

**EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2016**

*A meeting of the East Norriton Township Planning Commission was held at the East Norriton Township Building, 2501 Stanbridge Street in East Norriton, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, January 20, 2016. The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm. Attending were Planning Commission members Robert Schottmiller, Keith Tornetta, John Kolb, Judy Belkowski, Jeffrey Moller, Kevin McDevitt, Kandy Heckman, Harold Smith and George Kennedy. Zoning Officer, Bryan Bortnichak was also in attendance.*

**1. Reorganization:**

Mr. Kolb made a motion to appoint Mr. Schottmiller as Chairman. The motion was second by Ms. Heckman and the motion passed 8-1 with Mr. Smith opposed. Ms. Heckman made a motion to appoint Mr. McDevitt as Vice-Chairman. The motion was second by Ms. Belkowski and the motion passed 9-0.

**2. Approve Minutes of the December 9, 2015 Planning Commission Meeting:**

Chairman Schottmiller called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the Planning Commission's December 9, 2015 meeting. Mr. Moller made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was second by Ms. Heckman and the motion passed 9-0.

**3. Review proposed Flood Plain Ordinance:**

Mr. Bortnichak reviewed a proposed amendment to the Township's Zoning Ordinance that would amend the requirements for construction and other activity in the floodplain. Mr. Bortnichak advised that East Norriton Township has participated in the National Flood Insurance Program since 1973 and that continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program is contingent upon adoption of the floodplain ordinance on or before March 4, 2016. Mr. Bortnichak noted that FEMA has issued revised floodplain maps and that copies of the maps are available on the Township's website and in the Township offices. In response to a question from Chairman Schottmiller, Mr. Bortnichak noted that the Township does not have a list of properties that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program because the requirement to purchase flood insurance typically results from a mortgage on a property that is a private transaction between the property owner and the lender. Mr. Bortnichak noted that information had been run in previous newsletters and that there would be another article in the upcoming Township newsletter advising residents of the availability of the revised maps.

Chairman Schottmiller called for a motion. Mr. Tornetta made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the floodplain ordinance. Mr. McDevitt second the motion and the motion passed 9-0

**4. Review ZHB Case #2016-1, 2960 Felton Road:**

*Present: Amee Farrell, Applicant's Attorney*

Ms. Farrell reviewed the property that the storage yard is now being used to store transformers, copper wire and other high-value equipment. Ms. Farrell explained that the applicant is seeking relief from the East Norriton Township Zoning Ordinance to install an 8' fence with razor wire on top around the gravel area of the property. She noted that the razor wire would not be circular, but that it would be three strands of razor wire consistent with the sketches provided to the Planning Commission. In response to a question from Mr. Moller inquired about additional security measures are provided on the site, Ms. Farrell noted that there are currently no cameras and that crews come and go as needed from the staging area. She pointed out that there is normally no one on site.

Mr. Moller asked about the distance from the property to the East Norriton Middle School. Ms. Farrell noted that there are woods and a creek between the school and the property. In response to a question from Mr. Kolb about the height of the fence and wire, Ms. Farrell stated that she would amend her request for a variance to include the height of the fence plus the razor wire. Mr. Tornetta suggested signs should be placed on the fence warning of the razor wire. Mr. Smith asked if the entire perimeter of the property would be fenced. Ms. Farrell noted that only the stoned portion will be fenced. Mr. McDevitt asked what type of gate would be installed and if vehicles would be stored in the fenced area. Ms. Farrell noted that the owner is still investigating the style of gate that will be installed and that trucks and heavy equipment will be stored in the yard. Mr. Moller asked if there are other sites with 8' fences. Ms. Farrell responded that this is really the last industrial property on Felton Road and that it is at the end of the cul-de-sac.

Chairman Schottmiller called for a motion. Mr. McDevitt made a motion to grant the requested relief with a condition that signage be installed on fence to warn of the razor wire top. Ms. Heckman second the motion and the motion passed 8-1 with Mr. Moller opposed.

**5. Review ZHB Case #2016-2, 2200 Old Arch Road:**

*Present: Joanne Yeich, Owner  
Richard Yeich, Owner*

Ms. Yeich explained that they need two variances to construct a one and a half car garage on their home. Mr. Yeich noted that they spoke with both of his neighbors and that neither of them expressed any objection to the proposal. Mr. Tornetta asked if the exterior of the garage would be designed to match the existing house. Mr. Yeich noted that the colors

would be close. Chairman Schottmiller suggested that Mr. Yeich get a letter from the Mullin's in support of the variance requests.

Chairman Schottmiller called for a motion. Mr. Tornetta made a motion to grant the requested relief. Ms. Belkowski second the motion and the motion passed 9-0.

**6. Review proposed Zoning Map and Text Amendment for 2935 – 2941 Whitehall Road:**

Present: Israel Roizman, Applicant  
Noam Roizman, Applicant  
Kim Friemuth, Applicant's Attorney  
John Kennedy, Applicant's Land Planner  
George Hartman, Applicant's Engineer  
Pete Spisszak, Applicant's Traffic Engineer

Ms. Friemuth reviewed the location of the properties at 2935 – 2941 Whitehall Road and noted that they are just under 10 Acres in size. Ms. Friemuth explained that the proposal is to rezone the properties to HR-1 with a zoning text amendment to change the parking requirements for senior housing that would allow the design of 1 ½ parking spaces per dwelling unit but allow the construction of 1 parking space per dwelling unit.

Mr. John Kennedy reviewed the zoning map noting that the property is on the edge of a residential area but approximately 200' from an Institutional zoning district that is the Einstein hospital site. Mr. John Kennedy noted that he reviewed the walkability of the Einstein campus and numerous commercial businesses within walking distance of the properties. Mr. John Kennedy pointed out that the East Norriton Township Comprehensive Plan calls for housing for senior and that a market study demonstrates a need for senior rental housing.

Mr. John Kennedy noted that the site offers an existing sidewalk network along the West side of Whitehall Road and that completion of that sidewalk network is proposed. Mr. John Kennedy explained that this form of senior housing would have no impact on the Norristown Area School District. Mr. John Kennedy explained that the apartment buildings would be two three-story structures with a residential use and a residential feel that will blend with the surroundings.

Mr. Hartman reviewed a proposed site plan noting that the development will provide a sidewalk connection to the existing sidewalk to the south of the site and noted that one driveway entrance is to be proposed. Mr. Hartman noted that the existing house on the site is to be evaluated for future use and reviewed the setbacks to the two proposed three-story buildings. Mr. Hartman advised that the parking shown on the site plan depicts 162 parking spaces with an additional 80 spaces in reserve and he pointed out the perimeter buffer that will consist of existing vegetation along with supplemental plantings. Mr. Hartman stated that the bulk zoning requirements will comply with the HR-1 zoning district requirements and added that there is proposed courtyard between the two buildings.

Mr. Spissak noted that the Institute of Transportation Engineers Manual calls for .59 parking spaces per dwelling unit for this type of senior development and advised that he has looked at similar sites in Whitemarsh where there are 62 apartment units and 62 parking spaces, but that the peak demand at this site is 49 parking spaces. Mr. Spissak stated that a surplus of 15% should be provided and that 120 parking spaces is appropriate for the proposed development. Mr. Spissak added that a full traffic study would be performed and that both the AM and PM peak hour trip generation for this development would be .5 trips per unit.

Mr. Israel Roizman explained that he holds real estate in many locations along the east coast of the United States and that has owned and managed approximately 3800 units since 1987. He explained that he provides programs to residents that do not want to shovel snow, cut grass and deal with the upkeep of their homes. He advised that each building will have management and maintenance staff and that the units would have balconies. Mr. Israel Roizman invited the Planning Commission members to come to his buildings in Whitemarsh and he added that the buildings have community space, trash chutes and staff to care for the needs of the tenants. Mr. Roizman noted that about 76 of the units in each building would have one bedroom and the other four units in each building would contain two bedrooms.

Mr. Israel Roizman reviewed elevation renderings of the buildings and noted that security cameras will be installed on the buildings and that his company would provide security in the evenings. He added that his building in Whitemarsh was filled to capacity in 60 days and that there is a waiting list of 200 applicants waiting for a unit.

Ms. Freimuth noted that the Applicant invited all of the residents within 200' of the subject properties to come to the Whitemarsh facility the weekend prior to the Planning Commission meeting.

Chairman Schottmiller explained that he is not concerned with the architecture and that he reviewed several sections of the planners' review letter and noted that this type of development is better suited for dense areas of the Township.

Mr. John Kennedy noted that open space planned for the golf course in the Township's Comprehensive Plan did not materialize, that the hospital was built and that the Comprehensive Plan should be redone to acknowledge this change. Mr. Kennedy continued pointing out that the Township's Planning Consultant noted a need for senior housing in his review letter. Mr. John Kennedy opined that an area near a hospital is a good location for this type of development and that the area is in transition and that this is an appropriate area for the proposed use. Mr. John Kennedy stated that only three story buildings are proposed not six story buildings and that the combination of architecture and façade materials would be used. He believes that this is a good use and a good location for this property.

Chairman Schottmiller referred to the Montgomery County Planning Commission's review letter and noted comments about inconsistency with the County's 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the Montgomery County Planning Commission's recommendation that the proposed changes be denied.

Mr. Smith asked what advantages the development would bring to nearby homeowners. Mr. John Kennedy explained that the owners would be able to grow old in East Norriton Township as not all seniors are able to afford to stay where their families are. Mr. John Kennedy noted that this development would offer them an alternative housing type that allows them to stay in the area and allow them to age in place in an affordable setting. Mr. Smith asked specifically if this development will increase the value of surrounding owner's properties. In response, Mr. Roizman asked the Planning Commission to come to Whitemarsh to see the development and opined that this is a perfect location for senior housing due to the proximity of the hospital.

In response to a question from Chairman Schottmiller, Mr. Roizman explained that the one-bedroom units would rent for approximately \$1,000 per month and that the two-bedroom units would rent for approximately \$1,200 per month.

Chairman Schottmiller explained that some members of the Planning Commission recently walked the property and observed issues with grading and runoff.

In response to a question from Ms. Belkowski, Mr. Israel Roizman noted that each building would have two centrally-located elevators. Ms. Belkowski also inquired about the age of the residents. Mr. Israel Roizman explained that one or both of the tenants must be 62 years of age or older.

Mr. Moller asked if other sites had been considered. Mr. Israel Roizman stated that he looked at the Provident property at 2500 Dekalb Pike but that the costs associated with the development of the site were outrageous. Mr. Moller asked if a similar zoning amendments were required for the Whitemarsh site. Ms. Freimuth noted that variances were required but that rezoning was not.

Mr. George Kennedy asked if Mr. Roizman is willing to restrict the height of the buildings to three stories. Mr. Freimuth responded that they are willing to record a declaration against the property.

Mr. Moller asked if there will be people in the buildings who don't own automobiles. Mr. Spisszac explained that the age restriction limits the number of vehicles on the site. Mr. Moller noted that public transportation is not available at this site but that it is available at the Whitemarsh location. Ms. Freimuth explained that there is a bus stop at the Einstein hospital site. Mr. Moller asked if East Norriton residents are really ready to move to this type of housing. Mr. John Kennedy explained that this type of housing is a national trend and that seniors want to age in place where maintenance is provided for. Mr. Riozman explained that he did a market study and that there is a huge number of people in need of this housing type.

Mr. Tornetta noted that the pressing issue is the zoning change from AR to HR-1. He noted that he always envisioned a Heatherwood-style development of single family homes at this property. Mr. Tornetta noted that the grade of the property drops significantly from back to front and asked what the height of the building would be from Whitehall Road to the top of the building. Mr. Hartman estimated the elevation difference to be 50'. Mr. Roizman confirmed that it would be 58' because of the slope of the ground.

Mr. Tornetta asked if the rent is subsidized for the tenants. Mr. Israel Roizman noted that the rent is not subsidized and that the tenants pay full rent each month. Mr. Israel Roizman noted that the financing is by subsidy. Mr. Tornetta asked if the Applicant approached Einstein about a joint venture. Mr. Israel Roizman noted that they did and that Einstein was not interested.

Mr. Kolb pointed out that Whitehall Road is mostly rural with residential single family dwellings and opined that rezoning this land to HR-1 would constitute spot zoning. Mr. Kolb also asked about parking and if the parking analysis was performed during a holiday. He stated that the site should be parked at a higher ratio. Mr. John Kennedy noted that the parking on the site has been designed for an average day.

Mr. Kolb noted that public transportation is not near by for seniors and that they will not walk to the Einstein site in the rain. Ms. Freimuth noted that they will build the additional parking spaces if the Township wants, but they would prefer to leave more green space on the site.

Mr. Kolb expressed concern that with the rezoning there is no guarantee that the plan will be constructed as shown. Ms. Freimuth stated the the Applicant is willing to record a declaration limiting the building to three stories.

Ms. Belkowski expressed concern with storm water management given the significant amount of impervious surface proposed on the site. Ms. Freimuth acknowledged that this is an issue that will be dealt with in land development and that they will comply fully with all Township storm water requirements.

Mr. Martin Grieder of 708 Woodland Avenue expressed concern about diminished property values and noted that the proximity to the hospital and the McDonald's does not justify the development. Mr. Grieder questioned why the parking spaces were designed around the buildings instead of between them to provide a greater buffer to the neighbors.

Ms. Lizanne Knott of 3150 Sunset Avenue explained that she moved here to get away from development and does not want to see this development approved. Ms. Knott expressed concern about the lack of a pedestrian friendly path to the Wawa store.

Mr. Doug Clark of 808 Irenic Court pointed out that there is no sidewalk on the Wawa property and that sidewalk from the subject properties to the Wawa property is not a pedestrian safe walkway.

Ms. Cindy Burnsteil of 712 Woodland Avenue advised that she visited the Whitemarsh site and was advised that she could not see a unit. She noted that the staff informed her that the property was mismanaged and that she was not even able to see a floor plan of the apartments. Ms. Burnsteil stated that she sat in the parking lot and saw an elderly man with a walker walk to a nearby commercial use and return to the site. She pointed out that this would not be possible at this location because there are no commercial uses in the immediate vicinity of this property.

Ms. Francis Segal of 807 Irenic Court informed the Planning Commission that she is an architect who developed the Irenic Court subdivision without variances amendments to the zoning ordinance. Ms. Segal noted that her subdivision was developed with 12 single family dwellings and that the subject properties should be developed in the same manner. Ms. Segal opined that this is an inappropriate location for HR-1 zoning and that she is absolutely opposed to the development. Ms. Segal pointed out that the Montgomery County Planning Commission's 2040 plan calls for housing to match the character of the neighborhood and that the proposed development does not accomplish that goal. Ms. Segal stated that high density housing is better suited for areas of the Township with more commercial development and that the Montgomery County Planning Commission's 2040 plan calls for single family dwellings at this location.

Ms. Lauren Elban of 3158 Sunset Avenue stated that she and her family appreciate the open space for what it is and that this development would change the character of her neighborhood. She would like to see it remain as open space.

Ms. Bette McTamney of 3113 Eisenhower Drive inquired about a traffic study and asked if a traffic signal is warranted. She asked how the development would impact the Township's sanitary sewer system and stated that the property owners should develop the land as single family dwellings.

Mr. Ken Christovich of 2937 Tanglewood Lane asked about the lack of washers and dryers in the units, association fees and the arrangement for utility billing. Mr. Christovich expressed concern with storm water management on the site and pointed out that home values in East Norriton have already fallen.

Mr. James Randall of 2942 Whitehall Road asked if there is a plan to move forward with the development without the zoning change and expressed concern about the rental turnover rate that this property will see.

Mr. Mark Burnsteil of 712 Woodland Avenue noted that he is speaking on behalf of several residents and noted that walkability is present at the Whitemarsh site but not at this location. He asked the Planning Commission to consider the recommendations of Montgomery County Planning Commission's 2040 plan and the Township's Comprehensive Plan and stated that this rezoning request goes far beyond what is reasonable. Mr. Burnsteil noted that the Norristown Area School District moved the bust stop back into the neighborhood from the corner of Whitehall and Woodland Avenue because it was too dangerous. Mr.

Burnsteil opined that there is no existing vegetation to serve as a visual buffer to the parking lots and that many of the trees are diseased. Mr. Burnsteil noted that the focus here should be on rezoning and that there is no guarantee that another developer will hold to the limits of the plan as presented.

Ms. Karen Messics of 3003 Whitehall Road noted that she toured the Whitemarsh location and that she saw a sign for the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency and the Montgomery County Department of Housing Community Development and upon calling the agencies, she learned that many of the tenants are low income. Ms. Messics expressed concern that there is no guarantee that the proposed plan will be built if the property is rezoned and she fears more buildings and taller buildings. Ms. Messics stated that there are tax write off's that will benefit Mr. Roizman and asked how this development will benefit East Norriton.

Ms. Patricia Nave of 2940 Whitehall Road stated that she is opposed to the plan and that she is opposed to rentals. She explained that it is difficult for her to get in and out of her driveway and that she is concerned with water runoff. Ms. Nave noted that she moved here to get away from businesses and that this development would take away from why she moved here.

Ms. Susan McLaughlin of 2926 Whitehall Road stated she has issues with the traffic and that there are too many accidents at Whitehall Road and Woodland Avenue. Ms. McLaughlin noted that there was an accident there this past Saturday night. She is concerned that a fire truck only goes to five stories and that water runoff will be horrendous. She expressed concern with lighting that will be located at or above the level of her house and the noise from trash dumpsters. She stated that she is totally opposed to this development.

Mr. Frank Riccardelli of 2934 Whitehall Road noted that he is representing himself and his mom who bought their house in 1953. Mr. Riccardelli noted that the zoning change is not conducive to the neighborhood. He asked if the zoning change is approved, would a parking garage be allowed. Mr. Bortnichak explained that a parking garage would be allowed if it was constructed in accordance with the setbacks and other requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Anne Sakalay of 2809 West Crossing Circle stated that the Township is at a crossroads because we allowed a hospital to be built and stated that we are on the express lane to urbanization. Ms. Sakalay stated that the Planning Commission has a responsibility to keep the character of our neighborhood and pointed out that senior housing is available in the Jefferson Crossing development. Ms. Sakalay asked the Planning Commission to consider preserving the Township for the future and noted that she is opposed to the proposal.

Chairman Schottmiller noted that his parents bought their house on Barbara Drive in 1958. He also stated he has lived in East Norriton for 50 years only four house from his childhood home. He mentioned his father spent his final years living with him and his family. He said, his father only left his house after he could not live by himself. He expressed concern

about future use of the development post baby boom and stated that he does not think this is an appropriate use for this area.

Chairman Schottmiller made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors deny the request for a Zoning Map Amendment. Ms. Heckman second the motion and the motion passed 9-0.

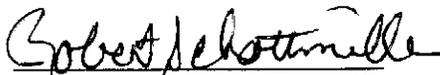
Chairman Schottmiller made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors deny the request for a text amendment to the HR-1 zoning district. Ms. Heckman second the motion and the motion passed 9-0.

Mr. George Kennedy pointed out that the Planning Commission has been working on a feasibility study to construct sidewalks and trails with the Board of Supervisors and asked the public to keep this goal in mind.

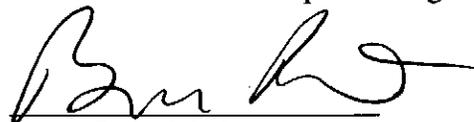
7. **Adjournment:**

Mr. Moller made a motion to adjourn. The motion was second by Ms. Heckman and passed 9-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman Robert Schottmiller  
East Norriton Township Planning Commission



Bryan Bortnichak  
Zoning Officer