

NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Lehigh Carbon Community College, 4525 Education Park Drive, Schnecksville, PA 18078
Lisa Jane Scheller Community Services Center Building 7 –Room 203 (Parking Lot F)
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF MARCH 25, 2025

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, March 25, 2025 by Vice Chairman Robert Korp

Attendance:

Supervisor Al Geosits	Township Planning Administrator Jane Kelly
Township Manager Randy Cope	Vice Chairman Robert Korp
Township Director of Operations Jeff Mouer	Secretary Richard Semmel
Township Planner Kevin Murphy	John Barto
Township Zoning Officer Aubrie Miller	Jeff Johnson
Township Engineer Steve Gitch	Kathy Crawford
Township Solicitor Tom Dinkelacker	Sean Ziller

Minutes of the February 25, 2025 meeting were approved. Motion made by Sean Ziller, seconded by Jeff Johnson, all others agreed.

1. **Lehigh Valley Zoo Barn & Barnyard**- NWT-240-25-003, Sketch, Parcel 5458 8959 5575, 5150 Game Preserve Rd, CR Zone, 538.5 Acres. The plans were presented by Bohler Engineer Don Peters and Lehigh Valley Zoo representative Amanda Shurr.
 - o Waiver Request from:
 - From SALDO 375-32.A & 375-36.A - A request to waive Land Development and pursue Administrative Review for the Plan.
 - a. Keystone Engineers have reviewed the plan and offered their comments and recommendations in a letter dated March 17, 2025.
 - b. Township Planner's review is contained in his letter dated March 3, 2025.
 - c. Township Zoning Officer's review is contained in his letter dated March 14, 2025.
 - d. Assistant Township Fire Marshall's review is contained in his letter dated March 12, 2025.
 - e. The proposed barn and barnyard are to help improve the guest and staff experience at the zoo.
 - f. The existing buildings are approximately 1200sqft and the proposed barn and barnyard will be 5000sq ft. Net impervious cover increase would be roughly 5,000 sq ft.
 - g. There are 2 phases proposed with this project, the barn and barnyard are phase 1. An educational center will be phase 2.
 - h. Phase 1 will be more for the animals and guests walking through, septic updates will not be needed for this phase. Phase 2 will be a larger educational center, and septic updates will be discussed at that time.
 - i. **Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford** questioned why the applicant is requesting a waiver from Land Development? Engineer Don Peters stated the applicant wants to start construction as soon as possible and the Land Development phase might take another 90 days.
 - j. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** questioned when the project was first discussed? The Applicant stated they talked to the Township staff over the summer and the project is dependent on funding.
 - k. **Township Supervisor Al Geosits** questioned if the building is generally an accessory structure, and will it be handicap accessible? Amanda stated yes to both questions.
 - l. **Township Manager Randy Cope** stated the Township staff had several meetings with the design team and this project will need to comply with the building code.
 - m. **Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp** shared a few comments emailed from Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith who is not present at tonight's meeting, Brian is generally not in favor of waiving the Land Development process for anyone, it is in the Township Ordinance, and it sets a poor precedent. If Land Development is waived now, the Applicant will look for a similar treatment as it moves onto additional phases.
 - n. **Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp** stated he is of the opposite opinion; he does not have a problem with waiving the Land Development process for phase 1 of this project because it is a small redevelopment of an existing developed portion of 500-acre tract, distant from neighbors, and requested by a non-profit/government entity.

John Barto motioned to waive the Land Development process of this applicant and forward the plan to the Board of Supervisors for an administrative review, **Jeff Johnson** second the motion, vote was taken, **Richard Semmel** and **Kathy Crawford** voted no, all others voted yes, 5-2, motion carried.

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

By a vote of 5 to 2, the Planning Commission voted to recommend to the Board of Supervisors a waiver of the requirement to pursue land development, subject to the following conditions:

1. At the commencement of the permit process, the Developer will establish an escrow account in an amount to be determined by the Township to reimburse the Township for consultant review and other fees incurred.
2. Upon completion of the project the Developer shall prepare and file at its expense a set of as-built plans depicting the work, said as-built plans to be subject to review and approval by the Township engineer.
3. The Developer shall obtain all required permits and outside agency approvals and provide copies to the Township.
4. The Developer shall comply with the comments set forth in the review letters issued for the project.

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2. **3948 Portland Street Land Development** – NWT-240-23-006, Preliminary/Final, Parcel 5479 8461 9922, 3948 Portland Street, ME/I Zone, 4.07 Acres. The plan was presented by Hanover Engineering, Engineer Andrew Woods.
- o Waiver Request from:
 - SALDO Article 3 Section 3.02.A. – At the request of a Developer, the Planning Commission, at its option, may accept and review a submission as a Preliminary/Final Plan.
 - SALDO Appendix C - Typical Local Roadway Cross- Section. The waiver is for the horizontal location of the curb and sidewalk. Appendix C cross section shows the sidewalk adjacent to the curb.
 - SALDO Section 375-72 – regarding recreation areas. The applicant has indicated the recreation fees are such that it would create a significant burden on the project. The applicant is requesting a waiver of the fees (in whole or as agreed to with the Township) in lieu of paved path to the Ironton Rail Trail, and additional cost due to Act 2, environmental testing and cleanup, additional building construction cost, revised plans to make the project a borrow project and not export any material, and additional cost to import fill and topsoil.
 - a. Keystone Engineers have reviewed the plan and offered their comments and recommendations in a letter dated March 17, 2025.
 - b. Township Planner's review is contained in his letter dated March 17, 2025.
 - c. Township Zoning Officer's review is contained in his letter dated March 14, 2025.
 - d. Assistant Township Fire Marshall's review is contained in his letter dated March 14, 2025.
 - e. There have been some minor revisions to the building since the last time it was presented to the Planning Commission. The building has been flipped around, there are 39 apartments with this submission, down from the previous 40.
 - f. The outside agencies have been submitted and are being reviewed and processed.
 - g. Water pressure has been tested & it is adequate.
 - h. The lighting plan has proposed 3 20' light poles with a controlled spread. The Planning Commission members requested the light site not spread beyond the property line.
 - i. **Township Supervisor Al Geosits** questioned what kind of material the guiderail along Portland Street would be made of? Engineer Andy Woods stated the guiderail would be PennDot metal.
 - j. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** stated the only thing he does not like with this plan is it does not have a continuous loop around the building for emergencies.
 - k. **Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford** questioned if the applicant heard from Parkland School District regarding bus stops? There has been no response from Parkland School District after a few attempts to request plan comments. Engineer Andrew Woods stated there will be room for sidewalks to a bus stop. Kathy also asked in the maintenance will on site or on call. It was stated the maintenance will be on call.
 - l. **Planning Commission members John Barto and Sean Ziller** were both concerned with the lighting and security of the residents and children.
 - m. **Township Manager Randy Cope** requested the light closest to the Ironton Rain Trail, Portland Street and Quarry Street should be changed to help light up the parking lot at the trailhead. Randy also suggested during the demo of the building the emergency service companies might be able to do some training in the old building.
 - n. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** suggested the color of the lights for the streetlights and the along the building should be warmer in color and not as bright as those installed along the Maple Street homes.
 - o. **Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp** stated this project is a positive by removing a blighted building, redeveloping a brownfield, and connecting to the rail trail.

Richard Semmel motioned to send a favorable recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, to waive SALDO Section 375-72 in its entirety, **Jeff Johnson** second the motion, there was a vote taken, **Robert Korp, John Barto & Sean Ziller** voted No, all others voted yes, 4-YES 3-NO, motion carried.

▪ SALDO Section 375-72 – recreation areas.

Jeff Johnson motioned to send a favorable recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, to waive SALDO Article 3 Section 3.02.A. & SALDO Appendix C, **Sean Ziller** second the motion, there was a vote taken all agreed, motion carried.

▪ SALDO Article 3 Section 3.02.A. – At the request of a Developer, the Planning Commission, at its option, may accept and review a submission as a Preliminary/Final Plan.

▪ SALDO Appendix C - Typical Local Roadway Cross- Section. The waiver is for the horizontal location of the curb separated from the sidewalk by a planting strip. Appendix C cross section shows the sidewalk adjacent to the curb.

Sean Ziller motioned to send a favorable recommendation to the Board of Supervisor to approve the plan, **Jeff Johnson** seconded the motion, a 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. KCE Review letter, dated 3.17.25, Comments 1, 3 (as revised), and 4-7, with respect to comment 3 the lighting plan conditions are revised as follows:
 - a. Parking lot lights to be a consistent 20' height.
 - b. Except for streetlights, no spillage of light off the property.
 - c. Provide for uniform distribution of light on site.
 - d. Maximize / optimize lighting at the IRT parking lot.
2. NWT Planning Letter, dated 3.17.25, Planning Comment B.
3. NWT Zoning Letter, dated 3.14.25, General Comment 3.
4. ESO Letter, dated 3.14.25, Comment 1 to maximize paved area and to incorporate striping for firefighting access.
5. Korp Memo, dated 3.18.25, Comments c.(i) and (ii).
6. Standard conditions as follows:
 - a. Execution of an Improvements Agreement with all required improvements to be secured by and irrevocable standby letter of credit, all to the satisfaction of the Township solicitor.
 - b. Execution of a Stormwater Agreement to the satisfaction of the Township solicitor.
 - c. Payment of all review fees and as a condition of plan recording.
 - d. Payment of all impact fees in accordance with Twp. ordinances or the requirements of outside agencies.
 - e. Participation in a pre-construction conference prior to commencement of work at the site; and
 - f. Compliance with conditions of Zoning Hearing Board approval, if any.

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Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith joined the meeting at this time.

3. **Coplay Apartments** – NWT-22-021, Preliminary, Parcel 5489 0543 8920, 2260 Quarry Street, VR Zone, 3.0777 Acres, 13,375 Bldg sq ft. The plan was presented by Lehigh Engineering, Engineers Lew Rauch and Phil Albright.
- a. Keystone Engineers have reviewed the plan and offered their comments and recommendations in a letter dated March 17, 2025.
 - b. Township Planner's review is contained in his letter dated March 17, 2025
 - c. Township Zoning Officer's review is contained in his letter dated March 14, 2025
 - d. Assistant Township Fire Marshall's review is contained in his letter dated March 14, 2025.
 - e. Sidewalks have been added to the plan.
 - f. A large underground stormwater detention basin has been proposed.
 - g. The water line is proposed from NBMA and septic from NWT.
 - h. The developer is proposing a spray irrigation system to offset the increased stormwater, and it has been suggested that meadow grass would help absorb the spray volume and create a soft buffer between the building and the rail trail.
 - i. There are retaining walls proposed on the site, there are proposed to be under 4'. A note should be added to the plan regarding the height of these walls as being 4' maximum and therefore not surcharged.
 - j. **Township Supervisor Al Geosits** questioned access to the IRT, he would like to see a walkway. Al would also like to see a streetlight going along the driveway and one further in the driveway.
 - k. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** questioned the neighboring property Ranger Lake, would this development be putting up and signs or fencing warning their residents of the neighboring shooting range? Engineer Lew Rauch stated no fence but possible signs.
 - l. **Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford** stated she lives across the street from the proposed development, so she has a few concerns. She is concerned with runoff once there is imperious coverage where there once wasn't, rather than so many steps to the buildings have you thought about ramps, the crosswalk across Quarry Street, there should be a flashing light like there is on Mauch Chunk Rd & she is requesting larger trees.
 - m. **Planning Commission member John Barto** was also concerned with the safety of the residents living close to the shooting range.
 - n. **Planning Commission member Jeff Johnson** stated he believes it is the shooting range's responsibility to keep the people off their property not the other way around.
 - o. **Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith** stated the plan is moving in the right direction, but he also agrees he has concerns being so close to the shooting range and that there are too many incomplete items to warrant approval of the plan even as preliminary.
 - p. **Planning Commission member Sean Ziller** was concerned with the crosswalk across Quarry Street.
 - q. **Planning Commission Vice Chair Robert Korp** questioned the lighting plan as being without footcandle coverage data, the spray irrigation system not detailed, the post construction stormwater management plans not being included, and he also suggested adding a railing on top of the retaining wall for safety as it exceeds 30" in height.
 - r. **Township Solicitor Tom Dinkelacker** questioned where the water and sewage will come from? Water is NBMA and sewage is NWT.

Robert Korp motioned to table the plan, John Barto second the motion, vote was taken, all agreed, motion carried.

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

Director of Operations Jeff Mouer informed the Planning Commission that future meetings are being scheduled and emails are being sent out to the commission and Board of Supervisors. Please watch your emails for dates, times, and locations.

Jeff Johnson motioned to adjourn the meeting, Richard Semmel second the motion, all others agreed, motion carried.

Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp adjourned the meeting at 8:30pm.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:30pm.
Jane K. Kelly
Planning/Recording Secretary
North Whitehall Township