

**RICHLAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2007**

MEMBERS:

Tim Gaichas - Chairman
Jim McChesney - Vice Chairman
Robert Goetz
Joseph Pillart
Diane Pontoriero

OTHERS PRESENT:

Dean Bastianini - Township Secretary
Suzanne Owens - Recording Secretary
Phil Bishop – Echo Real Estate
Joseph Tassone – Echo Real Estate
Members of the audience - 2

The meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Mr. Gaichas on November 19, 2007 at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Goetz made a motion to approve minutes from Planning Commission Meeting of October 15, 2007. The motion was moved and seconded by Ms. Pontoriero and approved by all.

CORRESPONDENCE

A letter, dated November 12, 2007, from Jerry Reichart, Acting Zoning Officer, regarding the shipping container on the property owned by Mr. Carmen Fusca, Imperial Cleaners, was entered into the record. The letter stated that the shipping container, which was subject to removal upon completed construction, has indeed been removed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Echo Richland Associates – Texas Roadhouse Restaurant – Consideration of preliminary land development plan to construct a restaurant on Lot #4R, Grandview Crossings Plan. Deemed approval date December 20, 2007.

A letter, dated November 13, 2007, from Joseph Tassone, Echo Real Estate, agreeing to extend the deadline for the Township to act on the Land Development Application to February 21, 2008. Ms. Pontoriero made a motion to table the Texas Roadhouse preliminary land development plan. The motion was moved and seconded by Mr. Goetz and approved by all.

NEW BUSINESS

Echo Richland Associates – Famous Footwear – Consideration of preliminary land development plans to construct a retail store on Lot #7, Grandview Crossings Plan. Plans dated October 26, 2007. Deemed approval date February 17, 2008.

Mr. Bishop and Mr. Tassone, Echo Real Estate, presented the plans. A letter, dated November 15, 2007, from Echo responding to Mr. Scott Shoup's review comments was entered into the record. Each of the comments was discussed.

Mr. Bishop described the exterior appearance of the building and the proposed site layout. He discussed deliveries, landscaping, the need for a parking waiver, the dumpster location and lighting. Mr. Bishop stated that there are no lights on the rear or sides of the building except for the exit and emergency lighting.

At the conclusion, Mr. Gaichas asked if a response was received from the Allegheny County Planning Department. Mr. Bastianini said the County had not responded.

For the record, Mr. Gaichas stated the plan changes/conditions which the Planning Commission was recommending. A list follows.

Continuation of the landscaping plan installed on the PNC parcel.

All four exterior walls of the store will be built of earth tone brick and stucco to compliment the PNC Bank and the Target store.

The developer is requesting a waiver from the Township's parking regulations to permit 5.6 spaces per 1,000 sq.ft. of building area.

The plan shall be revised to relocate the building northward on the site to reduce the amount of asphalt and provide increased opportunity for landscaping and to limit vehicular access to only three sides of the store.

Emergency vehicles would have access to three sides of the building, the fourth side would be accessible via PNC Bank. Township staff will review the situation with the Fire Marshall.

The access drive shall be moved northward to align with the Lowe's driveway in order to create a four-way plus intersection.

Redesign sidewalk.

Incorporate dumpster location and materials with new site plan.

Increase the landscaping by adding taller plants to soften corners of building and break up large facades on northern and eastern sides of the building.

The developer must comply with the Township's lighting regulations. The Planning Commission will pay close attention to the illumination of the logo and the brightness and method of lighting the proposed architectural band. The commission preferred the use of down cast lights and requested that lights and signs be turned off one half hour after the close of business.

The payment of a Transportation Impact Fee, in the amount of \$22,500, at the time of building permit application.

A sign permit package will be submitted at the time of building permit application.

Mr. Goetz made a motion to table Famous Footwear preliminary land development plans. The motion was moved and seconded by Mr. McChesney and approved by all.

Echo Richland Associates – Grandview Crossings Plan, Lot Line Revision – Consideration of plan revising the lot lines of the conservation Parcel (1R). Plan dated August 30, 2007. Deemed approval date February 19, 2008.

Mr. Bishop stated that this is a minor subdivision which modifies Parcel 1R by removing steep slopes, retaining walls and a portion of the storm water detention pond from the conservation parcel. Each of these features will be consolidated onto parcels owned by Echo. A letter, dated November 13, 2007, from Mr. Shoup was entered into the record. The letter contained a technical correction and confirmed the accuracy of Mr. Bishop's presentation. It also discussed the need to identify an appropriate remedy for the removal of 1/3 acre of trees which were designated as conservation areas.

Mr. Goetz made a motion to approve the plan dated August 30, 2007, revising lot lines within Grandview Crossings. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pontoriero and approved by all.

In regards to the replacement of the trees removed from the conservation area, Ms. Pontoriero recommended that since the removal has resulted in a big barren slope that new trees should be arranged across the hillside to create a natural appearance. Mr. Gaichas recommended that a reforestation plan utilizing diverse and native species should be prepared by an arborist with experience and expertise in re-vegetation. The other Planning Commission members expressed their support for these recommendations.

OTHER BUSINESS

Consideration of a Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 27, Part 25 of the Codified Code banning the illumination of canopies, awnings and other exterior parts.

Mr. Bastianini explained the Planning Commission's role under the MPC to review zoning amendments and to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. A letter, dated November 2, 2007, from Kay Pierce, Planning Manager of Allegheny County, was entered into the record. The letter included model lighting regulations from the Pennsylvania Outdoor Lighting Council.

A discussion ensued regarding the model regulations, administration of the proposed canopy ordinance, and the status of the comprehensive zoning ordinance update. At the conclusion of the discussion Ms. Pontoriero made a motion recommending the Board of Supervisors adopt the proposed amendment as an interim step until the lighting section is redone as part of the ongoing update to the entire zoning ordinance and with the addition of the following language "The interior illumination of a canopy which permits any light to pass through is hereby banned". The motion was moved and seconded by Mr. Pillart and approved by all.

Discussion of the illumination of the Get-Go store canopy.

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission that it would be appropriate, in order to avoid potential litigation, to permit illumination of only the western façade (facing Route 8) of the northern most canopy.

Expiration of Joe Pillart's term on the Planning Commission, December 31, 2007.

Mr. Gaichas stated that in his opinion Mr. Pillart had done a good job as a member of the Planning Commission. He regularly attended meetings, he provided quality input, and as a member of the volunteer fire department he provided valuable perspective on public safety issues. Ms. Pontoriero recommended that Mr. Pillart be reappointed. The recommendation was moved and seconded by Mr. McChesney and approved by all.

Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Bastianini mentioned the vacancy on the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. McChesney said he knew someone who would be qualified. He will check with him to see if he is interested.

Ms. Pontoriero reported that she and Mr. Bastianini had reviewed a proposed change which would eliminate the sidewalk on the Route 8 side of the Applebee's restaurant. Since the sidewalk would be at the top of a steep slope, the owners were concerned about safety. They submitted a plan which eliminated the sidewalk and added a significant amount of new landscaping which will buffer the area and enhance the appearance.

Mr. Gaichas stated that non-compliant lighting has been installed on three sides of the retail plaza at Grandview Crossings. This deficiency was reported to the developer on October 10, 2007. The Planning Commission asked Mr. Bastianini to write a letter to the developer informing them that all non-compliant lighting must be replaced within 30 calendar days and that the lights facing Route 8 must be turned off immediately or no additional occupancy permits will be issued.

Ms. Rosemary Scott asked about the status of the zoning ordinance update and whether residents would still have the opportunity to submit additional input. Mr. Bastianini stated that completion of the update would be a priority during the first quarter of 2008, and that residents could continue to submit information.

Ms. Donna Snyder asked whether the new zoning ordinance would contain bonding requirements for construction and development. Mr. Bastianini responded that the Township currently requires bonds on public improvement. Mr. Gaichas stated that serious consideration is being given to expanding the bonding requirements to include items such as landscaping.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Approved by:

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Gaichas, Chairman

Suzanne Owens, Recording Secretary

sro/deb

cc: Richland Township Board of Supervisors
Zoning Hearing Board