

Borough of Malvern

Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2013

Approved Minutes

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission was held on Thursday, April 18, 2013 at the Malvern Municipal Building. Members present included: Amy Finkbiner, Dave Knies, Chris Mongeau, Cecelia Oswald and Carroll Sinquett

Chairman Mongeau called the meeting to order at 7:37 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for April 4, 2013 approved as corrected.

Old Business

217 S. Warren Avenue Development

No representative present

Public Comment

Danny Fruchter

Mr. Fruchter presented the content of a letter from John Snook, Senior Planner for the Brandywine Conservancy. His comments included:

- the proposed plan would require a number of waivers,
- the plan is out of character with the existing neighborhood,
- the proposed houses would be “McMansions” on postage stamp sized lots and are out of sync with existing homes.

Mr. Fruchter presented a chart of data he gathered comparing the house volume and lot size of the current homes to the proposed homes.

	House volume (average)	Lot size (average)
Current homes	27,550 cu ft	57,040 cu ft
Proposed homes	13,700 sq ft	7,248 sq ft

The PC asked Mr. Fruchter to send a copy of data presented to them in writing.

Mr. Fruchter stated that the proposed alley is a zoning issue, i.e. a common driveway versus an alley. He suggested that in order for a waiver to be granted which eliminates the need for the developer to widen Warren Avenue, the developer should have to make a financial contribution to the Borough. Mr. Fruchter stated that if the developer insists on creating 5 lots the Borough should refuse to grant any waivers. If the developer reduces the number of lots created to 4, then the Borough would consider the request for waivers.

The four-step design process which was meant to be burdensome for the development of large tracts of land was discussed. Mr. Fruchter stated that if the PC gives waivers now to Tag Builders they will set a precedent for future large developers.

Mr. Fruchter then asked the PC members to comment on the issue of 5 versus 4 lots.

Dave Knies noted that the PC is not “waiver city.” There is currently not a plan for the PC to review. He suggested that Mr. Fruchter review what the Comprehensive Plan says about the purpose of the four-step Process. It only applies to large developments. Cecelia Oswald noted that Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan contains this information.

It was noted that Mr. Galbally is willing to supply a copy of the Phase I Environmental Study to the Borough when it is completed. According to Ms. Oswald a summary letter from the State will be sufficient.

Dave Knies explained the Zoning Board process.

New Business

North Warren Ave – Progressive Housing Ventures, LLC

Sarah Peck, Owner

Ms. Peck stated that her company specializes in new developments in historic areas with walkability. She shared photographs of projects completed in Norristown and Downingtown. The proposed North Warren Avenue project would include both sides of North Warren between Quaker and Spring Streets. The parcels are 1.7 acres on the west side and 2.2 acres on the east. The west side is zoned I-2 and the east side Residential. The property has an extremely steep slope. It is ¼ mile from the Malvern train station. The seller lives in Malvern.

The property on the west side of North Warren would need to be rezoned from Industrial to Residential - R7. The property on the east side would be donated to the borough or Malvern Hills HOA as green space. There is a PECO easement at the south end of the property. The developed community would have a homeowner’s association.

Ms. Peck is proposing to build 20 town homes on the west side of North Warren. A retaining wall 20-25 feet in height would be built at the rear of the homes in stepped sections of 10, 5, 10,

and 5 feet. The sketches presented to the PC featured garages in the lower level of the front of the homes, and guest parking between the homes and Warren Avenue. The PC stated that they preferred that the parking and garage entrances be placed between the retaining wall and the rear of the homes. The homes are 4 stories including the garage level. The garage parking for two cars is end-to-end rather than side-by-side parking. There are 2 bedrooms with two full baths on the second floor and a finished room on the third floor.

The stream on the east side of North Warren Avenue is seriously eroding the road bed. Ms. Peck has included stream stabilization in her budget for the project. It is an extreme value stream. Cecelia Oswald recommended construction of a 200 year water retention system. Storms are changing in both frequency and intensity, and this property has a steep slope.

Public Comment:

Syd Baglini

Ms. Baglini's comments concerned the drainage issues related to this very steep property, disturbance of trees and the construction of the proposed retaining wall.

Recommendation to Borough Council for the Malvern-Willistown Greenway Trail Master Plan

Discussion included the discontinuity in the path in section 2 of the map. The PC would like the lines to be connected or to have an explanation as to why this was not done. There is no bike path on the map. The description in the plan includes a bike path. The plan is well written and identifies potential funding sources.

Dave Knies made, and Cecelia Oswald seconded, a motion that The Planning Commission recommends approval of the Malvern Willistown Greenway Trail Master Plan to Borough Council with the following comments.

1. The bike path meets the intent of Chapter 2 (9.22, 9-26 and 9-27) of the Malvern Comprehensive Plan in terms of safe bike lanes.
2. Removal of the traffic signal shown on the map at the bridge as the signal does not currently exist.

The motion carried unanimously.

All business before the Commission being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 10:05pm.

Recorded by Marty Laney