

CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT TO CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

APPLICANT: Corson Street Acquisition Limited Partnership (Equus)
PROPERTY: 400 West Elm Street
MEETING DATE: July 8, 2021
ZONING: SP-3 Specially Planned District Three; BR-2 Borough Residential
District Two
ACTION DATE: July 8, 2021

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation of approval of preliminary and final land development along with the requested waivers, subject to the following conditions:

1. the applicant shall obtain the approval of Borough Council for the public amenities offered in support of the request for height bonuses
2. the applicant shall obtain the approval of the County for the Schuylkill River Trail relocation and design
3. the applicant shall comply with all requirements of the conditional use approval granted for the project

WAIVERS REQUESTED:

1. partial waiver from SALDO § 22-306.A(1) to excuse the requirement of showing all existing and proposed features within 100 feet of the property, subject to the applicant providing such information deemed necessary by the Borough Engineer
2. waiver from §§ 22-308.A and C to permit simultaneous application for preliminary and final land development approval
3. waiver from SALDO § 22-404.2.B to permit a driveway width to exceed 25 feet
4. waiver from SALDO § 22-404.2.C to permit a driveway closer than 40 feet from the intersection of West Elm Street and Corson Street
5. waiver from SALDO § 22-404.3.F(7) to permit parking spaces of less than the minimum required size as shown on the plans
6. waiver from SALDO § 22-405.1.C to permit sidewalk of less than 15 feet in width, subject to the condition that the sidewalks shall be a minimum of 5 feet in width (including top of the curb) along the private roadway
7. waiver from SALDO § 22-405.1.D to permit a grass verge of less than 4 feet from the curbline
8. waiver from SALDO § 22-405.2 to permit flush curb as shown on the plans
9. waiver from SALDO § 42-409.2 to permit grading within 3 feet of the property line and rights-of-way

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. decision of the Conshohocken Borough Zoning Hearing Board dated January 28, 2021, application no. Z-2020-14

2. amended decision of the Conshohocken Borough Zoning Hearing Board dated February 5, 2021, application no. Z-2020-14
3. list of requested waivers, prepared by Bohler, dated March 31, 2021
4. landscape and lighting plans, prepared by Stuart and Associates, LLC, dated March 30, 2021, last revised June 4, 2021, 7 sheets
5. Transportation Impact Study, prepared by McMahon Associates, Inc., dated February 24, 2016 (regarding office building)
6. Transportation Impact Study Supplement, prepared by McMahon Associates, Inc., dated October 30, 2020
7. Post Construction Stormwater Management Calculations, prepared by Bohler, dated June 4, 2021
8. plan titled "Fire Accessibility Exhibit", prepared by Bohler, dated June 17, 2021
9. plan titled "Catenary Pole Elevations", prepared by Control Point Associates, Inc., dated September 22, 2016
10. 19 photos of existing site conditions
11. "will serve" letter from Verizon, dated March 26, 2021 and e-mail from Verizon dated March 30, 2021 regarding nearest existing underground facilities
12. review letter of Borough Engineer, dated June 30, 2021
13. review letter of Borough Zoning Officer, dated July 1, 2021
14. review letter of Borough Fire Marshal, dated June 30, 2021
15. review letter of Borough Traffic Engineer, dated June 30, 2021
16. review letter of Montgomery County Planning Commission, dated May 5, 2021

MEETING SUMMARY:

This is an application for preliminary and final land development approval to permit a 13-story, 30,210 square foot footprint residential building containing 348 dwelling units, a two-story 30,745 square foot footprint parking garage containing 189 parking spaces, and a surface parking lot containing 238 parking spaces (for a total of 427 parking spaces), along with associated improvements.

The meeting occurred remotely using the GoToMeeting platform. The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Stacy Ellam, Chair; Elizabeth MacNeal, Vice Chair; Judy Smith-Kressley; Dana MacNeal; and Daniel Swartley McArdle. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael Peters, Esquire, Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., Borough Engineer, Karen MacNair, P.E., Borough Traffic Engineer, Brian Keaveney, P.E., P.T.O.E., Borough Traffic Engineer, and Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Present for the applicant were Lou Colagreco, Esquire, Bob Dwyer, and Bill Rearden, P.E. Mr. Colagreco provided a background of the project, including the history of the property and previously proposed projects on the property. Mr. Colagreco

explained that the current project had already received conditional use approval from Borough Council, but would also need approval of Borough Council for the proposed “height bonuses” as well as land development approval.

Mr. Dwyer, representative of the applicant, reviewed the plans with the Planning Commission, in general terms, including the trail system and the proposed open space areas. Mr. Dwyer reviewed the various public access points around the property as well as the proposed public amenity areas. These include a trail back to an area shown on the plan as “Trailhead Park”. Trailhead Park as currently designed contains benches, etc. with a trail system down to the Schuylkill River Trail, along a park area. The applicant reviewed the current proposal for Trailhead Park with Plymouth Township. The Township was supportive and agreed to waive its land development requirements.

Trailhead East is another amenity area shown on the plans, which includes a bridge area (the surface of which will be repaired by applicant as part of this project). Trailhead East as currently designed contains a sculpture garden, bike pumps, an area for food trucks, etc.

Another area adjacent to Plymouth Creek is proposed for a private dog park area. If the Borough does not desire a private dog park, it can be designed like Trailhead Park instead.

The public amenity areas would be open to the public and maintained by the applicant. The private dog park area would only be open to residents of the project.

Where applicable, Mr. Dwyer emphasized the differences between what was previously proposed at the time of the conditional use, and what is proposed now.

Mr. Rearden, applicant’s engineer, reviewed the plans in greater detail. Mr. Rearden discussed each requested waiver with the planning commission and explained the applicant’s purported justification for each waiver. While most of the waivers were the same as previously granted for the office project on the Property, Mr. Rearden explained that some waivers were different, at least partially because there is now only one driveway off of West Elm—at the request of the Borough’s staff and professionals. Mr. Rearden explained that the applicant had no issue with complying with all aspects of the review letters as issued.

Mr. Rearden reviewed the “public” parking available within the project for access to the trail, totaling 20 spots.

Ms. MacNair, Borough Engineer, confirmed that there were no major issues in her review letter. Ms. MacNair also confirmed that she had no objection to the requested waivers.

Mr. Johnson, Borough Zoning Officer, explained that there were no major issues in his review letter, but did ask that the Planning Commission provide specific feedback on the public amenity areas being offered for the height bonus.

Mr. Keaveney, Borough Traffic Engineer, explained that there were no major issues in his review letter, and noted that the applicant was in the process of working with PennDOT for any amendment of the Highway Occupancy Permit for the project.

The meeting was turned over to members of the Planning Commission for questions.

Member Smith-Kressley wanted to know whether the Schuylkill River Trail would be improved with lighting. Mr. Dwyer explained that the County did not want the trail to be lit, and instead wanted the trail to be “dawn to dusk” only. Mr. Dwyer explained that the County’s concern was that the trail would otherwise become an “attractive nuisance”. Member Smith-Kressley otherwise expressed her satisfaction with the project as proposed.

Member Swartley McArdle had a question regarding the waiver being requested for the grass buffer along the edges of the Property, specifically what the minimum width would be. Mr. Rearden explained that the minimum width would be 1 1/2 feet to 2 feet. Member Swartley McArdle wanted to know how the applicant would address MCPC’s concerns regarding signage for the Trail. Mr. Dwyer explained that the applicant would be presenting an entire sign package to the Borough for approval following land development. Mr. Dwyer stated that the applicant would comply with the requests for signage to ensure that the public is able to successfully identify those areas of the property accessible to the public and navigate to the Trail. Member Swartley-McArdle stated that he liked the bonus features proposed, and wanted to ensure that those features were accessible to the general public.

Member Dana MacNeal had no specific questions for the applicant, but stated that she approved of the amenities proposed and the design of the project generally.

Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal wanted to ensure that the reduction in parking space size for some spaces would still accommodate an SUV. Mr. Rearden explained that the spaces would still be “usable” for an SUV, and further explained that the reduced size permitted the needed room for the fire truck. Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal asked applicant to confirm whether the dog park would be open to the public or only to the residents of the project. Mr. Dwyer explained that the dog park was proposed to be “private” for residents of the project, not open to the public. Mr. Dwyer explained that the dog park was being offered as part of a broader package of amenities, and that without making it “private” residents of the project would have limited open space private to the project. Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal stated that she understood why it was proposed to be private, but that she hoped the applicant could

find a way to open the dog park up to the general public, e.g. through a membership. Otherwise, Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal was supportive of the project.

Chair Ellam asked the applicant to confirm the number of units. Mr. Dwyer confirmed that there would be 348 units. Chair Ellam asked the applicant to confirm that it was providing adequate parking. Mr. Dwyer explained that the project had 5 more parking spaces than was required. Chair Ellam asked the applicant to confirm what area of curbing/sidewalk was proposed to be “flush”. Mr. Rearden explained that the “flush” area of the curbing/sidewalk was that area adjacent to the building, not along Elm. Chair Ellam asked Mr. Keaveney to confirm that the traffic generated by the project did not mandate a new traffic light as opposed to the prior office project. Mr. Keaveney explained that the amount of traffic was being reduced under the proposed apartment project. Finally, Chair Ellam asked how long construction would take, and Mr. Dwyer explained that the project would take approximately 18 months to construct after construction began. Chair Ellam stated that she hoped the dog park would be used, and that she appreciated that the management company would be responsible to maintain the amenity areas.

Ms. Rogers explained that no written public comment had been received. One member of the public, Scott Langstein, 200 West Elm Street, offered comment. Mr. Langstein’s concern related to an area adjacent to the Grande used by Grande residents to walk their dogs. Mr. Langstein’s asked whether the applicant would consider selling the area to the Grande for a “nominal fee”. Mr. Dwyer explained that the area is not currently proposed to be improved under the current plans. Chair Ellam explained that discussions between the Grande and the applicant should occur separate from the Planning Commission meeting. Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal asked for the minutes to reflect the Grande’s request that the area remain open for use by Grande residents to walk their dogs.

Member Swarley McCardle moved for recommendation of approval of preliminary and final land development, subject to the conditions above. Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by all present.

Vice Chair Liz MacNeal moved for recommendation of the requested waivers, subject to the conditions above. Member Swartley McCardle seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by all present.

CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT TO CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

APPLICANT: DJB Properties, LLC
PROPERTY: 333 West 7th Avenue
MEETING DATE: July 8, 2021
ZONING: BR-1 Borough Residential District One
ACTION DATE: July 8, 2021

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation of approval of preliminary and final land development along with the requested waivers, subject to the applicant's compliance with all review letters identified hereinbelow.

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. land development plan set prepared by Joseph M. Estock , dated May 5, 2021, 8 sheets
2. list of requested waivers
3. building plans prepared by J.R. Betts & Associates, 8 sheets
4. Post Construction Stormwater Management Written Narrative, prepared by Joseph M. Estock, P.E., dated May 5, 2021
5. 14 photos of existing site conditions
6. two page document titled "Site Description and Analysis"
7. review letter of Borough Engineer, dated June 30, 2021
8. review letter of Borough Zoning Officer, dated June 30, 2021
9. review letter of Borough Fire Marshal, dated June 10, 2021
10. review letter of Borough Traffic Engineer, dated June 30, 2021
11. review letter of Montgomery County Planning Commission, dated June 16, 2021

WAIVERS REQUESTED:

1. waiver from SALDO § 22-409.2 to permit proposed grading within the alley and roadway rights-of-way within 3 feet of property lines
2. partial waiver from SALDO § 22-421.4 to permit proposed street trees to be located within the West Seventh Avenue right-of-way, subject to the condition that the property owners will agree to maintain the trees
3. partial waiver from SALDO § 22-804 to permit a fee in lieu of dedication of park/recreational facilities/land

MEETING SUMMARY:

This is an application for preliminary and final subdivision and land development approval to permit subdivision of the property into two lots containing 4,130 square feet each. Each lot is proposed to be developed with an 860 square foot footprint single-

family semi-detached dwelling, 240 square foot rear deck, a 140 square foot front porch, and rear parking area to accommodate two parking spaces with access to the rear alley, as well as associated improvements.

The meeting occurred remotely using the GoToMeeting platform. The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Stacy Ellam, Chair; Elizabeth MacNeal, Vice Chair; Dana MacNeal; Judy Smith-Kressley; and Daniel Swartley McArdle. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael E. Peters, Esquire, Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, P.E., Borough Engineer, Karen MacNair, P.E., Borough Traffic Engineer, Brian Keaveney, P.E., P.T.O.E., and Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Present for the applicant were David Brosso and Joseph M. Estock, P.E., applicant's engineer.

Mr. Estock gave an overview of the project, and explained that the applicant had developed a similar project a couple lots down from the subject property. Mr. Estock reviewed the waivers requested by the applicant. With respect to the sidewalk in particular, Mr. Estock explained that the applicant sought to end the sidewalk 5 feet from the property line due to an existing wall on a neighboring property.

Mr. Estock stated that he had reviewed all review letters, and that the applicant would comply with all review letters.

Ms. MacNair stated that the comments in her review letter were technical in nature and that she had no specific concerns regarding the waivers being requested.

Mr. Johnson explained that the primary issue raised in his review letter was regarding the front yard setback. Mr. Johnson had identified a discrepancy between the building line proposed for this project and the building line for the similar project constructed by the applicant on the same block. Mr. Estock stated that the setback proposed met the requirements of the zoning ordinance. Mr. Johnson also posed a question regarding whether there would be a deck or patio to the rear of the property. Mr. Estock explained that due to the grading it would be deck.

Mr. Keaveney stated that, given the number of units proposed, there were no traffic issues nor was a traffic study required.

Mr. Peters explained that the review letters of the Montgomery County Planning Commission and the Borough Fire Marshal were "clean" and contained no major issues.

The meeting was turned over to the Planning Commission members for questions.

Member Smith-Kressley stated that she approved of the Project.

Member Swartley McCardle asked for more information on the sidewalk waiver, and specifically more information regarding the wall on the neighboring property. A “street view” of the properties was reviewed, and Member Swartley McCardle stated that he understood why the waiver was being requested.

Member Dana MacNeal asked for specifics on the size of each house, and Mr. Estock explained that the houses were 4 bedrooms. Member Dana MacNeal stated that she was supportive of the project.

Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal asked for specifics on the proposed location of the street trees. Mr. Estock explained that the trees would still be between the house and the sidewalk, but not in the specific location required. Mr. Estock confirmed that the trees would be planted such that the root system for the trees would not impact the sidewalk.

Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal asked for greater specifics regarding the front yard setback issue identified by Mr. Johnson. Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal wanted to ensure that the new units were constructed in the manner best suited to fit the future of the neighborhood. Mr. Johnson explained that as proposed the development met the requirements of the zoning ordinance. Vice Chair MacNeal explained that it would be probably be preferable for the setback to match the setback on the new houses constructed by applicant on the block, as those houses were likely to remain in existence longer than other houses on the block.

Chair Ellam questioned why the property couldn't be developed with single-family detached dwellings. Mr. Estock explained that there would be lot area issues with two detached dwellings. Chair Ellam also asked for confirmation that the existing home could be removed without a conditional use pursuant to the Borough's historic conservation ordinance. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the house was built in the 1980s, and therefore did not required a conditional use.

Vice Chair Elizabeth MacNeal moved to recommend preliminary and final land development approval, with the waivers requested, subject to the conditions above. Member Swartley McCardle seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by all present.