

Bern Township Planning Commission Meeting of November 14, 2023

Present: Planning Commission: Steve Tricarico, Michael Werley, James Dailey, James Colflesh and James Rumbaugh.

Also attending: Mr. Chip Hawes, Solicitor; Kent Morey, Spotts, Stevens & McCoy.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mr. Tricarico.

Public Comment

None.

Subdivision and Land Development Plans

Berkshire Country Club Waiver of Land Development Plan

Mr. Nick Perilli from McCarthy Engineering stated that the Berkshire Country Club is proposing the construction of a new 682 sq. ft. kitchen addition off the existing snack bar at the pool area and a new 1,530 sq. ft. golf learning center near the driving range. Instead of a formal land development plan, the Berkshire Country Club would like to submit a stormwater plan for Township review. Mr. Tricarico asked if the new construction would require utilities. Mr. Perilli stated they would tie into the existing utilities. Mr. Morey stated that item 2 is incorrect because plans for the learning center were submitted. Mr. Morey also stated that because the buildings are over 180 sq. ft. the plans do meet Bern Township's definition of land development and land development plans should be submitted. Mr. Perilli stated that the City of Reading has waived land development and presented the Planning Commission with a letter from the City of Reading stating that fact. Mr. Tricarico stated that the Bern Township Ordinance requires land development and the Township cannot set a precedence. Mr. Tricarico also suggested that a SPFR could be submitted. Mr. Morey asked about the stormwater for the pool house. Mr. Jim McCarthy stated that the club built a pond for irrigation in 2017 and has a permit to withdraw from the river. The stormwater from the pool house would go to the river. Mr. Morey asked where the pond was located and Mr. McCarthy stated to the left of the driveway. He also stated stormwater run-off from the two roofs would be minimal. Mr. Perilli stated they would submit an SPFR. Mr. Dailey made a motion to not grant the Berkshire Country Club Waiver of Land Development and to require an SPFR; Mr. Colflesh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Stinson Drive Partners, LLC

Mr. Steve Bensinger from Stackhouse Bensinger, Inc. and Mr. Sean Yentsch from Penske were in attendance representing the plan. Mr. Tricarico asked if this plan was previously submitted under a different name. Mr. Bensinger stated that Stinson Drive Partners, LLC are the owners of the property who are proposing subdividing it into two lots and ultimately Penske will purchase Lot 2 for land development. Mr. Bensinger also requested that construction of the modified Stinson Drive be delayed until Penske proceeds with their land development. Mr. Tricarico expressed his concerns about approving a subdivision plan that depicts the modified Stinson

Drive and then delaying construction until land development. Mr. Morey stated that it's important that all right-of-ways, distances and surveying components are correct and in place so there isn't a need to go back.

Several residents were present and expressed their concerns about Stinson Drive being closed at West Leesport Road and traffic increasing on West Leesport Road therefore potentially backing up due to congestion at the traffic light at the intersection of Route 183 and West Leesport Road. Questions were raised about the portion of Stinson Drive that would become private and who would be responsible for road maintenance and the drainage culvert. Because the BTMA pump station is located in that section the Township would plow and maintain the road, but the culvert responsibility would fall to the property owners along the private portion. Mr. Potts stated unless an easement is put in place.

Mr. Morey asked about comment 13. Mr. Bensinger the old portion of Stinson Drive from the new road would be vacated and the new road would be dedicated as a collector street.

Mr. Tricarico asked about item 7. Mr. Bensinger stated no lights are intended and that he feels items 6 and 7 are land development issues.

Mr. Robert Fies from Cedar Hill Drive expressed concerns about the construction of the new road. Mr. Bensinger stated that the road would be constructed to meet Township requirements. Ms. Phyllis Heffner from Faller Lane doesn't like the idea of industrial traffic near a residential neighborhood and would like to see a traffic light at the intersection of Leisz's Bridge Road and Stinson Drive. Mr. Bensinger described the proposed left turn lanes on West Leesport Road for Faller Lane and the proposed entrance to Stinson Drive and how this concept would keep truck traffic from passing the houses on West Leesport Road. Mr. Morey informed the residents that traffic lights need to meet certain criteria to be put in and that this area doesn't meet the requirements. Mr. Morey went on to say that the idea was to eliminate a dangerous intersection by vacating the portion of Stinson Drive. He also asked the Planning Commission to disregard the last sentence in item 19 pertaining to the widening of West Leesport Road and that the only portion that would be widened would be at Faller Lane so West Leesport Road would not attract speeding.

Mr. Bensinger stated that there needed to be a discussion with BTMA about sewer lateral, fire hydrants, and waterline extension.

Mr. Morey stated comments 37, 43, and 45 wouldn't apply if the stormwater is to be part of the land development. Mr. Bensinger said a retention pond is proposed to handle the stormwater for both lots and the road. He also stated that it is designed based on both lots being built to 60% impervious, which is the maximum build-out the Township allows. Mr. Tricarico asked if the pond would be infiltrating because he was concerned about flooding issues. Mr. Bensinger stated it is designed per the Township 100-year storm ordinance and he is aware of the flooding issues to consider in the area, but would like the stormwater to be delayed for land development.

Mr. Morey stated that the intersections at Stinson Drive and Cedar Hill Drive as well as West Leesport Road and Stinson Drive need to be cleaned up on the plans because he is concerned about the proposed alignment.

Mr. Tricarico mentioned that there are quite a few items to be resolved.

Mr. Bensinger requested a waiver for Section 154-30.1(2)(g) steep slope analysis. This is mentioned in comment 25. Mr. Morey supported the request. Mr. Dailey made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors they grant a waiver for 154-30.1(2)(g); Mr. Werley seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Bensinger requested a waiver for 154-32.1(1) placement of permanent stone, concrete or iron pipe encased in concrete monuments shall be accurately placed at the intersection of all lines forming angles in the boundary of the subdivision or land development and at changes in direction of lines in the boundary of the property. This is mentioned in comment 27. Mr. Bensinger stated they would like only to set strategic locations. Mr. Morey supported the request. Mr. Dailey made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors they grant a waiver for 154-32.1(1) and allow setting strategic locations; Mr. Colflesh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

More discussion took place about eliminating the current intersection of Stinson Drive and W. Leesport Road. Another resident suggested closing Stinson Drive at W. Leesport Road forcing traffic to enter Stinson from Leisz's Bridge Road. Mr. Tricarico stated that would make a cul-de-sac and Mr. Morey stated that emergency access is a primary concern. Ms. Burkovich expressed concerns that traffic that would normally turn left onto Stinson Drive from W. Leesport Road would now be traveling in front of the residential area and that there is potential for backup occurring at the stop sign at Old Bernville Rd. and W. Leesport Rd. She also expressed her concern over conflicts in zoning districts. Joe Krezdorn who previously lived on West Leesport Rd wants people to be able to turn left onto Stinson Drive and feels a traffic study should be done to see how many vehicles go left there. Mr. Dailey asked Ms. Larue if a lot of accidents occur when vehicles make the left onto Stinson. Ms. Larue stated no.

Mr. Bensinger stated that to make the end-of-year deadline with Penske they needed preliminary plan approval. Mr. Tricarico stated there are too many open items.

Mr. Sean Yentsch from Penske said that they are trying to respect the property owners along W. Leesport Road and he can't solve cars going in front of their homes. Still, he can control the trucks from doing so by modifying Stinson Drive and getting trucks into the site as quickly as possible. He mentioned that there is already an approved subdivision plan that can be recorded allowing Penske to buy 30 acres and build, but that Penske wants to work with the residents. Mr. Tricarico reminded the residents that the Township cannot stop a developer if they are obeying the rules. Mrs. Reed and Mr. Potts gave their opinions. Mr. Potts asked for clarity on shutting down Stinson Drive. Mr. Colflesh asked about the possibility of making Stinson Drive a

one-way road at the north section of the roadway and the residents seemed to like that compromise.

There was no action taken to recommend approval of the plan to the Board.

C&B Development, LLC Preliminary Land Development Plan

Andy Baldo and Matt Close from C&B Development Co and Steve Walsh from Dynamic Engineering were present representing the plan for a proposed 221,100 square foot industrial wholesale warehouse with 221 parking spaces for vehicles and 47 truck parking spaces. The location is off Epler Way at the G&T Industries site. The proposed truck parking would face the river. Trucks would access the site from Epler Way and employees would utilize the proposed access road off Leisch's Bridge Road.

Mr. Morey went over key points instead of the review letter.

Mr. Morey stated his concern about the maneuverability of emergency vehicles on the south side of the property and recommended that the fire chief provide a review. He also recommended an easement with G&T since Epler Way is a private road and trucks only use Epler Way. Mr. Morey also explained that because they are proposing a 50-foot building height they would need a variance and the Township was not willing to provide a variance for this previously. He would also like to see drawings that depict the elevation in comparison to G&T since this proposed building is down the hill. Mr. Morey then mentioned the access road and that it needs to be kept as far north on Leisch's as possible. There also needs to be landscape buffering along the access road due to the residential development alongside it. Mr. Potts advised them to watch the sight line since where the road is depicted to come out onto Leisch's there is a drop off in the road not far from there. Mr. Tricarico asked if the capacities for utilities were checked. One of the representatives stated they have already been in touch with BTMA. Mr. Tricarico asked how they determined the number of employees if they didn't know the end use. A representative stated they used industry standards to gauge the number of employees. Mr. Tricarico pointed out comments 5 and 11. One of the representatives stated it would not be a truck terminal. Mrs. Reed expressed concern about a potential automated warehouse. Mr. Tricarico suggested they reach out to Schuylkill Valley Greenways and their trail. Mr. Morey stated there should be different soil horizons in the soil report.

Solicitor

Atty. Hawes stated he had nothing to present.

Adjournment

Mr. Werley made a motion to adjourn at 9:29 PM; Mr. Colflesh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.