

**UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**January 28, 2015**

The Upper Merion Township Planning Commission met for their regularly-scheduled meeting on January 28, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Township Building, 175 W. Valley Forge Rd., King of Prussia, PA.

**Present:** Jacque Camp, Chairperson; M. Jonathan Garzillo, Vice-Chairperson; Mark McKee, Secretary, Matthew Popek, Member; Robert Loeper, Township Planner; Scott Greenly, Associate Township Planner; Maudy Hedlund, Recording Secretary.  
**Absent:** Steve Elgart, Member; William Jenaway, Liaison to the Board of Supervisors.

**Meeting Minutes: January 14, 2015**

Mr. Garzillo made a motion to accept the amended January 14, 2015 Minutes. Mr. McKee seconded. A 4-0 vote, in favor, carried.

**PLANS:**

**Sky Group Investments, LLC**  
**DP 2014-16; IFLY Indoor Skydiving**  
**300 Goddard Boulevard**  
**5,929 SF indoor sky-diving facility.**  
**16.42 acres, LI Limited Industrial**

**Present:**

Debra A. Shulski, Esq., Riley Riper Hollin & Colagreco, 717 Constitution Drive, Exton, PA.  
Marcus Hurley, Project Manager, MGAC, 730 Eleventh St., Washington, D.C.  
Charles “Cody” Smith, P.E., Kimley Horn, 11400 Commerce Park Dr., Reston, VA.

From Mr. Loeper’s overview:

The Zoning Hearing Board granted Sky Group Investments a special exception to build an indoor sky-diving facility. The applicant is requesting three waivers: for grading within five (5) feet of the property line; for reducing the width of a number of parking spaces from 9.5 ft. to 9 ft.; and to relocate the loading space to a small area where it will not block parked cars.

The applicant’s representatives presented an architectural rendering of the building; the air handler system; and a description of the soil conditions at excavation depths of 24.5 ft. and 25 feet for the tunnel that wraps beneath the main floor.

The company, which is owned by expert skydivers, has been in business since the 1990’s without incident or injury to patrons. In the event of a power failure, a safety mechanism comprised of fly wheels continues to maintain air pressure and assures safety for patrons in the air chamber. A daily safety check list includes inspection of the tunnel for debris and leaks. The State of PA requires that all ride facilities meet the Code requirements and to anticipate the State Department’s unannounced annual inspection.

The proposed building's maximum capacity of 40 people will generally consist of two parties of twelve people each plus ten employees. First time users receive an hour's training before being allowed two ten-minute floating periods in the tunnel.

Group discussion identified the following:

- The business acquired a land lease from the property owner.
- To minimize the loss of parking spaces and not create more impervious area a suggestion was made to resize and restripe a number of the theatre's parking spaces.
- The peak-hour on-site traffic count of 10 to 15 trips has a relatively low impact.
- The net impervious will be reduced by seeding the back lot with turf grass and a small rain garden.
- A trash dumpster will be located near the edge of the parking lot.
- Indoor air will not be re-circulated.
- Noise quality outside of the building will be negligible and in compliance with the applicable decibel levels.
- Construction is proposed to begin in April with occupancy in October of 2015.
- The daily hours of operation will be from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm on weekdays and from 10:00 am to 11:00 on weekends.
- The experience is estimated to cost \$100 to \$125.

Mr. McKee voiced his concerns about land subsidence. To prevent sinkholes from forming behind the building, he recommended adding a liner beneath the grassy area and installing a fence at the rear of the property. Mr. McKee's points were well taken. The applicant assured that the site will be a safe environment and that all doors will be alarmed.

Group discussion determined that the Commission would not need to see the applicant again.

Mr. McKee made motion to recommend approval of the Sky Group's proposal for 300 Goddard Boulevard. He suggested that the Board of Supervisors consider whether the request for the reduction of the parking sizes is consistent with what we're doing in other areas of the Township and, in view of the families that are expected to participate here, recommended that the applicant seriously consider safety protections on the area abutting both the storm water management basin and the Pennsylvania Turnpike; and that the applicant study the area of the rain garden for possible sinkhole subsidence issues, as they have occurred in other areas of the parking deck. Mr. Garzillo seconded and a 4-0 vote, in favor carried.

**SunCap Property Group, LLC**

**DP 2014-15**

**600 River Road**

**Construction of a FedEx Ground Distribution Facility (315,897 SF) and subdivision of the property.**

**65.39 acres, HI/LI**

**Present:**

Jonathan Greene, Vice President, SunCap, 6101 Carnegie Blvd, #180, Charlotte, NC 28209.

Matthew N. McClure, Esq., Ballard Spahr, LLP, 1735 Market St., Philadelphia, PA.

Christopher M. Hager, PE, LEEP AP, Senior Principal, Langan, 30 S. 17<sup>th</sup> St., Philadelphia, PA.

Daniel D. Disario, PE, PTOE, Senior Associate, Langan.

Richard Dougert, area resident.

Ken Forman, area resident.

Project Engineer, Daniel Disario updated members that FedEx selected Hagerstown, MD as the newly-designated hub for the proposed FedEx Ground facility. Group discussion confirmed that this decision would not change previously-designated truck routes.

Excluding the number of truck drivers, the site will employ 200 people at the 5-year ramp-up time.

Additional traffic counts, taken of employees' cars entering and exiting from the Philadelphia Inquirer's three driveways located between B Street and Swedeland Road along 23, indicated a difference of eight to nine percent from the previous analysis. At less than ten percent this would not make a difference to the results provided at the January 14 meeting.

Members appreciated the availability of mass transit at "B" Street and 23 to reduce the number of vehicle counts. In response to Mr. Loeper's comment on the possibility of SEPTA rerouting its bus line to access a site, Mr. Disario stated that his conservative analysis did not include mass transit or carpooling.

In response to Mr. McKee's concern about trip distribution, Mr. Disario stated the numbers for the volumes on River and Flint Hill Rd. The volume on River Road is five times that of Flint Hill Rd. Mr. McKee agreed about Flint Hill Rd. but disagreed with the Swedeland and Trinity Road interchange that Renaissance, GlaxoSmithKline and Inquirer employees are using.

Mr. Disario commented on a probable misperception at a scoping meeting with PADOT is that this facility is going to generate 1,000s of trucks per day and heavy truck volume at peak hours. The mandated route for all FedEx trucks is a required route.

The applicant is going to perform a sensitivity analysis on the corridor and make proposals if a significant impact warrants mitigation such as signal time changes or widening of the lanes. Mr. McKee responded that this is what the community is trying to preempt.

In order to verify to FedEx that there were no restrictions Mr. Disario investigated the route to the point of exhaustion. Mr. Greene noted that FedEx' Operations people came out here last year to

confirm that very thing. Matthew McClure stated that the HI-zoned property is going to be developed. The truthful representations are based on communications with FedEx Ground.

Mr. McKee commented on traffic problems that, beginning on the Expressway or Blue Route direct trucks through the residential Gulph Mills neighborhood where there is no room to widen the road or make improvements without changing the character of a historic neighborhood. Mr. Disario shared Mr. McKee's concerns.

Matthew McClure referred to a workshop meeting held with the Board Supervisors in 2014 where the chairman of the workshop made a reference to donating a right of way along the northern route of the applicant's site. SunCap is willing to donate the right of way. FedEx would have to sign off for the Township to take dedication of the right of way.

Matthew McClure stated that the site plan would result in losing some parking spaces and change the size of some of the trailer spaces. There would be no changes to the flow of the building, the way it relates to the street, the hours of operation, or to organizational planning. Mr. Hager stated that the site plan would be unnoticeably changed.

Mr. Loeper stated that the township's feasibility study determined that a 40-ft. wide road could be built on this right of way. Grading issues would have to be addressed and some retaining walls would be needed. The road might be useful in the future but isn't warranted based on existing traffic flows. It would line up with Hertzog Boulevard and add an intersection on River Road.

In response to Mr. McKee's inquiry, Mr. Hager stated that the Township's traffic consultant approved a gate or break in the 22-ft. sound wall for the location of a secondary emergency access to the site.

Ms. Camp asked for comments from the audience.

Representing the Gulph Mills Civic Association's 850 + families, Mr. Richard Dougert said that the Association, which has always been concerned with moving traffic through the township, encourages our Supervisors to assist new commercial ventures to move traffic directly to and from major arteries and off residential arteries. The Association is not against the project and encourages the applicant to improve the access to major arteries.

Ms. Camp stated that one member of the Commission strongly feels that the road being built should be a condition of your approval. Some of us think that this is unrealistic because the Township would have to build the road and incorporate it into its planning. It would not be fair to the applicant to have his progress hinge on that. Ms. Camp offered a recommendation that the Township pursue restricting truck traffic on roads that cannot accommodate it.

Mr. Richard Dougert provided the following mechanism of action: (1) the deeding of the right of way on the north end of the property to the township for future development and use; (2) pursuing with FedEx some mechanism to guarantee enforcement of the truck routes; and (3) some serious effort to work with PADOT to restrict truck routes in the intersection of Trinity, Balligomingo and Holstein Roads.

Matthew McClure commented that the accommodation is unrelated to law and should not be a condition of approval. Mr. Garzillo offered to hold the applicant's foot to the fire for truck routes on 320.

In response to Ms. Camp's request for a recommendation, Mr. Garzillo made a motion that the Board of Supervisors approve the FedEx Ground facility with three pieces of recommendation added: (1) that the right of way offer be accepted should FedEx finalize that proposal; (2) that the Board of Supervisors consider working with PADOT to restrict problematic truck traffic on 320, specifically at the intersections of Trinity, Balligomingo and Holstein Roads; and that the Board of Supervisors pursue hard guarantees from FedEx that all proposed and promised trucking routes be kept to now and in the future, per attachment. Mr. Popek seconded. A 3-1 vote, in favor, carried.

For reasons previously discussed Mr. McKee felt that the road should be part of the plan. He would like to see the road be part of the facility because of the western distribution that this facility will be serving and because the connection with Church Road is an important viability for the applicant's site. While he appreciates the offer of dedication he cannot support a full recommendation without the applicant's participation in the construction of the road.

Mr. Garzillo recommended that Commissioner McKee's comments be included in the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Sincerely yours,

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MARK MCKEE, SECRETARY

**UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

**JANUARY 28, 2015**

**TO: UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**FM: UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

**REF: SKY GROUP INVESTMENTS, LLC**  
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**PRESENT: Chairperson Camp, Vice-Chairperson Garzillo, Secretary McKee, Member Popek; Township Planner Loeper; Associate Planner Greenly; Recording Secretary Hedlund.**

**ABSENT: Member Elgart; Liaison to the Board of Supervisors Jenaway.**

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,

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MARK MCKEE, SECRETARY

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**Popek; Township Planner Loeper; Associate Planner Greenly; Recording**  
**Secretary Hedlund.**

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