

Chester Heights Planning Commission

May 27, 2021

Meeting Minutes

The meeting convened at 7:00pm in Chester Heights Borough Office with the following Commission members in attendance:

Mr. Chris Leiser
Mr. John Lesky
Mr. Thayer Schroeder
Mr. Mark Carroll
Mrs. Melinda Kerry
Mr. Gregg Homan (via Zoom)
Mr. Matt Houtmann – Borough Engineer

The meeting was held at the Administration Building of the Garnet Valley School District due to COVID related social distancing limitations at the Chester Heights Borough Office/Firehouse. A Zoom meeting was also held to enable community participation.

1) Meeting Agenda and Discussion Summary

- Proposed Powell subdivision on Valleybrook and Smithbridge Roads.
- Proposed Kheny subdivision on Valleybrook Road.
- Rosehill subdivision – minor plan changes.

Powell Subdivision

Guests

Mr. Joe Damico
Mr. Tom Comitta
Ms. Jennifer Reitz
Ms. Ann Hutchinson
Mr. Glenn Powell
Mr. Chip Vaughan

Information given by Joe Damico and Tom Comitta: The proposed plan of the Powell Farm is to create a PRD (Planned Residential Development) on the 62.6-acre property. A PDR would require a zoning change. Current zoning is R1 ½ with the ability to lot average. A 52-carriage home community would be developed on 13.7 acres at or near the top plateau of the property. This would result in approximately 70% of the property being maintained as open space. The plan as outlined would dedicate approximately 48 acres to the Borough. The proposed development (as well as any by-right plan) would feature public sewer and public water. A sketch of a possible by-

right usage plan of the property showed 23 single family homes. No engineering work has been done to verify that quantity though.

The financial impact (presented by Jennifer Reitz) of the proposed carriage home plan (using a multiplier of .36) would result in an anticipated 19 new students to the Garnet Valley School District. The by-right plan (using a multiplier of .75) would result in 18 new students. As a comparison, the new Brookfield community on Valleybrook Road used a multiplier of .50, so the student impact may be as high as 26.

Per Ann Hutchinson, a representative of Natural Lands, the Powell Farm is the largest undeveloped property in Chester Heights. The by-right usage of the property would cause major disturbance to the vast majority of the property as opposed to the carriage home community. With the carriage plan, the open space would be sold (for \$1) to the Borough. This would include the existing house and barn. Natural Lands Trust sees the open space as being a passive park with trails. The cost of maintaining the open space was a major concern of the Planning Commission.

A key aspect to a carriage home PRD would be the viability of a second access to be used only for emergency needs. Resident Bill Burke (via Zoom) expressed concern about the proposed access from Valleybrook Road since that area is used by residents and a business (es).

Kheny Subdivision

Guests

Mr. Bobby Kheny

Mr. Pat McFadden

Mr. Christopher Poterjoy

Information given by Christopher Poterjoy and Pat McFadden: The proposed plan is for the development of 13.2 acres at the corner of Valleybrook and Bodley Roads. The West Branch of the Chester Creek and Green Creek run through the property creating flood plains. The property is zoned R 1 ½ and a zoning change would be required OR an amendment to the current Overlay District would be needed to allow a townhouse development in a residential district. A previous sketch plan was submitted a few years ago to develop the property for single family homes. Apparently, that was not a financially viable plan.

The key aspect to developing this site is access into the property itself. Because of the proximity of the creek(s) to Valleybrook Road a large bridge would be required to cross the creek(s) and flood plains. This seems to be achievable engineering-wise but the access point onto Valleybrook Road is the bigger hurdle. The nature of Valleybrook Road in that area is a steep and curving downslope. An almost immediate turn to the left off the curving downslope would be needed to enter the bridge.

Resident Laura Lim (via Zoom) highlighted numerous accidents that have occurred in that area over the years and expressed concern about a multi-car access. She also brought up the potential for school bus(es) to access the property/bridge. A traffic study by PennDOT has not been done at this stage but it would be vital to assess the viability of this development.

Another concerning topic is a secondary emergency access to the property. The current sketch plan shows access from Matson Road. Matson Road does not border the property and an agreement with the neighboring property owner would be needed. The applicant proposed that the second lane of the bridge could be used but the Planning Commission and Borough Engineer did not like that approach.

Rosehill Subdivision

Guests

Mr. Mike Ciocco

Mr. Bill Messick

The Rosehill Subdivision is an approved plan that is in the early stages of site development. Minor changes to the approved plan were proposed for the consideration of the Planning Commission. Rosehill is a 33-unit townhome community. Per the current approved plan, the townhome widths vary at 26, 28 and 30 feet. The proposed modification is to make all the townhomes 28 feet wide. This change would result in approximately 5 additional feet between clusters of units. In addition, 4 to 6 foot high berms are being added along Lenni and Llewellyn Roads. These berms will not impact any sight distances.

After discussions within the Commission, a Motion to approve the modified plan was made (contingent of a final Borough Engineer report) and seconded. A vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Other Activities:

- No other activities occurred.
- Motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Prepared by Chris Leiser