

BOROUGH OF CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

PUBLIC MEETING held via GoToMeeting video/teleconference

PRESENT: Colleen Leonard, Council President
Tina Sokolowski, Council Vice-President
Robert Stokley, Senior Council Member
Anita Barton, Council Member
Jane Flanagan, Council Member
James Griffin, Council Member
Karen Tutino, Council Member
Yaniv Aronson, Mayor

ALSO PRESENT: Michael E. Peters, Borough Solicitor

CALL TO ORDER

The Public Meeting of the Conshohocken Borough Council duly advertised, was held remotely using the GoToMeeting platform. Colleen Leonard, Council President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Leonard thanked everyone for attending the virtual Council meeting. She reviewed the meeting logistics and participation instructions.

PRESENTATIONS

a.) Consider approving Proclamation 2021-03 recognizing National Public Works Week

Ms. Leonard recognized the Public Services employees for providing services that sustain a high quality of life for the Borough of Conshohocken.

Mr. Griffin made a motion to approve Proclamation 2021-03 recognizing National Public Services Week for the week of May 16 – May 22, 2021, seconded by Mr. Stokley. The motion carried 7-0.

LAND USE MATTERS, PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ORDINANCES

a.) Public Hearing on Accessory Use Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Mr. Peters opened the public hearing to consider an ordinance amending the Conshohocken Zoning Ordinance by amending the accessory use regulations. He discussed the proposed ordinance amendment, which would increase the permitted size of garages to 450 square feet. He added that the amendment excludes the additional 100 square feet from imperious coverage and building coverage requirements of the zoning ordinance provided the structure is for vehicle storage. Mr. Peters mentioned that the amendment also requires that property lines be staked before an accessory structure is constructed. He explained that the purpose of the amendment is to increase available off-street parking in the Borough and reduce the need for zoning variances for two (2) car garages.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Peters closed the matter on the record and continued the hearing to May 19, 2021.

b.) Conditional Use Hearing for 261-263 East Elm Street: Craft Custom Homes, Applicant

Mr. Peters opened the public hearing on the conditional use application for 261-263 E Elm Street. He shared that three (3) individuals entered party status. No parties were present for the hearing. He explained that the applicant, Craft Custom Homes, is seeking conditional use approval to permit a multi-family residential development utilizing the Residential Overlay District and to permit a building height taller than 35-feet. Mr. Peters stated that the proposal was submitted prior to the repeal of the Residential Overlay (RO) District provisions in January 2021.

Debra Shulski, attorney for the applicant, introduced the application, which proposes a redevelopment consisting of the demolition and rebuild for purposes of constructing 21 multi-family residential units and associated parking and improvements. She discussed that the redevelopment would result in more parking than currently exists on the property and result in a net reduction in the impervious coverage.

Ryan Alexaki, Craft Custom Homes explained, that the project was similar to the project proposed by the applicant on Hector Street in the Borough. He described the existing conditions of the property, and past and present use of the property. Mr. Alexaki discussed the concept of installing scissor-lifts in the parking area to double the amount of parking. He discussed vehicular ingress and egress to the surface parking area under the building. He stated that the plans for the redevelopment of this site are compatible with the County and Borough comprehensive plans.

Ms. Sokolowski asked how the proposed redevelopment meets the energy efficient goals of the Borough's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Alexaki discussed alternative energy installations, sustainable designs and stormwater management practices that would be implemented as part of the project.

Ms. Flanagan questioned the significant number of variances being requested. Mr. Johnson stated the applicant is requesting mostly dimensional variances. He added that, given the existing site constraints and non-conformities, any redevelopment of the site would require similar relief.

Mr. Peters asked the applicant to confirm the requested permitted building height with the scissor lifts. Mr. Alexaki stated that a building height of 45 feet on the East Elm Street side of the building would be required to accommodate the scissor-lift concept.

Nicholas Vistardis, the applicant's Engineer, testified that the proposed redevelopment would improve overall conditions by adding landscaping and pedestrian access to the Schuylkill River Trail, reducing the impervious coverage, providing adequate parking and generating less traffic than the existing use. Ms. Flanagan voiced a concern related to access to the grass/landscape courtyard area designated in the back of the building. Ms. Barton recommended constructing a gate in that area to provide an additional egress to the street in case of an emergency.

Ms. Sokolowski inquired about parking on site. Mr. Vistardis replied that the proposed plan meets the parking requirement.

Andreas Heinrich, the applicant's Traffic Engineer, reviewed the findings of a Traffic Generation Trip Study. He explained that the proposed development is expected to generate less morning and afternoon peak hour traffic than the prior uses on the property. He explained that the Parking Assessment for the redevelopment of the property demonstrates that provision of an off-street parking supply of 2.0 parking spaces per dwelling unit, as proposed, would provide a more than adequate parking supply for the proposed residential development.

Ms. Sokolowski asked if the data related to existing traffic conditions was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Heinrich responded that the study simply does a comparison of the traffic generated by the existing use versus the proposed use.

Ms. Sokolowski voiced her support of the application specifically the adaptive reuse of the commercial space and focus on the promotion of public transportation.

Mr. Peters called for public comment.

Rob Ratoskey, 201 Hallowell Street and Conshohocken Borough property owner, voiced support of the application.

Mr. Peters closed the matter on the record and continued the hearing to May 19, 2021.

c.) Preliminary/Final Land Development Application for 203 East Twelfth Avenue, Ratoskey & Trainor, Applicant

Mr. Peters introduced the preliminary/final land development application for 203 East 12th Avenue. Jerry Rath, the applicant's attorney, explained that the applicant is proposing to construct three (3) single-family detached dwellings on three (3) new lots. Mr. Ratoskey explained that, as part of the project, he has installed a new sewer main and provided laterals to the new lots and three (3) neighboring properties to connect to the public sewer system. He asked Council to consider waiving or reducing the park and recreation fee given his investment in the public sanitary sewer infrastructure improvements. Mr. Peters stated that Council would consider approving the application at the May Voting Meeting.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

There was no Council business.

MANAGER MATTERS

a.) Consider approving Resolution 2021-07 approving an extension of the local disaster emergency

Mr. Griffin made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-07 approving an extension of the local disaster emergency, seconded by Ms. Barton. The motion carried 7-0.

b.) Consider approving Seven Tower Bridge financial security escrow release no. 2 in the amount of \$234,829.00

Mr. Flanagan made a motion to approve Seven Tower Bridge financial security escrow release no. 2 in the amount of \$234,829.00, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion carried 7-0.

c.) Consider approving SORA West financial security escrow release no. 5 in the amount of \$1,852,474.50

Ms. Barton made a motion to approve SORA West financial security escrow release no. 5 in the amount of \$1,852,474.50, seconded by Mr. Griffin. Mr. Stokley recused himself. The motion carried 6-0.

d.) Consider approving a special event request for the 2021 Soap Box Derby

Ms. Flanagan made a motion to approve a special event request for the 2021 Soap Box Derby subject to final administrative review and approval with COVID modifications as applicable, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion carried 7-0.

e.) Consider approving Conshohocken Catholic Early Childhood Center fee waiver request for use of the A-Field

Ms. Leonard explained that Conshohocken Catholic Early Childhood Center is requesting use of the A-Field for the preschool's moving up ceremony.

Mr. Griffin made a motion to approve Conshohocken Catholic Early Childhood Center fee waiver request for use of the A-Field, seconded by Ms. Sokolowski. The motion carried 7-0.

f.) Discussion on Hometown Heroes Banner Program

This item was tabled until June 2, 2021.

DEPARTMENT MATTERS

There were no department matters.

LEGAL MATTERS

There were no legal matters.

COUNCIL MEMBER AND MAYOR MATTERS

Mayor Aronson thanked everyone for participating in Bells Across Pennsylvania. He shared information about the VFW Flag Planting events. He reminded everyone about the Arts Festival and Car Show on June 5, 2021 and shared the bands that are scheduled to perform. Mayor Aronson announced that Scoops is open for the season and encouraged everyone to support local businesses.

Ms. Flanagan shared that she would be seeking Council's approval to utilize interest funds from the Mary Wood Park Trust to make repairs to the exterior of the Mary Wood Park House.

Mr. Griffin encouraged everyone to continue to follow COVID protocols.

Ms. Sokolowski encouraged everyone to participate in the Storywalk at Mary Wood Park.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brittany Rogers, Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, stated that there was no written public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Cecco,
Borough Secretary.