

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES – JUNE 28, 2010

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the Municipal Building on June 28, 2010. Chairman Pazdera called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Those present:

Planning Commission: John Pazdera, Chairman
 Dean Dickson, Secretary
 Tony Bush, Member

Others: Nancy Frick, Director Zoning, Inspection & Planning
 John Donaghy, Township Solicitor (joined meeting in
 progress)
 James Majewski, Township Engineer

Absent: Mark Fried, Planning Commission Vice Chair
 Karen Friedman, Planning Commission Member
 Dan McLaughlin, Supervisor Liaison

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Dickson moved, Mr. Bush seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of March 22, 2010 as corrected.

Mr. Dickson moved, Mr. Bush seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of May 24, 2010 as written.

#335-M – INFORMAL SKETCH PLAN PRESENTATION BY TOLL BROS. FOR
THE REVISED/AMENDED FINAL PLAN OF THE OCTAGON CENTER

Mr. Edward Murphy, attorney, was present and stated they are present on behalf of Toll Bros. to present a Sketch Plan for two of the three Residential sections of the Matrix/Octagon Center project that Toll Bros. purchased within the last month. He stated they purchased the single-family section that fronts on Oxford Valley Road and the carriage/town home section of the project that fronts on Big Oak Road. He stated the other Residential section that has not yet been purchased or developed is the condominium section which is across Big Oak Road from the carriage section.

Mr. Murphy stated there is also a Residential section in Middletown that is part of the Plan but not part of the Lower Makefield jurisdiction.

Mr. Murphy introduced Greg LaGreca and Bob Levitsky from Toll Bros. Mr. Murphy stated Toll Bros. intends to follow the Stipulation and Settlement Agreement that was reached a number of years ago between Matrix, the Township, and the various citizens' groups and individuals that were part of the litigation. He stated this will be developed as an active adult community. Mr. Murphy stated the Settlement Agreement provides for a maximum of 200 single-family homes, and the proposed plan shows slightly less than this. With regard to the carriage homes, the Agreement called for 200, and this Plan shows 180. He stated there were fully-engineered, approved Plans; but Toll Bros. would like to make some changes which they would like to identify for the Planning Commission this evening. He stated they will go before the Board of Supervisors on July 21 and then commence engineering of the changes so that they can come back before the Planning Commission in the early fall. Toll would like to commence construction toward the end of fall.

Mr. Donaghy joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Murphy stated they did provide copies of the Plans to the Planning Commission in advance of the meeting. Mr. Murphy stated on the Plans being presented, they highlighted in color those areas of the Plan which will change; and those areas which are not highlighted remain unchanged. He stated there are more changes contemplated in the single-family section than in the carriage home section.

Mr. Greg LaGreca stated the majority of the changes contemplated occur in the single-family section. He stated a major change from an engineering standpoint was a lowering of the benchmark, which is an engineering term for a grade line used throughout the community to measure elevation and dirt movement; and in lowering the benchmark approximately 6" to 9" it had a major effect on the community. He stated this will result in approximately 57,000 cubic yards of material that will no longer have to be imported to the site, and this results in approximately 4,700 less trucks delivering material to the site. In addition, this will allow them to soften the grades in the community, reduce retaining walls in the community by about 550', and also reduce storm inlets and about 2,000 liner feet of storm pipe which will allow for more overland infiltration and natural run off of water especially between home sites. He stated previously there were a fair number of inlets behind and between houses.

Mr. LaGreca stated the other changes are more lay-out changes. He stated the previous Plans had a very large Club House of approximately 24,000 square feet which is a very large Club House for a community of this size to maintain, heat, and cool. He noted an area where there was previously a small enclave of carriage homes as it was contemplated that the developer would construct the carriages and singles at the same time and have the “model park” adjacent to the Club House. He stated they adjusted the size of the Club House since they felt 24,000 square feet was too large of a Club House for a community of fewer than 400 units. He stated the requirement for the Club House is 350 square feet per dwelling unit, and they will meet this requirement with the proposed 3 acre footprint. Mr. LaGreca stated this will remain an Active Adult Community, and they will market the singles first. He stated they will still provide the amenities previously contemplated including tennis courts, bocce, indoor and outdoor pools, billiards, cards, ballroom, and exercise facilities in the Club House.

Mr. LaGreca noted on the Plan that Tall Pines Road was previously proposed to go through the community to what was called North Street. He stated Tall Pines Road is no longer a “straight shot,” and it will now have a curve and undulation. He stated they relocated Tall Pines away from the protected area, which he noted on the Plan, and installed a row of homes that back up to that area. He stated they have also created additional houses that ring the re-aligned Tall Pines Road. He stated in the center of the community there was previously an “island lot” which was one house that was surrounded entirely by streets, and they have eliminated that. He also showed on the Plan green spaces that will allow for visual break between pods of houses. He also noted an area on the Plan where they have pulled houses away from the entrance to provide green space. Mr. LaGreca stated they like the idea of four-way realignment rather than offset realignment.

Mr. LaGreca stated they also removed the connector road from the right-in/right-out along Oxford Valley Road, and realigned it with some additional roads so that it was not as circuitous to come from one section to the other. He stated they will have a pedestrian trail to connect the two so that people can walk, and this would be an extension of the walking trail currently on Oxford Valley Road.

Mr. LaGreca noted on the Plan where there was previously a road that connected the single home section to the back end of the condo section. He stated Toll Bros. did not purchase this portion of the Matrix site. He stated they considered this a cut-through area, and they have therefore removed it. He stated there is the potential for emergency services to use that road, and they would be willing to work with the Township on this if the Township engineer and emergency services deem this necessary.

Mr. LaGreca stated this will be a gated community, and they have set queue lines off of Oxford Valley at both entrances. He stated gate arms would work similar to other active adult communities in the area. He stated these are typically not staffed, and it is usually run from a key fob, and there is access by call box directly from the sensors to the person you are trying to visit. He stated emergency services would have automatic access.

Mr. LaGreca stated the Plan will continue to comply with the Stipulated Settlement and the allowable limits of clearing, impervious, and open space. He stated they do not intend to challenge any of these numbers.

Mr. LaGreca stated they proposed 199 single family homes which is more than was previously proposed; and they have taken out a portion of those which were carriage homes, and they now have more single-family homes in the footprint of where the carriage homes used to be.

Mr. Murphy asked about the price point and size of the homes. Mr. Greco stated the single homes will be in the low \$400,000 and between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet. He stated some of the homes will have basements, and some will be on slabs.

Mr. LaGreca stated they hope to open these up for sale by the end of the summer and to break ground in the fall. He stated these homes are part of their Regency Brand which is the name Toll Bros. has given to their active adult market. He stated there are Regency Brand communities in Northampton Township off Newtown-Richboro and in New Jersey and other States. People could see the singles at Regency in Monroe in New Jersey and Regency at Providence in Montgomery County, PA and the carriage houses in Northampton.

Mr. LaGreca showed on the Plan the location of the proposed carriage houses. He stated they have proposed fewer changes for the carriage houses. He stated there will be two gated entrances to this community and some minor realignment of lots.

Mr. Bob Halpin, Sylvan Terrace asked the size of the proposed Club House, and Mr. LaGreca stated it will be just under 9,000 square feet under roof which does not include the outdoor pool, tennis courts, and bocce courts. He stated the prior Plan showed the Club House on one level, and they are proposing that this will be two levels. He stated it will have a smaller footprint than the prior Club House, and will take the grade into account. He stated as you pull into the Club House area, you will see one level in front of you, and as the grade drops off the second level will be similar to a walk-out. Mr. Halpin asked if the townhouses will still be built and will they be part of this Association. Mr. LaGreca stated they will not be part of the Club House or part of the Association. He stated Matrix has retained that parcel, and he is unaware of their Plans.

With regard to the carriage house portion, Mr. LaGreca showed on the Plan some realignments they made at the entrance locations. He noted Units 158-167 where there was previously an additional road that ran through this pod of houses, and they have turned the orientation of the two buildings. He stated they have not yet determined the price point for these homes. He stated they will range in size from 2,200 square feet to 2,900 square feet. He stated the interior units are 34' feet wide, and the exterior units are 32' feet wide. He stated they will have double garages, as will the singles.

Mr. Murphy stated they would like to begin construction of the singles this fall but not the carriage houses; and Mr. LaGreca agreed, but added they may do some "dirt work" in the section where the carriage houses will be located. He stated they will begin with the singles, building the Club House, models and the streets at the beginning. He stated they feel the Club House, amenities, and the entrance features are part of the community and the draw into the community and feel it is important to show that they will follow through with the entire plan.

Mr. Halpin asked if this information is on the Internet, and Mr. LaGreca stated at TollBros.com there is a "Coming Soon" site and more pictures will be loaded each day although pricing will not yet be listed. He stated the Plans and elevations will be shown. Mr. Halpin asked what is included in the Club House, and Mr. LaGreca stated there will be a big ballroom, concierge area, billiards and card table area, a craft room, a large fitness area with machines and cardiovascular equipment as well as floor space for yoga, stretching, and physical therapy. There will also be an indoor pool. He noted on the Plan the location of the indoor and outdoor pools, bocce, and tennis courts. He showed the walking path which will include a connecting feature for the sidewalk that goes throughout the major roads of the community with a connection to Big Oak Road.

Ms. Marilyn Levowitz noted a feature on the Plan which was unidentified, and Mr. LaGreca stated this is a pond. Ms. Levowitz asked how the size of the Club House compares to the Club House at their Monroe Complex, and Mr. LaGreca stated the one at Monroe is much larger and has a Golf Course attached to it. He stated there are 800 homes at that project. Mr. LaGreca stated they felt that the 2,400 square foot Club House previously proposed would be very expensive to repair, insure, heat, and cool for a community of 400 units. Ms. Levowitz asked for a comparison of the proposed Club House to the one at Shady Brook, and Mr. LaGreca stated he believes the one at Shady Brook is 10,000 square feet. He stated they wanted the Club House to be manageable for the community to maintain. Ms. Levowitz asked the size of the indoor pool, and Mr. LaGreca stated it will be 18' wide and 30' long. He stated normally people use it for classes and for physical therapists to come in.

Ms. Levowitz asked if there will be some lots that have privacy in the rear, and Mr. LaGreca noted an area where the rear yards back up to woodlands. Ms. Levowitz asked about the prices of the carriage houses noting that some of them are larger than the singles. Mr. LaGreca stated he does not yet know the prices for the carriage houses. He reviewed ways that they consider pricing of homes.

Mrs. Halpin asked the distance between the single homes, and Mr. LaGreca stated it would be 10' to 15 feet which is the required distance, and there will be grading between the lots to allow water to move toward the street to be collected into inlets or toward the rear toward a collection system in the back.

Mr. Bush stated as part of the Settlement Agreement, the road improvements were to be completed before any construction took place; and he asked their expectation with regard to the road improvements given they want to start construction in the fall. Mr. LaGreca stated they plan to begin those immediately. He stated there are some minor changes they are proposing at the entrances that would impact Oxford Valley and Big Oak Road. They intend to complete all road improvements as required.

Mr. Bush asked if Toll Bros. has an option to purchase any portion of the remaining land owned by Matrix, and Mr. LaGreca stated they do not for the land located in Lower Makefield. Mr. Murphy stated they are in the process of engineering the Plans for non-aged qualified town homes in Middletown Township, and they hope to be able to submit the engineered plans to Middletown for approval in the next two weeks; and hopefully have that approval process completed in Middletown before the end of this year. Mr. LaGreca stated this project does not involve Toll Bros.; and Mr. Murphy agreed and stated he is representing Matrix in Middletown for that project. He stated the expectation is, much like with this current arrangement with Toll Bros., Matrix would offer that approved town home project for sale to builder/developers; and Toll may be one of those. Mr. Bush asked how many units would be in Middletown, and Mr. Murphy stated he feels it is between 135 and 145.

Mr. Bush stated he feels the changes made to the road configuration make sense. He noted the road they have eliminated along the left hand side of the Plan, and stated he feels they should have this for emergency access as otherwise it could be difficult to get to the back of the development.

Mr. Pazdera asked if the elimination of this road impacts the traffic study, and Mr. Murphy stated their analysis indicated it did not. Mr. Majewski stated he is not sure about this. Mr. Pazdera stated he would agree with Mr. Bush that it would be good to have this road for emergency services given the number of units in the rear. Mr. LaGreca stated they could easily engineer this.

Mr. Majewski stated the only concern he has is whether there is enough stacking room behind the gates so that cars do not stack out onto the major roads. He stated on the north side it seems sufficient, but on the south side of Robert Sugarman Way it seems tight; and if they pushed the gates further into the site, it would be better. Mr. LaGreca agreed to look into this. Mr. Majewski stated he is in favor of the revision of the lay out for the main road on the north side as opposed to the “straight shot” that was previously there. He feels this revision will make it more livable for the community and will moderate speeds. Mr. Majewski stated he is also in favor of reducing the amount of fill being brought into the project as this was a previously a concern for the Township.

Mr. Pazdera asked about changes made to the retaining walls, and Mr. LaGreca showed areas on the Plan where changes have been made. He noted an area where they could have walk-out basements.

Ms. Levowitz stated originally it was indicated that they could not have basements because the water table was high. Mr. LaGreca stated he has not seen anything about this. Mr. Majewski stated this may have been true for certain parts of the site where that was applicable; and if this is still the case, those homes would just be built on slabs and they would not have basements.

Mr. Murphy stated they plan to go before the Board of Supervisors in July and anticipate coming back to the Planning Commission in the fall.

OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted the next meeting of the Planning Commission will be held on July 26, 2010.

There being no further business, Mr. Bush moved, Mr. Dickson seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dean Dickson, Secretary