



## JENKINTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

6:30pm – 9:00pm

### MEETING MINUTES

#### Attendance

Members Present via Video Conference: Jon McCandlish – Chairperson, Lucinda Bartley - Secretary, Alison Danilak, Eric Horowitz, Peter Van Do, Phil Zimmerman

Members Absent: -

Others Present: George Locke – Borough Manager, Deborra Sines-Pancoe – Borough Council, Marley Bice – Montgomery County Planner, Khal Hassan – Borough Engineer, Patrick Hitchens – PC Attorney

#### Reports/Actions

December 2021 PC meeting minutes were approved.

Motion: Jon McCandlish; Second: Alison Danilak; All in favor.

#### Public Comment

Scott Denlinger, an attorney representing the Pavilion, stated that he will have comments on the land development application for 93 York Rd.

#### New Business / Business for Discussion

##### **93 York Rd - Jenkintown Commons Limited Partnership #3 and BAP Jenkintown, LLC – Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment Request**

The Planning Commission first reviewed the proposed Gateway Commercial District zoning text amendment at the 14 December 2021 public meeting, and the matter was tabled pending receipt of expert review comments. At this meeting, the PC reviewed comments from the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) and Borough Engineer and asked further questions, heard public comment, and participated in a question-and-answer exchange with the applicant's representative, Gregg Adelman. After a vote, the Planning Commission supports approval of the zoning text amendment by Borough Council on the condition of certain recommendations, as detailed in a letter submitted to Mr. Locke and Borough Council, dated 20 February 2022 (attached).

Motion: Jon McCandlish; Second: Lucinda Bartley; All in favor.

**610 York Road – Monopole Off Site Advertisement Sign Conditional Use Application - 610 (L)  
Jenkintown Land Holdings, LLC – 610 York Road, Jenkintown, PA 19380**

Applicant's representative, Jack Larkin, presented the application for a conditional use to erect a monopole double-sided digital billboard display on the northern end of the 610 York Road property. The Planning Commission reviewed the comment letter from the Borough Engineer and followed up with questions. Public comment included Stuart Winegrad, Abington Commissioner representing the neighborhood bordering the proposed site, and residents from Abington and Jenkintown. Public comment was unanimous in opposition to the proposal. After a vote, the Planning Commission does not recommend granting this conditional use application in its current form, as the PC believes it fails to meet the zoning code conditional use standards and presents inconsistencies with the Borough's Comprehensive Plan, as detailed in a letter submitted to Mr. Locke and Borough Council, dated 20 February 2022 (attached).

Motion: Jon McCandlish; Second: Lucinda Bartley; All in favor.

**Jenkintown Borough SALDO Code Review / Update**

Marley Bice and Alison Danilak provided a brief summary of the SALDO revision progress status and schedule. Ms. Bice will distribute the latest draft to Khal Hassan and Patrick Hitchens for review and comment. PC members should send notes and comments to Ms. Danilak by 22 February.

**Ongoing Business**

**218 York Road – GE Sign**

The Zoning Hearing Board will be reviewing the sign installation. Mr. McCandlish will readdress and send the PC's previous letter to the ZHB.

**821 Homestead Road Apartment Building**

The applicant was granted conditional use approval and the plans have been reviewed by the Borough Engineer and the MCPC. The applicant will revise the plans and resubmit. The PC can expect to review the Land Development application in the next few months.

Motion to Close: Jon McCandlish; Second: Phil Zimmerman

**Adjournment**



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Jenkintown Borough Council  
George Locke, Borough Manager

**FROM:** Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission

**DATE:** 20 February 2022

**RE:** Gateway Commercial District – Proposed Zoning Text Amendment

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Dear Borough Council and Manager Locke,

The Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission first reviewed the proposed Gateway Commercial District zoning text amendment at the 14 December 2021 public meeting. At that time the matter was tabled pending receipt of review comments from the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) and Borough Engineer. At our 15 February 2022 meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed the MCPC and Borough Engineer comments, heard public comment, and participated in a question-and-answer exchange with the applicant.

**After a vote, the Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission supports approval of the zoning text amendment by Borough Council on the condition of the following recommendations.**

**I. Section 1.A – Maximum impervious coverage for Permitted Uses**

The Planning Commission wishes to encourage flexibility for the further gradual development of the Gateway Commercial District and recommends adoption of the Borough Engineer’s suggestion to provide a pathway to higher impervious coverage, in cases where the design will advance the Borough’s long-range goals.

A. The Planning Commission recommends amending the proposed text to read:

*70% or maintaining such existing total impervious coverage if the property or properties are being redeveloped. Impervious coverage may increase to 80% if approved stormwater facilities shall capture and permanently remove from the runoff flow at least the first two inches of runoff from all impervious surfaces above 70% coverage and where measures are being taking to provide for improved pedestrian access, green stormwater management, and an enhanced landscape.*

## II. Section 2.A – Building Design Standards

Section 2.A.(3) defines a minimum dimension of 200' for the introduction of architectural elements intended to break down the monolithicity of a single unbroken or unadorned building façade. The Planning Commission feels that the minimum dimension of 200' is not appropriate in the Borough, where the vast majority of lot frontages and building elevations are less than 200'.

To address the above condition, the Planning Commission proposes the following edits to the proposed text amendment:

- A. Strike section 2.A.(2) in its entirety, and
- B. Incorporate the following edits to the first sentence of section 2.A.(3):

*Building facades of ~~200~~ 100 feet or more which face public streets, pedestrian ways, or public parking shall, ~~in addition to offsets,~~ be interrupted at least once every 100 horizontal feet with offsets of three feet of more in depth. In addition, the façade shall include other design elements to break up the façade, such as awnings, porches, canopies, towers, balconies, bays, changes in building materials, gables, and planted trellises.*

- C. The PC does not recommend adopting the proposed sentences that begin “Where the building is located on a corner lot...”, in either 2.A.3 or 2.A.3(a), because we do not believe it is beneficial to define a “primary façade” for design purposes. See below.
- D. Given the density of existing structures and pathways in Jenkintown, the Planning Commission wishes to support building designs that differentiate as little as possible between a ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ façade as oftentimes this distinction leads to a less articulated design and poorer quality materials on the non-‘primary’ facades. To support this goal, the Planning Commission advocates for inclusion of the following recommended language in this text amendment:

*Façade articulation or design elements shall wrap around the corner of buildings onto any adjacent facades for a minimum distance equal to at least 25% of the length of the building façade along the adjacent facades.*

## III. Section 2.C – Parking and driveway standards

Section 2.C establishes standards for parking lot planting islands and perimeter planting areas. Creating a balance between hardscape and landscape are critical aims in establishing a greener community and improving pedestrian experience. In addition, interrupting hardscaped impervious areas with meaningful vegetative areas improves storm water infiltration and reduces the potential for undesirable microclimatic conditions such as the heat island effect. The Planning Commission agrees with the MCPC in recommending the following edits to the proposed text amendments:

- A. Establish a minimum dimension of planting islands within parking lots of 9 feet wide by 18 feet long, or the dimension of a single parking space, whichever is greater.
- B. Retain the shade tree requirement in order to further promote both beneficial shading and the desirable ecological and visual impacts of a canopy layer. The applicant may be allowed to install the required shade trees elsewhere on the site with approval of Council.
- C. Retain a minimum perimeter landscape area of 10 feet but allow the planted area to be reduced to 5 feet in locations where a 5-foot-wide pedestrian walkway is provided alongside the parking lot to improve internal pedestrian circulation and safety.

**IV. Section 2.E – Lighting Standards**

While the Planning Commission appreciates the definition of measurable standards for maximum foot-candles as measured at the property line, we also understand the negative impact of visible light sources to neighboring properties and public ways, especially at night. Where possible, we encourage adherence to local night-sky standards and specification of full cut-off fixtures.

- A. The Planning Commission proposes adoptions of the recommendation on page 4 of the MCPC letter to “establish a standard to limit the hours of operation for certain light fixtures on the site, such as those on the rooftop parking area, based on the hours of operation of the business on site.”

**V. Section 2.G – Other Requirements**

The location and screening of site elements such as loading docks, utility meters, HVAC equipment, trash dumpsters, and other service functions is critical to the design of any new structure in Jenkintown, where properties and structures are close together and linked via pedestrian pathways. In fact, it’s fundamental to the qualities of being a good neighbor. The proposed text amendment appears to weaken the requirement for these elements by poorly defining the acceptable screening criteria.

- A. The Planning Commission recommends retention of the current zoning code language stating, “these areas shall be located and screened so that the visual and acoustic impacts of these functions are fully contained and out of view from adjacent properties and public streets.” The PC also recommends adding language which directs applicants to comply with any applicable screening requirements in the SALDO code.

The Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission thanks you for your consideration of the above recommendations.

Sincerely,



Jon McCandlish, Chair

**Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission**

CC: Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission:  
Alison Danilak  
Lucinda Bartley, Secretary  
Erik Horowitz  
Jon McCandlish, Chair  
Peter Van Do  
Phil Zimmerman



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Jenkintown Borough Council  
George Locke, Borough Manager

**FROM:** Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission

**DATE:** 20 February 2022

**RE:** Conditional Use Application, 610 York Road Monopole Digital Billboard

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Dear Borough Council and Manager Locke,

In considering the application for a conditional use to erect a monopole double-sided digital billboard display on the northern end of the 610 York Road property, the Planning Commission met with the applicant and heard public comment at our 15 February 2022 meeting.

Public comment was unanimous in its opposition to the proposal. No attendee other than the applicant provided a supporting case for the conditional use.

The Planning Commission feels that the application fails to meet several standards for conditional use, as outlined in Article XVI Administrative Section 181-99 Conditional Use Standards of the Jenkintown Borough Municipal Zoning Code nor has the applicant provided adequate evidence or expert testimony to suggest that these standards are being met:

**I. 181-99 B. Master Plan. *It shall be generally consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.***

The JPC believes this design is in direct conflict with the Jenkintown 2035 Comprehensive Plan's goals of neighborhood and historic preservation, and of economic development encouraging "residential development near the Noble Train Station as part of a transit-oriented development." Granting this conditional use will be a detriment to the existing historic and neighborhood feel of Jenkintown's streetscape, and it will also preclude future desirable development that will further the goals of the Borough Comprehensive Plan.

Additionally, Comprehensive Plan Strategy ED2e (page 90) calls for Jenkintown to coordinate with Abington Township to develop complementary land use and design standards along Old York Road. Abington allows billboards only in the BC Business Center District, and only one sign is allowed in each of their BC areas; the BC-Noble district is just to the north of the 610 York Rd property.

Per Abington zoning code 2208.2.D.4. Billboards:

- F. Shall be set back at least 40' from all property lines
- G. The height of the billboard shall not exceed the setback of the billboard from the property line, up to a maximum height of 30'.
- H. Must be set back at least 200' from any property where zoning permits a residential use.

While acknowledging that our municipal design standards are not yet coordinated, the Planning Commission encourages Council to consider how the design of the proposed sign could be revised to consider the spirit of cooperation with Abington's land use and design standards.

Additionally, in line with Comprehensive Plan Strategy NP3, the Planning Commission is completing a historic resource inventory and evaluating the creation of a local historic district. The 610 York Rd property and the landmarked Strawbridge's building would be a centerpiece of that historic district. Approval of this application will detract from a remarkable historic structure and property.

**II. 181-99 C. Traffic. *It shall not result in or significantly add to a serious traffic hazard or serious traffic congestion.***

It is the opinion of the Planning Commission that a large, digital display with illuminated images changing at a five- or seven-second intervals will be disproportionate and over-scaled for the location proposed. This presents a potential traffic hazard. The JPC suggests further evaluation and documentation from a traffic study engineer or qualified professional to determine if a sign of the size, height, and position proposed would be a dangerous distraction for drivers at what is already a hazardous intersection.

Any traffic study or expert witness testimony shall include not just impacts on vehicular traffic flows and safety, but also pedestrian pathways and access to Noble Train Station.

**III. 181-99 E. Design. *It will involve adequate site design methods, including evergreen screening, setbacks, berming and traffic control, to avoid serious negative influences on adjacent uses.***

The applicant submitted no documentation regarding adequate screening of the structure, light, and reflected light from the nearby residential homes and surrounding community.

The adjacent residential neighborhood in Abington Township is only 50 feet from the sign, per the engineer's review letter. Those residents will most directly experience a "serious negative influence" from a large, illuminated sign. Though the residents directly affected are in Abington Township, the code here and elsewhere does not distinguish between residential uses in Jenkintown or other municipalities.

Given that there are no other similar signs in the area, the Planning Commission further feels the size and height of the sign as described by the applicant is out of line with the adjacent context and should be subject to substantial reduction in order to fit into its surroundings more suitably.

In addition to failing to meet the above standards for conditional use, the Planning Commission feels the application also does not meet the following standards as outlined in Article XII G of the Jenkintown Borough Municipal Zoning Code, Gateway Commercial District:

**I. 181-56 J. *Assure suitable design to protect the character and property values of adjacent and nearby neighborhoods.***

The Planning Commission is concerned that the proposed design for an illuminated monopole sign, at the maximum allowable square footage and height, will be a detriment to the character of historic commercial and residential neighborhoods in both Jenkintown and Abington. The residential neighbors express strong concerns that their enjoyment of their homes and their property values will be negatively impacted. Other uses permitted by right may also affect these neighbors, but a land development and design review process can mitigate those harms; no such review will be possible with this use.

- II. **181-58 Conditional Use Criteria. *Buildings, driveways, parking areas, loading areas, outdoor activity areas, light sources, trash areas and other potential nuisances shall be located and designed to minimize adverse impacts on abutting residential properties. In order to limit the adverse impact of a proposed general commercial use, the Borough Council may require alternative site layouts, including increased setbacks from residential property lines, different locations of buildings, parking areas, and driveways, the incorporation of loading and trash collection areas as part of the principal building design, and increased screening for light sources and outdoor activity areas.***

The Planning Commission feels that the application in its current design fails to meet this standard. The size and height of the sign, illumination, changing state, and safety considerations will likely create a visually and materially adverse impacts on abutting residential and commercial properties. The applicant provided no evidence of meeting this standard, or of requiring the proposed height and area.

At a minimum, the Planning Commission would recommend a substantial (50%+) reduction in the size and height of the sign, along with consideration for either a fixed display or a much longer period between digital messages.

- III. **181-60 General Requirements D. *Site landscaping and buffers shall be provided.***

The applicant did not provide a site landscape or screening plan, nor did they provide any additional evidence or expert testimony that any proposed landscape and buffers would meet the required standard.

Finally, the application fails to meet the following standards for Off-site Outdoor Advertising Signs as outlined in the Jenkintown Borough Municipal Zoning Code Section 181-141.

- I. **181-141 B. Height and location of sign. *The maximum height of an off-premises advertising sign shall be the minimum necessary in order for the sign to be reasonably viewed by the intended motorists and in no event higher than 40 feet measured from the ground level upon which the sign support is mounted to the top of the sign...***

The Planning Commission was not presented with any independent evaluation that the design with a 40-foot-high structure was the “minimum necessary.” Additionally, due to the nature of that specific location, the JPC suggests the height measured at the mounting location cannot be adequately evaluated on its own. The surrounding topography and sight lines of nearby neighbors should be evaluated and documented.

The Planning Commission highly recommends that Council request an elevation drawing along Old York Road showing the topography of the land and the height of the proposed sign, the houses on Spring Ave and Rodman Ave, and the parking garage structure, from the Baeder Rd intersection to



the Madeira Ave intersection. This would help to clarify the relative impact of the height of the proposed sign on neighboring uses and provide a baseline criterion for effective screening as required and described elsewhere in this letter.

- II. **181-141 G. Landscaping.** *In addition to all other landscaping, buffering and berming requirements under this chapter, an off-site outdoor advertising sign visible from any residential zoning district shall be landscaped in order to shield its visibility from such residential district(s). A landscaping plan shall be submitted to, and reviewed and approved by, the Borough Engineer.*

As stated previously, no design elements were presented as evidence to meet the requirement for adequate screening, "...from any residential zoning district...".

In conclusion, the Planning Commission does not recommend granting this conditional use application in its current form, as it fails to meet the above standards and presents many undesirable conditions including, but not limited to, direct negative impacts to our Abington neighbors, a "highway-like" presentation in the middle of an historic community, and an incompatibility with the Borough's adopted Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Commission continues to believe that a mixed-use, transit-oriented development, of the kind previously discussed with the property owner, would be a higher and better use for this site and is substantially more compatible with the Borough's Comprehensive Plan (Strategy NP2d, page 40 and ED2d, page 89). The Planning Commission would welcome the opportunity to work together with the property owner to develop a mutually beneficial approach for this important and historic gateway to the Borough and our community.

Sincerely,



Jon McCandlish, Chair

**Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission**

CC: Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission:  
Alison Danilak  
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Erik Horowitz  
Jon McCandlish, Chair  
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