

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025 at 7 PM

Community Meeting Room, 425 Wells Road

Meeting Minutes

The Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular Meeting was held at 7:00 pm on Monday, March 24, 2025. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included Judy Hendrixson, Chairman; Michael Kracht, Vice Chairman; Tom Kelso, Robert Repko, and Jill Macauley. Others in attendance included Judy Stern Goldstein, Gilmore & Associates; Dan Wood, Board of Supervisors Liaison and Stephanie J. Mason, Township Manager.

The meeting officially began at 7:00 pm.

Public/Commission Comments

None.

Review of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Repko, seconded by Mr. Kracht, the February 24, 2025 minutes were unanimously approved.

Presentation

N/A

Land Development

Barn Plaza Theater Redevelopment – Sketch Plan

Present on behalf of the applicant were Gregg Adelman, William Greimel from Brixmor, and Brian Conlon from Langan Engineering. They presented a sketch plan for the former Barn Cinema site on Easton Road.

Mr. Greimel explained that this is the second phase of the Barn Plaza redevelopment project, and that they have received prior zoning relief for this plan, which would include three smaller buildings at the Barn Cinema site. They cannot say yet who the tenants would be as they are still working on agreements, but they are expected to be restaurants and retail. They have received numerous comments on the plan through the zoning process and do wish to implement those items. They are looking for comments from the Planning Commission as well.

Mr. Conlon provided greater detail of the site plan, pointing out a sidewalk along the Easton Road frontage, a crosswalk connecting this section of the plaza to the Wholefoods section, some additional landscaping, and the three buildings themselves, with outdoor seating and some additional public spaces. There will also be an access added at the north end of the site that is a “right in/right out” only. The applicant also plans to meet the requirements for stormwater by adding retention basins, and possibly a rain garden or infiltration basin. They also anticipate adding EV charging stations.

Mr. Repko asked if parking would be lost at the back of the site by the addition of the rain garden.

Mr. Conlon said that there will be a slight decrease in parking, about 13 spaces, and an overall decrease in impervious coverage, but the parking spaces would be from the site overall, not one particular area.

Ms. Hendrixson asked about the service areas for each building.

Mr. Conlon said that these would be at the back of each building. There is also a two-way service road that goes along the back of the site.

Ms. Hendrixson noted that the site backs up to a wooded area with a view of the creek and that perhaps there is an opportunity there for outdoor seating at the back of the buildings to provide a better view. She added that they could possibly rework circulation through the site.

Mr. Kracht asked if the site is overparked, and suggested nudging everything closer toward 611. He added that he would like to see more creativity at the site.

Mr. Conlon responded that from a code standpoint, the site is overparked. But the spaces provided are based on tenant's need. He added that the walks are oversized, there are areas for landscaping and planting, and it would be a more pedestrian friendly plan.

Mr. Kracht asked if the tenants want front door visibility on 611 or signage and road appeal.

Mr. Greimel replied that they want both visibility and parking and signage. They want front facing walk-in. Going against this idea has been unsuccessful in the past.

Mr. Repko noted that he is unsure of how nice the wooded area is to look at, and suggested meeting at the site to get a better idea.

Mr. Greimel further noted that there is a steep drop-off and a guard rail at the back of the site.

There was an additional discussion regarding the parking needed. Mr. Kracht noted that the county is historically overdesigned where parking is concerned. There is a question of whether the parking and proximity of those spaces is a necessary amenity. Ms. Macauley further noted Valley Square as an example where the majority of parking is a short walk away from the restaurants and shops, in favor of an area to congregate and walk.

Mr. Repko expressed concern over having enough parking, worrying that congestion through the site could spill out into the roadway, particularly at peak times.

Mr. Kelso raised the question of adding a sidewalk on 611 that extends across the nearby bridge over the Neshaminy Creek.

Mr. Greimel said that this was considered and can be added to the plan. There was a question of what it connected to.

Mr. Kelso asked about the traffic study for the development.

Mr. Conlon said that it is in the works now and will be available when they present their next plan.

Mr. Kelso suggested speaking with Evan Stone from the Bucks County Planning Commission regarding their plans for the property across the street. This could include some road improvements as well.

It was requested that the Planning Commission receive copy of the Zoning Hearing Board decision for this property for the next presentation.

Mr. Kelso raised the question of the necessity of the rear access drive, and if it needs to be two-way.

Mr. Greimel said they would look at that in terms of need and safety requirements.

Ms. Goldstein asked if there would be a significant grade change from 611 coming into the site, and then about the nearby flood plain.

Mr. Conlon said they would be lifting a portion of the site, but not significantly, maintaining the current building elevation. He added that the flood plain is just outside the perimeter of the site and that it will be noted on their development plans.

There was a discussion of the circulation between sites and any need for traffic calming. Mr. Conlon said the traffic engineers are looking at that.

Mr. Wood emphasized this need after the busy opening of Wholefoods, and the new car wash expected to go in across the street as well.

It was decided that a site visit would take place prior to the next Planning Commission meeting on April 28th at 5:30 pm.

The Almshouse Reimagined

Ms. Mason and Ms. Hendrixson provided a summary of their meeting with the Bucks County Planning Commission to discuss the Almshouse Reimagined project. They have done a zoning analysis for each parcel and are speaking with Grundy Hall who may have an interest in subdividing a portion of the property for additional space in the future. They have a grant for the demo of the old Neshaminy Manor and will be moving forward with that. They also plan to include a new Health Department building across the street, and wish to retain the existing Almshouse building, a chapel and old laundry. However, they are still seeking input for the rest of the redevelopment.

There was discussion of redoing circulation at the site so that new development does not put more traffic out onto 611.

Mr. Kelso asked about the next step.

Ms. Mason said they are planning to do another RFI and want more input from the Planning Commission.

Ms. Hendrixson noted the need for affordable housing, opportunity for energy sources on the open space, and the need to keep away from the intersection at Almshouse and 611.

Mr. Kelso noted the opportunity for Brixmor to speak with the County, since they are both going through redevelopment of their sites.

It was discussed that the County wishes to maintain ownership of the property, with a lease option for a developer. It was determined that the key points for the Planning Commission are affordable and/or workforce housing, and traffic.

Mr. Wood suggested a land trust option in order for the County to maintain ownership.

Ms. Mason said yes, this is an option and would help to keep the housing attainable. Ms. Goldstein gave an example of the model used by Habitat, whereby Habitat maintains ownership of the land, but the homes are owned by the occupant and kept affordable in perpetuity. She added that this is meant for attainable housing, not what is considered low income.

Mr. Kelso noted the obstacles to their goal, most notably the need to improve the intersection, which can be very costly to a developer.

Ms. Macauley asked about the potential for municipal owned land, where there is an attraction of some sort.

Ms. Goldstein suggested a public/private partnership, whereby a civic component is included.

There was a discussion of the County continuing its participation in the senior living business, i.e. Neshaminy Manor, and how this factors in for the future. It was determined that the County ultimately needs part of the property to generate income that will support the housing component to it.

Adjournment

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaitlyn Finley
Office Manager, Code Enforcement