

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 28, 2018

The Upper Merion Township Planning Commission met for their regularly-scheduled meeting on February 28, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the Township Building, 175 W. Valley Forge Rd., King of Prussia, PA.

Present: Matt Popek, Chair; Mark McKee, Vice-Chair; Todd Brown, Secretary; Jaque Camp, Member; Kyle Brown, Associate Planner; Maudy Hedlund, Recording Secretary.

Absent: Vivian Peikin, Member; Rob Loeper, Township Planner; Dr. William Jenaway, Liaison to the Board of Supervisors.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Popek thanked members for re-electing him as Chair and looks forward to another productive and successful year.

Meeting Minutes: January 10, 2018.

Mr. Popek asked if there was a motion to approve the January 10th Minutes. Mr. Brown moved. Mr. McKee seconded. Mr. Popek abstained. The Minutes were approved 3-0.

Plan:

DP 2017-17: Brandywine Operating Partnership

500 N. Gulph Rd. Re-development of existing office building +3,000 SF and construction of a 1-level parking deck; 5.32 acres, SM.

Present: Brian Berson, Vice President, Development, Brandywine Realty Trust, Philadelphia, PA.
Christos N. Dinoulis, Project Manager, Bohler Engineering, Philadelphia, PA.
Michelle Flowers, Development Manager, Brandywine Realty Trust.
Alfred R. Fuscaldo, Esq., Managing Member, Fuscaldo Law Group LLC, Valley Forge, PA.
William F. Kavanagh, AIA, NCARB, Director of Parking Design, The Harman Group, King of Prussia, PA.

Mr. Brown provided an overview before turning the meeting over to the applicant.

Counsel Alfred Fuscaldo described the proposed make-over of the property and the granted variances and special exceptions before introducing the applicant's representatives, whose presentations follow:

Building:

- Remove the building's existing knee walls and replace the existing black exoskeletal glass.
- Install clear, low-E, floor-to-ceiling glass panels to modernize the building.
- Push the glass-line out to obtain a net-neutral gain of 3,000 SF.
- Create offices that line the entire perimeter and cubicles designed for a density of 5 to 6 employees per 1,000 SF on the interior.
- Provide at least two atria environments on the north and south side of the building to provide common space for employees.
- Create a paver-lined drop-off and a 2,000 SF turfed garden amenity space for employees.

Deck for parking:

- Construct a one-story, two-level structured parking deck along the Turnpike boundary.
- Provide a two-way access ramp from the front of the building.
- Install a stair and wide drive aisle to make maneuvering comfortable.
- Increase the current number of parking spaces from 315 to 450.
- An adequate amount of vegetation will be added between the edge of the parking deck's curb line and the property line to screen the structure from the Turnpike.

Driveway:

A re-alignment of the driveway is not proposed.

Impervious:

A small increase in impervious – approximately two percent – is anticipated over the entire site.

Setback:

The front-yard parking setback is fifty feet. There is no rear-yard setback.

Sidewalk:

The applicant is requesting a waiver for the sidewalk along Gulph Rd. Mr. Dinoulis commented that the Sheraton received a waiver for not providing a sidewalk and stated the reasons why the sidewalk would not be ADA-compliant. Mr. Berson referred to the sidewalk as having no connection on either end.

Stormwater management:

There is no detention system. All building run-off is collected and put down immediately into the street's conveyance system. A significant grade drop-off exists at the back edge of the property. Stormwater runoff is collected here by a series of inlets that discharge through pipes to

an end wall and sheet-flows to a swale that runs parallel to the Turnpike to another headwall before going underneath the Turnpike.

Timeline for completion:

Occupancy: December, 2018.

A connection:

The applicant is requesting a waiver from installing a sidewalk to the bus shelter along N. Gulph Rd. because there is nothing to connect the sidewalk to and significant site constraints, including utility poles, would make the 4-foot sidewalk and required 2.5" verge not ADA-compliant.

Driveway re-alignment:

None are proposed.

Engineer's Letter:

The Engineer's letter has been received. The County's letter is anticipated.

Comments from the Planning Commission on:

Staircase:

Mr. McKee commented that the submitted plans showed a staircase between the two (Brandywine and Sheraton Hotel) properties. He was informed that the staircase was abandoned because it could not be ADA-compliant. Mr. McKee asked why it needed to be, and suggested that 95% of the 500 employees expected to occupy the Brandywine site could utilize stairs to access the Sheraton's restaurant and Goddard Boulevard.

Easement:

Mr. McKee asked if creating an easement between two properties could be checked into. Mr. Berson offered to study the request but is not committed to building it.

Pedestrian connection:

Ms. Camp voiced concern that this property is within walking distance of a lot of amenities and we're not accommodating there being any pedestrian connection whatsoever between this property and anything else.

Ms. Camp responded to the applicant's position that this sidewalk would have no connection on either end, stating, "We are never going to get them if everybody uses the claim that we can't build sidewalks because they don't connect to anything."

Ms. Camp stated that a connection proposed for the other side of the road leaves a bus stop that pedestrians can't get to. She added that allowing this re-development without this sidewalk improvement would leave the bus stop still stranded; that there will be a connection on the other side of the road; and that a crosswalk here could connect that bus stop.

Mr. McKee referred to Realen's low-lying area as a safe place to install a sidewalk with a crosswalk at the existing traffic light. He suggested that if Brandywine can't install a sidewalk on its side of Gulph Rd., it work with Paul Fry and Realen to build it on the opposite side from Guthrie Rd. to the new Bryn Mawr Rehab site.

Referring to the applicant's description of 500 N. Gulph Rd. as an "island", Mr. Popek said, "We're still treating it as an island. It's our job to say, let's think about all the connections to the different types of properties and areas around it."

Ultimate Right of Way:

Mr. Popek, who is interested in expanding the trails, asked if there is an ultimate right of way to dedicate here. Mr. Dinoulis believes there could be.

Ms. Camp considers that the plan, for the most part, looks like a vast improvement. Mr. Popek was willing to entertain a motion.

Motion:

Mr. McKee made a motion that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors favorably consider the renovations for the Brandywine 500 N. Gulph Rd. site with the addition of a parking deck; and that the Board and the applicant consider continued exploration of opportunities for pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhood amenities. Mr. Brown seconded. Counsel Alfred Fuscaldo interrupted the vote and asked if the Planning Commission was also approving the six waivers.

Ms. Camp and Mr. Popek asked to approve this first, and the rest separately. Mr. McKee's motion passed 4-0.

Counsel Alfred Fuscaldo stated the six requested waivers.

1. A waiver from §145-24.A.(1) to allow parking stall dimension to be less than the minimum requirement of nine and one-half feet (9.5') in width by nineteen feet (19') in depth.
2. A waiver from §145-24.(1) to not provide the minimum one-way aisle width of eighteen feet (18') for 60-degree angle parking stalls.
3. A waiver from §145.24.1.D. (2).(a) to not provide a landscape island for every twenty (20) parking stalls spaces in a row.
4. A waiver from §145.24.1.D.(2).(a) to not provide a landscape island at the end of all parking rows.
5. A waiver from §145.24.1.D.(2) to not provide planting strips into smaller areas of no more than 100 spaces.
6. A waiver from §141-6 to not provide sidewalk along North Gulph Rd. frontage.
The applicant is requesting to not provide the required sidewalk along the roadway frontage due to the following constraints:
 - There are no other areas of sidewalk along N. Gulph Rd. to connect to.
 - Grade along the roadway would not allow for an ADA compliant route.

- Significant grading into the site to accommodate the sidewalk and verge.
- Retaining walls would be required to maintain existing and proposed vegetation.
- Conflicts with existing utility poles would require path to shift further away from the road and further into the site.

Ms. Camp was not in favor of recommending the sidewalk waiver.

Formal Motion:

Mr. Popek made a formal motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors: out of the six waivers that are mentioned by the applicant that five, including the three for landscaping and two for parking stalls and aisles be recommended and that the sidewalk waiver not be recommended. See previous comments on our overall site plan recommendation. Mr. Brown seconded. A 4-0 vote carried.

Plan:

DP 2018-02: Realen Valley Forge Greenes

VR 8 Hanover. Village at Valley Forge, 350 Village Drive; 390 residential apartments.

Present: Paul Fry, Project Manager, Realen Properties, 1000 Chesterbrook Boulevard, Berwyn, PA.
Adam Harbin, Acquisitions and Development Partner, Realen Properties.

Mr. Fry and Mr. Harbin described the following features of the apartment complex:

- Access to the 600-space garage via a private alleyway on the back-side of the apartment complex.
- The apartment's sizes.
- The parking fee, which ranges from \$75 to \$100 per month.
- Handicap parking spaces will be available on each level of the garage.
- Security is a big focus. A Key Fob is needed to get into the garage, to enter or exit doors, and to use the elevator.
- The premises will have a security guard and management staff on hand.
- The complex attracts young professionals and older residents.

There being no additional business, Mr. Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting.
Ms. Camp seconded.

Meeting adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Sincerely yours,

TODD BROWN, SECRETARY

**UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 28, 2018**

TO: UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FM: UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REF: DP 2017-17: Brandywine Operating Partnership
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Camp, Member; Kyle Brown, Associate Planner; Maudy Hedlund, Recording
Secretary.
ABSENT: Vivian Peikin, Member; Rob Loeper, Township Planner.

The members of the Commission reviewed the above referenced plan.

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I do believe the opinions expressed herein, do properly define the position of the Commission.

Sincerely yours,

TODD BROWN, SECRETARY