



JENKINTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 19th, 2021

6:30pm – 8:00pm

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance

Members Present via Video Conference: Gabriel Lerman – Chairperson, Lucinda Bartley, Alison Danilak, Jon McCandlish, Phil Zimmerman – Secretary

Members Absent: Joe Hentz, Glen Morris

Others Present: George Locke – Borough Manager, Patrick Hitchens – Borough Solicitor, Deborra Sines-Pancoe – Borough Council President, Kieran Farrell, Alexandria Khalil – Borough Council members, Jeff Lustig – Midgard Properties Applicant, Alyson Fritzges, Greg Richardson, Steven Kline – Representing Midgard Properties

Reports/Actions

Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes from the March 2021 Planning Commission (PC) meeting were approved.

Presentations

Midgard Properties, 821 Homestead Road Conditional Use Presentation

Ms. Fritzges provided project updates to the PC: reviewing previous PC comments and describing how PC comments/recommendations were addressed in a revised siteplan, renderings and elevations that had also be presented to BC.

Mr. Kline elaborated on Ms. Fritzges summary and presented the revised documentation to the PC.

- Presented rendered elevations and views describing materiality, massing and scale. Described materiality in relation to surrounding structures.
- Reviewed site plans and discussed buffering, trash locations, setback revisions, revisions focused on the pedestrian experience.
- Reviewed landscape plan and described site tree preservation. Reviewed screening colonnade feature in addition to landscape buffer along York as well as privacy fencing around parking areas to the rear of the site.

Legal representative of several adjacent properties and concerned residents announced his clients' presence and summarized their opposition to the project.

Mr. McCandlish requested clarification of materials to be used on the project. He inquired about the siding material and portions of flat panels indicated on elevations. Mr. Kline responded that siding would be a composite or vinyl material and that the finish panels would be a similar composite material (cement board).

Ms. Bartley asked to see the proposed structure's north elevation. Mr. Kline confirmed that they hadn't yet created one but that it would be similar to the south elevation presented earlier in the meeting.

Mr. McCandlish asked about what outdoor mechanical equipment might be used on the project. Mr. Kline stated that it would be a combination of rooftop condensers and individual, wall units.

Mr. McCandlish asked Mr. Lustig if the first-floor commercial space was a necessary component to the development's success. Mr. Lustig clarified that it was required by the Borough's zoning code but that it did not contribute significantly to the success of the project. He further stated that he would prefer to omit the required commercial space in lieu of smaller project footprint and opportunity to develop additional amenities.

Mr. McCandlish asked about the design of the balconies: would they be full depth balconies or just guards across sliding doors? Mr. Kline confirmed that they would be usable but smaller balconies.

Mr. McCandlish inquired about the design of the proposed paved plaza space, asking if blue stone style pavers or decorative concrete would be used. He also asked what other general improvements were being considered for existing sidewalks and landscaping. Mr. Kline confirmed that the intent was for a stone paver material to be utilized at the plaza and that sidewalks would be replaced in kind.

Mr. McCandlish requested an overview of what measures would be taken to transform and preserve the existing buildings. Mr. Lustig stated that Holmstead Hall had been completely renovated on the interior and also restored on the exterior with masonry repointed, stone cleaned, slate refurbished, and windows replaced in kind. He further explained that the church would also be restored; existing stonework and slate roof refurbished, and windows replaced in kind.

Ms. Bartley expressed her concerns of the site plan, removal of trees and general change from pastoral site to pavement and building right up against York road. Ms. Fritzges clarified that tree removal was due to health of trees. Mr. Kline stated that a conscious effort had been made to preserve lawn space on the project. Mr. McCandlish asked that a spirit of collaboration be maintained and reminded the PC that what was being shown for parking was what was legally required by Borough zoning code.

Mr. Lerman and Mr. McCandlish suggested that by relaxing the Borough requirement for ground level commercial space there might be some opportunity to tighten parking and expand open greenspace on the site.

Mr. Richardson provided updates regarding the project's traffic study and confirmed that it had been submitted to the Borough for review by the Borough engineer. He stated that the owner would be agreeable to posting signage prohibiting traffic from turning left out of site on Holmstead. Mr. Richardson also stated that he had discussed site access from York Rd. with representatives from PennDOT about that their response was that they had no interest in considering additional access onto York.

A representative from the Borough Engineer's office confirmed that he had reviewed the traffic study and stated that he had generally taken no issue with its findings and further agreed that previous concerns had been addressed.

Summary of Public comment.

- Generally, community members shared the PC's concerns regarding the project's site plan – transformation of site from pastoral to parking, the presence of the building right up against York Road and the removal of trees.
- There was agreement that comments pertaining to design review requirements had been met.
- Community members were glad that site ingress/egress onto York was brought up with PennDot, although expressed concern that this concept was not thoroughly explored with them.
- Community members stated that they would rather see a development by someone who is thoughtfully considering the existing historic properties and trying to observe minimal required parking, etc.
- There was a suggestion that traffic congestion could in-itself be a traffic calming measure and that making Holmstead one-way could worsen traffic.
- Adjacent property owners expressed concern that they would be viewing from their properties directly into a large parking lot.
- Community members expressed interest in the project promoting a walkable Jenkintown but thought this would require further sidewalk buffering from old York road.
- Neighbor expressed concern of proximity of the proposed building to the lot line as well as existing adjacent wall and site wall.
- Community member shared concerned with tenant parking for adjacent residential rental units and inquired about the availability/possibility of permit street parking

PC members expressed their support and shared their concerns related to the project in general and the PC's recommendation for approval by BC. This discussion formed the basis of several possible conditions to PC recommendation for the project including...

- Relief from the commercial use requirement of the project allowing reductions to parking, minimized building massing and expansion of greenspace.

- Traffic control improvements, signed no left turn out of Homestead, no trucks on Homestead
- Pedestrian safety improvements, striped crosswalks, crossing guard presence
- Heightened pedestrian experience on the site: connection of mid-block stair to landscape/connection element and plaza, promote walkability to and from the project.
- Greenspace preservation, maintaining the existing building setback from York. Relocate or omit parking adjacent to York.
- Maintain a portion of the existing building as boutique retail space (coffee shop)
- No visible mechanical units: screened or located inside.
- Tree preservation: perform proper tree survey, cherry tree at entry to remain.
- Parking calculation clarification: confirm adequate parking is being provided for the apartment residents in addition to the church and homestead hall uses.
- Building design: consider a more nuanced building massing that promotes an appropriate, broken-up or varying scale for the proposed building. Integrated materiality that weaves stone higher into the elevation, relates more appropriately with the materiality of the adjacent structures.
- Treatment of all four elevations of the project similarly with respect to materials and facade design.

The PC voted to recommend conditional use approval for the project granted that conditions would be met or considered prior to BC vote to approve. Mr. Lerman offered to draft a letter of PC support to BC with conditions clearly outlined.

On-Going Business

Northern Gateway and TOD Project Coordination

Although initially thought to be scheduled for PC review, an application for digital signage to be located at 610 York was not presented as property owners were not present. Further discussion pertaining to this project was tabled for discussion at a subsequent meeting.

Adjournment