

CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES/REPORT TO CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING DATE: August 11, 2022

AGENDA ITEM #1 – CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATION

APPLICANT: Christina Pieri
PROPERTY: 1016 Maple Street

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation for approval of conditional use application as presented.

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. conditional use application
2. three pictures of existing conditions
3. site plan, with no preparer or date listed
4. architectural renderings, 14 pages
5. architectural drawings, prepared by RHC Design, LLC, dated April 4, 2022, no revisions, 8 sheets
6. zoning determination from Borough Zoning Officer, dated August 4, 2022

MEETING SUMMARY:

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing single-family detached dwelling on the property and construct a new single-family detached dwelling in its place. Because the existing dwelling is more than 50 years old, a conditional use is required.

The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Daniel Swartley McArdle, Vice Chair, David Swedkowski, and Judy Smith-Kressley. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael Peters, Esquire, Tyler Williams, P.E. from the Alternate Borough Engineer's office, Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., Borough Traffic Engineer, Brian Keaveney, P.E., and the Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Chuck Borkowski, the builder on the project, Christina Pieri, and Brian Pieri (Christina's husband) were present for the applicant.

Mr. Borkowski explained that this application, and the other conditional use application to be considered by the Commission (1125 Wood Street), was brought by a family with an established history in the Borough. Mr. Borkowski explained the Pieris' desire to remain in the Borough. Mr. Borkowski explained that the Pieris had spent a year designing the project in a manner that would be acceptable to the neighborhood.

The proposal is to build a home as close to (in terms of setbacks, footprint, etc.) the existing home as possible. Mr. Borkowski explained that although the existing home had been inspected to determine whether it could be saved, the structure has had consistent leakage, stucco that was improperly repaired, lacks insulation, and has holes in the roof and foundation.

Mr. and Mrs. Pieri explained to the Planning Commission that they would be living in the new home with their family. Mr. Pieri explained that he had previously lived in the house, that staff from his businesses in the Borough have lived in the house, and that now his wife and he are looking to update the property so they can live there.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked the Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., if he had any concerns regarding the project. Mr. Johnson explained why the conditional use was required, and that this application was consistent with maintaining the single-family character of the upper streets of the Borough.

Member Swedkowski asked Mr. Borkowski to explain in greater detail why the house could not be saved, and Mr. Borkowski walked the Commission through photographs showing the various issues with the existing structure.

Member Swedkowski asked whether the landscaping along Maple Street would be made to match the existing landscaping in the neighborhood. Mr. Borkowski responded in the affirmative, and stated that the exterior of the property would be designed with outdoor living space and that the general approach to the landscaping would be to “go lush”.

Member Smith-Kressley asked Mr. Borkowski to confirm that there would be no issues with building setbacks, impervious coverage, etc. Mr. Borkowski explained that the home had been designed to specifically avoid those issues.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked for public comment. No public comment was offered.

Member Smith Kressley made a motion to recommend approval of the conditional use as presented. Member Swedkowski seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by all present (3-0).

AGENDA ITEM #2 – CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATION

APPLICANT: Fred DeStolfo
PROPERTY: 1125 Wood Street

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation for approval of conditional use application as presented.

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. conditional use application
2. three pictures of existing conditions
3. site plan, prepared by RHC Design, LLC, dated April 4, 2022, no revisions, 1 sheet
4. architectural renderings, 9 pages
5. architectural drawings, prepared by RHC Design, LLC, dated April 4, 2022, no revisions, 8 sheets
6. zoning determination from Borough Zoning Officer, dated August 4, 2022

MEETING SUMMARY:

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing single-family detached dwelling on the property and construct a new single-family detached dwelling in its place. Because the existing dwelling is more than 50 years old, a conditional use is required.

The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Daniel Swartley McArdle, Vice Chair, David Swedkowski, and Judy Smith-Kressley. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael Peters, Esquire, Tyler Williams, P.E. from the Alternate Borough Engineer's office, Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., Borough Traffic Engineer, Brian Keaveney, P.E., and the Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Present for the applicant were Chuck Borkowski, the builder, Fred DeStolfo and Danielle DeStolfo.

Mr. Borkowski explained that this application was more or less the same as the application for 1016 Maple Street. The foundation of the existing house has been improperly repaired over the course of 40 or more years, and it is not feasible to save the existing home. Mr. Borkowski explained that the DeStolfos have an expanding family, and need a home appropriate in size and condition for the family.

Mr. DeStolfo explained that this home was his grandmother's home, and that if he could have saved it, he would have.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked the Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., whether he had any specific concerns regarding the application. Mr. Johnson explained that he did not have any concerns. He also informed the Planning Commission that zoning relief had already been obtained for dimensional issues related to the project, as the lot is undersized.

Member Swedkowski explained that based on the information presented it does not appear that the existing house can be salvaged. Member Swedkowski further stated his opinion that the proposed home would fit into the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked for public comment. No public comment was offered.

Member Swedkowski y made a motion to recommend approval of the conditional use as presented. Member Smith Kressley seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by all present (3-0).

AGENDA ITEM #3 – WAIVER OF LAND DEVELOPMENT

APPLICANT: SEPTA
PROPERTY: 101 Washington Street

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation for approval of waiver of land development, subject to compliance with all review letters issued by the Borough, and its staff, professionals, and consultants and further subject to the condition that the Borough and SEPTA work to clarify off-peak usage the of parking spaces by the general public without a fee.

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. subdivision/land development application
2. request for waiver of subdivision/land development, dated July 6, 2022
3. report titled “Geotechnical Engineering/Foundation Report”, prepared by McCormick Taylor, dated May 20, 2022
4. four photographs of existing conditions
5. report titled “Stormwater Management Calculations”, prepared by McCormick Taylor, dated June 2022
6. report titled “Transportation Impact Assessment”, prepared by McCormick Taylor, dated June 3, 2022
7. decision of the Zoning Hearing Board of Conshohocken, application no. Z-2022-07, dated May 16, 2022
8. presentation titled “Conshohocken Phase II Parking Improvements”, 13 slides
9. plan set prepared by McCormick Taylor, dated May 27, 2022, 231 sheets
10. review letter of the Alternate Borough Engineer, dated July 22, 2022
11. review letter of the Borough Zoning Officer, dated July 22, 2022
12. review letter of the Borough Traffic Engineer, dated July 22, 2022
13. review letter of the Borough Fire Marshal, dated July 15, 2022
14. review letter of the Montgomery County Planning Commission, dated July 28, 2022

MEETING SUMMARY:

The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Daniel Swartley McArdle, Vice Chair, David Swedkowski, and Judy Smith-Kressley. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael Peters, Esquire, Tyler Williams, P.E. from the Alternate Borough Engineer’s office, Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., Borough Traffic Engineer, Brian Keaveney, P.E., and the Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Present for SEPTA were Michael Gill, Esquire, Robert Tangi, Project Manager with SEPTA, and Kris Bellotti, P.E. with McCormick and Taylor, SEPTA's consulting engineering on the project.

Mr. Gill reminded the Planning Commission that SEPTA had been before it previously regarding Phase I of the project, the new station. Only a small amount of parking was associated with Phase I.

Phase II addresses parking. Mr. Gill walked the Planning Commission through a presentation outlining the project, which includes surface parking, a parking structure, and associated improvements.

Mr. Gill explained that the project had already received zoning relief from the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Gill confirmed that SEPTA had reviewed all review letters issued by the Borough and would be complying with all review letters.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked Tyler Williams, P.E., with the Alternate Borough Engineer's Office whether he had any specific concerns regarding the project. Mr. Williams explained that with SEPTA's commitment to comply with all comments in the review letters, he had no specific concerns.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked Eric Johnson, P.E., the Borough Zoning Officer whether he had any specific concerns. Mr. Johnson explained that the primary concern in his review letter related to issues surrounding the floodplain, and that those issues were being addressed by SEPTA.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked Brian Keaveney, P.E., the Borough Traffic Engineer, whether he had any specific concerns regarding the project. Mr. Keaveney explained that he had had a productive call with the applicant's engineer, and expected additional analysis regarding, for example, the size of the parking garage. Mr. Keaveney does not expect any major issues in resolving the comments in his review letter.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked Michael Peters, Esquire, the Borough Solicitor, whether there was anything specific in the Fire Marshal or Montgomery County Planning Commission review letters that the Borough wanted to bring to the Planning Commission's attention. Mr. Peters stated that the letters speak for themselves, and that there were no specific issues to be brought to the Commission's attention.

Member Smith-Kressley asked the applicant to address the 3 waivers being specifically requested, which related to parking space size, sidewalk width, and relief from the fee-in-lieu of park and recreational facilities.

Mr. Johnson, Borough Zoning Officer, explained that, as to the parking spaces, there is a conflict between the Borough's zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance ("SALDO"), such that the proposed spaces comply with the zoning ordinance but not the SALDO (hence the request for the waiver).

Mr. Bellotti, the applicant's engineer on the Project, explained that although the sidewalks would be less than 15 feet wide as required, the smallest sidewalks would still be 8-10 feet wide.

Mr. Gill explained that as to the fee-in-lieu it is SEPTA's policy not to pay such fees-in-lieu because to do so requires expenditure of public monies—in essence taking public monies from one entity and giving them to another. Therefore, SEPTA is requesting a waiver of the fee-in-lieu.

Member Smith Kressley asked whether there would be a charge for the parking during off peak hours. Mr. Tangi explained that the surface parking lots would be open to the public on the weekends without cost. Mr. Tangi stated that he needed to confer with SEPTA internally to determine whether there is a charge on the weekends for parking within the parking structure.

Member Swedkowski asked how SEPTA would determine whether it would need an additional two stories on the parking garage in the future. Mr. Tangi explained that the determination would be made based on the reality of the parking demand.

Member Smith Kressley asked the applicant to confirm that benches would be installed along the trail extension along the river, and Mr. Tangi replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Johnson explained that this project would extend the trail all the way to the edge of the Borough.

Vice Chair Swartley McArdle asked for public comment. No public comment was offered.

Member Swedkowski made a motion to recommend approval of the waiver of land development, subject to compliance with the review letters issued by Borough staff, consultants, and professionals, and further subject to the condition that the Borough and SEPTA work to confirm the availability of off-peak parking by the general public without a fee. The motion was seconded by Member Smith Kressley. The motion was unanimously approved by all present (3-0).