

**HELLAM TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of April, 13, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Devin Winand. The meeting was held at the Hellam Township Municipal Building. Chairman Winand led the Pledge of Allegiance. Other members present were Fred Owens, Rick Cooper, John Eifert, Jay Kokiko, Christopher Altland and Michael Shillott. Other attendees included Rachel Vega, Zoning Officer, Nedette Otterbein, Supervisor and Bill Conaway, Supervisor.

Approval of Minutes

The Planning Commission reviewed draft minutes from the March 23, 2023 meeting. Mr. Owens pointed out that on the last page, second paragraph, last sentence, the word "and" should be "as." Upon a motion by Mr. Shillott, seconded by Mr. Owens, the Planning Commission approved the minutes with the above-mentioned change. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Z-2023-07, Kirk and Tracy Lavetan, 6052 River Drive (MK-30B) Variance

Mr. Lavetan presented his application for a setback variance. He is requesting a zero-foot right side yard setback to construct a 20' x 29' detached garage. This garage will be constructed on the existing paved driveway and will therefore not increase the impervious surface. He has discussed with the affected neighbor who has lived there for 23 years and they are agreeable to the project.

Mr. Eifert stated that one of the variance requirements is that the request be the minimum variance necessary. He asked if Mr. Lavetan can place the garage behind the house. Mr. Lavetan stated that putting the garage behind the house would increase the impervious coverage and disturb steep slopes. The slope behind the house is about a 45% grade. Ms. Vega stated that the right side-yard is essentially a cliff, at least 14' high. The proposed placement of the garage would be the minimum variance. Mr. Eifert asked if the garage could be made smaller so there would be some setback. Again, that side-yard is a cliff and having a few feet between the garage and the retaining wall would require additional maintenance.

Mr. Lavetan was asked about stormwater management. He stated that he is not increasing the impervious coverage. The water would be collected in the gutters and likely flow along the driveway as it currently does. Mr. Shillott stated that the flow of water would now be concentrated and he needs some sort of stormwater mitigation. Ms. Vega stated that the Stormwater Ordinance does not require mitigation when there is no increase in impervious area. Regardless, Mr. Cooper would like to see some concessions on stormwater management. Regardless of the lack of increase of impervious surface, the lot coverage needs to be determined and anything over 15% should be mitigated. Upon a motion by Mr. Cooper, seconded by Mr. Shillott, the Planning Commission recommends approval of Z-2023-07, variance request by Kirk and Tracy Lavetan at 6052 River Drive for a zero-foot right side yard setback with the condition that stormwater will be mitigated for any impervious surface that exceeds the maximum 15% lot coverage. Motion carried unanimously.

Z-2023-08, B&T Cheese, 5890 Lincoln Highway (LL-31A) Variance

Scott Swengel of B&T Cheese presented his application. He is requesting a 75-foot front yard setback from Lincoln Highway when a 100-foot setback is required. He proposes to construct a 38' x 40' addition on the front of the building. Since taking ownership of the property, they have made several improvements to the property such as enclosing the dock and changing the siding. Business has been quickly increasing hence the need for an expansion. The addition will have a 12' ceiling with a sloped roof. The roof will slope toward the Blessing's property. There will be no windows on the addition. They are a wholesale food distributor and do not have customers on site except one.

Mr. Eifert asked if there was an alternative location for the addition to meet the minimum variance requirement. If he placed the addition on the back of the building there is a six-foot elevation difference and the addition needs to be at the same level as the existing building. Additionally, putting the addition in the back would

increase the impervious area and may require a variance from the lot coverage requirements. This is a nonconforming lot as the minimum lot size in the Mixed-Use 1 Zone is two acres and this parcel is only 0.88 acres.

Mr. Shillott asked where the stormwater is going. Mr. Swengel responded that there is a large swale on the property that takes the water to the Blessing's field. Mr. Shillott stated that water is being concentrated into the swale and feels some sort of stormwater management should be done. Mr. Winand commented that this addition would not cause any additional traffic since the business is not open to the public and would also not require any additional parking. Mr. Kokiko asked if there would be additional truck traffic. Mr. Swengel responded that there will be no additional truck traffic. Currently they have two trucks that run in and out of the property. Mr. Cooper added that since there is no retail traffic to the business that visibility is not an issue and suggested to plant a screening along Lincoln Highway. Mr. Cooper does not understand why Lincoln Highway has a 100-foot setback.

Upon a motion by Mr. Kokiko, seconded by Mr. Eifert, the Planning Commission recommended approval for Z-2023-08, variance request for a 75-foot setback from Lincoln Highway at 5890 Lincoln Highway, as presented. Motion carried unanimously

Z-2023-09, Susquehanna Heritage, 202 Cool Springs Road (LL-70E) Special Exception

Mark Platts, President of Susquehanna Heritage presented the special exception application for 202 Cool Springs Road. He was accompanied by Eric White, Wrightsville Borough Council and Attorney Alex Snyder. Susquehanna Heritage currently operates the Zimmerman Center. They support heritage and outdoor recreation. This special exception is for a use not provided for in the Zoning Ordinance. Susquehanna Heritage proposes to use 202 Cool Springs Road (the Mifflin House) as the Susquehanna Discovery Center. It is a semi-public park and visitor center. They have made great strides in trying to preserve the Mifflin House and its history as an underground railroad site and civil war site. Susquehanna Heritage feels this use fits into a national heritage center/visitor destination so visitors can learn about our history. The proposal is to eventually connect to other historical properties. This will bring economic development to the area and many educational opportunities. Most of the land would remain open space and have some walking trails. The house would be used as a learning center for the underground railroad and a museum. The barn would be re-used as an education center. Susquehanna Heritage owns property along the river and hopes to eventually offer a walking path from the visitor center to the river. This would allow visitors to understand how people tried to get to the river to escape slavery. This use is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. The adjoining property owners would like to preserve the land so this use would maintain the character of the neighborhood. The plan submitted is a phased development that will take place over five to ten years. The first phase would be improvements to access and parking to get people into the site as soon as possible. They would like to have temporary parking so they can offer scheduled tours. Allowing people on the site would provide for additional fund-raising opportunities and allow donors to see what they are investing in. This use will bring about ten jobs into the township. Since this is a use not provided for, there are no specific parking criteria. Looking at other similar facilities, they will base their parking on what is provided at these facilities.

Eric White from Wrightsville Borough Council supports this use. It will bring in more tourism. This use also ties in with the regional comprehensive plan as the property spans across both Hellam Township and Wrightsville Borough. It will help connect visitors to the amenities available in both municipalities. Mr. White hopes this facility will be able to tie into their existing park and ballfield. He would also like to see Civil War re-enactments held on the property. Mr. White feels this use fits in the with vision and the character of the neighborhood.

Wright's Crossing has a business association that controls the stormwater management for the development. Susquehanna Heritage will be required to contribute financially to the maintenance of the stormwater facilities that exist. Additionally, since this property will not be developed as an industrial site, that means there is more than adequate storage for stormwater.

Upon a motion by Mr. Shillott, seconded by Mr. Altland, the Planning Commission recommends approval of Z-2023-09, Susquehanna Heritage's request for a special exception to operate as a semi-public park and visitor center at 202 Cool Springs Road. Motion carried unanimously.

Ongoing Business

Mr. Winand stated that the Planning Commission will continue its review of short-term rentals at the next meeting. He would like to discuss the concept of glamping and solidify what we've been working on so far. Mr. Shillott would like to talk about licensing short-term rentals versus having them apply for a zoning permit. He feels short-term rentals should be limited to certain areas of the township like the river, not scattered all over the township.

Mr. Winand presented the Commissioners with a sample letter of support that Lancaster Conservancy is asking for. The letter is to support a grant application for better access into Hellam Hills. Mr. Shillott asked what is in it for the township. If they want something from us, they should give something to us. Mr. Owens does not think this is an appropriate scenario for a quid-pro-quo. The work Lancaster Conservancy is doing is wonderful for the township. Upon a motion by Mr. Owens, seconded by Mr. Cooper, the Planning Commission agrees to provide Lancaster Conservancy with a letter of support for their grant application.

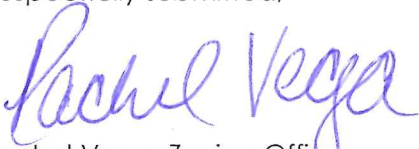
Correspondence/Reports

Ms. Vega provided the March 2023 Zoning Report.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2023. The Planning Commission will continue to discuss and review the short-term rental ordinance.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Rachel Vega, Zoning Officer