

Bern Township Planning Commission Meeting of March 9, 2021

Present: Planning Commission Members: Mr. Russ Adams, James Dailey, Glenn Sweigert, Kelly Wickersham, and Mr. Steve Tricarico

Mr. Tim Dietrich, Solicitor; Mr. Kent Morey, Engineer, Spotts, Stevens and McCoy, Inc.

Meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by Mr. Tricarico

Minutes: A motion to accept the minutes of the meeting of February 9, 2021 was made by Mr. Dailey. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sweigert. All voted in favor and the motion was carried.

Subdivision and Land Development Plans:

Ammeraal sketch plan. The property is owned by the Greater Berks Development Fund. The intent of the plan is to subdivide what is Lot 2 of the G&T plan into two separate lots: Lot A and Lot D. Lot A is between G&T and the river and proposes a 254,500 square foot distribution facility on 21.88 acres. No development is currently proposed for the 13.29 acre Lot D other than an access road from Leiscz Bridge Road to proposed Lot A. Access to Lot A from Leiscz Bridge Road is proposed through a private drive through Lot D as well as by way of Van Reed Road, which is still in the planning stages with the G&T plan. Public sewer and water service are proposed.

Mr. Greg Bogia representing Bogia Engineering, Mr. Scott Graham representing Muhlenberg Greene Architects, and Ms. Jenn Macarthur representing Ammeraal Beltech were present to answer questions about the plan.

Mr. Bogia reported that they intend to build a parking lot for 200 employees over 3 shifts. He added that the building is for a proposed distribution, storage and manufacturing facility for the belts and packing.

Mr. Morey wanted to discuss the most salient points beginning with the proposed use of the building as a distribution facility. Mr. Bogia answered that the facility will be used for distribution, storage and manufacturing and packaging that will be done indoors.

Mr. Morey asked about the square footage used for manufacturing, storage and office space. Mr. Graham provided a schematic breakdown as follows: 254,500 square foot warehouse storage would be 40 percent 106,000; office occupancy would be approximately 20,000 to 30,000 square feet. Remainder for production, assembly, packing and shipping.

Mr. Morey asked about the plan to subdivide the plan into two lots: A and D. Lot A at the rear of the property and lot D at the front having frontage on Leiscz Bridge Road. In addition, the proposed roadway designed as a driveway. It's not designed as a through road; therefore, Lot D does not have appropriate frontage. It needs to be a through road designed to Township standards and not be up against the building. It looks like a secondary access at the southeast end of the building. There are a couple of issues: number one is that the road is up against the building. Number two, there's a parking area for 98 spaces and the right of way would encroach on those parking spaces which would not be allowed. Mr. Morey summarized that they:

- Need to redesign parking spaces.
- Needs to have road frontage for Lot D.
- Need to improve access around building.

Mr. Bogia replied that Ammeraal is looking for private street to avoid the issues with a public street. Access to a structure from a private street is permitted if approved by the Township Supervisors.

Mr. Morey emphasized that a private street must be designed to Township standards, which is different than just getting approval from the Supervisors. This issue exists because of the two-lot subdivision. If the development was just one lot, there would be frontage on Leisczs Bridge Road.

Mr. Tricarico asked about the requirement of distance of private Southern Rd from building.

Greg: keep 50 flagstick at the Eastern driveway for road frontage requirement.

Mr. Tricarico asked about moving the building itself, reconfiguring the layout.

Mr. Morey said that there needs to be a through street to comply with Township standards. The cul de sac is beyond the minimum length permitted by current zoning. Mr. Bogia replied that they would seek relief from zoning requirement. Mr. Morey asked if they could flip the building and parking to move the building toward river and the parking towards GT.

Mr. Morey added that just providing frontage on one side does not solve the problem because it's not a through street and not designed to Township standards. The cul de sac might be beyond the minimum length allowed by the standards. Mr Bogia replied that they would seek zoning relief on the cul de sac requirement.

Mr. Morey asked for clarification on why they can't flip the building and parking? Mr. Bogia answered that they want to keep the docks away from the residential side, but they can look into flipping the building and parking.

Mr. Tricarico asked if rotating building 90 degrees and readjusting the parking toward residential side would be acceptable? Mr. Morey answered that there are sticking points. He won't suggest what the resolution should be and recommends Mr. Bogia look at these suggestions. They need to come up with something that resolves the issue.

Mr. Tricarico asked if the Road would be private? Mr. Bogia answered that Ammmerall wants to keep it as private Road. Mr. Morey added that the Township will not want to maintain a cul-de-sac.

The next item discussed was off-street loading. Mr. Morey asked about the number, frequency and schedules of vehicles serving the facility. Mr. Bogia said they would provide that information.

The next item discussed was off street parking requirements and Mr. Morey asked if the planning commission has any comments with regard to reserved parking?

In calculating the minimum required, a total of 509 spaces are required based on the stated size of the building footprint being 245,500 square feet. There is a discrepancy on the Ammmerall plan between the

square footage noted in the building footprint and the size noted in the Parking Data section which should be clarified. The plan notes 288 parking spaces are provided and proposes 236 spaces as deferred parking for a total of 524 spaces.

Mr. Tricarico stated that if they want to do anything different from the current ordinance, they would need to get a variance or go before the zoning hearing board. Mr. Potts added that there could be an agreement to defer paving all of the parking spaces and reserve the parking as green space until needed in the future. Mr. Dietrich clarified that it is delayed parking not waived parking.

Mr. Tricarico recommended paving the number of parking spaces for the current need and set aside green space for future parking if/when needed. Mr. Adams concurred stating that it is not necessary to pave all of the parking. Mr. Dietrich agreed stating that more green space with less storm water is better.

Leisczs Bridge Road will serve as a collector road for this development and shall be upgraded to collector road standards along the entire frontage east of Van Reed Road. Mr. Morey asked when that should happen? Mr. Tricarico responded that now is the time to make changes to Leisczs Bridge Road. Mr. Dailey agreed that they should make improvements to Leiscz Bridge Road now. Ms. Wickersham and Mr. Sweigert concurred.

The next item discussed was the A stormwater management report, including calculations must be submitted with the preliminary plan. The plan shows a proposed drainage basin near the river (on Lot A) and a rain garden near Leisczs Bridge Road (on Lot D). Infiltration testing shall be conducted throughout Lot A, including in the parking areas and within the building envelope. If testing in the building envelope is favorable, it may suggest the building and parking locations should be switched.

In addition, this plan proposes a driveway on the northwest side of this Lot A that will be constructed over several stormwater features that are proposed to serve the G & T project. The elimination of these features will need to be incorporated (added) to the stormwater design of Lot A and a major modification to the G & T NPDES permit will be required. Mr. Bogia responded that they will adjust stormwater management without the need for additional facilities. They are working with Berks county conservation district and the property owner on this issue.

The available driveway sight distance looking east from the proposed driveway appears to be on the order of 250 feet. Based upon the 40 MPH speed limit for Leisczs Bridge Road the required minimum sight distance is on the order of 290 feet. This situation could be addressed by either moving the driveway much farther to the west or by reconstructing a portion of Leisczs Bridge Road in order to improve the sight distance. Mr. Bogia will take both solutions into consideration and decide what works for them.

Mr. Tricarico asked about compliance with the parking requirements. He noted that the ordinance requires 1.5 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of building space plus 1 parking space for every 1-1/3 employees. Complying with this requirement will change number of spaces required.

Mr. Morey noted that there's no way we can know their future parking needs. They state their future needs are zero. Mr. Bogia said that they will provide information on how many employees there will be to address parking issues.

Township parking ordinance. Burkey Development Group.

Mr. Morey said this is just a kick-off of the topic, something to think about. He would like the Planning Commission to consider:

- LTL expressed concern legitimate with regard enforcement. It's difficult for them to enforce parking based on number of employees. LTL would prefer parking be related to square footage of building, not the number of employees. The building can be split up for different functions, but parking should not be tied to the employees. For industrial uses, there's information out there to support what the Township already requires: 2 spaces for every 1000 square feet.
- Burkey proposes 1.1 space per employee. Mr. Morey does not think this is the best way to go about calculating parking requirements. We don't know how they came up with that number.

Mr. Tricarico observed that the planning commission is heading in the same direction. We should leave ordinance as it is basing parking on square footage, not number of employees. Our ordinance is consistent with what others require. If the building use changes, then ten years later there's still sufficient parking if building is sold or use changes. We will discuss this topic further next month.

Solicitor: No report

Public Comment: No public comment

Adjournment: Mr. Dailey made a motion to adjourn the meeting that was seconded by Ms. Wickersham. All voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 pm.