted to the Township.
  - w) Mr. Bob Theo, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Upper Providence Township – commented that he is not for or against the plan, but is concerned with traffic impact, especially because there are plans for an Expo Center in the shopping center with the private road proposed for access. He questioned if there were any alternative traffic studies, and looks forward to discussing the traffic situation with the appropriate parties.
  - x) Ms. Cinda Waldbuesser, PA Program Manger, National Parks Conservancy Assoc. – commented that she supports this project if it were to be moved to the park or another location. She does not like the size, scale or scope of the project. She remarked that this was a national issue and asked that the PC not approve the plan.
4. Mr. Daly noted that he was cognizant of the comments made, but commented that they have met or exceeded requirements of the Lower Providence Township ordinance, and the reviews and recommendations of consultants. They have had a preliminary meeting with the PA DEP and were applauded for their implementation of BMP’s on site. Mr. Daly commented that he was eager to move forward with the project and thanked the PC for their consideration.
5. **MOTION** – Mr. Stemple made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors grant preliminary and final plan approval for Phase 1, the Trailhead Building only, with the

stipulation that an archeological report be completed and submitted to the Board of Supervisors for review.

- a) Mr. Onorato recommended that the archeological report be completed to the Board of Supervisor's satisfaction prior to the U&O being issued. Ms. Zimmerman concurred with this recommendation.
  - b) **AMENDMENT** – Mr. Stemple amended his motion to reflect the stipulation that the archeological report be completed to the Board of Supervisor's satisfaction prior to the U&O being issued. Mr. Endlich seconded the motion.
  - c) Mr. Endlich commented that with his vote on the project, he is looking out for the residents, noting that 392 homes could be constructed on this site.
  - d) **MOTION VOTE** – The motion *passed* 8-1. Mr. Vibbert opposed the motion.
6. Preliminary Approvals for Phases II & III:
- a) **MOTION** – Mr. Bodek made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors grant a waiver of Section 123-32, internal curbs and storm sewers. Mr. Kuberski seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 9-0.
  - b) **MOTION** – Mrs. Satterwhite made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors grant a waiver of Section 123-33, sidewalks. Ms. Zimmerman seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 9-0.
  - c) Ms. Holland commented that she has no strong concerns with the project, but encouraged the PC to take the point of access study into consideration, as this is critical to the Township and the region.
  - d) Mr. Onorato noted that the applicant has agreed to comply with all of the reviews, which includes performing the point of access study and meeting all the requirements in the reviews.
  - e) There was a discussion to clarify the requirements of the motion.
  - f) **MOTION** – Ms. Zimmerman made a motion to recommend preliminary plan approval for Phases II and III of application S-08-02, with the conditions that the applicant comply with the conditions set forth in all of the Township review letters associated with the project; and that a meeting be held between the ARC, Lower Providence Township Staff, Upper Providence Township Staff, the private property owner and the County to review the point of access issues with the private roadway, St. Gabriel's Field, and the Rt. 422 interchange. Mr. Endlich seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 9-0.

## 6. Other Business:

- A. Old Business –
  1. None.
- B. New Business –
  1. None.

## 7. Adjourn

- A. **MOTION** – Mr. Endlich made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Stemple seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 9-0. The meeting ended at 10:12 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** June 25, 2008 – Regular Meeting  
July 23, 2008 – Regular Meeting