

HANOVER TOWNSHIP, LEHIGH COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

October 16, 2018
7:30 P.M.

Present: Baillie; Tocci; Paulus; Thomas; Hawk; Trexler; Susan G. Maurer, Esquire;
Al Kortze, P.E.; Christopher Garges; Vicky Roth

Absent: Bean

Attendance: 7

Approval of Minutes: September 18, 2018 Planning Commission Meeting

Motion: I move we waive the reading of the Minutes of the September 18, 2018
Planning Commission Meeting and accept same as presented.

Thomas, Baillie: Moved and Seconded

Unan.

Correspondence:

Chairman Thomas stated that there is a ton of correspondence in front of him this evening, not much of it relating to Agenda items. He said if anyone is interested in reviewing any of the correspondence, they may do so at the Township Building during normal business hours. Christopher Garges, Township Manager, stated that being newer to the game, he is just trying to make sure that the Commission is getting copies regarding any projects that are current or have previously been before the Commission. He said if it gets to the point where the Commission is receiving too much information from him, to let him know and he can halt some of it. He is just trying to keep the Commission informed. Mr. Thomas said he appreciates it and his comment was not a judgment. It was just a statement. Mr. Garges replied that he understands and he put a lot in the Commissions' packets and realizes there was a lot of information.

New Business:

1. Sketch Plan Review, Goodman Properties, Middle Lloyd St., Allentown, PA 18109 (Review and Recommendation)

Mr. Garges mentioned that there was a review letter from the Township Engineer, Keystone Consulting Engineers. Mr. Garges told the Planning Commission there is a Shade Tree Commission review from the City of Allentown in their packets as well as a review letter from LANTA.

Lisa Peirara introduced herself to Council and all in attendance at the meeting. She was at the meeting representing the Applicant, Goodman Properties. In attendance with her, is their engineer, Mr. Jeff Beavan and also the Developer's representative, Rick Albertson. Ms. Peirara stated that Mr. Albertson has a family emergency that he needs to deal with this evening and will need to leave the meeting a bit earlier, due to the interest in time, she thought it would make sense to have Mr. Albertson give a brief history of the project which some members of the Commission may already be familiar with at this location and some of the discussions that were previously had with the Township as to the development of the site. But, to fill everyone in on it, she would like to have Mr. Albertson address everyone after which she and Mr. Beavan can deal with the more-technical aspects of the sketch plan and answer any questions with respect to the development.

Mr. Albertson introduced himself. He mentioned that he goes back 10-12 years with most of the Commission members. The sketch plan in front of the Commission was a normal build out from the existing Airport Centers Shopping Center. The 20 acres were available, however, and some may already know, Walmart had tried to work with the owners of the cemetery that is there, Cedar Hill Memorial Park, and build a Walmart there. They came before the Township and did not get a very good reception and things blew up. Mr. Albertson went and spoke with the cemetery folks telling them they'd be interested in the 20 acres; however, they would have to get over the pricing that Walmart threw out for the property. What Walmart who makes one to two million dollars a week can pay for a property, most cannot do. Mr. Albertson was willing to pay at least what they paid for the Airport Centers Shopping Center if not more. He said it took two years to finally get things set up. The only down side was is that they knew they would not be walking in before the Township with Walmart and that a big box was not welcome there. And, they knew that the cemetery wasn't going to wait long. They did not realize that the gentleman they were dealing with was terminally ill and passed away three or four months after they closed on the land without a lead tenant. Mr. Albertson said that as the Commission might already know retail has had its ups and downs over the past five or six years. Some of it is making a strong comeback and some of it is not. Some will just go away because they fail to change. They have held this property for this amount of time hoping to get the lead tenant that was needed. They realized they had enough to finish about half, but the biggest would be about a mid-size tenant to be about 12,000-13,000 feet and then ancillary from there and pad usage. The owners of the apartments near there had approached them about the property and originally, they said no to them and they came back and all of a sudden, they only had half of the property to deal with retail wise. Economically, it made sense if they had the other half. But, it had to be the front half of the corner that is part of the Airport Road and American Parkway intersection. In keeping that piece there, they would put apartments on the other side and kept them to a lower level. They took

the total number that they wanted and took that down some and then started to address the fact that there is a line that runs right through the middle of the property and divides it between the Township and the City of Allentown. Of course, Allentown wants all the retail in their section and all the apartments in the Township and Mr. Albertson suggested that the Township would like the opposite of what Allentown wants. Mr. Albertson said they have to look at it from a developer's standpoint and what makes sense is to put the retail, any mid-size building is going to be in the Township and not because they are trying to be nice guys. It's just that this is what makes sense. It faces American Parkway and Airport Road, then there are the pads around the perimeter there, and the apartments would go in the so-called back. Unfortunately, that means right in through the middle where the apartments are, half is in Allentown and half is in the Township. Neither one of them are a permitted use in the municipalities that they are dealing with. Mr. Albertson said after five years of banging their heads against the wall and going after food stores and value retailers and trying to convince the TJMaxx people that they would need to move out and get a new facility, etc. they have a waiting list of people that would like to go in this property. It took them a good amount of time to convince people that it would be a good development. They had Costco incidentally leave them on Airport Road because they said they were going to be in a hole where Sam's Club is presently. And they explained to them that if they can read elevations, you're saying they are going to balance the site so it's the same and basically almost sitting on Route 22 and they said no. They wanted to go over where the Christmas Tree Shop is presently and developer said no, that they felt the original location was the best place for them. They came back after the deal had been completed with Sam's Club and realized they made a mistake. Mr. Albertson said this is where they are now after five, six years carrying this property and things stabilizing somewhat in the retail environment.

Having a big center is ok. And by big center Mr. Albertson means Airport Centers size. Having a small center, not so good because retailers aren't bold or adventurous and they would be literally down the street, doesn't matter. Mr. Albertson said they came up with what they felt was a compromise with something that was doable and something that could be done today and get started on and get the improvements in. Everyone has told him they need to put sidewalks around and they understand there are certain things that they have to do. Given this background, that's where they are today. Planning Commission Member Baillie asked Mr. Albertson about Walmart and Mr. Albertson replied that they are no longer an option. He asked Mr. Albertson why and Mr. Albertson responded because they said no. Mr. Tocci asked if this location would be near Sam's Club and that area. Mr. Albertson said it's the 20 acres, down from them. Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Albertson to explain again why it is being considered as not just retail but apartments as well and why this ever came into the component. Mr. Albertson replied, because they couldn't get enough retail interested. He said if they had a 50,000 sq. foot user, like a food store, then others would fall in. Mr. Albertson gave

examples from the Airport Centers Shopping Center. As soon as they got Target, it was like falling dominoes. They all came. They all want to be in Airport Centers overlooking Route 22. Mr. Albertson said the 20-acre property in question works as half retail and half apartments, economically. Mr. Thomas said if the main issue is the economic viability, the thinking is that in the front end they will have enough interest in retail shops. If this spurs what they are hoping, couldn't the rest of it be developed as retail and to be growth on that site. Mr. Albertson replied that when they have to do what they believe they have to do based on their experience with Airport Centers like offsite work, etc., there are millions of dollars that will need to be spent (i.e. sidewalks, improving intersection, etc.), the only thing that makes sense for the site is doing what they are proposing from an economical standpoint. Mr. Thomas commented that as Mr. Albertson mentioned apartments are not a permitted use in both the City of Allentown and the Township. Where does that leave the Township if it is not a permitted use. What would be required of them. Ms. Peirara responded on behalf of the Developer. She said what that would require is both Hanover Township and the City of Allentown to discuss and prepare a Zoning Text Amendment to fit what they are proposing to do with this type of development. It will require additional discussions with both governing bodies just to see how they would like them to approach it. Ms. Peirara said that is how they are envisioning it. Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Peirara why would the Township want to do that and she replied that what she has seen done in other municipalities is when you are looking at the type of development that they are proposing, one of the things, from just looking at their plan review, it really adds the department use, is really a transition zone between the retail and the medium density residential that is located directly behind it. The Township also has properties being used for residential buildings and uses directly behind it. Ms. Peirara said it really fits in line with what is already there. Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Peirara to put up the Sketch Plan so that everyone could see it and if she could point out where the shops would be and where the apartments would be. Ms. Peirara also mentioned that they did meet with Township Council and staff and are not coming before the Planning Commission out of the blue. At this point, Ms. Peirara went through the details of what is actually being proposed. Ms. Peirara asked the Developer's Engineer, Mr. Beavan, to come up to the podium and to go through the plan and identify what is located in Hanover Township versus the City of Allentown so the Commission gets an idea of the scope of the project. Mr. Beavan said the parcel overall is 20.75 acres. It's bisected by the municipal boundary line with 11.65 acres in Hanover Township and 9.1 acres in the City of Allentown. It is located in the northwest corner of American Parkway and Airport Road bounded on four sides by roadways, Airport Road which is a state road, American Parkway, City of Allentown, to the west is Irving Street, a state roadway as well, and to the north is Lloyd Street. What is being proposed is three main components. On the eastern portion is various commercial. Also, looking at strip retail, a restaurant with drive

thru, bank with drive thru and south of that a sit-down restaurant and then in the City of Allentown strip retail. The center of the site has a main boulevard that runs north to south, intersection with Lloyd Street and at the south intersection with American Parkway. West of that would be the proposed apartments. Then the medium density residential that was referred to is west and northwest of the project site. The site is zoned PC-Planned Commercial. Across the municipal boundary, it is zoned B3, which is highly business in the City of Allentown and then it is surrounded by a number of uses, i.e. Industrial, Office, Light Industrial. To the north, it's Limited Use. North and Northwest of it, is the medium density residential with the existing homes and apartments. Access for the site is proposed on all four roadways to provide the best access to the various uses. From a Zoning standpoint, dimensionally, they meet the required building coverages and setbacks for the various uses and building coverage as well. They are proposing sidewalks throughout the interior of the site to connect pedestrians from the apartments to the commercial and vice versa and look at connection points to some of the various roadways as necessary to get pedestrians into the site. Mr. Tocci asked Mr. Beavan if as of now the sidewalks are all in the interior of the site. Mr. Beavan responded that the way they are shown on the plan, they are in the interior of the site. Mr. Tocci mentioned that there is a fair amount of pedestrian traffic on Irving Street already even though there are no sidewalks and he occasionally sees it on Lloyd Street also. He asked if that's a consideration to complete sidewalks on the outside of the site and Mr. Beavan replied it certainly could be something they would look at, whether it's a complete sidewalk along the side or strategic connecting points to bring pedestrian traffic into the site. Mr. Garges asked Mr. Beavan if he has any idea of where there might be traffic signals or where they might be warranted at the access points that he mentioned. Mr. Beavan responded that at this point they hadn't done a full traffic study. He believes that the anticipation is that one might be warranted at American Parkway, but it has to be reviewed by a traffic study. Mr. Garges asked Mr. Beavan if he would anticipate a left turn in from Airport Road north into the shopping center. Mr. Beavan responded directly into the shopping center, no. Mr. Garges remembered there being a median there and Mr. Beavan replied that he was correct and the median would remain in place and that's why the access points along Airport Road are right in and right out only and then the full access driveways would be to the north on Lloyd Street or on the south at American Parkway. Mr. Tocci asked if there was an access to Irving Street and Mr. Beavan replied that there is to the apartments. Mr. Tocci said there has been a huge increase in traffic since the American Parkway has been completed. He said there are points at certain hours where the intersection at American Parkway and Irving Street and then Irving and Lloyd are backed all the way up to the Airport Centers. Mr. Beavan said the traffic study, because some of the roadways are under PennDOT jurisdiction, will go through a scoping process with PennDOT and through this process the Township is involved, the City of Allentown is involved, the various study points, what's looked at and certainly what they would look at is what the existing traffic is on those roadways and current conditions and what the proposed development would be contributing

to that and then what will be necessary to mitigate what the proposed development is doing. Mr. Beavan believes the improvements for Airport Centers extended all the way down to at least Lloyd Street if not further south to American Parkway. These intersections have been upgraded as some of the projects have gone in, but the traffic for the proposed development would look at what those impacts would be, queuing at the various traffic signals and where signals are warranted. Mr. Tocci said he was not aware of any improvements at the corner of Irving and Lloyd Streets, in particular. He said it's a four-way stop, but if they are lucky, it's a two-way stop. He would be interested in seeing what improvements have been done. At this time, Mr. Beavan turned to the plan to point out the improvements to Mr. Tocci. A discussion followed regarding one of the apartment buildings being dissected between the City of Allentown and the Township and how that would be handled, i.e. taxes, school districts, etc. Mr. Beavan replied that this is something that would need to be addressed during the Proposed Land Development process. At this time, Mr. Beavan went over the Keystone Consultant Engineers comment letter with the Commission. Overall, there weren't any comments that the Developer and their engineers saw as issues. They understand that pedestrian connectivity is a concern. They have work to do on the various uses. Submit the plans to the Fire Department. They will do that and get their comments. The site will be subject to a number of permits going through the Land Development process as related to storm water, traffic, utility design, etc. Comment 7 has future traffic scoping meeting with PennDOT and should include Hanover Township and the City of Allentown. The invitation for this would certainly be extended both by them and PennDOT as part of the process. A general traffic study would be required and is acknowledged. Mr. Beavan said he has discussed the various access points and as they go through the traffic study, they will look at the various existing sections, the proposed intersections and identify what, if any, improvements are required at the various points. Comment 3, the Township may want to consider the requirement of sidewalks around the perimeter and references an October 3 letter from LANTA which they did receive and, in the letter, they requested accommodations for bus stop and connections into the center in addition to the internal circulation. This is something they can certainly review with the Township, the City and LANTA, themselves. Lastly, is future traffic scoping as well. Mr. Beavan said there was nothing in the Engineer's letter that they saw as issues. He said the apartments are a point of discussion. There is a special exception for the use and then a lot of the items that are typically addressed with a land development. Susan Maurer, Esquire, the Planning Commission Attorney, said that she thinks the issues that the Commission and Zoning are going to have to address are with traffic congestion, safety, and the hazard to the community. It's clearly fitting to the character of the neighborhood. That's not going to be an issue, but it's going to be really about the undo congestion and safety in needing all the sidewalks, etc. This will come to the Commission to make a recommendation to Zoning or Council and Zoning will be addressing these issues when it ultimately comes down to land development and whether or not they can get through Zoning will be the be all to end all. Mr. Garges said the sewer and water was

not discussed and it was in the Township Engineer's comment letter. Mr. Garges asked Mr. Beavan if they've explored that yet or not with LCA or the City. Naturally, the project flows toward the American Parkway and Mr. Garges didn't know where the sewer services are there. From what Mr. Garges understands, the Township doesn't have extra capacity for a project like this. He said the Developer would have to approach the LCA or the City and Ms. Peirara agreed. She said they completely understand and as part of their land development, they will be required to do all of these things. What they are trying to get at this stage of the game is some feedback from both municipalities to see what comments and concerns they have with respect to a development of this type. They understand they have zoning issues for both municipalities. They met with the City of Allentown Planning Commission last week, presented the plan for them, and they raised a lot of the same issues with respect to the traffic and congestion and that is certainly something that they are going to be evaluating and dealing with as part of their traffic impact study. With respect to the apartments, the City seems to be favorable to that and understood the reasoning they had brought forth and appreciated the transition zones. Ms. Peirara said they understand there is a lot of land development items that they would have to deal with, i.e. sewer, water, and traffic. They are all things that will have to be addressed. But, before they go down that path, they will really need to talk to both municipalities about the zoning aspect to see if this is something that is viable because without it certainly the project won't work. A discussion ensued regarding the traffic and congestion in area. Mr. Baillie asked if Lloyd Street would need to be widened and if Lloyd Street was one of the entrances and Mr. Beavan replied that Lloyd Street is an access point to the boulevard and any widening of Lloyd Street would be addressed in their land development. Al Kortze, Township Engineer, said one of the comments in his letter, since it's a sketch and there isn't a whole lot of detail that is necessary, he did note that minimum improvements along the development to Lloyd Street frontage and should include curb widening and storm sewer and additional improvements may be necessary based on the study. If the study shows that there will be a lot of traffic coming out of there, they may want to see a d-cell lane or maybe even a turn lane if necessary and all of that would have to take place on their frontage. The northern side of Lloyd Street does have some widening and curbing and storm sewer improvements that have already been put in place. At a minimum, Mr. Kortze said they would have to mirror that. It's not a huge amount of widening because it's a cemetery. But, when they put the curbing in they did widen it some and put storm sewer in along the north side of Lloyd Street. He said it's quite possible there will be improvements along all four streets, including the one in the Township. At this time, Mr. Beavan discussed the multiple access options into the center. Mr. Thomas asked if there were any questions or comments from the audience. Residents in the audience asked their questions and made their comments and a discussion ensued. Ms. Mauer told the audience that they should stay with the project as it goes forward and state their concerns and ask their questions. The process will be long and to keep informed, they need to be involved through the entire process. Mr. Thomas said this is the time to put their concerns in to the

Developer so they can consider their concerns during the development process. Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Peirara if they knew who the tenants of the proposed center are and she replied that at this time she did not know who the actual tenants would be. Mr. Thomas asked her what's next and when does it happen that they will know who the tenants are. Ms. Peirara said she was hopeful in getting from the Planning Commission tonight some insight to the residential component of the project because that is a huge part of their plan and they need to know from a practical perspective whether this is something that the Planning Commission would look at favorably so they can then expend the time and money to answer more of those questions that are of concern. Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Peirara if she got sufficient feedback this evening and she replied that it would be helpful if they got some more feedback. Mr. Thomas said the traffic is a huge concern for him and he would like them to tell the Township why they should allow apartments in a place where they are not permitted, recognizing the significant impact it's going to have on that already, extremely congested area that was extremely congested before the Tilghman Street bridge was shut down. He said they are getting to the Christmas season and he feels it's going to be the place where you don't want to go. He also can't imagine what it's going to be like when FedEx is fully operating. Ms. Peirara said these are fair points and they hear it loud and clear. She said the City of Allentown has the same issues. She said one of the benefits with the apartments is there will be less traffic than if it was going to be 100% retail. Mr. Tocci echoed the same concerns. He has lived in the area long enough to see the changes since Airport Centers. He said there is a real concern for how 168 apartments would affect the small and relatively secluded residential area that is adjacent to it where you have single-family homes with children. His other concern is the traffic and safety. Ms. Peirara asked Mr. Garges if this is something they should approach Council with just to go through with their formal sketch plan. Mr. Garges replied that he believes that would be their next step. He said they will listen to the Planning Commissions feedback ultimately. Ms. Peirara understands that and said they would have a chance to explain things to Council. Ms. Peirara asked if this is something they need to make application on or could it just be placed on an agenda. Mr. Garges replied that they can put them on the agenda and they would be looking at the earliest being Wednesday, November 7. Ms. Peirara said she would speak with Mr. Albertson and Mr. Beavan and confirm everyone's schedules and then she will be in contact with Mr. Garges tomorrow or by the end of the week regarding being placed on the November 7 Agenda. Mr. Garges addressed the residents and told them that the Township places Agendas on their website if they need to refer to them and they are welcome to call the Township office as well if they want to attend the Council meeting. At this time, Ms. Peirara thanked the Commission, staff and all in attendance for their time.

Ms. Mauer asked if the other matter that was to come before them this evening withdrew entirely or if they were coming back and Mr. Garges replied that it was continued at the request of the Developer. They indicated to the Township that the tenant they are working with has started to relook at sizing and potential phasing. At this point, he said

rather than spending more money and invest in the project, they want to do it right the first time and not misrepresent anything and then have to come back later with changes.

A discussion ensued regarding the trucks driving through residential areas and how they could be stopped. Ms. Maurer said that these are issues that should go before Council. Mr. Garges said The Planning Commission is a recommending body and Council is a governing body and they meet twice a month on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Garges said what is happening nowadays is that a lot of the truck drivers are following apps on their phones which don't necessarily know that they are driving a tractor trailer and the app will route them the shortest route. Most of the drivers will follow that. One of the residents asked how they can prevent this and Mr. Garges responded it would require a traffic study and there are some state and federal laws that will restrict the Township from doing so. At that point, everyone would put no trucks on the road. Ms. Maurer said unfortunately we would have to see a significant amount of accidents before a traffic study would be initiated. Mr. Kortze said signs won't help. If they are using their GPS or some sort of app and the signs say not to make a right turn, they will make the turn anyhow because the app told them to. Irving Street is a state road. That would be something that would have to be brought up to PennDOT. The Township doesn't have any jurisdiction over state roads. Two of the roads, Airport Road and Irving Street are state roads and they are outside of our jurisdiction as well. Ms. Maurer suggested asking the City of Allentown to put more patrols on the American Parkway for speeding. Mr. Garges told members of the audience, for the sake of the Commission's time this evening, if they needed to discuss this matter further, they could call him during Township hours.

Mr. Garges said going forward depending on what happens with Council, he would like to reach out to the City of Allentown. It may be advantageous to call their Planning Commission and not be an island of our own. Mr. Thomas said a united front would be good. Mr. Garges said depending what happens with Council he will open up a discussion with the City and see if there is an ability to meet jointly. Those details can be worked out later making it positive for both municipalities. Mr. Baillie said when the LVPC met last month they mentioned a Multi-Municipal Plan. He feels the more voices added together make a louder voice. He said the people need to be heard.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Paulus, Secretary
Hanover Township Planning Commission