

MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION

LOWER ALLEN TOWNSHIP

REGULAR MEETING

February 18, 2025

The following were in ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS

Brett McCreary, Chair
Jay Blackwell
Jeff Logan
Brian Wickenheiser
Michael Washburn

TOWNSHIP PERSONNEL

James Bennett, Township Planner
Michael Knouse, P.E. Township Engineer
Isaac Sweeney, Director, Community & Economic
Development
Renee' Greenawalt, Recording Secretary

OTHER

Commissioner Joe Swartz
Steve Hoffman – Cumberland County Planning Dept.

CALL TO ORDER AND PROOF OF PUBLICATION

Mr. Bennett called the February 18, 2025, meeting of the Lower Allen Township Planning Commission to order at 7:00 pm. He announced that proof of publication was available for review.

REORGANIZATION

Mr. Bennett announced the reorganization of the Planning Commission for 2025. He requested a motion for the nomination and election of the Chair of the Planning Commission.

Mr. WASHBURN motioned to nominate and elect Mr. Brett McCreary as Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. BLACKWELL and approved 5-0.

Next, Mr. McCreary requested a motion for nomination and election of the Vice Chair. Mr. WASHBURN motioned to nominate and elect Mr. Brian Wickenheiser as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. BLACKWELL and approved 5-0.

Mr. McCreary requested a motion for nomination and election of the Secretary. Mr. LOGAN motioned to nominate and elect Mr. Jay Blackwell as Secretary. The motion was seconded by Mr. WASHBURN and approved 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Mr. BLACKWELL motioned to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2024, Regular Meeting. Mr. WICKENHEISER seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

SLD #2025-01 – 702 Nailor Drive Townhomes for Reedlee Leasing, INC. Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan

Applicant Presentation

Ms. Terry Delo from Integrated Consulting presented a summary of the proposed plan to build nine single family townhouse units on the property located at 702 Nailor Drive. The proposed parcel will be 0.73 acres located in the Multi-family Residential (R-3) District. The two-story units are approximately 11,000 square feet, connected to public sewer and water, including 18 parking spaces with one entrance from Nailor Drive, and exit onto Cedar Run Drive. Ms. Delo noted that an old pool had been removed from the property. Reviewing the stormwater management plan, she noted that no NPDS permit was required. Township and county comments have been addressed. She summarized the modifications being requested.

Township Comments

Mr. Knouse referenced the comment letter of February 13, 2025, noting the need to provide a copy of the zoning variance and conditions of approval to be noted in the plan. Subdivision and land development items are primarily administrative including certificates and financial security. Stormwater management comments are mostly administrative to include the O&M agreement and post construction maintenance and monitoring inspections.

There were no additional comments offered by Cumberland County.

Commissioner Comments

Mr. McCreary asked for the purpose of seeking approval from the Zoning Hearing Board. Ms. Delo said it was to allow parking in front of the building and for a side yard buffer setback reduction to 15 feet.

Mr. Wickenheiser asked whether the pool fill in area encroached into the development area. Ms. Delo noted that the former pool is primarily located over the stormwater management area.

Recommendation on the Plan

Hearing no further discussion, the Planning Commission members addressed the requests for waivers and recommendations on the plan.

Mr. **BLACKWELL** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 192-30.A. – Submission of a Preliminary Plan. The motion was seconded by Mr. **WASHBURN** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **BLACKWELL** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 184-12.J. – Dewatering time greater than 72 hours. The motion was seconded by Mr. **WICKENHEISER** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **BLACKWELL** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 184-22.E.(11)(t) – Minimum 20' easements for stormwater management facilities. The motion was seconded by Mr. **WICKENHEISER** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **BLACKWELL** made a motion to approve the plan upon satisfactory completion of Township and Cumberland County comments. The motion was seconded by Mr. **WASHBURN** and passed 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

SLD #2024-11 – Sheetz – Camp Hill (PA) Hartzdale Preliminary/Final Subdivision and Land Development Plan

Mr. Sean Delaney, attorney from Stevens & Lee, presented updates on behalf of the applicant, noting he was joined by representatives from Sheetz, along with Josh Weidler, Civil Engineer from B&L Companies and Eric Mountz, Traffic Engineer from TPD. The purpose of the plan is to consolidate two existing lots into one lot, demolish the existing buildings and construct a gas station/convenience store located at 2501 Gettysburg Road. The proposed plan is in the C-2 Zoning District.

Referencing their prior presentation before the Planning Commission on November 19, 2024, he noted there had been no additional changes other than to the access on the side of the property at Lebanon Avenue. Since the prior meeting, Sheetz had met several times with residents of the adjacent neighborhood several times for discussion and had addressed feedback by implementing changes to the plan.

Mr. Weidler presented a rendering of the plan for re-orientation purposes and to demonstrate the plan's evolution with respect to the access drive on Lebanon Avenue. The original plan included a full motion access at Lebanon Avenue, which had evolved to a right turn in and left turn out onto Lebanon Avenue. The intersection was moved further away from Nina Avenue and angled away from the neighborhood. Fencing was added to the boundary along the residential area. Overall, turning movements were significantly reduced to address the concern expressed by residents.

Mr. Mountz explained that considering feedback, and working with the township traffic engineer, the plan was revised in an effort to redesign the driveway to meet the needs of all parties, providing access to the Sheetz from Gettysburg Road using the center turn lane. To mitigate concern about a proposed exit across from Nina Avenue, the driveway was moved closer to Gettysburg Road, angled at 45 degrees to discourage flow of traffic to Nina Avenue. He also noted the flush

mountable concrete that is sloped towards the driveway and additional signage included as traffic controls. Changes focused on orienting traffic to and from Gettysburg Road, as well as providing sidewalk along Lebanon Avenue to maintain pedestrian connectivity with crosswalks. He noted that the township traffic engineer had indicated acceptance of the proposed design changes.

Mr. Delaney addressed waiver requests including those effecting planting islands, parking space size and curbing and sidewalk along Lebanon Avenue where existing vegetation is being retained. He also spoke about the plan to infill with evergreen trees and to construct a 6-foot-high privacy fence.

Township Comments

Mr. Knouse referenced the comment letter of February 14, 2025, noting the need under zoning to provide a copy of the required parking and maintenance agreement with the adjacent property owner, and remaining administrative items including certificates and financial security. He acknowledged receipt of November 11, 2024, traffic impact study confirmation from Bowman that all technical comments had been satisfied. Stormwater management comments include the MBDS approval, O&M agreement and post construction maintenance and monitoring inspections. He characterized the plan as being generally in compliance with township ordinances.

There were no additional comments offered by Cumberland County.

Commissioner Comments

Mr. Washburn expressed concerns about the traffic congestion in the turning lane from Gettysburg Road to Hartzdale Drive, especially during high volume traffic times such as the holiday shopping season. He also inquired about the possibility of adding a traffic light and noted unease about the access at Christmas Tree Hill, the backup stacking to the light, as well as the potential internal traffic flow congestion and associated safety issues.

Mr. Mountz said that their expectation is that the left turn onto Lebanon Avenue would act as a relief valve for that turning lane. An additional traffic light was not warranted based on the volume and the short distance between the existing traffic signals. He asserted that the traffic studies observed queueing but that the traffic clears up at an acceptable level. He also noted that speed bumps could be added if desired by the township.

Mr. Washburn stated that the area is already highly congested and asserted the overall comprehensive plan aspirations for the Township are focused on connectivity, pedestrian and bike access. He said that while he supports redevelopment efforts, he has remaining concerns about the safety and traffic congestion impacts of the proposed plan.

Mr. Logan asked how westbound travelers would exit the Sheetz to access Gettysburg Road. Left turns will be prohibited from Lebanon Avenue, therefore travelers must exit onto Hartzdale, then access the left lane to turn left at the light. Mr. Logan also noted the likelihood of drivers instead using Nina Avenue to access Schuylkill Avenue.

Mr. Wickenheiser inquired about the stacking anticipated when exiting via Lebanon Avenue. Mr. Mountz acknowledged the concern about traffic cut-through and illegal movements, which drove the decision to push the rear driveway closer to Gettysburg Road.

Commissioner Swartz asked the applicant to address the concern about music playing over the external loudspeakers at night. Mr. Weidler noted that the hours would be limited for playing music overnight, and that the Planning Commission could recommend specific hours. Commissioner Swartz also asked about access and internal circulation for delivery trucks. Mr. Weidler explained that fuel and product distribution trucks are Sheetz owned so that they are under full control of the route so they will be familiar with the flow of circulation and access. He showed how trucks would enter along Hartzdale Drive, flow internally to the fuel pumps or restocking parking on the opposite side of the store from the fuel pumps. He noted that Lebanon Avenue would not be used for distribution trucks.

A discussion ensued concerning the absence of the need for PennDOT involvement for a highway occupancy permit since all access will be via Hartzdale Drive and Lebanon Avenue, which are both township roads, not state roads.

Commissioner Swartz echoed the sentiments voiced by Mr. Washburn with respect to the Township's plans for the corridor, which are incompatible with the proposed traffic flow and pattern of the plan. He acknowledged that the proposed plans followed current ordinance criteria but expressed concern with the anticipated traffic congestion and safety.

Commissioner Swartz and Mr. McCreary both noted their appreciation to the applicant for their efforts in considering resident feedback and implementing changes to address some of the concerns.

Public Comments

Mr. Alan Spurgeon, resident and business owner of several locations near Gettysburg Road, expressed appreciation to Sheetz for meeting with residents. He shared observations of limited space to accommodate vehicles existing Lebanon Avenue to Gettysburg Road, resulting in access challenges for residents and business patrons. He also noted his expectation that there would be a higher volume of traffic than is suggested in the proposed plan. He shared several videos and photos to illustrate the back up of traffic along Gettysburg Road, noting concerns related to access to the existing childcare center across the street. He voiced concerns over what he characterized as insufficient fencing for a commercial property and his overall perception that a Sheetz would detract from the character of the existing neighborhood.

Ms. April Knepp, 2409 New York Avenue, reiterated concern about traffic congestion and access to the site by commercial vehicles, particularly the wide turning radius of tractor trailers. She also observed that limits on playing music had not been included in the applicant's presentation of the proposed plan and asked whether that would be addressed formally, along with consideration given to limiting deliveries to overnight hours. Lastly, she expressed unease about the likely travel through Christmas Tree Hill parking lot to avoid the traffic light and congestion, and the associated pedestrian safety there and throughout the neighborhood.

Mr. Weidler noted the use of flush corrugated concrete to allow for wider turning radius. Mr. Mountz referenced specific dimensions of the trucks that were considered in the design and specific turning templates were applied to the plan. Mr. Delaney confirmed that deliveries would be limited to off-peak hours, with 2-3 trucks per week for fuel and other products.

Mr. Tom Earnst, 2418 Massachusetts Avenue, noted concern about residential safety and potential stacking at Lebanon Avenue, and the exiting onto Hartzdale, resulting in traffic through the neighborhood and down Nina Avenue.

Dr. Maryann Bova, resident at 2417 New York Avenue, shared appreciation for the applicant's recognition of resident concern, however she noted her opinion that there should be no access to Sheetz via Lebanon Avenue, which will slow departure from and access to the neighborhood, creating a significant impact on residents. She also voiced concern about declining property values due to the increase in noise, litter, light, exhaust fumes, crime and accidents. She asked the Planning Commission not to approve the plan.

Ms. Janelle Acri, resident at 2410 Massachusetts Avenue, thanked Mr. Spurgeon for sharing video evidence of the traffic congestion that is the source of much concern, and noted her experience of significant congestion already, referencing the existing challenges in accessing and departing from the daycare across the street.

Dr. Maryann Bova, resident at 2417 New York Avenue, summarized the resident concern being the negative impacts to health, wellness and safety of the public and the potential risk to the Township in the form of lawsuits resulting from accidents. She suggested that it was negligent to prioritize business over health and safety.

Ms. Suzanne Mahrady, resident at 100 Lebanon Avenue, expressed concern about child safety and possible delays to the school bus route.

Planning Commission members noted the importance of public engagement and expressed appreciation for residential participation and input. Mr. McCreary noted that decisions were reliant upon the information submitted by the applicant and the Township staff. Mr. Wickenheiser added that the role of the Planning Commission is not to make public policy but rather that they are required to make recommendations based on technical specifications.

To keep residents informed, Director Sweeney said that the Board of Commissioners Agenda would be disseminated to the residents who had provided email addresses.

Recommendation on the Plan

Hearing no further discussion, the Planning Commission members addressed the requests for waivers and recommendations on the plan.

Mr. **LOGAN** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 192-30.A. – Submission of a Preliminary Plan. The motion was seconded by Mr. **BLACKWELL** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **LOGAN** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 192-57.C.(8) – Curbing along the frontage of Lebanon Avenue. The motion was seconded by Mr. **BLACKWELL** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **LOGAN** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 192-57.C.(9) – Sidewalks along the frontage of Lebanon Avenue. The motion was seconded by Mr. **BLACKWELL** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **LOGAN** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 192-58.E.(10) – Parking lot planting islands designed to collect stormwater. The motion was seconded by Mr. **BLACKWELL** and passed 5-0.

Mr. **LOGAN** offered a motion to approve waiver of Section 192-59.C.(2) – Parking space size adjacent end islands be an additional two feet. The motion was seconded by Mr. **BLACKWELL** and passed 5-0.

Mr. McCreary expressed empathy for the situation and recommended more discussion and consideration of alternative options at the Board of Commissioners' level.

Mr. Washburn suggested considering moving the entire plan further south with one main entrance at Christmas Tree Hill. Mr. Mountz explained the concerns associated with conflicting left-turn movements and the proximity to the commercial entrance further south.

Mr. **LOGAN** offered a motion to recommend approval of SLD #2024-11 – Sheetz – Camp Hill (PA) Hartzdale Preliminary/Final Subdivision and Land Development Plan, conditioned upon satisfactory completion of township and county comments, an understanding that music will be turned off between 8 PM and 8 AM, and with the understanding that a reasonable accommodation will be negotiated between the Board of Commissioners, the residents and the applicant. The motion was seconded by Mr. **BLACKWELL** and passed 4-1 with Mr. Washburn voting in the negative.

Mr. McCreary again thanked the residents for taking the opportunity to express their concerns and to provide feedback.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bennett reported the likelihood of having two plans for consideration at the next meeting and before the Zoning Hearing Board.

NEXT MEETING

Mr. McCreary announced that the next meeting was scheduled for March 18, 2025.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 PM.