

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, Laurie Reynolds and Andrew Schlosser. The meeting was attended by Borough Manager P. Michael Coll and Danielle Baer, AICP, Montgomery County Planning Commission. The meeting was also attended by Borough Councillor Donna Rogers.

Chairman Huber noted that the minutes from the October 5, 2022, meeting have been prepared for review. Andrew Schlosser suggested a revision to the paragraph on the development plan for 30 W. Chestnut Street to clarify that the comments by Chairman Huber were made at a previous meeting. A motion was then made by Jeffrey Gross and seconded by Andrew Schlosser, to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2022, meeting of the Planning Commission as revised. The motion was approved.

Borough Manager Michael Coll presented conceptual renderings from owner Joe Chiaro concerning his proposed “Box Park” project to create a commercial retail facility with shipping containers on his property at 160 Main Street. The concept plan as prepared by TSM Design Services, dated October 8, 2022, show an L-shaped grouping of retail spaces overlooking a fence enclosed courtyard. Owner Joe Chiaro previously submitted a development plan to construct a new commercial building on this site, replacing a previous mixed use building that was demolished due to significant structural issues. That particular project was not pursued. The container village was also previously presented to the Planning Commission and to Borough Council.

With regard to the current submission, the Planning Commission found the conceptual plans to be interesting and generally acceptable. The building code official should review the proposal to verify applicability to National Building Codes. The Planning Commission provided the following comments to the latest conceptual plan:

- There is a recorded easement across the property to provide access to a future parking lot to the rear of the property owned by Souderton Borough. The plan should delineate and preserve the recorded easement.
- The concept plan suggests varying sizes of parking stalls. The parking stalls shall be provided according to Zoning and SALDO requirements.
- An engineer will need to develop grading, stormwater management and landscaping plans in conformity with Zoning and SALDO requirements. The amount of impervious surface is questionable.
- The development plan must clarify the amount of commercial space both in units and square footage to verify parking requirements. Parking for the adjoining Burger Shop can be considered as a lawful nonconforming condition.
- The fence poses some concern with overall height, potential Zoning conflict within the front yard, along with a visibility preference into the commercial space.
- Location and access to a dumpster.

Danielle Baer, AICP, further discussed recommendations concerning the sign ordinance. Danielle Baer reviewed a revised draft of “Signage Design Guidelines” designed to provide a user-friendly guide on sign regulations, which is based on the existing comprehensive sign ordinance. Text changes have been made to better define box signs and address murals based on discussions at the October meeting. The Planning Commission suggested adding a procedural statement in the guidelines concerning the option of variance relief.

The Planning Commission has had significant discussion concerning the size of murals. The Planning Commission further discussed a limitation of 25% of the front façade of a building with no limitation on the side or rear façade. Laurie Reynolds expressed that she is not supportive of any size limitation for murals, discretion should be left to the property owner. Calvin Munden expressed similar opinions against limitations to the size of murals. Chairman Huber asked for a vote from the Commission on the proposed 25% size limitation for the front façade of a building. The proposed mural limitation was supported by a vote of 3 ayes to 2 nays.

The Planning Commission discussed potential processes for the review and permitting of a mural application. Some members questioned whether it was appropriate to have an agency review at all. Perhaps there could be a procedure for public comment prior to issuing a permit.

Danielle Baer provided a brief update on the progress of the Souderton Borough Revitalization and Economic Development Plan.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll  
Recording Secretary