

MEETING MINUTES

May 23, 2023

7:00 PM

A meeting of the New Britain Township Planning Commission was held on April 25, 2023, at the Township Administration Building, 207 Park Avenue, New Britain Township, PA beginning at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Chair Marco Tustanowsky, Vice Chair Jim Scanzillo, and members Michelle Martin, Theresa Rizzo-Grimes, Kristen Ives and Kenneth Onsa. Township Assistant Planning & Zoning Officer Ryan Gehman and Township Engineer Craig Kennard were also in attendance.

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Approval of the Minutes from the Meeting of April 25, 2023

MOTION: Upon motion of Ms. Ives, seconded by Mr. Scanzillo, and unanimously carried, the April 25, 2023 meeting minutes were approved.

III. 505 W Butler Ave – Sketch Plan Review

William Benner of Benner & Wild, attorney for the applicant introduced himself and Rachel Butch, PE of Showalter & Associates. Benner noted that the applicant previously appeared in front of the Planning Commission for Conditional Use approval in 2017 when the Extra Space Storage was first proposed. Benner went on to explain the proposed improvements, noting that the applicant is proposing an approximately 20,000 SF building addition in which the same J25(b) use will be conducted.

Benner stated that at least one variance has been identified with regard to the building coverage, and others may be needed with regard to the woodlands disturbance and front yard setback.

Benner stated that if the proposed plans receive positive feedback and the applicant proceeds with a formal submission, there will be substantial improvements to the existing stormwater facility. It was also noted that the plans propose a large increase in green space due to a proposed removal of 170 parking spaces.

Butch stated that the previous iteration of the plans proposed an addition of approximately 24,000 SF, noting that the plans have been revised to reduce the footprint of the proposed addition and minimize the proposed tree disturbance. Butch also stated that an additional basin for Stormwater Management will likely be proposed.

Benner noted that a Zoning Determination would be requested regarding the need for a variance from the front yard setback requirements.

Ms. Ives asked if the proposed green spaces would be primarily lawn or if trees would be planted. Butch responded that the areas would be primarily lawn but would be supplemented with shade trees along the W Butler Ave frontage.

Mr. Tustanowsky asked if the plans would comply with the Butler Avenue Corridor Overlay District requirements, to which Benner responded that it is their intent to comply with those requirements. Mr. Kennard noted that when the site was initially developed, the Overlay requirements did not come into play as the project did not rise to the level of a Land Development.

Mr. Tustanowsky asked for a comparison of the areas of the proposed addition and proposed green space. Butch responded that the proposed addition is 20,710 SF, and the plans propose to remove approximately 50,000 SF of impervious area. Mr. Tustanowsky stated that he liked the idea of adding green space to the intersection.

Mr. Tustanowsky asked if the buffering along Schoolhouse Rd would remain. Benner responded that the buffer would remain, though there may be some disturbance to the existing buffer due to water and sewer lines being relocated.

Benner stated that the applicant's intent is to present the project to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for feedback, but if the project isn't favorable, the applicant would like to know sooner or later. Benner also stated that if the applicant is encouraged by the Board of Supervisors' feedback, they will appear in front of the Zoning Hearing Board to request the previously noted relief before submitting a Preliminary Land Development application.

IV. 4359 County Line Rd – Sketch Plan Review

Rachel Butch introduced herself and Kevin Leahy of Brooke Enterprises, the applicant for the project. Butch noted that a Sketch Plan application was submitted for review and noted the Gilmore review of the project. Butch gave some background on the project, noting that the site is a 5 acre property previously owned by Byers Choice and subsequently purchased by Brooke Enterprises. Butch stated that the site is currently occupied by CP Rankin, a roof contractor.

Butch stated that the existing lot is nonconforming with regard to lot width and side yard setback, and noted previous easements between the property and 4355 County Line Rd that have since expired.

Butch stated that the proposed addition is 31,000 SF and portions are to be used by CP Rankin with the remaining space being available for lease. Leahy confirmed that up to 50% of the proposed addition would be occupied by CP Rankin and the rest would be rented out. Mr. Scanzillo noted that this type of use would likely be considered a Flex Space (K18). Mr. Kennard noted that there may be restrictions against having multiple uses on the property and recommended the applicant confirm with the Township that the proposed uses are permitted.

Butch noted that the property to the rear of the site is within a residential Zoning District, so a 75' buffer is proposed which will be put into a conservation easement. Butch continued that the applicant's intent is to have a very minimal increase to impervious and noted that the plan shows a 5,000 SF increase which is due to the proposed additional parking to bring the use into compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. She went on to state that the applicant's intent is to ultimately submit a by-right plan.

The access drives between the site and 4355 County Line Rd were discussed, and the possibility of leaving the connections paved for emergency access was discussed. Leahy noted that the addition would not result in any additional employees for CP Rankin.

A discussion of the waivers noted in the Gilmore review letter ensued, including a waiver from providing curbing along the exterior parking areas and from providing frontage improvements along County Line Rd. Kennard noted that the Township has a desire to have sidewalks along County Line Rd, and the possibility of a Right of Way easement in lieu of improvements was discussed.

Ms. Rizzo-Grimes asked if sidewalks along the site would be required. Mr. Kennard responded that the Township has been trying to have sidewalks installed along County Line Rd for a while but it is difficult to do.

Mr. Tustanowsky asked if any relief will be needed. Butch responded that the proposed plan is a by-right plan.

Mr. Kennard recommended the applicant reach out to the Fire Marshal regarding the access drives between the two properties.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

VI. Sketch Plan Discussion

Mr. Tustanowsky noted that conversations have been had over the years regarding whether residents should be notified for Sketch Plan applications as they are for Preliminary Plan submissions. He noted that the earlier notifications could help developers work with residents earlier on in the process and ease tensions at meetings for people who were potentially unaware of a project until it is at the Preliminary stage.

Mr. Kennard noted that his office is working on an amendment to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance which would require Sketch Plan applicants to notify neighbors in the same way that notifications are required at the time of Preliminary submission. Mr. Kennard noted recent projects that would have benefitted from notifying residents earlier on in the process.

Ms. Rizzo-Grimes expressed support of the idea and stated that she does not see any negatives to requiring notifications earlier in the process. She asked if the requirement would become part of the Ordinance. Mr. Kennard stated that if the amendment proceeds, the notification requirement for Sketch Plan Applications would become part of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

Ms. Ives asked for clarification of the requirement in question and noted that she has seen discussions online that suggest that people feel they were not properly notified of projects.

VII. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion of Ms. Rizzo-Grimes, seconded by Mr. Scanzillo, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marco Tustanowsky, Chair

Ryan Gehman, Assistant Planning & Zoning Officer