

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

December 14, 2016

The Upper Merion Township Planning Commission met for their regularly-scheduled meeting on December 14, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Township Building, 175 W. Valley Forge Rd., King of Prussia, PA.

Present: Matthew Popek, Vice-Chairperson; Mark McKee, Secretary; Todd Brown, Member; Kyle Brown, Associate Township Planner; Maudy Hedlund, Recording Secretary.
Absent: Jaque Camp, Chairperson; Vivian Peikin, Member; Robert Loeper, Township Planner; William Jenaway, Liaison to the Board of Supervisors.

Matt Popek opened the meeting with a pledge of allegiance to the flag, self-introductions and a request for a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for November 9, 2016.

Meeting Minutes: November 9, 2016

Todd Brown made a motion to approve the Minutes of November 9. Mark McKee seconded. A 3-0 vote, in favor, carried.

Kyle Brown provided a historical overview of the following plan.

Plans:

DP 2016-08: Upper Merion Area School District. Gulph School, 650 S. Henderson Road. Demolition of existing school and construction of replacement school with associate site features, amenities and stormwater facilities. 22.61 acres, R-2 Residential District.

Present: John A. Toleno, Ed.D., Superintendent, Upper Merion Area School District, 435 Crossfield Road, King of Prussia, PA.
Kenneth A. Bissinger, Renew Design Group, Souderton, PA.
Nick Groch, SCHRADERGROUP architecture LLC, 161 Leverington Ave., Philadelphia, PA.
Michael A. Crain, Project Manager, Reynolds Building Solutions, Wayne, PA.
Alice Hope, Vice-President, Upper Merion School Board.
Michael P. Keeley, Business Administrator, Upper Merion Area School District.
Eric Elvanian, Upper Merion Area School District School Board.
Rob Erickson, area resident.
Jean Osbahr, area resident.

From Dr. Toleno's presentation:

The new Gulph School will be similar in size to the current building but its design will resemble that of the new Caley School. Both schools will provide full-day Kindergarten. Preliminary meetings with PADOT and the Township's Engineers have been held. A traffic study has been done.

Dr. Toleno announced that he will hold two separate meetings for area residents. His letter to residents living within 500 feet of the Gulph School will be sent after the holidays.

From Mr. Bissinger's presentation:

Access:

The school's property can be accessed and exited at Henderson Rd. A one-way lane beginning at the Crooked Lane entrance and running throughout the site will be designated for bus and Staff use only. Sidewalks and a handicap-accessible ramp will flank the Crooked Lane entrance. PADOT recommended installing a new "right-in only" driveway from the Schuylkill Expressway (76) or Gulph Road and keeping the distance of the bus parking configuration as far away from the intersection of Gulph and Henderson Roads.

Exit:

Motorists will not be permitted to use Crooked Lane to exit the property.

Parking:

A row of parking spaces will be designated for Staff members only. Parents picking children up in the afternoon may park in an aisle-way that accommodates sixty-five vehicles. Additional parking for 135-140 cars will be available during special events.

Other:

- The plan proposes soft- play areas on the school's property.
- A stormwater management system will significantly reduce the amount of water leaving the site.
- Grading the property softly and constructing the school building five feet below grade will place it in harmonious proportion to the surrounding residential area.
- The school building's façade will consist of brick and cement board.
- Lighting will comply with Township standards.
- The school district acquired and will maintain a portion of the small cemetery that borders the Gulph School property.

From group discussion:

PADOT has not indicated an interest in signaling the new driveway at Henderson. Crosswalk requirements at Henderson Rd. have not yet been established.

The applicant will maintain an existing pedestrian connection and will work with the township to improve the situation that exists in the vicinity where two stop signs are located within 45 feet of one another.

Matt Popek stated that the Planning Commission will wait receipt of letters from the Township Engineer and the Montgomery County Planning Commission. The applicant is expected to reappear before the Planning Commission in January of 2017.

Comments from members of the audience:

Referring to the new entrance/exit on Henderson Road, area resident Jean Osbahr commented that for safety reasons she would not want cars to make a left out onto Henderson. The applicant considers it a better solution than going out onto Crooked Lane. Mr. McKee suggestion for a “right turn out only” during the peak hours of 4 to 6 p.m. met with the applicant’s approval.

Ms. Osbahr asked if people working at the Merion Building will be forced to exit out the new drive. Mr. Bissinger confirmed that they would have to exit at the new drive. He stated that the current drive will be improved and widened and added that the owners of the Merion Building acquired an easement from the school board.

Mr. Bissinger and Dr. Toleno provided the following answers to questions posed by area resident Rob Erickson.

- Parking will not be permitted in the play area.
- One small, two-foot retaining wall may be constructed in one area.
- The property will be fenced and many plants will be added as buffer.
- Crooked Lane will not be available as a pass-through.

Mr. Erickson also asked whether there were any concerns about the fumes and odors that the neighboring mulch plant produces. Dr. Toleno replied that the plant has to go through a certain process to gather their DEP permitting and that part of that process has to do with the school district. Dr. Toleno stated that it’s in the hands of the people litigating it and added that the school board has put the mulch plant on notice; that it is not going to grant that particular end of the approval for their DEP permit because of the odors, dust and lack of protection for the kids and the school district’s new equipment.

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Sincerely yours,

MARK MCKEE, SECRETARY