

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Lower Makefield was held remotely on September 14, 2020. Mr. Bruch called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Those present:

Planning Commission: Ross Bruch, Vice Chair
 Tony Bush, Secretary
 Dawn Stern, Member

Others: James Majewski, Director Planning & Zoning
 Barbara Kirk, Township Solicitor
 Andrew Pockl, Township Engineer
 Frederic K. Weiss, Supervisor Liaison

Absent: Adrian Costello, Planning Commission Member

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Stern moved, Mr. Bush seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of September 1, 2020 as written.

SALDO ORDINANCE AMENDMENT DISCUSSION ON DESIGN GUIDELINES IN OFFICE/
COMMERCIAL/MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

Mr. Bruch stated this is a continuation of the discussion from the last meeting when they started to talk about parking and its application within the Design Guidelines they are trying to put together this year. He stated among the group they circulated additional materials including the Green Sustainable Parking Lot Guideline that was put forth by the Montgomery County Planning Commission. He stated they also had some additional materials sent by the Planning Commission members and several staff members as well to help with this discussion.

Mr. Bush stated he would like to discuss what has been circulated since the last meeting. He stated one item that he did not see which he felt was going to be circulated was the Township's current standards. Mr. Majewski stated he did

not circulate those, but he can pull them up on the screen, which he did. Mr. Bush stated he feels it would be helpful to know what the Township currently has while discussing what they would like to see in place.

Mr. Majewski stated as he noted previously when the Township adopted Low-Impact Development Standards to include in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance in 2006, they came up with some additional items that they added in to try to make parking lots a little more environmentally-friendly.

Mr. Majewski showed a slide outlining the current standards. He stated the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance has requirements for the width of driveway aisles that are in developments; and depending on whether it is Residential - low-density or high density - or non-Residential determines what the width of the driveway aisles are which is anywhere from 12' for a one-way driveway to 24' typically for a parking lot driveway aisle.

Mr. Majewski stated with regard to parking lots they had discussed lighting, and under Section A it is required that the Lighting Plan provided for non-glare lights focused downward. He stated you do not want to see a yellow glow with the source of the light able to be seen. He stated they are to be non-glare lights and the source of the light should be recessed in the head of the light as is seen in most modern parking lots. Mr. Majewski stated the light is to be focused downward and not projected out like a building spotlight. Mr. Majewski stated that provides a more downward, uniform flow for the light. Mr. Majewski stated the light is not to spill over onto adjoining properties, and the light should be contained within the property.

Mr. Majewski stated also in the Ordinance under Section B it states the lighting has to be shown on the Plan in sufficient detail to make sure that it is not going to effect adjoining properties having too much light spillover or glare, and that there will not be traffic safety issues where there would be spotlights projecting out from a building into a parking lot where it could create glare for drivers and be a potential hazard. He stated they should also reduce the incidence of overhead sky glow which addresses Mr. Costello's concerns about the dark sky requirement. He stated most modern parking lots are designed that way where the light intensity is a

lot lower than it used to be. Mr. Majewski stated the Township also has a requirement that you cannot see the source of the light. He stated no sodium vapor lights are permitted.

Mr. Majewski stated within the Historic District, the lighting is post and lantern type lighting where you actually do see a little bit of the source of the light, and that is meant to be for a Village; and there are not 30' high light poles illuminating a large parking area, and it is more smaller parking areas. He stated this can be seen in the Edgewood Crossing Development in Edgewood Village.

Mr. Majewski stated for off-street parking they are looking for parking lots that try to incorporate some infiltration and bio-retention areas to separate the parking lot rather than having a “sea of parking” with raised islands with trees. He stated where there are soils that are conducive they should try to put in some bio-retention areas to do infiltration where possible and spread out the water so that rather than going over land from a parking lot into the storm drain and then a detention basin, if you can you should try to filter it into soil between parking areas and go into the grass to be filtered and absorbed somewhat by the soil before it goes to the drain pipe and piped to a detention basin. Mr. Majewski stated where bio-retention areas are not practical, which is the case in certain areas where it does not work with the flow of traffic or the flow of parking, they should try to have a planting strip every so often to break up the sea of pavement with trees so that it eliminates a little of the heat effect when there is a lot of impervious surface.

Mr. Bush stated this seems to have been done in 2004/2006; and he asked Mr. Majewski if he feels there are things that need to be updated.

Mr. Majewski stated he feels they should look to update this since technology and methods of dealing with this change. He stated he feels that meeting the DEP water quality and water volume requirements in the NPDES Permit for stormwater discharges for greater than one acre, is something that developers need to address in some fashion. Mr. Bush asked how he would recommend that the Township go about doing that. Mr. Majewski stated they could look at what other Townships have been doing recently to see if we can update our Ordinance to see if we can be more current.

Ms. Stern asked if there is currently a requirement for any kind of solar lighting. Mr. Majewski stated there is not.

Mr. Majewski stated when he reviews plans, he recommends that they explore the use of LED lights because they lower energy consumption. He stated in 2011 the Township received a Grant where they switched out all of the lighting at the Township Building, the Pool parking lot, and Kids Kingdom; and that whole area has LED lighting. He stated they save over 50% energy over standard lighting by using the LED. Mr. Majewski stated no one noticed that the new lighting was any different so it does not significantly make a difference to the eye.

Mr. Bruch stated that was mentioned in the Montgomery County Green Parking Lots report in terms of energy efficiency, and he would agree that would be a good idea to include.

Mr. Majewski stated some of the local parking lots have also switched out their lighting, and he believes that the Giant parking lot has LED lights now as well as some others. He stated this is good for energy savings, and the lights last longer. He stated they have not changed a light bulb in front of the Township building for nine years, and they previously had to change them yearly.

Mr. Majewski stated the Township also has in the Ordinance that they want the parking lots to have curbs except where they are trying to channel stormwater into vegetated open channels and bio-retention areas. Mr. Majewski stated this has been done in several locations in the Township and he particularly noted the CVS/PNC Bank which are part of the Matrix project, and the water goes off the parking lot directly into the detention basin area. He stated this is a more effective way to treat stormwater, and it does not have to be piped.

Mr. Pockl stated in new parking lots he has seen that they have depressed curbs since the curb acts as a support function for the edge of the paving. He stated since it is depressed at the surface, the stormwater run-off can flow over it. Mr. Majewski stated they could use that or bumper blocks so that the wheels will stop and not get right to the edge of the pavement and damage the pavement.

Mr. Majewski stated they also encourage developers to try to incorporate alternative paving surfaces to promote infiltration. He stated where it is feasible due to the type of soil or the location of the parking, they should try to use infiltration basins underneath the parking areas. He stated they used that at the Makefield Elementary School when they re-designed their parking

lot, and they took a portion of the parking area and converted it to porous pavement. He stated it is also used at the Community Center; and in the back parking area, the parking stalls are porous pavement, but the main driveway aisles are standard pavement. He stated that benefits developers as well since they then have more land available for building square footage and parking and less area needed for detention basins.

Mr. Majewski stated also in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance is the idea of having pedestrian crosswalks and refuge islands at intervals not exceeding 200', and that is so that there is not just a sea of parking without having somewhere for people to walk safely through a parking lot.

Mr. Bruch asked about existing developments that are being rehabbed, and he asked how the Ordinances come into play. He stated he understands that when earth is moved is when you differentiate between renovations and complete rehabs. He stated at a parking lot, a lot would need to be done to bring an old, outdated parking lot into compliance with what is being discussed. Mr. Majewski stated with the new NPDES regulations, if you have an old parking lot, you do have to upgrade it somewhat when you are re-designing or re-configuring it or adding buildings and other impervious surfaces; and they have to try to make it better from a stormwater perspective and try to control the volume of run-off that was not addressed in the Ordinances thirty or forty years ago when some of these shopping centers were built.

Mr. Pockl stated once a developer goes through the Land Development process they are required to meet the Ordinances that are on the books, and that is when they would be required to meet the new standards. He stated at the Lower Makefield Corporate Center they wanted to upgrade the parking areas to provide more of an amenity to the Offices so that there could be a gathering space; and their design goal was to upgrade the parking area, and eliminate these large asphalt spaces to break it up so people could congregate outside. Mr. Bruch stated it sounds like they did that voluntarily, but he assumes they would probably have to have done some renovations regardless; and Mr. Pockl agreed.

Mr. Majewski asked if there would be NPDES requirements if they were over a certain amount of earth disturbance. Mr. Pockl stated if they are over one acres of earth disturbance, they are required from a stormwater management perspective to improve water quality and flood control. He stated they have

to consider 20% of the existing impervious area as meadow or grass. He stated if they do not reduce their impervious area by 20%, they have to add some kind of stormwater management component even if they keep the same amount of impervious area.

Mr. Bush stated that only applies if there is an acre of earth disturbance, and Mr. Pockl agreed. Mr. Pockl stated if they are doing less than an acre of earth disturbance, the Township's Stormwater Management requirements indicate that any additional impervious area has to be managed with water quality or flood control depending on the limits. He stated he recalls that an additional 5,000 square feet requires flood control, and less than that they are still required to do water quality improvements for stormwater management. Mr. Pockl stated even if they increase the impervious area by 200 square feet, they still have to do some type of water quality for that 200 square feet.

Mr. Majewski stated the Township does require buffering between Residential and Commercial and between Commercial and Industrial as well as buffers along main roads and between uses. He stated they also require landscaping/ street trees every 30' to 45' or they could cluster them rather than having them just a straight row of trees.

Mr. Bush stated Ms. Stern provided some aerial photos of the Costco in Lawrenceville, NJ which has large Retail and apartment buildings. Mr. Bush stated he felt it was helpful to look at that since it shows the buffering between the two uses. The photo was shown and Ms. Stern stated the parking lot contained a lot of the elements that they have been discussing including the plantings and the pedestrian walkways. Mr. Bush stated he has been past that area, and he noticed that there is a gas station there that often has long lines; and Ms. Stern agreed. Ms. Stern noted Quakerbridge Road on the slide, and stated that is the only way to get in and out of the complex which would be similar to the Township situation; however, it seems that the traffic moves along well although she has not been there early in the morning or at 5 p.m. Mr. Majewski stated it appears that they have the walkways along the perimeter at the parking lot so that you can get from the apartments to the main parking area. Ms. Stern stated there is not much additional Retail at this location. Mr. Majewski stated it can be seen that the areas of the parking lot which are the most used are the areas near the entrance; and it is typically seen that people primarily park at the areas that are closest to the front door.

Mr. Majewski stated you want to have adequate circulation where there is an area for people to get into the parking lot. Mr. Bruch noted the area where you enter where there is an island that forces drivers to make a left or right so that they cannot just pull straight in to a parking space. Mr. Majewski noted the walking area all around the perimeter of the building. He stated some people prefer to walk on the sidewalk rather than walking through the parking lot where cars are backing out.

Mr. Bush stated Mr. Majewski had circulated the Montgomery County materials that had been discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Bruch stated he did review that and felt it was very well thought out with good goals to strive for especially when they are taking an open field or pervious land and turning it into stores and parking lots; and they should do everything they can to mitigate the impact on the community, the water, and on the land itself.

Mr. Bruch stated Mr. Pockl had also provided some additional materials which were helpful. Mr. Pockl stated he had distributed sample Ordinances from other Municipalities that had Mixed-Use Developments or Mixed-Use Overlay Districts. He stated this included information on shared-use parking which he feels is an interesting idea especially for the development before the Township where there will be apartments and Retail that might not need space at the same time throughout the week so that some spaces could be shared between those uses. He stated it also included bicycle parking which would promote the goal that the District was trying to achieve of making it more walkable and more pedestrian friendly with less vehicle use. Mr. Pockl stated some other items included common plaza areas and gathering spaces, and there were standards established for those regarding planting materials, seating, and paving materials with a requirement that no more than 20% of the area can be concrete. Mr. Pockl stated it also covered loading and drive-through standards. He stated it included guidelines for creating smaller spaces for employee parking and recommendations that employee parking be along the sides and the rear of the Retail as opposed to up front with the customers. Mr. Pockl stated with regard to parking space size, the customer parking could be 10' by 20, and the employee parking and other spaces reserved for compact cars could be smaller.

Mr. Pockl stated there are different ways that various Municipalities try to direct developers to control the size of their parking lots, and they should consider whether that is something that Lower Makefield wants to consider.

Mr. Pockl stated he believes King of Prussia had a requirement at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors that the Applicant could provide shared parking among one or more uses/properties under certain conditions, and the Applicant is to submit a Parking Study using standards set forth by the Institute of Traffic Engineers or the Urban Land Institute. Mr. Pockl stated he feels it would be a good idea to require the developers to complete such a Study of the uses and the required parking so that they can fit the parking lots for the intended uses. Mr. Majewski stated that is something that is in the Mixed-Use Overlay Ordinance about shared parking design, and the developer has to provide a parking analysis.

Mr. Bush stated he would be in favor of some of the things that Mr. Pockl was discussing that are in the document regarding spaces for compact cars being a little smaller and customer parking being a different size from employee parking. Mr. Bush noted the document provided states “parking space is measured from the center line of the stripes,” and he asked if that is how it is done in Lower Makefield or is it from the edge of the stripes. Mr. Pockl stated it is usually from the center of the stripes. Mr. Bush stated the sample provided from Lower Merion had that up to 30% of the parking spots were reserved for compact cars, and he asked why that number was chosen and if it is realistic given what is seen on the road today. Mr. Pockl stated he does not know why they chose that number and it could have come from the ITE or the Urban Land Institute. He added he feels that 30% is high.

He stated there are certain vehicle manufacturers who have stopped making cars because SUVs sell so well.

Mr. Bruch asked if any other Township has addressed autonomous vehicles yet. He stated autonomous vehicle parking is something that could be relevant at some point. He stated such a vehicle would drop the rider off and then find parking someplace else in the facility. Mr. Pockl stated he feels it would be a good idea to incorporate something like a “ride-share” drop-off and pick-off point” which should be incorporated into any new design of a large-scale development. Mr. Bush stated the autonomous parking is fascinating, and he asked if they should designate a certain portion of the parking lot as dedicated for future use for autonomous parking. He stated it would be interesting to know if anyone has done anything with regard to autonomous parking. Mr. Pockl stated he could look at Ordinances from California to see what is coming.

Mr. Bush stated he has seen more “heavy-duty” bikes that people are riding now which are motorized. He stated you can pedal them, but they are also motorized and can go thirty miles an hour. He stated he does not know if they should be treated differently than a bicycle when it comes to parking.

Ms. Stern stated another item that was in the Montgomery County document was having the parking lot accommodate multiple uses such as a farmers’ market, etc. She stated gathering outdoors is at a premium at this time.

Mr. Bush asked how they will move this forward and put this into something that makes sense for the Township and developers. Mr. Bruch stated they still have to do landscape and hardscape which they will consider at the next meeting. Mr. Majewski stated based on the input that has been given, using the Montgomery County document as a guideline, they would incorporate some of the other ideas that the Planning Commission has raised during the discussions into something that would be a second draft. He stated they could then make decisions as to what they ultimately want to change or keep. Ms. Kirk asked who would draft that, and Mr. Majewski stated he would do it. Ms. Kirk asked Mr. Majewski if it would make sense to work from the Granite Run document that was provided originally, and Mr. Majewski stated it seemed that the majority were more in favor of the Montgomery County document. He stated they could bring in other items into that from the Granite Run document, what Mr. Pockl provided, and what the Planning Commission members provided during the discussions. Mr. Pockl stated once that draft is provided, the Planning Commission could review the numbers and technical details and change it as they see fit.

Ms. Stern noted the presentation she made earlier and asked if that was reduce to anything in writing. Ms. Kirk stated they do have her written document, but they did not put it together with what Mr. Bryson had circulated for the Architectural Guidelines; and everything is waiting to be merged into a workable draft.

Mr. Majewski stated they will also have to go through the Meeting Minutes to review what Mr. Bryson, Ms. Stern, and others had discussed; and he will include in the draft what it seemed that the consensus was.

There were no public comments at this time.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Majewski advised the Planning Commission that the Township received two Land Development Applications within the last few days. He stated they received an Application from the Pennsylvania American Water Company for a pump station upgrade for the area off of Oxford Valley Road behind the Community Center where the water tower is behind the ballfields at the corner of Edgewood and Oxford Valley Roads. He stated there is a facility at that location where they are proposing a building and some changes to parking. He stated he understands a Special Exception has been submitted as well so that will be coming to the Planning Commission at a future meeting. He stated the Special Exception will probably come first so that the Planning Commission can make a recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board and then subsequently the Land Development will come before the Planning Commission. Mr. Pockl asked if they are requesting a Waiver of Land Development like they did previously, and Mr. Majewski stated they are not. He stated they have submitted Land Development Plans.

Mr. Majewski stated they also received a complete Application for the Prickett Preserve project today. He stated a link to that will be going out to all Planning Commission members tonight, and he can also provide a hard copy. He stated the process is that once the Application is received, the Board of Supervisors has ninety days in which to act. He stated the ninety days starts at the first regularly-scheduled Planning Commission meeting after receipt so it is ninety days from tonight's meeting. He stated all information will be provided to the volunteer Committees which are required to receive it per the Ordinance to be reviewed as well as the Township engineer and the Township traffic engineer who has done an extensive review as part of the Mixed-Use Overlay. Mr. Majewski stated it will also be reviewed by the Township's Sewer engineer. He stated once all the review letters are received, the Applicant can either come to the Planning Commission or they could make revisions first to try to address any comments and then come to the Planning Commission. Mr. Majewski stated depending on the project he sometimes likes the Applicant to come to the Planning Commission before they make all of the changes requested by others so that the Planning Commission can comment on any changes they would like to see.

Mr. Pockl asked if the submission received today included the off-site road improvements, and Mr. Majewski stated he is not sure at this point. He stated the Township traffic engineer would look at that. Ms. Kirk stated that is a restriction that they filed of Record with the property so it is enforceable.

Mr. Bruch asked if the Planning Commission will be meeting on September 28. Mr. Majewski stated that would depend on how other meetings are scheduled. He stated the Township is trying to save money on the video capabilities that are needed to run all of the meetings, and they are trying to bundle meetings on the first and third weeks of the month. He stated the September 28 meeting may not be held unless other Committees need to hold meetings. He stated he may ask if the Planning Commission members are available the first week in October, possibly October 5. He asked that the Planning Commission members let him know when they would not be available in the month of October.

There being no further business, Mr. Bush moved, Ms. Stern seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tony Bush, Secretary