

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, September 24, 2015 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Vice Chairman, Mr. Ron Rosen presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: SPEARMAN, COOPER, GAUTHIER, STRACKHOUSE, ROSEN, RUSSELL, ROBINSON
Excused: WEGGEL

Also Present: Director of Code Enforcement MATTEO
Planning & Zoning Official PENECALE
County Planner NARCOWICH
Commissioner LUKER
Community Director STROTHER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Agenda Item PC1 – Application of Crest Manor Redevelopment, LP

Mr. Rosen read agenda item PC1 into the record, and asked the applicant to present their plan.

Joel A. Johnson, Executive Director of Montgomery County Housing Authority, 104 West Main Street, Suite 1, Norristown, PA., said we are the owners of the Crest Manor site and the MCHA is an independent authority that serves as a conduit for Federal subsidies for low-income households. We have two primary programs; one is a housing-to-adopt program formerly known as Section 8, which provides rental subsidies for low-income households within privately owned rental units all across the country.

We also have another major program, which is public housing and those are rental units for low income households, but the units are publicly owned by the MCHA, who serves as the landlord. We have 616 of those units in several locations across Montgomery County including the 40 units at Crest Manor in Abington Township.

Generally, the unit structures are in reasonable condition, but after 50 years, they are showing signs of age, and looking into the future over the next 10-20 years, budget estimates would not be able to maintain existing structures, so we have decided to redevelop the site. We sent out an RFP in spring of 2014, and many national developers who specialize in affordable housing responded, and the MCHA selected the firm of Pennrose Properties, LLC, which is a Philadelphia-based firm that has developed many affordable units.

The plan is to develop 16 new construction units and fully rehab 30 of the existing units. Some of the units will be removed and we will build a community building and a small playground in the area that is within the floodplain, which is shown as green space on the plan.

He introduced Kyle Speece Senior Developer, with Pennrose Properties and Mark Buchvalt, PE, with T and M Associates to the Board.

Mr. Rosen questioned whether any tenants had to leave the site.

Mr. Johnson replied no. The MCHA has strategically been stockpiling vacancies at the site, and as of today, we have 31 of the 40 units occupied. Our commitment to the residents is to phase construction and renovation in such a way that all residents can remain onsite throughout construction, which will be a 16-18 month process, although some residents will be moving to different buildings within Crest Manor for a period of time while their unit is being renovated.

Mark J. Buchvalt, PE, with T and M Associates, 74 West Board Street, Suite 530, Bethlehem, PA, Civil Engineer for the project, presented a plan showing improvements proposed for the site. Beyond the new units that will be constructed and the upgrades that will be made to the existing units, we will also be completely redoing the existing utilities and utility laterals for all units. Currently, they are on a master meter and that will be removed and we will install conventional laterals out to the street that will be individually metered.

We will overlay existing parking pads and replace all lead walks and all existing units will get new porches and patios. We will also replace all perimeter sidewalk with new sidewalk; there will be additional parking on Hamilton Avenue; we will install a new playground at the corner of the site making it a larger green space; additional street trees will be added throughout the site; and increase the stormwater management onsite.

We are currently working on and will comply with comments noted in Township staff review letter dated, August 31, 2015.

Mr. Rosen asked for a rendering of what the units will look like.

Mr. Buchvalt presented the rendering to the Board.

Mr. Penecale noted that a copy of the rendering was included in the Board's packet.

Ms. Gauthier commented that there are very large Maple Trees onsite and is there a protection plan for those trees during construction?

Mr. Buchvalt replied we have selected certain trees to be removed and those that will not be removed will be protected.

Ms. Gauthier commented that parking is not permitted on Hamilton, so what will be done there?

Mr. Penecale replied there will be a lay-by island that will be created from Franklin down to Washington, so the curb line will be recessed eight feet to provide parking along there and there is a small driveway apron proposed to create additional parking on the Franklin Avenue side.

Ms. Gauthier clarified that parking on Hamilton will only be for Crest Manor residents; how will that be enforced?

Mr. Buchvalt replied signage will be posted for Crest Manor residents.

Ms. Gauthier clarified that the community center to be constructed is just for Crest Manor residents. Is that correct?

Mr. Buchvalt replied yes. There is an existing community building onsite that is located in the floodplain that will be demolished and we will combine a community center and maintenance building into one new facility.

Mr. Rosen asked what type of functionality will the community center have?

Kyle F. Speece, with Pennrose Properties, LLC, One Brewery Park, 1301 North 31st Street, Philadelphia, PA, Senior Developer for the project, replied the primary functionalities will be a management office for onsite property manager as well as a maintenance office and garage with overhead door for maintenance technician onsite fulltime. There will be an office and conference space for the manager and then a community room comparable to a living room with sofas for residents.

Mr. Rosen asked for the size of the community room.

Mr. Speece replied about 600 sq. ft.

Ms. Strackhouse asked was it discussed with residents about the proposed playground and what they would like see there?

Mr. Johnson replied we initially did a survey and had meetings with residents on a wide range of topics and an active space for children was of interest, which was the concept behind the playground.

Ms. Strackhouse asked has a design been drawn for a playground or is it still just a concept?

Mr. Buchvalt replied it is a just a preliminary concept of a tot lot type of playground.

Ms. Robinson asked about safety measures for proposed playground as it would be right on the corner of the property.

Mr. Buchvalt replied we considered low decorative fencing to help define the area as well as keep the children safe.

Mr. Penecale said the tot lot would be within the limits of the 100-year floodplain and no fencing could be installed as it will impede the flow of stormwater.

Ms. Gauthier asked will the chain-link fence be removed?

Mr. Buchvalt replied it will be taken down between Franklin and Washington.

Mr. Rosen expressed concern for the safety of the toddlers and a fence or some other alternative should be considered.

Mr. Penecale replied we discussed a series of bollards with some type of barrier between them that would limit access directly to the street, but it has to be some type of structure that would not impede the flow of stormwater.

Mr. Matteo noted that the applicant went before the Zoning Hearing Board seeking relief for dimensional variances that were granted. Also, he, along with Commissioner Luker and Mr. Penecale held three neighborhood meetings that included residents from this community as well as from the surrounding neighborhood.

Ms. Gauthier asked about the engineer's comments in the staff review letter regarding curb cuts.

Mr. Buchvalt replied we spoke with Township Engineer and they want to see handicapped ramps at the corner of Franklin and Hamilton Avenues and Washington and Hamilton Avenues for a total of eight curb cuts and crosswalks at those locations.

Ms. Gauthier asked will there be ADA accessible units?

Mr. Buchvalt replied a percentage will be completely ADA accessible and there will also be units that are not fully ADA accessible, but do have some aspects of it.

Mr. Speece added that we also have units for hearing and visual impaired residents.

Ms. Strackhouse asked about traffic calming measures as suggested in the County's review letter.

Mr. Speece replied we reviewed the comments made by the County about additional landscaping and we will add landscaping and signage to accent the corner of the property.

Construction of a traffic circle would not be feasible due to the amount of funds in the budget, although we will be doing public improvements such as overlaying Franklin and Washington along the site with new utilities and sidewalks. Crosswalks will also be installed.

Mr. Rosen questioned whether the developer is concerned about traffic patterns and the fear of speeding and access to this property.

Mr. Johnson replied there is no history of accidents on this property and he feels the new development will provide new visual attractions to the site that will contribute to the traffic calming.

Mr. Narcowich suggested painting double bar lines indicating that it is an offset intersection that will also show where the cartway is located.

Mr. Speece replied the new bump-in with the parallel parking was a result from discussions with Township staff and he feels this will be a real improvement.

Mr. Rosen asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked when a project such as this comes before the Board that the "monies could be easily understood." Also, she asked for the community center to serve the entire community and questioned whether school taxes are paid.

Mr. Johnson replied the Township and MCHA have a cooperation agreement that includes payment in-lieu-of taxes, so there is a Federally-designated calculation formula that dictates the amount of school, Township and County taxes that are paid.

Mr. Rosen asked for the breakdown on how much of Federal, State and Township money is going into the project.

Mr. Speece replied \$200,000 comes from CDBG program, which is a Federal source channeled through Abington Township; there is \$1 million coming from Montgomery County through their Affordable Housing Trust Fund Program; there is \$750,000 coming from the Pennsylvania Housing and Finance Agency through Penn Homes Funds; there is about \$500,000 in permanent and private debt; and there is \$2.2 million coming from Montgomery Housing Authority in which the project will pay the Housing Authority for the land and the MCHA will immediately lend that money back to the project; and the difference of \$12 million is equity from a private institution that is generated by the project selling low income housing tax credits and that is a Federal source from the IRS.

Wayne Sudler, 1650 Summit Avenue, said he has been a resident for 75 years, and the first meeting he attended, he was aware that no new buildings would be built, but just refurbished, and now he has heard that there will be new buildings built. He was concerned that he did not get a notice about this meeting, and also about the location of the proposed playground, which is one of the highest traffic areas in Crestmont. He cautioned about putting kids on Hamilton Avenue to play.

Mr. Speece replied throughout Pennrose's four year history operating on developments such as this, we have made a sincere commitment to involve locally based business owners and locally based individuals and we will continue to do that. Our general contractor will put together a plan on how to outreach with local businesses and we will make a point to not only reach out to subcontracting firms, but we will also have job fairs.

Also, in regards to the playground, if there is a desire for no play structure there, it can remain as open space/green area.

Mr. Matteo clarified that it is not required for a play structure to be built in that location and that area could remain open space/green area. Is that correct?

Mr. Speece replied that is correct.

Mr. Penecale noted there was a recommendation made in the County staff review letter about street lighting, and he spoke with Public Works Director Mr. Micciolo, who indicated that additional street lighting is not required for this project.

Also, attached to this application is the Act 537 Exemption Application and the applicant is projecting less than one additional EDU increase and that gallon count comes out to 100 gallons of additional flow per day.

Ms. Gauthier commented that since some trees will be removed; and at Franklin and Hamilton where two large trees will be removed, she asked for a replacement tree to be planted there. Also, some smaller trees should be planted in the front yard green space.

Mr. Buchvalt replied we have a landscape plan and wherever there are gaps or an area where a tree is removed, a new tree will be planted. Also the landscaper will plant more than required additional decorative landscaping as the project progresses.

Mr. Penecale said in summary, sanitary sewer service is available and the Act 537 Exemption Application has been submitted for the increase in the number of EDU's that this project will require. Items listed in Township staff review letter dated August 31, 2015 will be taken under consideration by the Board of Commissioners and the recommendation listed in the Montgomery County Planning Commission letter dated, September 8, 2015 will be addressed to the satisfaction of the Board of Commissioners.

In addition, the applicant is requesting waivers as follows:

1. Section 146.11A – Property Identification Plan.
2. Section 146.11.B – Existing Features Plan.
3. Section 146-11.J – Recreational Facilities Plan.
4. Also, waiver request for an Architectural Plan.

Each waiver request was voted on separately for approval as follows.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146.11A – Property Identification Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146.11.B – Existing Features Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request from Section 146-11.J – Recreational Facilities Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Rosen made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve waiver request for an Architectural Plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

Mr. Spearman made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Gauthier to approve the application of Crest Manor Redevelopment, LP as submitted subject to the conditions as previously stated and approval of waiver requests as listed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 7-0.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Ms. Gauthier announced that she, along with Ms. Strackhouse attended and held a training session on Historic Survey along with 35 volunteers. She invited everyone to attend our second training session on Tuesday, September 29, 2015 to be held in this boardroom at 7 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Recording Secretary

