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

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF MAY 28, 2024

Meeting brought to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and a moment of silence at 7:00 p.m., on Tuesday, May 28, 2024 by Chairman Brian Horwith

Attendance:

Supervisor Al Geosits	Chairman Brian Horwith
Township Manager Randy Cope	Vice Chairman Robert Korp
Township Director of Operations Jeff Mouer	Secretary Richard Semmel
Township Zoning Officer Aubrie Miller	Bruce Stettler
Township Engineer Steve Gitch	John Barto
Township Solicitor Tom Dinkelacker	Richard Fuller
Township Planning Administrator Jane Kelly	Kathy Crawford
Stacey Yoder; Gilmore & Associates-**ZOOM**	Sean Ziller

Minutes of the April 23, 2024 meeting were approved. Motion made by Richard Semmel, seconded by John Barto, all others agreed.

1. **Donald & Adele Bush Lot Line Adjustment**- NWT-240-24-007, Final, Parcel 5479 1273 9865 & 5479 1199 7911, 4031 & 4015 Coffeetown Road, AR Zone, 13.3243 Acres. The plan was presented by Engineer Brian Gasda; Lehigh Engineering.

a. Keystone Engineers have reviewed the plan and offered their comments and recommendations in a letter dated May 21, 2024.
b. Zoning Officer's review is contained in his letter dated May 9, 2024.
c. The property line currently cuts through the shed and driveway; the proposed lot line will put all the buildings on one property and bring both properties into compliance with the current zoning regulations.
d. The property owner currently does not have plans to develop the agricultural land.

Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel motioned to send a favorable recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, including the conditions from the Township Solicitor below, Planning Commission member Sean Ziller second the motion, vote was taken, all agreed, motion carried.

Solicitor offered the conditions listed below for the Planning Commission's motion on action on the plan:

1. Compliance with conditions II.1 through 4 as set for them in the KCE review letter, dated May 21. 2024.
2. Recording of deeds reflecting the lot line adjustment at the time of plan recording.
3. Dedication of right-of way to the satisfaction of the Township Staff and Township Engineer for the nominal consideration of $1.00.
4. Payment of all fees due and owing as a condition of release of the plan for recording.

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2. **Nexus 78- Land Development**, Lot Line Consolidation and Land Development, NWT-22-013, Preliminary/Final, Parcel 5468 9340 0322, 5478 0205 7486, 5478 0231 5657 & 5468 9231 0028, 2945 & 3121 Route 309, 4425 & 4363 Orefield Road, LI/B Zone, 72.459 Acres. The plan was presented by Attorney Kate Durso; Fitzpatrick, Lentz & Bubba PC, Engineer Fidel Gonzales; Langan Engineering, John Pollock & Barry Henry; Trammel Crow and Ben Guthrie; Traffic Planning & Design.

a. Township Solicitor Tom Dinkelacker explained the Planning Commission progress for the residents new to attending a Township meeting.
b. The proposed warehouse is on 70 acres, in the LI/B zone and is a 547,500 sqft building.
c. The developer stated their proposed building will be within the required setbacks and will only be using half allotted the building coverage. The building will sit down from Route 309.
d. There is no tenant secured yet.
e. PennDOT will review the entire plan and a HOP will be needed, this is a very long process, review, and engineering.
f. Traffic counts will be checked during the traffic impact study.
g. The traffic study will include the following intersections, Route 309/Orefield/Kernsville, Route 309/Limekiln, Route 309/Shankweiler & Route 309/Huckleberry.
h. The traffic conversation included the betterment project with PennDOT, aligning, widening, new traffic signals widening radius of all.
i. There are 2 entrances and exits proposed, Route 309 and Orefield Rd. PennDOT would not put in a traffic signal at the entrance on Route 309.
j. Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel questioned when will PennDOT be done with their upgrades, and he requested their traffic study be done during the school year when traffic is busy with buses.
k. The developer stated this use is by right and they want to be a good neighbor.
l. There are 3 detention facilities proposed, public water and on lot septic.

m. An underground drip system is proposed for septic, subjected to DEP approval.
n. Spray irrigation is also proposed.
o. **Planning Commission member Bruce Stettler** questioned the mine holes on the northern side of the site, how will this be handled? The developer stated their geotect engineer will be handling the review of that area.
p. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** questioned how much of the building would be covering the mine hole? the developer stated the are would need to be tested for environmental hazard before that could be answered.
q. **Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford** stated the trucks will be loud, neighbors will hear the noise, she requested a noise study should be completed and noise barriers should be in place. She also requested jake brakes be prohibited and no overnight parking.
r. **Planning Commission member John Barto** questioned how many trucks in and out?
s. **Planning Commission member Sean Ziller** stated the LVPC review letter states 903 vehicles in and out daily, that's a lot of vehicles.
t. **Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp** had quite a few comments and/or suggestions:

1. State law, specifically the MPC, requires every township, borough, and city to provide for every type of land use within its borders.
2. The UNFI warehouses does not mean the Township has satisfied this requirement, particularly if the land in question is in the path of development.
    a. As this property lies between Route 22 and Independence Drive. It is difficult to argue this is not in the path of development.
3. By a recent amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, warehouses over 25 KSF in size are restricted to properties within the Industrial Zone with:
    a. direct access to an arterial road (Rt. 309 is),
    b. greater setbacks & landscaping buffers,
    c. a traffic study to include truck route mapping, and
    d. "sufficient off-street queueing space… to prevent vehicles from queueing on public streets while waiting for access to the facility."
4. If a warehouse must be permitted somewhere, and it must, a property at the southern end of the Township with direct access to a state route is the best location.
5. On the specifics of the plan set, the Applicant did well to depict turning movements for multiple vehicle types, including emergency services and trash trucks, and for including house-side shields on the site lights.
6. Beyond that, the layout and design are shortsighted and insufficient.
    a. Just because a warehouse can be there doesn't mean it should be there. There are many other profitable uses of that land that would have far less detrimental impacts on the surrounding road network and the community.
    b. Left turns into and out of the site, particularly by tractor trailers will be difficult if not hazardous without a traffic signal.
    c. Planning and provisions for sufficient onsite queuing is required & essential.
        - No more UNFI trucks stacked on Pennsylvania & Independence.
        - Wherever the gates are placed on the site, a condition of plan approval should be that they are kept open or removed at the direction of the Township if traffic backs up on to the adjoining roads.
    d. Advance signage should be provided to guide tractor trailers into the site.
        - If they miss the turns as the UNFI drivers too often have, they will be circulating a long time and/or making turns on local roads not designed for wayward tractor trailers.
    e. LVPC correctly notes that a 50-foot-tall warehouse will be out of character with the surrounding area.
        - The low elevation of the building pad relative to the elevation of 309 will somewhat mitigate the visual impact, as will required buffer trees.
        - A green roof across the warehouse would go even further and help with water quality management.
    f. The Applicant proposes to use underground stormwater basins yet the pavement section directly above them would be less than the thickness used in the drive aisles. A thicker pavement section would reduce the risk of failure.
    g. Inspection and maintenance records for the underground system should be provided annually to the Township.
7. The existing 309/Kernsville/Orefield intersection is overmatched at peak hours, dangerously skewed, and ill-suited to tractor trailer turning movements.
    a. PennDOT's so-called 309 Betterment project would add left-turn lanes on Route 309 only – not on Kernsville or Orefield.
        - It would not fix the skew.
        - It would not fix the problem of long queues from Orefield and Kernsville seeking to make left turns.
            - Removing left turns from the 309 through lanes would make it even harder for motorists on Orefield & Kernsville to turn left onto 309.

8. Whatever development occurs on this, the largest open parcel in the 309 corridors, should make 309 function and look better, not worse.
    a. It is inconceivable that 309 will become 4 lanes from Schnecksville to Route 22.
    - Even if NWT wanted that and was willing to invest the millions of dollars and undertake the condemnation necessary to make it happen, SWT appears to have no interest in that.
        - There would be no point in making 309 four lanes in NWT only to queue up at the lights at Orefield, Lime Kiln, Huckleberry, & beyond.

    b. Since 309 cannot become a multi-lane highway, let's make it an attractive main street.
    - It wasn't that long ago that residential structures dotted the 309 corridors.
    - North and south of the Orefield/Kernsville/309 intersection, many attractive homes remain.
    - Street trees and sidewalks would make the corridor much more attractive, inviting, and calm traffic when the congestion doesn't already do it.
    - LVPC is correct that not providing pedestrian accommodation as part of this project would be a missed opportunity.
    - While 309 has several LANTA bus stops, it is very uninviting to pedestrians, yet a few stalwart souls use it daily.
        - If this use is similar to UNFI, there will be workers taking the LANTA bus daily.
    - Street trees and sidewalks would make the corridor more attractive to neighborhood commercial uses that are in character with the existing residential and small commercial uses, not large-scale industrial.

u. **Planning Commission member Bruce Stettler** questioned if PennDOT betterment project is paying for the improvements along Route 309 what will the developer be paying for?

v. **Township Supervisor Al Geosits** questioned if there will be a guard shack and where will the trucks turn around? The developer stated there will be a turnaround area the first 500ft and it will be up to the tenant if they want a guard shack.

w. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** suggested a green roof or a solar roof, Developer stated they would look into solar roof.

x. **Planning Commission member Sean Ziller** stated he had environmental resource concerns buffering requirements around the site.

y. **Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith** stated Orefield Rd can not take the truck traffic.

Comments from the Residents:

- **George Singerline, Orefield**, he is concerned with the traffic along Orefield Rd, this is a 2-lane road, how will the trucks make those turns, school hours with buses, school bus stops, light pollution, fire calls, it is just a dangerous road already and not you are added more truck traffic.
- **Karen Kaintz, Orefield**, she is concerned with the 1st responders at her house, school bus stop at her house, bus traffic, and traffic concern in general.
- **Sam Claudio, Orefield**, he moved here to enjoy his backyard and now he has to look at a warehouse.
- **Nicholas Smith, Schnecksville**, he has lived here his entire life and has slowly watched the area become more industrial.
- **Sinara Singerline, Orefield**, she has concerns about garbage and security with the traffic along Orefield Road when the trucks are working on the mine hole. They had problems when they worked on the mine hole on the other side of Orefield Road, also when Parkland has their football games the traffic is backed up along this road and now adding the additional truck traffic will be horrendous. The bridge on Orefield Rd near Coffeetown Rd floods all the time.
- **Paul Semmel, Schnecksville,** he has environmental and traffic concerns. He suggests they look into solar panels.
- **Brandon Schantz, Schnecksville**, the mine hole was filled in 10 years ag, we are losing a lot of farmlands using this for a different use and he is concerned about the additional truck traffic.
- **George Borman, Schnecksville,** questioned if the developer has talked to PennDOT regarding the Route 309 entrance? He also questioned if the developer has talked to the Turnpike Commission since their parcel borders the turnpike.
- **Sue McGorry, Orefield, LowHIll Township,** she urges North Whitehall Township to keep fire safety in mind while reviewing this plan, remember there was a 4-county fire on Kernsville Road. This proposed building will need a fire suppression system.
- **Joanne Mertz, Orefield, LowHIll Township**, be careful of the waivers, your roads cannot handle more trucks, our roads cannot handle more trucks.
- **Bob Allen, Coplay**, questioned the main entrance if this is as wide as it will be, the developer stated they are in discussions with PennDOT.
- **Brandon Schantz, Schnecksville**, questioned the grade of the main entrance? The developer stated it starts at 6%- 4%- 2%, Brandon remarked, being a trucker himself, the majority of truckers would go out the Orefield Road exit with that grade. He also questioned if there would be covers on the lights? The developer answered, yes.
- **Karen Kaintz, Orefield**, questioned who would be using the Route 309 entrance/exit? The developer stated mostly employees.

Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith motioned to table the plan, Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford second the motion, vote taken, all others agreed, motion carried.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:30pm
Jane K. Kelly
Planning/Recording Secretary
North Whitehall Township