

SCHUYLKILL TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: MARCH 15, 2023

Curt English called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Members in attendance were: Michael Bauer, Peter Bigelow, Barbara Cohen, David Demey, Andrew Jacob, and Michael Pellegrino. Alternate Tom Gresko was in the audience and alternate Michael Walker was absent. Township Engineer Paul Boettinger, and Township Solicitor Bill Brennan were also present. Curt English announced the meeting would have a hard stop if needed at 10:30pm.

Re-Organization was held. C. Cohen nominated C. English to remain Chair of the Commission. M. Pellegrino seconded, all approved. C. English nominated B. Cohen to remain Vice-Chair of the Commission. D. Demey seconded, all approved. D. Demey and P. Bigelow were reappointed for a three year term.

The meeting minutes from October 19, 2022 and November 16, 2022 were reviewed. Motion made by M. Pellegrino, seconded by B. Cohen to approve. Approved by all.

Sedgley Farm/Reeves Tract, Pohlig Builders and Select Sites/East Philip Drive

Todd Pohlig gave history of property and updates to the plans most recently revised/submitted to the Township on February 14, 2023. The changes to the plan noted were the entrance roadway is now at "T" versus a "Y" intersection. It will have additional stop signs, and better traffic control. The culvert under the entrance way (Sedgley) has been revised to not connect in to the neighboring properties stormwater management system. It will now be contained on their property using storm drains on Sedgley and underground pipes. This will lessen the water that currently flows onto the neighboring properties on Dorchester Way. The revised plans eliminate the pump station. The building restrictions and distance requirements to nesting areas are removed, as the Bald Eagle is now protected not endangered. There is approximately 1.5 acres of open space, located at the highest point overlooking the reservoir. New PA law has increased the buffer from reservoir from 75' to 150'. A new wetland study will include AQUA land. Pohlig showed the cartway width on the entranceway to be 24' wide instead of 32' as required by ordinance. This will lessen the impervious coverage, slow traffic, and provide a larger landscape buffer with the Dorchester Way residents. M. Bauer questioned what variances they will need from the ZHB for this plan. Pohlig stated with the revisions there are some waivers needed now, but they don't need the variances for approval. The waivers would be having sidewalks on only one side of the roadways, cartway width, keeping the historical existing structures would need waiver for secondary use if tenant home is kept, and accessory structure in a front yard. Pohlig stated they feel this is a better overall plan with the waivers needed, but they are not necessary for approval. Township Engineer Paul Boettinger said their review of the revised plans was completed today and sent to the Applicant. To provide enough time for the applicant to review and respond to the letter, they will wait to discuss any items in this review at the next planning commission meeting in April.

P. Bigelow questioned if any proposed homes were located in the 100yr floodplain. Pohlig said they were not. M. Pellegrino asked about the slope of the property. Pohlig replied that the land drains to the southeast corner towards the reservoir. C. English asked about the 150' buffer around the property/reservoir area, and if there was room to potentially make that buffer area larger to plant more

trees beyond that 150' required feet. Pohlig said that 150' buffer area is restricted from any structures, disturbance, weed sprays, etc. This area will be staked out on the properties and marked on the deed. P. Bigelow asked how this restriction would be enforced. Pohlig stated either HOA and/or Township would enforce, as most structures and tree removal would require a permit be obtained from the Township prior to any work being done. The stormwater drainage pipe will daylight into rip rap and then drain into the reservoir. DEP permits are required for that within the riparian buffer. C. English asked if the pipe is required to have a headwall per our ordinance. Pohlig stated there is not a requirement, the headwall is just for erosion control. M. Bauer asked about the status of the previous PRD plans. Pohlig said one was denied by the Township and the Court held up the denial. The second PRD plan with more density on the north side is on a shelf at County Court on hold. M. Bauer asked if the Township wanted PRD plan would he build it . Pohlig said he would consider it by way of stipulated agreement. The PRD plan that was denied has high density on the south side of the property. Pohlig said the PRD plan is no more traffic than the buy right plan, as it's aimed towards empty nesters. The PRD plan did have gated access to E. Philip Drive. P. Bigelow asked why the gated access wasn't considered on the buy right plan. Pohlig said that could be a stipulation. M. Bauer confirmed that the gate could be possible on the buy right plan, and Pohlig said it could be potentially possible on the buy right for a gate restricted access. M. Pellegrino said it appears the plan revisions seem to address the water issues that were of concern. He asked about traffic at the access points. Pohlig said he believes there will be a left turn restriction on to Valley Forge Road at rush hour times. If there is a restriction, then residents will use E. Philip Drive to get out to the light at Whitehorse. M. Pellegrino emphasized with the residents on E. Philip cul-de-sac, and that his biggest concern is the traffic and turning left on to Valley Forge Road. M. Pellegrino asked if the second access is a requirement. Pohlig stated that it was not a requirement for R-1 zoning, but it's beneficial for marketing the development. When he first approached the Township with the plans, the Township wanted the second access for safety. M. Pellegrino asked if E. Philip entrance could possibly be a one way in or out use. Pohlig said they could look into that and discuss that further.

Joe Fiocco, SAFE Highway Engineering LLC was in attendance on behalf of the Township. They had done a traffic study previously on the PRD plans and have now reviewed the revised traffic study by Applicants traffic engineer, Traffic Planning & Design dated 12/19/22, and revised 2/14/23. Their formal report will be submitted to the Planning Commission for review and presentation that their April 19, 2023 meeting.

Public Comment

Marie McKnight, 20 Bantry. – concerned with additional traffic.

Ellen Jantzen, 15 Galway. – Concerned about fertilizers and runoff into the reservoir, additional traffic, sewage grinders at each house is problematic, worried about the reservoir water table changing. Questioned why the Township didn't buy this property using the Open Space tax money.

Frank Mercurio, 805 Spruce Grove Ln. – Thinks the gated access at E. Philip Drive is a great idea to prevent cut through traffic. If not gated, it would be used to avoid the light at Whitehorse and Valley Forge Road. He encouraged the gated access be put in by the developer, not the HOA.

Al Giovenella, 786 Pickering Ln. – Glad to see that the SWM system has been revised to keep the water on their property and not continue it to Dorchester as it is now.

Nicole DePalma, 762 Coventry Ln. – Has concerns about the congestion at the intersection of E. Philip and Whitehorse if this will be an access. It's not a safe intersection. Requested that the Township double check traffic studies.

Melinda Mercurio, 805 Spruce Grove Ln. – Disappointed that it is not going to be open space. Concerned about destroying the quiet neighborhood on E. Philip Drive by using it as a cut through. Requested that the Planning Commission think about the current residents.

Mike Busia, 845 E. Philip Dr. – Disagrees with the opening of the cul-de-sac, that it's been beyond the 21 year time limit to open a cul-de-sac, and how this could happen. Asked procedurally what needs to be approved for this to happen. Mark Donovan, Township Elected Supervisor, was in audience and said that this aspect of the plan is being reviewed by the Township Solicitor and Engineer. M. Bauer said that the Planning Commission only provides a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, that any zoning variances needed would come from Zoning Hearing Board. M. Pellegrino said they can "approve" the plan but ultimately it is up to the Board of Supervisors.

Morgan Welding, 85 S. Whitehorse – Opposed to opening E. Philip Drive. She's lived on the corner for 5 years, she knows all the cars, the people, it's a small town feel. Concerned about the additional traffic and the safety of the children who walk and ride their bikes. There are no sidewalks.

Karen Hilyard, 920 Valley Forge Rd. – Questioned the new pipe under the entrance way from Valley Forge Road. Pohlig confirmed it will be for stormwater, with storm drains in the roadway. She questioned the relocation of her existing driveway on the plan. Currently it exits directly to Valley Forge Road, this plan has it relocated to exit on Sedgley. Pohlig stated that PennDot had asked if the previous owner of 920 Valley Forge Road would want to tie in their driveway to the new access road. It is not a mandated relocation, but if that's what she would want they would do it. She wanted to let them know that traffic does back up from the light at Valley Forge Rd & Whitehorse Rd going towards Phoenixville past the entrance in the evenings as well, not just at rush hour.

Dan Eichenwald, 105 Byrne Dr. – Against development using E. Philip as access. Cars speed, Whitehorse has the blind hill, kids aren't allowed to cross over Whitehorse to E. Philip to get the bus for school because school deemed it unsafe.

Susan Rockey, 160 Diamond Rock Rd. – Former owner of the other lot on the end of the cul-de-sac on E. Philip Drive. She said Pohlig does build beautiful homes, but she's strongly against breaking through the cul-de-sac, it will destroy the neighborhood.

Jeanne Sillup, 801 Spruce Grove Ln. – Said if they use E. Philip Drive a traffic light at Whitehorse and E. Philip would be needed.

Tom Gresko, 9 S. Forge Manor (alternate PC member) – Talked about how traffic on Valley Forge Road is already so bad he can't make a left so he has to make a right and then a u-turn in the G-Lodge. Asked when the traffic study was done, if it was done during school days. Pohlig said the study was done in December 2022, while school was in session.

M. Bauer asked what the PC needs to do to prepare for the April Meeting. P. Boettinger said they can review the waivers, make a recommendation on the waivers, and that there are two separate plans here. The Reeves property, and the E. Philip (Select Sites). M. Pellegrino confirmed SAFE Highway will be at

Aprils meeting to present their report. Joe Fiocca confirmed. Fiocca did state that it was determined a traffic signal was not warranted at either entrance.

P. Bigelow questioned Pohlig on his statement about a stipulated settlement, would that be via court or internal. Solicitor Bill Brennan said discussions would be internal.

With no further business, B. Cohen made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Kimberly Yocom Valyo

Zoning Officer

Next Meeting Date: April 19, 2023