

The regular meeting of the Souderton Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 pm on the above date by Chairman Edward Huber. Other Commission members present included Jeffrey Gross, Calvin Munden and Andrew Schlosser. The meeting was attended by Borough Manager P. Michael Coll and Chloe Mohr, AICP, Montgomery County Planning Commission.

Chairman Huber asked for consideration of the minutes from the January 4, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. A motion was made by Jeffrey Gross and seconded by Andrew Schlosser, to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2023 meeting of the Souderton Planning Commission as presented. The motion was approved.

Chairman Edward Huber first recognized Nate Clemmer, owner and developer of Branch Creek Brewery Taproom at 30 W. Chestnut Street. Nate Clemmer confirmed that the shared parking agreement with Univest Bank and Trust Company was formally executed. The required pedestrian access and temporary construction agreements are also in process of execution.

A motion was made by Andrew Schlosser, seconded by Calvin Munden, to recommend conditional final approval of the proposed Branch Creek Brewery Taproom, 30 W. Chestnut Street subject to submission of the fully executed parking agreement, temporary construction easement and pedestrian access easement with Univest Bank and Trust Company. The motion was approved.

Planning Commission members noted that at some point the Borough will need to develop a formal process to account for and manage shared parking throughout the Borough. Shared parking spaces can be utilized by more than one commercial development, but residential spaces cannot be shared. Perhaps the Borough should encourage use of underutilized parking spaces in church parking lots. Chloe Mohr noted that the very recent revitalization planning survey suggests that residents are somewhat satisfied with the availability of parking within the Borough.

Borough Manager Michael Coll confirmed that Souderton Borough Council has scheduled a Conditional Use hearing on Monday, February 27, 2023 to consider the proposal of School Lane Development to locate a Starbucks restaurant with a drive through service window on a commercial pad site fronting East Broad Street. Drive through service windows are only permitted by Conditional Use approval from Borough Council. The developer prepared a revised site plan for the Starbucks restaurant, drive through service window and adjacent parking. The developer had a traffic engineer evaluate the design and circulation for the drive through window as required for the Conditional Use application.

Planning Commission members noted that the size of the proposed Starbucks restaurant appears to have a smaller footprint than the original proposed restaurant on the commercial pad site. The developer should note that the smaller commercial building may affect the ratio requirement for overall residential density on the site. The Planning Commission also noted that the developer will need to open the last remaining development phase to accommodate

construction and permitting of the new commercial building. The approved land development plans located a primary Towne Gate Commons development sign along East Broad Street which has been removed from the Starbucks plan revision. The development sign should be relocated at the East Broad Street/ Souder's Way entrance. Planning Commission members also noted the following observations and concerns:

- A reduction in parking spaces has been made with the revised Starbucks plan. The reduction might be acceptable given the smaller size of the restaurant and the added drive through service window. However, the overall parking opportunities for other existing or future commercial buildings appear to be diminished.
- The Planning Commission and Borough Council should review and approve the revised development plan prior to permitting. The last construction phase of the development will need to be formally opened and approved by Borough Council with adjustments in developer's escrow.
- A pedestrian crosswalk may need to be added at the drive through exit.
- The proposed line of trees along East Broad Street may impact vision of motorists leaving the development. The Planning Commission will need to clarify with the developer if the PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit restricts turning movements from the development onto East Broad Street.
- Chloe Mohr of the Montgomery County Planning Commission will prepare a separate review letter.
- Overall the Planning Commission supported the proposed Starbucks use with the drive through service window.

Chloe Mohr discussed the Montco 2050 comprehensive planning process. Montgomery County encourages residents, the workforce and visitors to visit the new plan's website and to complete a survey.

Chloe Mohr circulated a memorandum dated February 1, 2023 which outlines various talking points and concerns within the commercial zoning districts. The Planning Commission members discussed the following matters:

- Medical Offices should be allowed within the C-1, C-2, MUR and LI districts but not within the C-3 Commercial Downtown Core District. Primarily since such offices usually operate during the business day and will not attract evening business.
- Medical Marijuana Dispensaries can be permitted within the C-1 district. This use should be discussed and coordinated with the Indian Valley Regional Planning Commission.
- A draft of a revised C-1 Commercial District should proceed for review by the Planning Commission.
- Planning Commission members discussed and suggested further review of specific conditions that may be desired for various permitted conditional uses. If there is limited or no specific conditions, then consideration should be given to permitting the use by right. Reducing the amount of conditional uses is desirable.

- A number of uses throughout the Zoning Ordinance require a more specific definition. The discussion went further into a potential to restructure the Zoning Ordinance to have an Article that just addresses use regulations. This may be a significant project but may be most beneficial in the long term.
- Chloe Mohr noted that all new principal buildings within the C-2 District require some degree of a conditional use application. She further noted that most projects, with exception of a single family dwelling, requires land development approval. The original intent was to insure that new construction incorporate architectural features to blend with surrounding buildings. Case law has been limiting the amount of municipal leverage for conditional uses. It is important that the Zoning Ordinance is specific enough to achieve certain goals and intent without relying on conditional use applications.
- Improved definitions for Group Homes and home based occupations is necessary.
- Garden Apartment uses should be eliminated from the R-3 Residential District.
- The Limited Industrial District should be reduced. The existing industrial district at Reliance Road and Railroad Avenue and along Cherry Lane should be retained, with more intense commercial uses and less traditional industrial uses. The existing Industrial District comprising the Lawn Avenue Park should be eliminated and changed to another commercial or residential district.
- Planning Commission members discussed uses permitted by Special Exception which may also be reduced much like the discussions with Conditional Uses.
- Short term rentals was discussed but not favorably viewed by the Planning Commission.
- Artisan manufacturing should be added as a permitted use in the commercial districts.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll
Recording Secretary