

**EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2014**

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, June 25, 2014. Chairman Robert Schottmiller called the meeting to order at 7:02p.m. Attending were Planning Commission members Keith Tornetta, Robert Schottmiller, Kandy Heckman, John Kolb, Judy Belkowski, Kevin McDevitt, Jeff Moller and George Kennedy. Zoning Officer, Bryan Bortnichak was also in attendance.

1. Approve Minutes of the May 21, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting:

Chairman Schottmiller called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission's May 21, 2014 meeting. Ms. Heckman made a motion to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission's May 21, 2014 meeting. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion and the motion passed 8-0.

2. Review Conceptual Subdivision Plan for 351 E. Johnson Highway:

*Present: Amee Farrel, Attorney for Laurel House
 Beth Sturman, Executive Director, Laurel House
 Jennie Allen Residential Director, Laurel House
 Dick Feron, Broker for Laurel House*

Ms. Farrell reviewed a conceptual subdivision plan that is proposed by Laurel House on the St. Paul's Church property at 351 E. Johnson Highway. The subdivision involves the former Our Lady of Victory School and several acres of property with frontage along E. Johnson Highway.

Laurel House is a shelter for battered woman and children that has both administrative and housing functions in Norristown today. Laurel House intends to subdivide and purchase property from the Church and to occupy it in two phases. Phase one would involve moving their administrative functions to the first floor of the school and phase two would involve renovating the second floor as small apartments for victims of domestic violence.

Ms. Farrell noted that the front yard setback of the school building is an existing nonconformity and that some zoning relief would be required – primarily for parking as Laurel House does not need nearly as many parking spaces as the ordinance would require. She stated that most clients would use public transportation. Ms. Farrell also explained that Laurel House is in the process of negotiating shared parking and access easement agreements with the Church.

In response to a question from Mr. Tornetta about the size of the school, Ms. Farrell stated that the school is about 34,000 square feet and three stories in height. Mr. Tornetta asked about a use variance. Mr. Bortnichak stated that he had spoken with Ms. Farrell about the need for a use variance for the shelter / apartment portion of the use, although the administrative function would not require a variance.

Mr. Schottmiller asked about the need for a fire sprinkler system. Ms. Farrell acknowledged that the change of use would necessitate the installation of a fire sprinkler system under East Norriton Township's requirements. She advised that Laure House may file an appeal with the Building Code Board of Appeals seeking a variance from that requirement.

In response to a question from Mr. Schottmiller, Ms. Allan advised that there would be no more than two bedrooms in each shelter unit.

Mr. Kennedy inquired about the consolidation of administrative and shelter services. Ms. Allan advised that both Norristown facilities would ultimately close and be consolidated at the East Norriton location.

In response to a question from Mr. McDevitt, Ms. Allan advised that the shelter is open and staffed seven days a week. Mr. Moller asked about security at the proposed facility. Ms. Allan and Ms. Sturman advised that most people located at this shelter would not be from this area. They also noted that they would provide for video security monitoring. They will try to keep the shelter as nondescript as possible and they have no plans to have security personnel on site.

In response to questions from Mr. Schottmiller about curfew, length of stay and visitors to the property, Ms. Sturman advised that clients must abide by a 9:00pm curfew, that emergency housing is typically provided for 30 days, but that extended housing is available for up to six months, and that no visitors are allowed.

Mr. Moller asked if the church would still use a portion of the school after Laurel House takes occupancy. Ms. Sturman explained that the ground floor may be leased back to the Church for certain Church-related activities.

Mr. Tornetta expressed a concern that the site may be under parked for their use. Ms. Farrell advised that Laurel House's parking demand for their administrative use is very light. Mr. Bortnichak suggested that reserve parking be shown on the plan with a note that it would have to be constructed at the Township's discretion if parking is deemed to be insufficient. Mr. Bortnichak also suggested that a special exception to allow the use of shared parking facilities that currently exist on the Church property.

Ms. Belkowski asked about how security would be dealt with if the church has access to the building. Ms. Sturman noted that the access from the ground floor would be restricted into the rest of the building.

Mr. Moller asked about parking at Laurel House's existing facilities. Mr. Sturman noted that the residential component has only on-street parking while the administrative component has about eight parking spaces.

Mr. Kolb asked why the subdivision is not be done as a condominium unit. Ms. Farrell advised that the condo unit would still have to meet all of the bulk requirements of the zoning ordinance necessitating additional zoning relief. Mr. Kolb also inquired about maintenance agreements. Ms. Farrell advised that they are negotiating with the Church to work out agreements for things such as snow plowing, grass cutting, etc.

Mr. Schottmiller noted that the plan has not yet been filed with the Township and that it does not require a vote to recommend approval to Board of Supervisors, but he called for a vote of those in

favor of the subdivision and Laurel House project. Planning Commission members voted 8-0 in favor of the proposed subdivision and Laurel House project.

3. **Review Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Text Amendment:**

Mr. Bortnichak presented a proposed text amendment to the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) that would delete requirements for stormwater management that are contained in the SALDO and instead refer to a separate stormwater management chapter of the East Norriton Township Code that was put in place early in 2014.

Following a discussion about the requirements for stormwater management that are already in place, Ms. Heckman made a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the ordinance. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kolb and passed 8-0.

4. **Other Business:**

After reviewing Mr. Moller's revised letter Mr. Tornetta made a motion to approve of sending the letter to the Board of Supervisors, of requesting to be on a future Board of Supervisors meeting agenda, and of authorizing Jeff Moller and Robert Schottmiller to represent the Planning Commission and a future Board of Supervisors meeting. Mr. Kolb seconded the motion and the motion passed 8-0. Mr. Schottmiller directed Mr. Bortnichak to attempt to obtain Mr. Smith's signature despite his absence at the meeting.

Planning Commission members reviewed the Land Development and Construction update that was provided by Mr. Bortnichak.

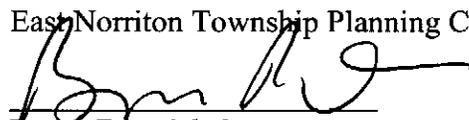
Mr. Schottmiller also reviewed a memo from the Township Solicitor dated May 27, 2014 and took issue with some of the responses. Mr. Schottmiller questioned why certain requirements cannot be enforced such as allowing multiple families in one house and why annual inspections cannot be required.

5. **Adjournment:**

Mr. Tornetta made a motion to adjourn. The motion was second by Mr. McDevitt and passed 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,


Chairman Robert Schottmiller
East Norriton Township Planning Commission


Bryan Bortnichak
Zoning Officer