

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
February 22, 2017

The Upper Merion Township Planning Commission met for their regularly-scheduled meeting on February 22, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Township Building, 175 W. Valley Forge Rd., King of Prussia, PA.

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

Matt Popek opened the meeting with a pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Meeting Minutes: February 8, 2017

Todd Brown made a motion to approve the corrected Minutes of February 8, 2017. Mark McKee seconded. A 4-0 vote, in favor, carried.

Plan:

DP 2017-02: KOP Hotel (58-00-08467-00-7), 260 Mall Boulevard, demolish existing LA Fitness building and construct a 9,970 SF restaurant. 9.53 acres, GC-General Commercial.

Present: John Ambrose, BPGS Construction, Wilmington, DE, representative for the owner of the site.
Jeremy Maziarz, P.E., Chester Valley Engineers, Paoli, PA 19301.

The following are highlights from Messrs. Loeper and Ambrose presentations.

Reviews:

Mr. Loeper informed members of the audience that the Engineering Review for this permitted use arrived today and that the County Review is expected shortly.

Proposed is the demolition of the four-story LA Fitness building, expected to take from 60 to 90 days, followed by construction of J. Alexander's, a Nashville-based restaurant known for its wood-fired American cooking.

Ground Lease, Liquor License:

The applicant has acquired a ground lease from the hotel property owners and is working with the County to obtain a liquor license.

The Building's Appearance:

In response to Dr. Jenaway's question, Mr. Ambrose showed what the proposed building would look like from Mall Boulevard by showing examples of what has been built in different markets. The one-story restaurant will have 13-foot high walls. Parapets will conceal roof-mounted HVAC mechanicals from view.

Capacity:

Fifty-five hundred square feet of J. Alexander's will be allocated for patron-occupied space. The restaurant's open-concept kitchen and dining area for 112 patrons will be complimented by a bar with seating for 12 or 13 and flanked by a small outdoor terrace, available during warm weather. To keep the building's exterior neat-looking, mechanicals, recyclables and refuse will be stored in a thousand square foot area internal to the back of the restaurant.

Access, Parking, Traffic:

The applicant negotiated with the property owners of the Crown Plaza, Fairfield Inn, and Toys R Us to tie in another driveway at the location that leads to Joe's Crab Shack, the Hyatt House and Toys R Us, in order to create a parking area for 150 cars. Traffic, access and parking have been reviewed to ensure that the total parking requirements for all three uses are met without getting into a shared parking situation. Valet parking is not currently being provided. There will be no cross-easements.

Parking Spaces:

The total site requires 559 parking spaces; 627 spaces are proposed. A member asked if a safer parking arrangement could be proposed for the front of the building. The applicant's representatives offered to figure out a better way to build it.

Fence:

A new, more aesthetically-appealing fence with clear, wayfaring signage will be installed to direct motorists to the site's amenities.

Retaining Walls:

The retaining wall at Mall Boulevard will be four feet high. The other, north of the driveway's entrance, will vary in height to about seven feet.

Stormwater management:

A significant upgrade to stormwater management (Bed I) and an extensive underground detention system (Bed II) is capable of capturing the water from the parking lot, driveway, and the restaurant's roof.

Raingarden:

When asked to consider adding a rain garden, the applicant's representatives stated that utilities, gas, and electric lines are utilizing the less-than-one acre site.

Landscaping:

Four street trees are proposed. A member recommended installing a plant-based filtration system in lieu of a grassy lawn. The applicant's representatives will take the suggestion under consideration. A member identified a nearby raingarden on the western portion of the parking lot.

Sidewalk:

Group discussion about who owned the sidewalk portion along Mall Boulevard determined that the property belongs to Toys R Us.

Pedestrian Safety and Crossings:

Group discussion regarding pedestrians safely getting from the Hyatt House to the Mall concluded that pedestrian crossings are probably going to be limited to where signals are located.

Dr. Jenaway informed the applicant to be prepared about being questioned by the Board of Supervisors about a green roof.

Plan:

DP 2017-03: Johnson Development Associates, Inc., (58-00-10042-00-7), 510 S. Henderson and Shoemaker Roads, 4-story, 120,000 SF Self-Storage building, 3.34 acres, LI-Limited Industrial.

Present: Michael F. Russo, Jr., Regional Director of Development-Self-Storage Division, Johnson Development Associates, Inc., Spartanburg, SC.
Matthew M. Chartrand, P.E., Bohler Engineering, Center Valley, PA.
Bailey C. Gaffney, Development Manager, Self-Storage Division, Johnson Development Associates, Inc., Summit, NJ.
Natalie A. Smith, Real Estate Manager, Self-Storage Division, Johnson Development Associates, Inc., Summit, NJ.
David J. Brooman, Esq., High Swartz, Attorneys at Law LLP, Norristown, PA.

From Mr. Loeper's overview:

History of the site:

The property has been in a green state for a number of years. The Gambone Brothers, by building Shoemaker Road in the 1990's, connected Henderson and Yerkes Roads. The brothers also built the area's business park and made extensive stormwater management improvements to the area that used to flood out in extreme rain.

Proposed Plan:

Johnson Development is proposing a four-story, 120,000 SF self-storage facility with access off Shoemaker Road's signalized intersection. Given that self-storage facilities are considered one of the lowest traffic generators, the site won't require a lot of parking spaces. The applicant's two neighbors operate as storage facilities.

From the applicant's representatives:

Proposed Building:

The, 34-foot-tall, all-enclosed building will have a loading dock, an office, and two elevators and provide 940 internal units that range in size from 25 SF to 200 SF. The building will be climate-controlled and have a 30,000 SF footprint. A portion of the building's fascia will be glass for viewing into the building. The secured site will have on-site cameras.

Hours of Operation:

CubeSmart will operate the building for the applicant. Business hours are 7 a.m. to lockdown at 9 p.m. The building will be manned from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Every customer will have a security code or card to get to the floor of their designated unit.

Customer Base:

Fifty percent of its customers will be business people needing space to store their samples. The other fifty percent will consist of area residents needing additional storage space.

Site:

The site has a significant slope from the east down to Henderson Rd. The east side of the building will be cut into the hillside.

Pilings and a Well System:

The site's challenging topography requires installation of a piling and well system. Trash and contaminated construction debris such as concrete, masonry, wood, and garbage, would have to be taken to a registered landfill.

Berms:

Additional berms will minimize removing soil from the site.

Driveway:

The driveway will use an existing access easement.

Traffic:

Twenty to thirty cars were recorded during a peak hour.

Parking:

The applicant is operating under warehouse parking requirement in an industrial district. Twenty-two parking spaces will be located on north side of building. Twenty nine spaces will be placed in reserve parking.

A member asked if the applicant would be willing to take fewer parking spaces. The applicant's representatives were receptive to the idea by providing more landscaping.

Waivers:

Three waivers, one each for pipe size, grading and traffic study are requested.

Stormwater Management:

Conversations with the Conservation District and the DEP resulted in a decision to take the roof's water into a rain garden and the 80-foot deep wells to avoid sinkholes and achieve the volume reduction needed for the required stormwater reduction.

Sidewalk/Safety Concern:

The applicant described the location of the guiderail, the culvert's wall and a 15-foot fall into the culvert as deterrents to installing a safe sidewalk. A member commented that people are already walking there. Another member asked how much of the property would be fenced and if the sidewalk could meander from Shoemaker to Henderson, away from the drop-off and swales. Mr. Loeper stated that the school district made it very clear that there will be no crossing on Henderson Rd. for school students. He added that there is a signalized intersection and a pedestrian crossing. The applicant's representatives indicated a willingness to look at installing a sidewalk behind the guard rail.

There being no additional business, Vivian Peikin motioned and Matt Popek seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Sincerely yours,

VIVIAN PEIKIN, SECRETARY