

**EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009**

A meeting of the East Norriton Township Planning Commission was held at the East Norriton Middle School, 330 Roland Drive, East Norriton, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, April 1, 2009. The following members were in attendance: Chairman Keith Tornetta, Vice Chairman Joseph Gavanus, Jr., William Griffin, Jr., Kevin McDevitt, Joan Morello, Derek Bell, Colleen Henderson, Kristl Wiernicki and Robert Schottmiller. Also attending were Township Solicitor, Christen Pionzio, Township Planner E. Van Rieker, Township Sewer Engineer Stu Rosenthal and Mary Stover and Brian Keaveney representing Township Engineering Consultant, Pennoni Associates, Inc. Zoning Officer, Bryan Bortnichak was also in attendance. Chairman Tornetta called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02 p.m.

1. Announce purpose of meeting and review of how the meeting will be conducted:

Chairman Tornetta announced the purpose of the meeting and explained the format by which the meeting would be conducted, noting that audience members would be permitted a five minute time to make comments and ask questions, and added that the meeting would be continued to April 8, 2009 if necessary.

**2. Final Land Development Application:
Albert Einstein Healthcare Network, 559 W. Germantown Pike**

Present: Richard Montalbano, V.P. AEHN, Project Executive
Joseph Kuhls, Esq., Dischell, Bartle, Yanoff & Dooley
Raymond Syms, Raymond A. Syms, Associates
Matthew Hammond, Traffic Planning & Design, Inc.
Rick Paul, Perkins+Will
Les Bishop, Wells Appel

Mr. Kuhls introduced himself and the Einstein project reviewing the progress made to date including conditional preliminary approval that was granted by the Supervisors on December 23, 2008 and noting that final plans have been submitted and that review letters have been prepared by the Township's consultants.

Mr. Montalbano introduced himself and reviewed the need for local advanced healthcare in Montgomery County. Mr. Montalbano also reviewed changes that have been made in the plans in response to the Planning Commission comments and public comments. These changes include the relocation of the emergency department and changes to the height and location of the medical office building. Mr. Montalbano continued noting that the final plan respects the 170' building setback by locating all improvements including buildings, parking lots and driveways outside the 170' building setback. Mr. Montalbano reiterated Einstein's desire to work with the Township to resolve long standing traffic and sewer concerns. Lastly, Mr. Montalbano addressed the proposed helipad noting that the need for a

helipad is to fulfill the criteria to obtain accreditation as a trauma center. He added that the helipad would not offer fueling, maintenance or housing of helicopters and that it would not be used for personal use for executives. Mr. Montalbano called on Mr. Raymond Syms their aviation consultant.

Mr. Syms described his professional and military experience and his professional affiliations. He described the proposed location of the helipad as one which provides for appropriate approach and departure paths and which keeps flight paths away from residential areas and within the existing sound corridor of Germantown Pike. Mr. Syms added that both the FAA and PA regulatory agencies would review the heliport for conformance with their respective regulations. Referring to an exhibit, Mr. Syms outlined the 8:1 approach and departure paths to the east and west of the helipad which depicted the mature height of landscaping within the approach and departure paths.

In response to a question from Mrs. Henderson about illumination of the helipad, Mr. Syms noted that the pad would be defined by twelve one watt LED lights and that the lead in pathways would be similarly defined. The LED's would always remain on during night time hours. Mrs. Henderson also inquired about the area that would be served by this helipad. Mr. Montalbano responded that no specific service area is designated, but that this is a function of the location of the medical emergency and nearest hospital that is capable of treating the patient's injuries. He added that helicopters are directed by medical control in Montgomery County to the nearest hospital that is capable of treating the patient's injuries. Mrs. Henderson also inquired about the timing of FAA and PA approvals. In response, Mr. Syms stated that he plans to file the applications later this week and expects approval within 30 days.

Chairman Tornetta asked about the extent of the approach and departure paths beyond the property and their impact on residential areas. Mr. Syms noted that approaching helicopters would begin to descend from a cruising altitude of about 1,000' when they are about 2,000' from the helipad. Mr. Syms again referred to the approach and departure path exhibits to describe the approximate location where descent from cruising altitude would begin and added that once departing helicopters reach a cruising altitude of 1,000' they can fly in any direction. Chairman Tornetta also asked about the sound comparison chart and about what level of noise would be generated by the helicopter. Mr. Syms responded that the noise from a helicopter at the site would average 75 decibels for a period of about 20 seconds.

Mrs. Wiernicki inquired about other circumstances during which Einstein would offer the helipad for emergency use. In response, Mr. Syms noted that the helipad could be offered for use during a natural disaster or other public safety emergency but that this would be a very unusual occurrence. Mr. Syms added that medical helicopters are only flying to save lives and that for an emergency involving a large number of patients, the Einstein facility would only be able to fly in a limited number of patients. As the capacity of the trauma center was filled, flights would be diverted to other hospitals with available trauma facilities.

In response to a question from Mr. McDevitt about how long the helicopter would remain on the pad after dropping off a patient, Mr. Syms explained that in order to save fuel, the helicopter would probably not idle for long periods on the helipad as they would shut down the helicopter if they were to remain on the pad for more than ten to fifteen minutes. He added that the helicopter would be difficult to hear from the residential areas because of the background noise from the Germantown Pike sound corridor.

Mr. Griffin asked what would cause flight paths to change from the approach and departure paths proposed in the exhibit. Mr. Syms responded that nothing would cause a change and added that pilots are professionals who are instructed to follow the mandatory approach and departure paths. Mr. Syms added that the applicant would be receptive to a condition that the approach and departure paths not be altered as a condition of the Planning Commission's recommendation if the members feel that it would be appropriate.

Chairman Tornetta asked what penalty a pilot would face for not obeying the mandatory approach and departure paths. Mr. Syms explained that all pilots serve at the pleasure of a chief pilot and that a pilot who fails to obey protocol may lose their job for failing to follow such a policy. Chairman Tornetta also asked if Einstein operates a helicopter. Mr. Montalbano responded that Einstein does not, but that helicopters are operated by a third party.

Mrs. Pionzio asked how patients are transferred from the helicopter to the emergency room. Mr. Montalbano explained that trauma center accreditation requirements prohibit the patient from being transported from a helicopter to an ambulance and then to the emergency department. The patient must go directly from the helicopter to the emergency department.

Mr. Bell asked about the statistics on helicopter crashes. Mr. Syms noted that the FAA calculates that in one of every 432 years there may be an incident at a helipad. Referencing seven recent crashes, he noted that they only involved the crew and patient and that no member of the public were involved. He added that the safety record for public injury due to crashes is zero.

In response to questions from Mr. Schottmiller regarding the number of hours required for a medivac pilot and whether or not medivac helicopters must have two engines Mr. Syms stated that 1,000 hours are required and that there is no requirement for two engines.

Mrs. Henderson asked about weather-related restrictions on helicopter flights. Mr. Syms responded that the FAA governs weather-related flight restrictions. Mrs. Henderson also asked who in the hospital is responsible for the helipad. Mr. Montalbano noted that the Chief of the emergency department and an administrator, likely the director of security, will oversee the helipad.

Mr. Montalbano then stated that the final plans have addressed some questions that the Planning Commission raised previously regarding the separation of the hospital from homes along Whitehall Road and introduced Rick Paul of Perkins+Will to describe how the plans address this issue.

Mr. Paul described how the use of landscaping, berming, a sound wall and the natural topography of the land have been used to visually shield residents along Whitehall Road from hospital activities. He displayed a profile view showing a cross section between Whitehall Road and the hospital including landscaping at various stage of growth including mature heights. The exhibit showed that the loading dock will be 28' lower than the house on Whitehall Road. Mr. Paul described the sound wall and added that it is designed to block the sound from a line of sight path from the loading dock to the surrounding houses.

Mr. Paul then described the oxygen storage tank which is required to be 50' from a wooden structure and 50' from any non-ambulatory patient area. The proposed location would provide 300' from the nearest wooden structure and 230' from then nearest non-ambulatory patient area. Mr. Paul described efforts that have been made to visually shield the oxygen storage tank from neighbor's view including berming, the use of a grove of existing trees and the fact that the oxygen tank will be partially set into the ground.

Chairman Tornetta asked about the height of the oxygen tank that will be installed. Mr. Paul responded that despite the added cost Einstein has chosen to provide a horizontal configuration as opposed to a vertical configuration because of the reduced visual impact on neighboring properties. Mr. Paul explained that the tank would be approximately 12' in height. Chairman Tornetta asked if the applicant had considered placing the tank underground. Mr. Paul noted that it will be partially buried into the ground but that coils must have adequate air circulation for the tank to function properly. Chairman Tornetta asked specifically if the top of the tank would be below the top of the berm separating the tank from the adjacent residences. Mr. Paul stated that it would.

Mr. Griffin stated that he is concerned about the neighbors and asked what the sound wall would be made of and if the use of sound absorbing materials in the loading dock had been considered. Mr. Paul stated that the underside of the loading dock canopy would contain sound absorbing material and that the change in grade, the sound wall, berming and landscaping would help to mitigate sound from the loading dock. Chairman Tornetta noted that he would like to see an attractive sound abatement wall and opined that precast concrete is not a desirable material for this application. He would prefer an EP Henry style face or vegetation on the wall.

In response to a question from Mrs. Henderson about the resident's view of the oxygen tank, Mr. Paul stated that he could not guarantee that the tank would be shielded from view from every angle. Mrs. Henderson also inquired about the height and extent of the sound wall. Mr. Paul noted that the wall would be 18' in height and that it would extend from the south end of the medical office building to just before the loading dock driveway. This would act to block the acoustical line of site to the adjacent homes.

Chairman Tornetta asked if sound from the loading dock would exceed Township level requirements off site. In response Mr. Bortnichak noted that it is unlikely that sound originating from the loading dock would exceed the Township's requirements if the landscaping, berming and sound wall were constructed as shown. Mr. Van Rieker added

that he would like to review the acoustical engineer's report that the applicant agreed to provide as a condition of the preliminary land development approval.

Mrs. Wiernicki expressed a concern about traffic on the driveway that will be located to the west of the sound wall and sound reverberating off the sound wall back to the homes along Whitehall Road. Mr. Paul noted that the driveway would be 18' lower than the berm separating the driveway from the homes and that the wall would have sound absorbing qualities to prevent reverberation, though the aesthetics of the wall will also be considered. Mr. Paul added that a combination of the low elevation of the loading dock, sound absorbing materials in the loading dock canopy, the 18' sound wall, landscaping and berming will all help to reduce sound levels on adjacent properties. Mr. Paul reiterated that the sound wall will have acoustical material to abate sound propagation.

Chairman Tornetta asked Mr. Van Rieker about the landscaping review letters that he had prepared. Mr. Van Rieker noted that the applicant has agreed to comply with all of his review comments.

Chairman Tornetta asked Mr. Van Rieker about lighting fixtures and glare onto adjacent properties. In response, Mr. Van Rieker discussed the number of footcandles and the perceived brilliance of lighting that could be shed onto adjacent properties. Mr. Van Rieker added that direct line of sight fixtures should be avoided and that the stark contrast between well and poorly illuminated areas should also be avoided. He added that residential cutoffs will be provided, that fixtures are to be shielded and that no sag lenses will be permitted.

Mrs. Henderson asked about signage and specifically if any illuminated signage would be on the building. Mr. Montalbano stated that one internally illuminated sign identifying the hospital would be affixed to the building. Upon further discussion, Mr. Montalbano stated that an illuminated sign would also identify the emergency department, but that this sign would be located on the canopy as opposed to higher up on the building.

Mr. Montalbano then transitioned to a discussion about roadway improvements and signage along Germantown Pike. Mr. Montalbano discussed Einstein's preference for a five lane cross section from North Wales to Whitehall Road but stated that they are working within the existing right of way and that the four lane cross section has been designed because of this limitation. Mr. Montalbano noted that the County's preference with the four lane cross section is for two lanes in each direction.

Chairman Tornetta announced a five minute recess.

Mr. Hammond of Traffic Planning & Design, Inc. discussed both the regulatory and identification signage that is proposed along Germantown Pike noting that a monument-style sign would be provided at Einstein's main entrance and also at the secondary entrance. Mr. Hammond discussed the lane configuration with two eastbound lanes and two westbound lanes within the existing right of way from Einstein's eastern property line to North Wales Road adding that this configuration would provide for an improved level of service along this section of Germantown Pike. Mr. Hammond reiterated that the County's

preference is for two lanes in each direction as opposed to one westbound, two eastbound and one center turn lane.

In response to a prior question from the Planning Commission, Mr. Hammond advised that he had reviewed the warrants for a cautionary signal at the secondary access driveway and that this location does not meet any of the warrants for such a signal. The proposed signal at Einstein's main entrance will create adequate gaps to permit left turn movements into and right turn movements from secondary access driveway.

Chairman Tornetta noted that the widening of Germantown Pike has been needed for some time regardless of Einstein's development and asked what the hold up has been with obtaining land from the Farm Park. Mr. Bortnichak responded that obtaining additional right of way from the Farm Park side of Germantown Pike will require action by the Pennsylvania legislature. Mr. Montalbano added that the Township does not have eminent domain rights over state owned land. Mr. Hammond also noted that the Township has until June 30, 2010 to require that the five lane cross section be implemented and that Einstein is planning for the four lane cross section while remaining willing to commit to the five lane cross section until June 30, 2010 if right of way can be acquired from the Farm Park side of Germantown Pike.

Mrs. Wiernicki acknowledged that it would demonstrate great foresight if we aggressively pursue the five lane plan and asked if the secondary access driveway would provide an acceleration lane to allow vehicles to merge onto Germantown Pike. Mr. Hammond stated that there is no acceleration lane and noted that there is a stop sign for vehicles exiting onto Germantown Pike from the secondary access driveway. Mr. Hammond stressed that this configuration is no different than any other driveway on Germantown Pike. Mr. Hammond continued noting that the queuing from Whitehall Road and Germantown Pike does not stack up beyond the secondary access driveway and that adequate gaps would be created by the signal at the main entrance to permit right turn movements out of and left turn movements into the secondary access driveway.

Mrs. Wiernicki added that she is concerned with the increased speeds in this section of Germantown Pike that would result from the four lane cross section. Chairman Tornetta added that increased speeds are even more reason for concern that no center turn lane is proposed. Mr. Hammond reiterated that Einstein is committed to the five lane cross section if it can be done but that they are working now with the four lane cross section design that can be accommodated within the right of way. Mr. Hammond added that the four lane cross section does provide a significant improvement over the existing condition.

Chairman Tornetta asked whether other intersections had been studied. Mr. Hammond stated that no additional intersections have been studied, but that if the County requested additional studies then they will be performed. Chairman Tornetta added that he would like to know what effect the Germantown Pike improvements will have on Whitehall Road Traffic. Mr. Keaveney referred to his letter of March 18, 2009 and noted that Einstein has agreed to comply with all of his review comments and to resubmit plans for another review. To address Chairman Tornetta's question, Mr. Keaveney stated that the level of service for

East Norriton Township

Whitehall Road and Woodland Avenue is at a “D” and will remain at a “D” with or without the Einstein development. The level of service for Whitehall Road and Township Line Road is deficient and would remain deficient with or without the Einstein development noting further that the change in level of service is within a few percentage points either way.

Mr. Hammond noted that as traffic moves away from the development, it disperses and that there are signals that can be improved today. There is a possibility that money will be left over from the traffic impact fee that could be used to fund other improvements.

Mr. Griffin asked what would happen to Germantown Pike beyond Whitehall Road and also why the Township has the option to require the five lane cross section through June 30, 2010. In response, Mr. Bortnichak explained that there will likely be a referendum on the upcoming November election to ask the voters of Montgomery County to consider a bond issue to fund transportation projects. The County has placed the widening of Germantown Pike from North Wales Road to Route 363 near the top of the list to receive funding should the referendum be approved in November. Mr. Montalbano stated that funding is not preventing the construction of the five lane cross section but that the State is. Mr. Montalbano added that some people are opposed to the state yielding title to the required right of way that would permit the additional lane. Mr. Griffin responded that it would be good if our State Representatives were in attendance to hear the discussion taking place.

Mrs. Henderson asked if there would be a left turn arrow into the main entrance for eastbound traffic on Germantown Pike. Mr. Hammond responded that there would be a left turn arrow at the signalized intersection. He added that left turns would also be permitted into the site at the secondary access driveway.

In response to a question from Mrs. Henderson regarding which entrance would be utilized by trucks, Mr. Hammond responded that the secondary access would be preferred due to the proximity of this access to the loading dock area. Signage at this entrance would identify it as a “delivery” or “service” entrance.

Mrs. Wiernicki asked about the queuing length for left turns into the secondary access driveway and asked how many cars it would accommodate. Mr. Hammond stated that the length is about 275’ and that this lane would accommodate about 14 cars. He noted further that if 14 cars were stacked in the center turn lane that drivers desiring to make a left into the site would likely proceed to the main signalized entrance. In this way it would be self regulating.

Mrs. Henderson asked which signals would be retimed and what would be accomplished by retiming the signals. Mr. Hammond responded that signal timing become less optimal over time as traffic patterns change. Timings would be optimized for signals at Sandra Lane, Sunset Avenue, Whitehall Road, Einstein’s main entrance and North Wales Road. The optimized signals would result in increased efficiency.

East Norriton Township

Mrs. Henderson asked if the northbound right only lane on Whitehall Road at Germantown Pike is contingent upon obtaining additional right of way from the Farm Park. Mr. Hammond responded that it is not and that the northbound right turn lane can be accommodated without land from the Farm Park.

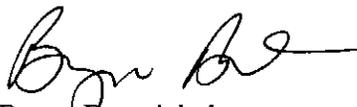
Mr. Schottmiller asked if preemption devices would be installed on traffic signals and also if there would be changes to the curb line along the southwest corner of Germantown Pike and Whitehall Road. Mr. Hammond responded they will comply with the Township's requirements for preemption devices and that the curb line along the southwest corner of the intersection will be pulled back and the island will be relocated.

Mr. Gavanus asked about a problem with vehicles negotiating the right turn from westbound Germantown Pike onto Whitehall Road. Mr. Hammond advised that the issue with larger vehicles making this turning movement is more a function of the location of stop bars than the radius of the curb.

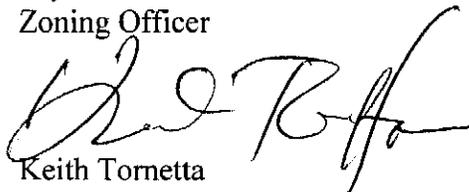
Mrs. Henderson asked about SEPTA service being provided to the hospital site. In response Mr. Montalbano reported that he has met with SEPTA representatives and that there is currently no SEPTA route along Germantown Pike. SEPTA has requested data on Einstein's anticipated employees and patients and SEPTA will then advise if a new route will be provided. Mr. Montalbano added that they have upgraded their turning and paving standards to meet SEPTA's requirements. Because of the proposed opening of the hospital in fiscal year 2013, SEPTA will not firmly commit to providing service at this point in time.

Chairman Tornetta announced that the meeting would be continued on Wednesday, April 8, 2009 at 7:00p.m. at the East Norriton Middle School and called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Griffin made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Henderson seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:53p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Bryan Bortnichak
Zoning Officer



Keith Tornetta
Chairman