

The regular meeting of the Souderton Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 pm on the above date by Chairman William Maxwell. Other Commission members present only included Roy Zeiher. The meeting was also attended by Borough Manager P. Michael Coll, Hannah Mazzaccaro of the Montgomery County Planning Commission, Planning Consultants Victor DePallo and Steven Ware and Borough Councillors Jeffrey Gross and John Young.

Chairman Maxwell noted that since there is no official quorum present, the Commission will not take any formal action on the minutes or other pending business. The members will receive comments from Metro Development Group on the draft overlay zoning ordinance and design guidelines for the Souderton High School Redevelopment project. The Board will also hear a presentation from Victor DePallo on the progress of the Expanded Redevelopment area Plan for the Borough.

Chairman Maxwell first recognized attorney William Benner and engineer Jack Schneider, representing Metro Development Group. Attorney William Benner commented that Metro Development Group received the latest draft of the overlay zoning ordinance and design guidelines approximately two weeks ago which afforded them an opportunity to test the proposed ordinance against their conceptual plans. The result of their tests have prompted the following comments and concerns, some of which are viewed as only points of clarification other are viewed as more critical issues. Engineer Jack Schneider then presented the following comments:

- Metro Development expressed concern over the 5% project cost designation for “artisan” features. Term artisan designed ornate lighting implies that the product has to be custom made. Can this term be modified to permit upscale products that may be readily produced? Borough representatives expressed concern that this direction might tend to allow basic catalogue items that will defeat the intent of creating a unique development for Souderton Borough.
- Parking requirement of 1.25 spaces for the independent care facility may still be too high. Experience suggests that this requirement can be further reduced.
- Section 2004(A) provides a calculation for three use types. Office use falls slightly under the required 15% minimum, suggesting some flexibility to reduce the office use to 13%. The market for office space is very soft; increasing the amount of office space is not feasible.
- The setback from Chestnut Street has been increased, which may pose some design issues in placing the assisted and independent living facility.
- Significant discussion was held on the issue of drive through facilities. The ordinance prohibits drive through facilities in the district. There is significant interest in a bank facility on the site, perhaps at the corner of School Lane and East Broad Street. Banking institutions desire the ability to have a drive through window. The Borough feels that permitting drive through facilities conflicts with the underlying goal of establishing a walkable community. A suggestion was made specifically permit a drive through facility only when the tract is directly accessible to an existing arterial street.
- The latest draft ordinance includes a minimum FAR of .30. The Borough clarified that this revision was intended to insure a fairly dense development. Metro calculates that their current conceptual plan has a FAR of .27. Concern was expressed over the balance of achieving the minimum FAR with parking and impervious surface requirements. Metro also noted that a parking garage is not justifiable for this project. They also noted that achieving this balance becomes more difficult if they eliminate some of the proposed townhomes to place a banking institution at the corner of School Lane and East Broad Street.

- There appears to be an error in the length of the building under Section 2004 (5). The length of the building should read 200 feet.
- Parking calculations were discussed at length. Metro provided a spread sheet showing their shared parking calculations for the project. The restaurant requirement appears high, but is probably closer to reality, but the parking requirement for the assisted and independent living facility is not consistent with known statistics. Metro prefers that if any parking relief is granted that it be towards the assisted and independent living facility.
- Clarification for the zero lighting encroachment restriction at the boundary, the standard is actually 0.1.
- Significant discussion was held on signage. Pylon signs are very important to this type of development for the retailers. A request was made to consider increasing the height of the sign to 20 feet to better accommodate the sign balance with the pole. Victor DePallo suggested that height increase may be acceptable and that the ordinance should be further revised to require an opaque background with cut out characters.
- Buffering requirements were clarified for parking facilities, with no recommended changes.
- Some of the planting and tree specifications will be further reviewed by the planning consultant.

Victor DePallo and Steven were informed the members of the status of the Economic Redevelopment Area Plan and the associated blight report which must be formally approved by the Souderton Planning Commission and the Montgomery County Planning Commission. A request was made to add redevelopment area 5 back into the final plan and eliminate the park and pool section found in area 4. Councillor Jeff Gross noted that area 5 is important to follow the recommendation of the Souderton-Telford Revitalization Plan to have Reliance Road serve as the connection between Souderton and Telford Main Streets. Some additional corrections were noted on the draft document.

Hannah Mazzaccaro recommended that the map and associated documents be revised to include area 5 and she will confer with Director Ken Hughes on the background supporting this revision. The Montgomery Planning Commission will be reviewing the final draft at their board meeting on Wednesday, June 10, 2009.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll, Recording Secretary