

QUAKERTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

MAY 13, 2013

The regular meeting of the Quakertown Planning Commission was held on May 13, 2013.

Those in attendance were Chairman Jon Roth, Vice Chairman Fred Tirjan, William Kee, Ronald Heller, Michael Orzel, Michele Scarborough, Philip Abramson, Michael Haywood, Zoning Officer Ken Fretz and Recording Secretary Kris Barndt. (Absent Cathy Gillahan)

A motion was made by Mr. Abramson, seconded by Mr. Orzel and was unanimously carried to approve the April 8, 2013 minutes as written. (Cathy Gillahan absent from vote).

A discussion of a Conditional Use application submitted by Gorski Engineering for the property at 18 S. 5th Street, for the purpose of razing a building on three parcels was held. John Riebow of Gorski Engineering explained that the property is presently being used as a warehouse for Roselon Industries. Mr. Gorski's plan is to raze the small lunch building, an L-shaped house, a blocked boiler room, an addition added to the side of Roselon Industries, and several storage sheds. Starting near Apple Street, the Roselon building dated 1925 will be kept. A one story structure in the middle of the buildings will be demolished to create a court yard area. The one story building next to that, built approximately in the 1960s, will be kept but since the façade does not match the other structures, the front will be stepped back approximately twenty feet off of the sidewalk and green space would be created. The one story structure in the middle will remain and the one story building on the end by the gravel alley will be demolished. The garage across the street in the parking area would also be demolished to create more parking. Jerry Gorski stated their proposal is to renovate the manufacturing building for office use. Mr. Gorski pointed out the existing entry to the building is immediately at the sidewalk and the new entrance would be set back in the court yard.

Mr. Heller questioned the diagram of the 1960s structure being demolished when they stated just the front twenty feet will be removed. Mr. Gorski answered if they find a second tenant looking for space, they would like the flexibility to not remove all of the structure. That area is approximately an extra 8,000 square feet of space.

Mr. Gorski stated they have $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of parking across the street, which they estimate getting 100 spaces from. There is a dilapidated building, previously an auto repair shop on the lot which would be removed. Chairman Roth asked if they planned on paving the lot. Mr. Gorski answered the lot is mostly gravel and as of now they plan on keeping it gravel. Mr. Heller commented that it would be nice to have the lot paved.

Chairman Roth asked if there was a thought or concern with the backing out of vehicles from the parking lot onto the gravel alley and Apple Street. Mr. Gorski replied that they thought that area had such a low volume of traffic going by but if there is a concern, they could put in back in only spaces.

Mr. Chairman stated he is very impressed with the design of the court yard step back, preserving the older elements of the structures and providing green space.

Mr. Gorski gave an estimated time of March 2014 to have the project completed.

A motion was made by Mr. Heller, seconded by Chairman Roth and was unanimously carried by roll call vote to recommend to Borough Council the approval to demolish the identified structures at 18 S. 5th Street. (Cathy Gillahan absent from vote).

Next on the agenda was the review of a sketch plan for townhomes off of Mill Street. Mr. Mease from Mease Engineering was present to discuss the project. Mr. Mease explained there was a proposal several years ago to build five or six single homes on this property which was not approved by Zoning Hearing. The owner of the property who is a contractor was going to construct an office for business, but with the turning economy choose not to do so. The current owner would now like to develop the property with ten townhomes.

There would be a road accessing a cul-de-sac with all the townhomes on one side of the road and the southerly side of the road would be open space and for storm water concerns. The cul-de-sac will be thirty six feet wide. There would be ten townhomes with one building of six homes and one building of four homes. The lots would be twenty feet wide with the end units being 36 and 45 feet wide.

The property would need some variances because townhome use is a conditional use in the LI (Light Industrial) zoning district. The building set backs are not conducive with the townhome use. Mr. Kee asked if single family homes are allowed in the Light Industrial District. Mr. Fretz replied that they are permitted and maybe if one of the single homes was removed from the previous plan, the turning radius could have been brought into compliance. Mr. Kee mentioned that issue would apply to this current plan with the townhomes. Mr. Mease explained there is still an issue with the clear site triangle, which goes through a house, at the entrance of the driveway.

Mr. Mease pointed out that the gravel alley would become a twenty eight foot wide road up to the cul-de-sac and then would taper to eighteen feet wide past the townhomes. The road which the parcel owner will install, would be dedicated to the borough. A right hand turn only exit would be permitted onto Mill Street. Mrs. Scarborough asked about parking on Mill Street. Mr. Mease answered the traffic study is still an issue. Mr. Kee stated if the road will be dedicated to the borough, then it should continue to be twenty eight feet past the townhomes to the end of the property line.

Chairman Roth asked if curb cuts would be made for the existing residence using the alley. Mr. Mease replied that curb depressions could be made or that side could just be left open.

Mr. Heller said the minimum lot area is six thousand square feet and the lots on the plan are showing less than half. Mr. Heller feels there are too many items in a small given area and he recalls that being one of the problems with the last application several years ago.

Chairman Roth feels there would not be adequate parking for each townhome and questioned how the overflow of vehicles would be handled. Mr. Mease answered that the only other parking would be along the one side of the cul-de-sac. Chairman Roth is concerned fire trucks would not be able to make it back through the cul-de-sac with added vehicles on the street. Mrs. Scarborough asked if the road leading to the cul-de-sac could be made wider. Mr. Mease answered that it could be made wider and still comply with the storm water issues.

The townhomes will be set back twenty two feet from the road. Mr. Heller pointed out in Cowan Associates's review letter, number 5. – In accordance with Section 314.7 of the Zoning Ordinance, the minimum front yard for "any other use" is thirty feet. Mr. Mease explained he looked in the Zoning Ordinance for the townhome use. In the TC (Town Center) district they have criteria for townhomes and that is what he used for the plan. The front yard requirement was a minimum of 10 feet in the TC district.

Mr. Tirjan asked if this property falls in the overlay district. Mr. Fretz replied that it does.

Mr. Heller commented that his concern is the safety coming out of that street onto Mill Street. It is not that far from Hellertown Avenue plus Mill Street is heavily traveled. Mr. Mease stated that recently a four way stop has been added to the Hellertown intersection.

Since this is just a sketch plan, Mr. Mease summarized what he perceived as some of the issues.

- The Planning Commission would like to see some kind of development on this vacant piece of ground.
- Safety is a big issue with regard to pulling out onto Mill Street and also emergency vehicle access.
- Adequate parking per townhome.
- Keeping the road width twenty eight feet straight to the end of the property line.
- Putting too much in too little of an area.
- Make the living space a little larger.

Mr. Fretz gave an idea of having a drive between the cluster of townhomes with a garage and parking in the rear such as on Alan Lane. It would take care of the street parking issue out front where visitors can still parallel park in front of the homes.

David Freeman, CEO of Quakertown National Bank and Brian Mack, Facilities Manager were present to discuss the last item on the agenda. QNB would like to demolish a structure which previously was a sewing factory and pave that area for customer and employee parking. Lighting would be added to that area. The exit and entrance would be on Fourth Street. The bank currently leases space for parking which has sixty five spaces.

Mr. Mack explained there will be some lot line adjustments but the bank would acquire parcels number 35-08-204 and part of 35-08-203.

Chairman Roth asked about storm water. Mr. Mack replied that it looks like there are three storm grades along the highest location. That area does retain water so some minor site work would have to be made to get the proper storm water flow.

Mr. Mack explained green space will be added along the edge with curbing and a picnic table area for employees. A sidewalk will lead to the handicap parking spaces. In the future, the bank would like to add a generator pad with a dual transfer switch.

Mr. Kee asked if impervious coverage will be increased. Mr. Mack replied that they are going to try not to increase it and at least keep it under an acre.

Chairman Roth asked if the neighboring property of William Spencer will be disturbed. Mr. Mack stated the Spencer property has arborvitaes and a fence which will not be touched even if some would be on the bank property to keep their privacy. There currently is parking and lighting next to the Spencers and the additional lighting will be made so it does not shine on them and it will be on a timer.

Mr. Chairman noted between QNB's plans along with Gorski's renovations, there are a lot of nice things happening in that general area.

A motion was made by Mr. Orzel, seconded by Mrs. Scarborough and was unanimously carried by roll call vote to recommend to Borough Council the approval to demolish the building for the proposed parking lot. (Cathy Gillahan absent from vote).

A motion was made by Mr. Tirjan, seconded by Mr. Abramson and was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2013.

Recording Secretary,
Kris Barndt