TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Lower Makefield

was held in the Municipal Building on September 25, 2023. Mr. Costello called the

meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Mr. Costello stated Mr. DeLorenzo has recused himself

from the item on the Agenda so he is not present this evening.

Those present:

Planning Commission: Adrian Costello, Chair

 Tejinder Gill, Vice Chair

 Colin Coyle, Secretary/Supervisor Liaison

Others: James Majewski, Community Development Director

 Dan McLoone, Planner

 Barbara Kirk, Township Solicitor

 Paul DeFiore, Township Engineer

Absent: Tony Bush, Planning Commission Member

 John DeLorenzo, Planning Commission Member

TABLING APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

Mr. Coyle moved, Mr. Gill seconded and it was unanimously carried to Table

approval of the Minutes from September 11, 2023.

APPEAL #Z-23-2032 – 777 TOWNSHIP LINE ROAD

Special Exception – Expansion of Existing Medical Use

Tax Parcel #20-012-006-005

O/R Office Research Zoning District

Allow an additional 21,000 square feet of medical-related space within the

existing office building

Mr. Majewski stated the Applicant is looking for a Special Exception from the

Zoning Hearing Board for a use that is permitted, but there are certain Conditions

that are placed upon that by the Ordinances. He stated one of the requirements

for a Zoning Hearing Board Application for a Special Exception is that first they

need to have an advisory report or opinion from the Planning Commission with

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respect to the location of such use in relation to the needs and growth pattern

of the area and where appropriate with reference to the adequacy of the site

area, arrangement of buildings, driveways, parking areas, off-street truck-loading

spaces, and other pertinent features of the site.

Mr. Tom Weitzel, Jones Lang LaSalle, was present, and stated he has represented

the ownership of the building since 2009; and he was involved in the Variance

that was received in 2009 to do an additional amount of Medical Use for Penn

Medicine. He stated this is a 110,000 square foot building, and Penn is currently

in about 36,000 square feet of that. He stated most of their space is self-contained,

and it has its own entryway, elevator, and is on the first and second floors of the

north side of the building.

Mr. Weitzel stated Penn would like to grow their presence in this market and in

this building. He stated they have been in discussion with them to expand them

on the second floor of the building. He stated the space has recently become

available from an office tenant that vacated.

Mr. Costello asked if they are proposing to expand what they currently do or

are they bringing something new in that they have not done before. Mr. Weitzel

stated it is expanding what they currently do, and he believes that it is a Primary

Care function. He stated what has been asked for is the right to put Medical on

the entire second floor and make it an expansion of their footprint; but what

they have currently laid out is moving non-clinical functions out of the current

envelope and moving it out of that space so that space can serve their patients,

and they are adding about six exam rooms. He stated looking at the Plan, 88%

of it is typical Office Use and 12% would be considered Clinical.

Mr. Majewski stated they are not planning any expansion outside the existing

building walls or modifying any of the parking lot. He stated our Ordinance

for parking allows for Mixed-Use, which this is as a mix of General Office Use

and Medical Office Use. He added there is a provision in our Zoning Ordinance

that says that the number of spaces required in a common parking facility may

be reduced below the total that is required for each individual use as a

Special Exception under Chapter 200-98 if it can be demonstrated to the

Zoning Hearing Board that the hours or days of peak parking needed for the

uses are so different that a lower total will provide adequately for all uses

served by the facility.

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Mr. Majewski stated they have done parking counts which were provided to the

Planning Commission. He stated they did one count in January and another in

August that showed that the maximum usage of the parking lot throughout the

day is at 45%. Mr. Majewski stated Mr. Weitzel confirmed that. Mr. Majewski

stated at the time of the first study, the building was 100% leased out, and at

the time of the second study in August, it was about 84% leased out.

Mr. Majewski stated Ms. Kirk worked in that building for a number of years,

and she can attest that the parking is more than adequate to handle this use.

Mr. DeFiore stated his office would recommend parking calculations to be

submitted for review for the change in the use in accordance with the Zoning

Ordinance.

Mr. Costello asked if there is a problem with our current Ordinance requirements.

Mr. Majewski stated the Ordinance was done approximately forty years ago; and

at the time they did that, they wanted a lot of parking to make sure that they

could cover every case possible. Mr. Majewski stated over time the Institute of

Transportation Engineers has modified their parking counts to lower the number

of spaces required for many uses. He added over the coming year he wants to

work on revising our parking requirements in accordance with those modern

standards. He stated he would also like to include a maximum on the amount

of parking because there have been a few instances that a certain number of

spaces were required according to the Ordinance, but the request was for a lot

more spaces; and there is no reason for that unless a reason can be demonstrated

to the Township.

Mr. Costello asked what would be required under modern calculations for what

they are proposing. Mr. Majewski stated they would still be well over what

would be required.

Mr. Gill asked if there will be the capability for having a larger drop-off as this

was a concern of Mr. Bush. Ms. Kirk stated if they are converting the second

floor, there is a carve-out in the front of the building for drop-offs in addition

to what is on the side where the primary offices are. She does not believe they

need more since there are already two designated drop-off sections. She stated

the rear entrance is such that the first row of parking closest to the building in

the rear is at least 70% handicapped spots. Mr. Majewski showed a slide of this.

Mr. Coyle stated this is where his primary care physician is; and at the drop-off

on the right side of the building, he believes that there is signage that says it is

for access for the office portion and not to the second floor medical facility.

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Ms. Kirk stated presently you can only access the medical offices from the north

side; but if they expand to the second floor as they are proposing, access would

be available from the front entrance as well. Mr. Weitzel stated while it could be,

as it is currently contemplated by Penn all patients and visitors would still go

through the north side as it is more conducive for control and flow for them.

He stated the initial tranche is about 6,500 square feet, and they are asking for

a Variance to grow that even further over the years. He stated in that case, what

Ms. Kirk has indicated would certainly be contemplated if visitors would be going

through the center of the building. He stated at this point it is a good control

point in the north, and that is how Penn prefers it as well.

Mr. Gill asked what is the current vacancy in the building, and Mr. Weitzel

stated right now it is at 84%, but there is a large tenant on the third floor who

is going to vacate in February. He stated this led them to think of how to use

this building differently than it had been used in the past. He stated it is a great

building so it should be more of a functional building than its current vacancy

level.

Mr. Coyle stated while we are discussing parking, the specific request is to

expand the Medical Office footprint beyond what is allowed in the current

building. He asked if there is also a separate relief to provide relief from

parking regulations related to the expansion. Mr. Majewski stated it is

two-pronged. He stated they already have a Special Exception for the use;

but with the expansion of the use, Lower Makefield has historically stated that

you have to come back and authorize the expansion of the Special Exception,

and the parking is part of it as well.

Mr. Coyle asked if as a result of the expansion is there a different count of

spaces required for Medical, and Mr. Majewski agreed. He stated that is

why Remington & Vernick indicated that they wanted that put in the Record.

Mr. Majewski stated he feels that it is clear from the parking counts that for

any standard used that they have enough parking, but we would like to get

it on the Record at the Zoning Hearing Board of what is required and what

is the nature of the relief that they are truly getting.

Mr. Weitzel asked if that request is a breakdown of number of spaces

allocated to Medical versus number of spaces allocated to Office, and then

adding the two together to make sure that the parking field has enough

spaces; and Mr. Majewski agreed.

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Mr. Costello stated what is being asked for tonight is whether the Planning

Commission would recommend going forward with this based on the change

from General Office to Medical Office; and Mr. Majewski agreed adding that if

the Planning Commission felt that there was an issue with expanding the

Medical Use from a general planning perspective, they should make their

opinion on that known to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Coyle stated they are not adding an ambulance entrance or anything like

that.

Mr. Gill moved and Mr. Coyle seconded to recommend approval of the request

for Special Exception to expand the Medical Offices into the designated second

floor area as shown on the Plan subject to the submission of parking calculations

as requested by the Township engineer at the time of the Zoning Hearings.

Mr. Coyle asked if there is the need for a separate Motion to exempt an

expansion of parking spaces, and Mr. Majewski stated he does not believe

that is necessary as the Motion covers that.

Motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Gill moved, Mr. Coyle seconded and it was

unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

 Respectfully Submitted,

 Colin Coyle, Secretary