

AGENDA (revised)

Upper Dublin Township Planning Commission

Tuesday, July 21, 2015

7:00 PM

A. Review & approve minutes from the June 16, 2015 meeting.

B. Presentations:

- Planned addition to the Burn Brae Fire Station, Richard Stoneback, PE, Charles Shoemaker Engineers
- Proposed rezoning of two tracts (50 acres) of the Prudential tract on Dreshertown Road by BT Dreshertown (UD #15-02)

C. Planning and Zoning:

- Final Draft of the Official Map

Next meeting - Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at 7:00 PM

A meeting of the Planning Commission (PC) of Upper Dublin Township (UDT) was held on Tuesday, July 21, 2015, at 7:00 p.m., in the UDT Building, Wesley Wolf presiding.

In attendance were members of the PC Dr. Paul Halpern, Gary Weaver, Hilary Hartman, Wesley Wolf, Michael Cover, Jeffrey Albert, and Rob Winegrad. Also present were Richard Barton, Community Planner and Zoning Officer; Kevin McCann, Fire Administrator; and Jim Rudolph representing the Township Engineer.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 16, 2015:

Mr. Albert motioned, with Mr. Weaver seconding, to approve the Minutes of June 16, 2015 without reading.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON MOTION	YES	DR HALPERN, MESSRS. WEAVER, WOLF, COVER AND ALBERT
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	ABSTAIN	MS. HARTMAN AND MR. WINEGRAD
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MOTION CARRIED

PRESENTATIONS:

Planned Addition to the Burn Brae Fire Station:

Richard Stoneback, PE, of Charles Shoemaker Engineers, explained the plans for the Burn Brae Fire Station as follows:

- This will be an expedited land development plan because it is an Upper Dublin Township (UDT) project.
- The Board of Commissioners (BOC) will handle any necessary waivers or approvals.
- Scheduled to be bid in September/October.
- Start date anticipated in spring 2016.
- Additional paving in the front.
- Some utilities will be relocated.
- Putting in some storm sewers and piping.
- Major renovations in the interior of the building.
- Flag pole will be relocated.
- Landscaping will be added.
- These renovations will preserve the corner piece of the Twining Valley Golf Course property.
- Displayed architectural elements.
- Some maintenance will be done to the façade.
- The intent is for the addition to blend in with the older portion of the building.

Kevin McCann, Fire Administrator, informed of the following:

- No new vehicles will be added.
- One bay will be used for storage.
- Zero emissions inside the station.
- No impact upon water flow off of this site in the direction of the Dresherbrooke Condominium to the left.

Proposed Rezoning of Two Tracts (50 acres) of the Prudential Tract on Dreshertown Road by BT Dreshertown (UD No. 15-02):

BT Dreshertown, LP proposes an amendment to the UDT Zoning Map to rezone two adjacent tracts on Dreshertown Road from OC - Office Center to A - Residential.

The tracts are vacant and have a combined area of approximately 50 acres. They are considered part of the "Prudential tract" at Dreshertown and Welsh Road, presently partially developed with the Prudential Eastern Home Office and a separate office building on Dryden Road. Should the rezoning be approved, the Applicant intends to propose a subdivision of single detached homes under the Age Qualified Residential Community option in the A- District (Zoning Code Section 255-43.2). The property would be developed similar to the Zieger Tract, now called Regency at Upper Dublin. The Applicant has supplied a site plan for informational purposes only to illustrate the type of development anticipated.

A similar rezoning proposal was made nine years ago, which was not approved by the BOC.

Michael Yanoff, Esquire; Pete Clelland, PE; Joe DeSantis, of McMahon Associates; E. Van Rieker, Community Planner; Jack Coyle; Real Estate Appraiser and Broker; Eric Garten, of Gilmore Associates; and Michael Markman, President of BET Investments; appeared on behalf of the Applicants.

Mr. Garten began by explaining the following:

- The 50 acre site will be used for an age qualified residential community, while the second 25 acres will remain as office use.
- Currently showing 115 lots with 7,000 sq. ft. each.
- The dimensional information follows the ordinance from 2014 that was passed for the Zieger Tract across the street.
- Some of the amenities will be a clubhouse and bike path/walking trails.
- The existing Dreshertown Road curve will be straightened, and a new road will be connected to Dreshertown Road to alleviate some of the traffic at the intersection.
- There are wetlands on the property that will require stormwater management.
- Have tried to keep open space along the road.
- One-in, one out access will be provided.
- From the back of their lot to the edge of their property is 30 ft.
- Rear yard setbacks in the ordinance are 15 ft.
- The sidewalk along Dreshertown Road will be continued.
- With respect to the corner property, they are not seeking any changes.

Mr. Rieker informed as follows:

- Here to revisit the Comprehensive Plan.
- Is aware that Montgomery County wanted to continue this area as an employment center as per the existing zoning map.
- What Montgomery County may not have realized is that everything to the right of the line remains unchanged.
- The corner property of 25 acres is not included in this proposal.
- When dealing with land use, the impact on the Upper Dublin School District must be considered. UDT will not lose a thing because of the over 50 age qualified option.
- The residential units will not generate as many peak hour traffic trips as the office campus would have generated.
- Will continue to implement the frontage improvements that were part of the original plan.
- Mr. Coyle has done a study of the Horsham sub-market and the approximate 13 other corporate and employment sectors in the Philadelphia market.
- Conditions have changed markedly since the concept of the campus was manifested.
- Did a demographic profile on the site, and found, in terms of market absorption, one of the two most prominent criteria for people wanting to buy a retirement home is the proximity to children and grandchildren.
- The Applicants feel this is a good market for age restricted housing.

Mr. Markman interjected as follows:

- The Dublin Terrace apartments have 192 age restricted units.
- 50% of the residents are either from UDT or have children in UDT.

Mr. Coyle commented as follows:

- Handed out two pages of data in the form of questions and answers as set forth below:

1. Is the Horsham area Class A office market space capable of supporting 440,000 sq. ft. of new office space?

Answer: No.

- With regard to all of the Class A office space in communities from the Delaware River to King of Prussia (sometimes includes corporate office buildings and sometimes it doesn't), identified the number of buildings, the amount of rentable square footage being offered on the market, and how much space has been absorbed in the last six months.
- For Class A the office space in the Horsham/UD/Pennsylvania Turnpike (PTP) market is 22 million sq. ft. of space. Right now, about 3 million sq. ft. of that space is vacant and available for lease (approximately 16%). Showing 10% more vacancy than the marketplace likes to see. A stabilized market would be showing 5%-6% vacancy.
- The problem is not unique to the PTP. If one takes all the Class A space in the Philadelphia area, that space is 129 million sq. ft. The vacant space is 14 million sq. ft. In the entire metropolitan area, there is an oversupply of space.
- If one takes all of the office spaces, they total 409 million sq. ft. with the vacant space being 42 million sq. ft.
- The Class A spaces are the most vacant because it is the most expensive.

- Doesn't believe it will be feasible in the next five years for office development on this site.
 - Costs have risen faster than rents.
 - Real rent prices have not escalated substantially since 2009.
 - Banks will not finance building projects without tenants being locked in.
 - Most companies are under a mandate that their real estate departments have to shrink the amount of space dedicated to offices.
 - In his opinion, there is no economic feasibility for adding additional office space.
2. Is there a real estate tax loss if 115 senior housing units were built instead of the 440 sq. ft. of office space?

Answer:

- First, identified the biggest and best office space in the Horsham area beginning with 2101 Welsh Road (Prudential building), 200 Dryden Road, and other buildings in close proximity.
- Identified 13 properties with 3.6 million sq. ft. of space with implied market values of \$445 million.
- The average assessment on a market value basis for office buildings in this market is about \$121 per sq. ft.
- In his opinion, altering the plan to age restricted housing will not make much difference in taxes.

The following discussion took place:

Mr. Wolf: UDT earns more through wage tax than it does for real estate tax in the Fort Washington Office Park (FWOP).

Mr. Albert:

- Montgomery County is making major efforts to revive County office parks. FWOP was one that was discussed as well as the area of the Turnpike and Welsh Road.
- A plan was developed to try to get the Turnpike Commission to respond to some of this and find money to deal with some of the conditions.
- One of the proposals submitted through the County and UDT to the Turnpike Commission is to have some kind of intersection at Welsh Road and the Turnpike. The Turnpike Commission's response was to study all this.
- Part of the Prudential Tract would be used as part of that exit.
- Hopefully, the foregoing will improve the traffic flow considerably.
- The Turnpike Commission is also studying widening the turnpike from the current six lanes to ten lanes along some of the sections including through UDT.
- Rebirth of county office parks is a chief priority of the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC).
- The Willow Grove Naval Air Station will be "wrapped up" this year, and hopefully, they will go on to develop a town center that will add a very substantial number of units in what could be described as a mixed use community (shopping and residential). He assumes, given how popular

55 and over developments are among builders, that it will be a substantial component of that community.

- What will the demand be after this immediate surge of population?
- Would like some vision about the future to be part of this.
- From UDT's point of view, the loss of earned income tax really does matter.
- UDT has long term infrastructure needs especially for the FWOP.

Mr. Clelland: Looked at the Naval Air Base, and doesn't think they are as close as they allege to be.

Mr. Markman:

- If this plan goes through and others planned in UDT are built, there will be approximately 500 to 700 age restricted units out of 9,500 residential units in UDT.
- There is a very sizeable office unit as well at the Naval Base.
- Will address the earned income tax issue at the next meeting.
- There is really no office market at the present time.

Mr. Coyle: All of the surrounding counties in the eastern part of Pennsylvania would also like to draw office space. We are not just dealing with incentives to build in Montgomery County. Must look at all the counties. Must stay competitive. Will only happen if there is an increase in jobs.

Mr. Markman:

- The property being talked about this evening is in direct competition with the FWOP.
- They are involved with Horsham Township to repurpose their office park across the street.

Mr. DeSantis from McMahon Associates was the next to speak on traffic issues:

- The two proposed buildings total 440,000 sq. ft.
- All traffic studies anticipated 500 peak hour trips generated by both buildings.
- For age restricted developments, the trip generation is approximately 50 cars during peak hours.
- Many of the improvements proposed were generated by the traffic counts.
- Dreshertown Road will be straightened out.
- New turnpike exchanges are a long way off.
- Age restricted housing would generate far less traffic than office.

Discussion continued:

Mr. Albert:

- Lamented the traffic problems on Welsh Road during peak hours.
- There is a need for pedestrian crossings on Welsh Road.
- Would like to see both over 55 communities across the street from each other be able to use the same clubhouse.

Mr. Weaver: Would like to see a breakdown of housing costs.

Mr. Wolf:

- Will the market be saturated?
- What can UDT absorb another 125 age qualified units?
- Will buyers be willing to pay the \$12,000 annual property tax bills in addition to the monthly HOA fees?

Mr. Winegrad: Asked if there were a footprint of the building.

Mr. Garten:

- The lots are 70 ft. wide by 100 ft. deep.
- Front yard – 20 ft.
- Side yard – 10 ft.
- Rear yard – 15 ft.

Mr. Albert:

- Amenities sell age restricted housing.
- Concerned whether age restricted housing is the best economic approach.
- Welsh Road should be made pedestrian friendly.

Mr. Wolf: Difficult to look at this plan on its own without the corner piece of vacant land being considered. Not an integrated plan. Not in favor of the road coming out at the proposed location on Dreshertown Road. Would rather see it coming out opposite Tuckerstown Road. Doesn't want an offset intersection.

Mr. DeSantis: The original plan with the offset was to discourage cut-through traffic. They have plenty of time to work out the road issues.

Mr. Markman:

- Mixed use is the trend in the country right now.
- The 25 acre corner property will continue to be zoned "Office" until UDT decides they can do something else.
- Not worried about taxes and homeowners fees.
- The Applicants are one of the most active developers in the area right now.

Mr. Barton: Distributed copies of a portion of the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to this property in 2010.

Mr. Albert: This particular tract was subject to a prior zoning decision by the BOC. There was a divided vote and no change in the zoning. Would like to see a copy of the Minutes of what the decision-making process was at that time.

Mr. Markman : This plan buffers the established communities from the office with one-story cottages.

Dr. Horn residing in the Dawsfield Development:

- Informed that the prior zoning decision by the BOC had to do with the Dawsfield neighbors objecting to a shopping center as half of the project and age restricted housing on the other.
- The big concern of the neighbors is what will happen with the 25 acre corner property.

PLANNING AND ZONING:

Final Draft of the Official Map:

Mr. Barton commented as follows:

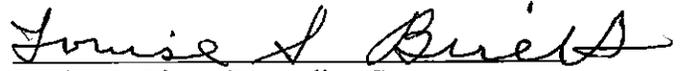
- The draft working map has been revised as of today's date.
- There are 5 properties that may or may not be on the map:
 1. Twin Spring Farms, 1632 East Butler Pike:
 - The PC does not see the value of adding this difficult property to the map, except for a trail-sidewalk connection
 2. McNulty Tract:
 - Not on the original Open Space Plan.
 - Old house and horses on the property.
 - Walking distance to Ambler.
 - Parks and Recreation (P&R) thinking about open space usage. PC would like to know what P & R is thinking about.
 - The PC was not opposed to keeping this property on the map.
 3. 465 Ambler Road:
 - P&R thinking of potential recreation site.
 - House on property.
 - Decision to remove from map.
 4. Fort Washington Day Camp:
 - P&R thinking of potential recreation site.
 - House and cabin on property.
 - Decision to remove from map.
 5. 70 Acres of Temple Ambler Property/Southern parcel:
 - Decision to add to map for preservation.

Mr. Barton will confer with the Solicitor whether the Zieger Tract should be on the map.

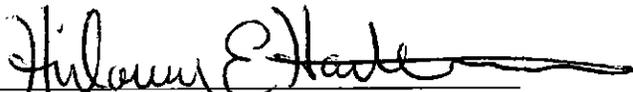
ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,


Louise S. Birett, Recording Secretary

Attest:


Wesley Wolf, Chairperson
Hilary E. Hartman