NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
3256 LEVANS ROAD, COPLAY, PA 18037

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

Virtual Meeting brought to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag at 7:30 p.m., on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 by Chairman Brian Horwith

Attendance:

Chairman Brian Horwith	Richard Semmel
Vice Chairman Bruce Stettler	Robert Korp
Secretary Leonard Nuss	John Barto
Attorney Lisa Young	Roderick Lowe
Township Engineer Steve Gitch	Planning Secretary Jane Kelly
Township Manager Chris Garges	Township Zoning Officer Jeff Mouer

Minutes of the August 25, 2020 meeting were approved as presented. Motion made by John Barto, seconded by Rod Lowe, all others agreed.

Chairman Brian Horwith opened the meeting by describing both items on the evening's agenda as Special Exceptions only, which is to review a specific use proposed by the Applicant, and offer comments and/or a recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board as to the suitability of the specific use. A Special Exception review does not include reviewing the design, plans and associated required reviews and approvals by other agencies, all of which will occur subsequently as an Applicant's proposal moves through the process.

1. **George Husack Special Exception**- Project # NWT-20-027, 4234 Locust Drive, 45,794 sqft, PIN 5468 6992 6932, SR Zone, Expansion of a non-conforming nonresidential use. **Applicant withdrew from the agenda and requested a continuance.**

2. **King's Route 309 Business Park Site Plan Special Exception**- Project # NWT-20-028, PIN 5469 1583 1994, 5469 1542 9796, 5469 1543 6417, 5469 1551 8424, 5469 1552 1095, 5469 1560 7910 & 5469 1489 4845, 4837 Route 873, 4815 Route 873, 4819 Route 873, 4807 Route 309, 4811 Route 309, 4803 Route 309, 4777 Route 309, PC Zone, 11.7669 Acres, Special Exception Appeal for Convenience Store. The plan was presented by developer Dave King, Attorney Blake Marles and Barry Isett & Associates Engineer Chris Williams.

a. Keystone Engineers have reviewed the plan and offered their comments and recommendations in a letter dated September 17, 2020.
b. Zoning Officer's review is contained in his letter dated September 16, 2020.
c. Sewage Enforcement Officer's review is contained in his letter dated September 18, 2020.
d. The Special Exception Appeal is to have a Convenience Store, with retail gas pumps, at one site on the proposed plan.
e. The proposed plan for the total site is to have 6 separate parcels with 6 separate owners, the remaining five of which are not included in the Special Exception Appeal.
f. The convenience store is proposed on the corner lot, Schneck Road and Route 873. Per the Applicant, this is the most desirable lot for the convenience store.
g. Planning Commission member Richard Semmel felt there was no need for another convenience store and gas station in the area. He would like to see it developed into something else.
h. Planning Commission member John Barto felt the proposed plan was being overused.
i. Planning Commission member Leonard Nuss wasn't in favor of the high density development.
j. Planning Commission Vice Chairman questioned what criteria is used for a special exception and on what grounds can the Planning Commission turn it down? Township Solicitor Lisa Young referred to North Whitehall Township Zoning Ordinance section 119.
k. Developer Dave King reminded everyone that the entire tract is in the PC zone.

Comments from the Residents:

Steve Watcher, 5070 Trexler Rd, Schnecksville, has zoning and property value concerns.
Naomi Morris, 5059 Trexler Rd, Schnecksville, has concerns with the hours of operation of the convenience store.
Stephanie Batdorf, 5023 Shawnee Blvd, Schnecksville, concerned with the traffic and crime that could be brought to the area with this development.
Scott Mellon, 4209 Mohican Dr, Schnecksville, is concerned with the proposed traffic pattern through the development.
Mike Luciano, 4926 Shawnee Ct, Schnecksville, is concerned with the additional traffic the warehouse (on Rt 309 off Independence Drive) is bringing and asked for a traffic study for this proposed development.
Elizabeth Hopkins, 5067 Mohawk Dr, Schnecksville, agrees with the Planning Commission member who stated we have no need for an additional convenience store in this area, but if one is to be developed, put it at the other end of the property on Route 309 away from Schnecksville North and the homes. **Developer Dave King** stated the other end of the property has several homes adjoining the property.
Larry Clemens, 5178 Shawnee Blvd, Schnecksville, questioned if the impact to the residents' and their traffic concerns are being taken into consideration? **Engineer Chris Williams** stated they are working with PennDot on traffic concerns and will conduct a study.
Sandra Sacks, 5059 Trexler Rd, Schnecksville, stated there is a gas station a ¼ mile south on Route 309 that has been boarded up for a few years now, why build this one? She also questioned the other uses, are there buyers yet and what are the uses?

Attorney Marles stated the developer is aware of the former gas station, this plan is being laid out as a convenience store with a gas station and there are no buyers at this time.
Robert Drews, 5245 Spruce St, Schnecksville, questioned how state police and emergency vehicles are going to get up and down Route 309 with this additional traffic, as it is a small road. He also questioned if the residents will see an increase in taxes due to this development?
Pete Seyler, 4967 Spruce St, Schnecksville, stated the ordinances that allowed the community to change and possibly allow this development to happen are terrible.
Dan Grim, 5454 Ridge Rd, Slatington, questioned how can this development be done without a traffic study? He also questioned the additional 200 tractor trailers an hour mentioned earlier.
Township Manager Chris Garges stated there was a traffic study completed for the North Valley Trade Center project and it is available at the Township for public review.
Planning Commission member Richard Semmel reminded the residents that the time to voice their concerns is at a Board of Supervisors meeting, they should not wait until their neighborhood is involved.
Nathan Armbuster, 4950 Shawnee Ct, Schnecksville, questioned the distance from Lot 1, the convenience store, and his property, which is in the adjoining development (Schnecksville North). **Engineer Chris Williams** stated the driveway from Maryann's Plaza and this development will line up. This driveway will be in between the convenience store and the detention pond, and then Schnecksville North.
Steve Watcher, 5070 Trexler Rd, Schnecksville, questioned if the ordinance can be changed so this does not happen again? He also questioned the zoning on 4807 Route 309, when did this zoning district change? **Planning Commission member Robert Korp explained ordinance changes can be done, however the process takes time and is subject to following the laws of the Commonwealth's Municipal Planning Code. Chairman Brian Horwith** stated he was not aware the zoning district was changed. Planning Commission member Robert Korp later stated that the current zoning category of Planned Commercial has applied to this site since 2002, or earlier.
Jennifer Krumrine, 3938 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, questioned if the developer does not find a buyer, will the convenience store still be built? She also suggested the Planning Commission look at a regional approach Comprehensive Plan.
Scott Mellon, 4209 Mohican Dr, Schnecksville, questioned how a traffic study can be done on an unknown use? He also questioned Schneck Rd, is a study being done on this road, isn't this a Township road?
Robin Monkiewicz, 5803 Manor Dr, Schnecksville, questioned how impactful will the traffic study be in the final decision? **Township Manager Chris Garges** stated the traffic study will be most important during the Land Development stage.
Township Manager Chris Garges stated PennDot wants a through traffic light at Routes 873 & 309 not at Schneck Rd and Route 873.
Planning Commission member Leonard Nuss stated he feels both lights should stay as they work well together.
Planning Commission member Richard Semmel suggested moving the convenience store to the middle of the development. This way it is away from both the adjoining development and the existing single homes.
Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith questioned the proposed size of the convenience store.
Township Engineer Steve Gitch stated the Township has not "washed their hands" of Schneck Road (as had been commented by one resident) and that the township will continue to work with PennDOT and the layout and intersections of Schneck Road.
Township Solicitor Lisa Young reiterated the outcome of the review of the Special Exception Appeal is for the Planning Commission to offer comment or recommendations to the Zoning Hearing Board.
Planning Commission Richard Semmel questioned if the comment or advice to move forward is only for the one lot? **Attorney Young** stated, no, it is for the use as specified in the Appeal.

The Planning Commission made no motion, recommendation, advice or suggestion to the Zoning Hearing Board. No Action was taken.

Any other items that may be discussed at the discretion of the Planning Commission

The current (latest) North Whitehall Township Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2009. The comprehensive plan was designed to guide the Township for a period of 10 to 15 years. Discussion continued that (1) funds have been allocated in the draft 2021 budget for a review and update to the comprehensive plan, and (2) that the Planning Commission will begin consideration of the review and update,

Richard Semmel motioned to adjourn, John Barto seconded, all others agreed

Meeting Adjourned: 9:25pm.
Jane K. Kelly
Planning/Recording Secretary
North Whitehall Township