

MUNICIPALITY OF MT. LEBANON
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
MEETING CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

DATE: Tuesday, May 19, 2020

TIME: 7 p.m.

PLACE: Mt. Lebanon Municipality – Commission Chambers

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Suzanne Seiber (chair), Andrew George, Dennis Pittman, Clint Rounsfull, Dave Hornicak

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Municipal Planner Ian McMeans, Municipal Engineer Dan Deiseroth

AUDIENCE PRESENT: Commissioner Steve Silverman, Alex Ferraro, Historic Preservation Board liaison, Craig Grella (Mt. Lebanon Ward 4 Commissioner), Blake Plavchak (City Councilman Anthony Coghill’s Office), Brookline neighborhood representatives

The Pennsylvania Office of Open Records has advised that to ensure continued compliance with the Sunshine Act, the procedures for on-line meetings should be stated at the beginning of the meeting. There is one applicant appearing before the board tonight. The planning board chair will read the agenda item, then the applicant will have the opportunity to make remarks. After that any public comments related to the application will either be played or read into the record. The board will then discuss the application and ask questions of the applicant before calling a vote. Any public comments received not relating to the application before the board will be read at the end of the meeting. The applicant has agreed to this procedure including conducting the meeting virtually.

1. Minutes

- a. April 21, 2020, meeting. Mr. Pittman moved and Mr. Rounsfull seconded to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2020, Planning Board meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Preliminary Consideration

- a. Residential Resources, Inc. owns the property located at 2904 Castlegate Avenue. In 2017 the Planning Board recommended and Commission approved the subdivision of this property and a land development plan for the Senior Apartments of Mt. Lebanon on the lower parcel. That project has been completed and is open. The Community Builders, Inc has an equitable interest in the property and is seeking to construct a residential development with townhouses, apartments, and a central office building on the upper parcel that was created by the 2017 subdivision. The property is zoned R-4 Residential with a Continuing Care overlay.

At this time, The Community Builders, Inc would like the opportunity to present their current proposed project informally to the Planning Board and public to get comment and feedback before submitting a formal land development plan. At this time, no formal land development application has been filed with the municipality and no vote will be taken on the project at this meeting. This project is independent of the demolition of the existing buildings on the site.

Recommended Procedure:

1. *Developer presents plans for the site*
2. *Planning Board provides comments and feedback*
3. *Comments and feedback from Councilman Coghill's office*
4. *Comments and feedback from public*
5. *Comments received prior to the meeting*

Vanessa Murphy, senior project manager, The Community Builders, thanked the board for providing an opportunity to present the project at this stage, and get feedback regarding the project. She gave an overview of the proposed site development that is on 5.6 acres, would have seven residential buildings, a standalone management office with a community room and greenhouse. The site is on the former DePaul Institute, and Bradley Center site. The proposed entrance would be located at the intersection of Dorchester and Castlegate, where the current entrance is. There are three buildings currently on the site; they have an option agreement with the current owners for them to demolish those buildings prior to transferring ownership of the property. She gave an overview of The Community Builders company, who will maintain ownership of the property once the project is complete. She showed pictures of other properties they have developed – some in other states, but mostly in Pittsburgh -- and said each building is unique and designed for the neighborhood. She showed a survey of the current site, then a drawing of the proposed site. They are proposing 51 apartments – 11 one-bedroom, 29 two-bedroom and 11 three-bedroom – four townhome strings, a triplex that fronts onto Dorchester; two garden-style apartment buildings, common greenspace, community garden space, and a management office/community space building. The buildings are two and three stories, and they have 101 parking spaces, which conforms to the zoning ordinance. All internal drives will be privately owned, as well as the utilities. This property will generate real estate tax revenue for the municipality. She showed detailed drawings of the proposed buildings. It is their desire to develop this site as an agrihood, which would provide a sustainable lifestyle. This would encourage residents to grow food and would encourage engagement between residents.

Bernie Lamm, Common Ground, civil engineer, described the entrance to the property with three buildings facing Dorchester Avenue, and internal circulation loop, streetscape along Dorchester that complies the Mt. Lebanon's zoning ordinance as well as Pittsburgh's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure's standards. The width of Dorchester is inconsistent so they are going to widen the street to provide more uniformity along the property. They will add crosswalks across Dorchester for pedestrian connections to Brookline Boulevard. There are decentralized bicycle parking areas, central mail kiosks, decentralized dumpster enclosures throughout the site, private fire hydrants – the internal loop will accommodate Mt. Lebanon Fire Department's ladder truck – a community garden will be behind the community center, and there will be some smaller planting beds in the common green area. He then described where the utility lines will be. They will hook into the water line from Dorchester, the stormwater connection on Midland, sanitary connection on Dorchester, the electric will be connected overhead from Dorchester, then going underground to service the site.

Ms. Murphy gave a schedule overview, demolition should be commencing spring or summer of 2020, depending on when they can get financing they hope to start construction in 2020, but may not start until 2021. They expect to have construction completed by fall of 2022 and then to start leasing. This completed the presentation.

Mr. George asked if where the stormwater system would be, and if there would be any stormwater retention ponds.

Mr. Lamm said the topography is high on the east side and lower on the west side. All of the underground detention will be kept to the eastern side of the site to avoid some of the steeper slopes to the south and west. They are envisioning some beneath the common green area, and to the right of the townhouses other stormwater retention will be provided. It will be piped to the connection to Midland.

Mr. George asked if there were retaining walls.

Mr. Lamm said there are retaining walls on the east side of the site and one that curves around the southwest end of the site. The maximum height of the walls is approximately eight to nine feet, but vary in height.

Mr. George asked what type of fall protection they envision for the walls.

Mr. Lamm said they will look at fencing, guardrail, and grading behind that area.

Mr. McMeans said that per the municipal zoning ordinance any wall over four feet high does need some type of fall protection barrier, such as a fence, on top of them.

Mr. George said he would like to see the electrical lines not interfere with the green space, and more masonry on the lower part of the buildings.

Mr. Pittman asked if all of the buildings would be connected by ADA acceptable sidewalks, and would provide areas to walk all around the property.

Mr. Lamm said the garden style apartments have ADA access to the sidewalks in the front of the buildings, the townhouses have sidewalks up to their doors. All of the buildings will access from at least one side of the building to an ADA accessible sidewalk. Dorchester is a steep street and some of the units will have stairs that connect to the sidewalks.

Mr. Pittman asked if there would be a sidewalk connection between Dorchester and Midland.

Mr. Lamm said they will connect, however the sidewalks on Midland Road are not in good shape, but may try to coordinate with the gas company the next time they are disturbing those sidewalks. There is access to the Salvation Army parcel.

Mr. Hornicak advised the developer to make sure this project does not add stormwater to flooding issues to McNeilly Road. He asked if plans had been made regarding traffic impact to the neighborhood, and additional signage that might be needed.

Ms. Murphy said they have not commissioned a traffic impact study at this time due to the COVID-19 shelter-in-place restrictions; it would not provide an accurate accounting.

Mr. Hornicak commented he would like to see what type of lighting is being proposed and how it would affect the nearby properties. He asked if the maintenance operations on site would be handled internally, and by whom.

Ms. Murphy said The Community Builders would be handling the maintenance such as landscaping, sidewalks, and sewers.

Mr. Deiseroth said they have met with the developer on several occasions in the land use group to provide them with particulars regarding the municipal ordinances. He believes they've done a good job for a complicated project. The city will be dictating the road and Mt. Lebanon will be overseeing the site. In regard to the Salvation Army, they put in a sidewalk and he thinks there could be a way to connect the sidewalks of the two facilities.

Mr. George asked about passive house or net zero.

Ms. Murphy said they were not on this project, but they are doing enterprise green community, which has a higher green threshold, but they were unable to make the numbers work on passive house and net zero.

Mr. Pittman asked what requirements would need to be met by someone interested in renting

Ms. Murphy said 14 of the units will be market-rate, so there will be no restrictions on affordability. The affordable units for a one-person household is approximately \$30,000 per year limit. She was unsure of the two-person household limit. There are no age restrictions for any of the buildings; the three-story building offers one-story living, which could be desirable to seniors.

Mr. McMeans said the proposed development of both townhouses and multi-family apartment buildings are permitted uses within the zoning code. All of the traffic flow inside the site will be privately owned and maintained. The applicant has had conversations with the fire department about turning radius around the internal drive aisle areas to make sure all the potential buildings would be accessible to the fire apparatus.

Mrs. Sieber said the planning board likes to see trees on proposed plans, and likes to see brick used for outside finish. She likes the idea of the garden.

Blake Plavchak, representing City Councilman Anthony Coghill, said he is optimistic regarding the connection to the PAWC storm line. He said one of the issues the city struggles with is related to water, and increasing the amount of water that is retained in the ground instead of flowing into the sewers.

Mr. Lamm, said they have been working hard to avoid sending more water to the Castlegate infrastructure, whether storm or sanitary.

Citizen Comments

Laura Guralnick, 2861 Castlegate Avenue, said she thinks the schematics look great. She asked for clarification regarding the income levels.

Ms. Murphy said there are five units for 30% and below, approximately 20 at 50%, and a small number at 60%. There are nearly 30% at market rate, so the property will be maintained in order to command the rents they are projecting.

Ms. Guralnick asked if there were any considerations given to special needs residents.

Ms. Murphy said the units are designed for general occupancy.

Ms. Guralnick supports the idea of connecting the sidewalk all the way to the Salvation Army property. She also supports the landscaping and the use of trees. She asked if any of the large trees already on the site going to be kept.

Mr. Lamm said they would like to keep the large trees, but thinks with the widening of the road and the slopes it will make it very difficult to save the large trees along Dorchester, but they will try to.

Angela Gaito-Lagnese, 2862 Castlegate Avenue, said she appreciates the developer is looking at landscaping and providing trees, and what type of lighting they will have. She asked if there were to be two apartment buildings, and if they each were going to have 51 apartments.

Ms. Murphy explained there are seven buildings; two three-story buildings with 12 units each are in the center of the development; 24 townhomes with some fronting Dorchester, then a smaller triplex unit that also fronts Dorchester, for a total of 51 units.

Mr. McMeans stated there were no public comments submitted via email or phone.

Ms. Guralnick, asked if there would be an opportunity to discuss the demolition process with Residential Resources.

Mr. McMeans said demolition permits do not have a public review process, they are reviewed by the municipal inspections office for compliance with erosion and sedimentation control, and other municipal ordinances. Any abatement issues are reviewed by Allegheny County and those permits come from Allegheny County. In order for a demolition permit to be obtained the municipality requires copies of the permits from Allegheny County. The property owner was preparing a flyer to send out to the neighbors.

Ernie Sota, Sota Construction, said they will be passing out informational flyers on Wednesday, that will list the procedures for obtaining the proper permits and beginning the demolition process. He said there would be a full-time person on site to make sure dust control and safety measures are in place.

Ms. Gaito-Lagnese asked if all of the units are rentals, or if any of them will be for sale.

Ms. Murphy said all of the units will be rentals.

Ms. Gaito-Lagnese asked if there was a possibility of having a meeting between the residents and the company before the demolition commences.

Mr. McMeans said he would be willing to attend a virtual meeting.

Ms. Guralnick said she would be willing to organize a meeting with the demotion company.

Mr. Sota said a zoom meeting could be set up.

3. Old Business

None

4. New Business

None

5. Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

6. Next Meeting — The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Mt. Lebanon Planning Board is **Tuesday, June 16, 2020**, at 7:00 p.m.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.