

Allen Township Planning Commission

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MINUTES
ALLEN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, January 20, 2014
7:00 P.M.

The regular monthly meeting of the Allen Township Planning Commission was held on Monday, January 20, 2014 at 7:00 P.M. at the Allen Township Fire Company Building, 3530 Howertown Road, Northampton, Pennsylvania 18067. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

Reorganization: Mr. Pierce made a motion to reappoint the current slate of officers; seconded by Mr. Tepes. On the motion, by roll call vote, all Commissioners present voted yes.

Minutes: Mr. Clater made a motion to approve the minutes of December 16 2013; seconded by Mr. Pierce. On the motion, by roll call vote, all Commissioners present voted yes.

Roll Call: Present: William Holmes; Alfred Pierce; Louis Tepes, Jr.; David Irons; Eugene Clater; Brien Kocher, P.E (Hanover Engineering); Jim Milot (Hanover Engineering); Kevin Chimics (Hanover Engineering) and B. Lincoln Treadwell, Jr., Esq.

Mr. Holmes requested that public comment would be heard at the end of the business meeting. He indicated the list of individuals who have signed up to speak is extensive.

Old Business

1. **High Meadow Estates**: Noted.

New Business

1. **Rockefeller Group Preliminary/Final Subdivision Plan**: Charles Everett, Lehigh Valley International Airport, Executive Director, provided a history regarding the airport property. He further

indicated that in 1994 the Airport Master Plan was amended to include of 1,500 acres of undeveloped land north of the airport to be acquired and held for future development of the airport. In 2004 the FAA signed the Airport Layout Plan which is part of the Airport Master Plan. The 2004 plan designates certain portions of the lands north of the airport to be developed for “on airport” aeronautical purposes and “off airport” compatible land use. In October 2011, the Airport Authority published a request to qualifications and proposals for commercial real estate broker and master developer services. Mr. Everett further explained, one year later a master development agreement was executed between the Airport Authority and Rockefeller Development Group. In 2013, Rockefeller submitted a concept plan and letter of intent which the Board of Governors of the Airport Authority approved. In September 2013, Rockefeller and the Airport Authority entered into an acquisition agreement for lands in Allen Township for use as a FedEx Ground Transportation HUB. In addition, Mr. Everett indicated, the proposed project is important to the Airport Authority because it is consistent with the approved Airport Master plan and the mission of the Airport Authority. Mr. Everett further explained that the project: will provide for a compatible land use with the vicinity of the Airport; improve the economic viability of the Airport in the region and the project will enable the Airport to pay the remaining balance of the land judgment on schedule.

Ron Gawlick, P.E., Pidcock Engineers, presented the Subdivision Plan. He indicated the Subdivision supports the development of Industrial uses in accordance with the Allen Township Zoning Ordinance. The FedEx Ground Hub Land Development Plan is proposed for development on two of the four parcels under consideration by Rockefeller Group. The property consists of approximately 280 acres in the south east corner of the Township. Of the Subdivision: Lots 1 and 2 are parcels considered for the FedEx Land Development; Lot 3 is dedicated to the existing Radar Tower and Lot 4 is considered for future development. The plans also propose the extension of a new road to service future development and provide a future thoroughfare. Regarding utilities, the site will be served by a water lines extension of existing water lines from City of Bethlehem water main located in Willowbrook Road and sanitary sewer service will be provided via an extension of the sewer interceptor located in Hanover Township, Lehigh County along Willowbrook Road near Race Street. The sewer extension will consist of a gravity sewer with a force main to service the remainder of the site. Mr. Gawlick further indicated that storm water will be managed via several storm water infiltration basins throughout the site. Currently the plan proposes three basins, a collection system in the roadways to get the waters to the basins.

Mr. Gawlick further provided a review of the traffic impact study scope which has been submitted to affected municipalities pursuant to PennDOT’s criteria. The study was provided to Allen Township, Hanover Township, Lehigh County, East Allen Township, the City of Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. The scope of the traffic study has been approved by PennDOT. The approved scope includes improvements necessary to support Fed Ex Ground and the development of remaining lands proposed within the Subdivision. The improvements will include the widening of Willowbrook Road from two to four lanes; installation of traffic signals at employee entrances, access drives and future through roads, improvement of Race Street from two to five lanes; improvement of the Willowbrook and Race Street intersections; addition of a south bound lane on Airport Road; signalization modifications to Race Street and Airport Road, Schoenersville Road and Airport Road, Airport Road and City Line Road; and Postal Road and Airport Road.

The traffic movement is contained to southerly movement via Willowbrook Road to Route 22, with 80% of cars and delivery traffic heading south and 100% of the truck traffic heading to the south.

Mr. Clater questioned the traffic impact study submitted as well as the northern route assessment regarding the 80/20% split described by Mr. Gawlick. Mr. Clater was concerned with the disbursement of the split and impacts to the outlying northern route within the Township. He felt more emphasis needs to be considered on the effective remediation of this additional traffic on intersections that are already problematic. He was concerned regarding the basis of assumptions in RDH as these assumptions relate to the additional warehouses. He asked to see some validation of the assumption of the personal vehicles in and out of the proposed facility including what the basis is for the other two warehouses. He felt these variables represented significant impacts. He was further concerned with the growth populations projections utilized as factors within the study. He concluded that he would need much greater dialogue in order to become comfortable with the assumptions and in turn the true traffic impacts including what the choke points are today and how they would be remediated with future build projection.

Mr. Clater further questioned any potential considerations for alternate routes if a shutdown on Willowbrook Road for any sustained period occurs due to the limited availability of adequate detour routes. He indicated there were actually three peaks on Rt. 329 given school bus traffic and the route is heavily burdened with traffic backups. Mr. Gawlick responded that the details of traffic study were provided in accordance with the industry standard required by PennDOT but offered to provide as much detail as necessary regarding distribution and alternate route analysis during peak hours. Mr. Gawlick further responded regarding the potential closure of Willowbrook Road for some type of emergency situation that the attempt to keep one lane whenever possible is the general procedure of emergency responders.

Mr. Clater further questioned traffic to East Bullshead and the disbursement of employee traffic. He felt it was essentially ignored in the study. Mr. Gawlick responded that the reason this intersection was left out was because studies are general limited to 100 trips to that intersection – therefore it was not included in the study. Mr. Gawlick further indicated it could be reviewed.

Mr. Clater felt that trucks should be restricted from northbound on Willowbrook Road. He felt this should be also in the case of emergencies. Mr. Gawlick indicated that the current plan does not provide for truck traffic north of Bullshead. Mr. Clater would like this condition to apply to future tenants or owners of the remaining Rockefeller holdings.

Mr. Clater questioned what is the projected distribution of traffic regarding the other warehouses and what the traffic numbers are based upon. Mr. Gawlick offered to review the details of all studies with in detail. Mr. Clater further questioned the points and times for taking of the counts especially with some of the counts being taken on weekends. Mr. Gawlick will follow-up regarding this observation.

On the question from Mr. Holmes, Mr. Gawlick explained proposed improvements on West Bullshead and Willowbrook Road. Mr. Gawlick indicated that the plan does identify improvements to the intersection of West Bullshead Road and Willowbrook currently but as discussions continue with the

Township regarding traffic concerns relative to the Northern Corridor that this issue remains under discussion.

Mr. Clater questioned the backup queue along Schnoersville Road and the potential to extend the removal of as much of the mountable median to get as much as the left turn lane as far as possible. Mr. Gawlick indicated he would review this observation.

Mr. Gawlick indicated that the comments provided by the Township Engineer are in the process of review and formulation of appropriate responses. Mr. Clater asked that Pidcock address the landscape plantings, plantings around the northwest detention pond and the two largest detention ponds. He would like to see more formal buffering and what type of landscaping will be provided on the future northern warehouses, for which there is no land development plan to date. He would like to see a more detailed response regarding buffering of the northern warehouse lot. Mr. Gawlick indicated that he will review this observation but that he was unsure of the layout of the northern warehouse lots and there is currently no land development plans for this area. Mr. Clater understood this concern but felt there were common elements involved with the plan and he felt the responsibility was on Rockefeller as the master developer.

2. FedEx Ground Hub Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan:

Mark Heeb, P.E., BL Companies, indicated that the proposed project is situated on 253 acres. He stated that Phase 1 would be an 818,000 square foot building with associated employee and truck parking. The circulation would be traffic coming from the north on Willowbrook with entry to the southernmost site entrance. The trucks park and commence to the unload area. The trucks load and exit drive and travel south on Willowbrook Road. Employee parking is divided into two phases. There are two proposed employee entrances. The campus of the facility, in addition to the main load/unload hub facility there is proposed to be: a truck washing building; two guard houses; a vehicle maintenance garage, a fuel station and gate house entrance. The guard houses are manned 24 hours per day. The employees enter through the parking lot and the area around the hub is secured. He further described the access operation to the site. He noted that the property is zoned Industrial and is consistent with the LVPC General Land Use Plan. He reviewed the extensive buffer provided around the site. Regarding the proposed through road area north of the buildings (to the lot 1 and 2 boundary depicted on the subdivision) will remain as open space. Mr. Heeb further reviewed the storm water management system which is under review by Northampton County Conservation District and the Township.

Mr. Heeb indicated that the comments provided by the Township Engineer are in the process of review and formulation of appropriate responses.

Mr. Clater questioned the LANTA bus routes to the site. He questioned if public transportation could be extended into the development. Mr. Clater indicated he would like this considered in the future once the demographics of the employees are identified. Mr. Clater would like to see one or two bus stops and that they are provided in a safe manner off the road and be lighted. Messrs. Heeb and Gawlick indicated they would review this observation and respond at future time.

Mr. Holmes questioned limitation on truck idling. Mr. Heeb indicated FedEx would comply with Act 124 of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Public Comment

John Mattaboni, 15 Country Road, voiced concerns regarding fairness, justice and the punishment of the residents of Allen Township by the actions of the Lehigh Valley Airport. He felt the burdens of impacts are unfairly placed on the Township residents. He requested that the project be stopped by the Township and Planning Commission.

Mike Givey, 197 East Bullshead Road, voiced concerns regarding the impact on the Townships way of life and the area as a whole. He felt everyone affected should have a voice. He felt the noise and reduced home values will negatively impact the community.

Steve Pignato, 10 Country Road, voiced concerns regarding air pollution impacts from the proposed FedEx project. He felt the Lehigh Valley already had air quality problems with regard to diesel particulates. He was also concerned regarding traffic impacts on surrounding roadways. He felt the factors in the traffic studies were underestimated.

Kimberly Pierce Nappa, 382 East Bullshead Road, voiced concerns regarding the radar tower and shared information she collected from websites regarding the planned placement of the radar tower. She was concerned that the FAA approval process was not being adhered to. She was concerned with the truck traffic, air quality, noise forecast, city infrastructure, flight operations over this facility and whether the review provided is legitimate.

Robert Nappa, 382 East Bullshead Road, voiced concerns regarding the residents suffering for the sins of the Lehigh Valley Airport. He felt the Township should not bow down to the developer. Mr. Nappa cited portions of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Nappa promised to unseat Township Planning Commission and Supervisors who vote to support the proposed FedEx project. He asked the Township Planning Commission and Supervisors listen to the residents and say no to the proposed project.

Meritt Snyder, 1023 Hogan Way, questioned some traffic concerns but felt the proposed project was not more offensive than if an airport would be built on the property. He felt some alternative routes should be considered to access the site.

James Beani, voiced concern regarding the future of the community and impacts on the area if the project is constructed. He felt the project should be turned down.

Ron Chontofalsky, Kreidersville Road, indicated he was opposed to the project.

Joseph Gartler, voiced concerns regarding Rt. 22.

Suzanne Mattaboni, 15 Country Road, voiced concern that development occur only in appropriate places given the vicinity to a school and a park. She felt there were many other places where it could go.

Lyla Sabia, 260 Stagecoach Road, voiced concerns regarding the changes that the FedEx project would bring to the community.

Lee Castle, Bally Drive, voiced concerns regarding the changes to the community to which he recently moved that the FedEx project would bring. He was opposed to the impacts on the Wayne Grube Park and Nor-Bath Trail. He felt that it would make the park non-accessible due to traffic. He was also concerned for the safety of the Catasauqua High School students.

Steve Glodeck, 126 Meloncholy Way, voiced concerns regarding traffic and a recent tractor trailer accident that occurred at an Interstate-78 toll booth in the area.

Timothy Sabia, Stagecoach Road, voiced objection to the Rockefeller family.

A resident questioned why this was being considered as a benefit to Allen Township. Mr. Treadwell explained the land development and land use process pursuant to the MPC and briefly summarized the land use review process regarding both the subdivision and land development plan currently before the Commission.

Pete Deshler, 235 McNair Circle, voiced concerns regarding traffic produced by the proposed development project. He encouraged the Commission to change the zoning so that they cannot build the proposed project.

Jim Figlar, East Bullshead Road, voiced concern regarding the road widening and the return route for the traffic to Rt. 22. He felt the traffic associated with the project would make the Township a worse place to live.

Steve Pignato, 10 Country Road, indicated that he was told by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, that the only people that could do anything about this was the Township.

Robert Nappa, 382 Bullshead Road, directed to Mr. Treadwell that the Lehigh Valley Airport stole the land and now the penalty for that is FedEx.

Mickey Phillpot, Saw Grass Drive, questioned the zoning building height increase. Mr. Holmes indicated that the height of the building would be 53' feet. Mr. Treadwell indicated that the ordinance does not have a requirement of 53'. Mr. Phillpot was concerned that the property values would drop if the facility is built. Mr. Treadwell indicated that Allen Township does not control how the property is assessed.

Rita Phillpot, Saw Grass Drive, questioned employee traffic crossing through neighborhoods due to upcoming bridge closures.

A resident from Saw Grass Drive, questioned when the property was changed from agricultural to industrial. Mr. Holmes indicated that the property was changed from residential to industrial in 2006.

Chris Schook, McNair Circle, voiced concerns regarding traffic impacts on Rt. 22. She further noted that the trucks would go both southbound and northbound on Airport Road. She felt this was not addressed. She was further concerned regarding Race Street and the backups. She further noted the recent Airshow at the airport that substantially backed up traffic – she felt that would occur every day if the project goes forward. She was further concerned for the safety of the children in the community given the transient nature of the future employees. She felt the facility should be located directly on Interstate 78.

Kimberly Nappa, East Bullshead Road, questioned details regarding the removal of the radar tower and further objected to the noise generated by the future facility.

John Recker, 130 Walker Drive, voiced concerns and noted that the Commissioners vote would be accountable.

Brian Hoenig, 19 Country Road, questioned what the Board would have to approve in order for the proposed development to go forward. Mr. Treadwell provided a lengthy explanation of the land development and subdivision submission and review process relative to the FedEx proposal. The resident further questioned access to public water and sewer to his property on 19 Country Road.

James Grell, 18 Country Road, voiced concerns and objected to the project.

Kathleen Platech, 1320 Adams Street, questioned the number of members were on the Board of Supervisors and the date the project would begin. She asked that the Township reject the plan.

Nick Tasick, 202 Walker Drive, voiced concerns regarding truck traffic impacts.

Lowell Albright, Weaversville Road, voiced concerns regarding traffic impacts on Weaversville Road. He suggested obtaining answers from PennDOT regarding existing problems on Weaversville Road.

A resident from 201 Windsor Drive, questioned PennDOT's involvement on road impacts. Mr. Gawlick explained the PennDOT procedure regarding requirements for traffic impact studies for improvements to State Road due to traffic impacts.

L B Roman, Northampton, indicated FedEx trucks weigh 40,000 tons loaded. She further indicated that the land was farmland. She indicated that the land was taken by eminent domain using the law as it was not intended to be used. She was concerned that the farmland was gone and can never be returned. She was further concerned with the habitat for wildlife. She was concerned with the size of the hub.

Mike Phillpot, questioned the number of acres involved and if there was a long term plan for the overall acreage. He further questioned if a referendum was allowable. Mr. Treadwell provided background regarding referendum law in Pennsylvania.

Richard Goch, 16 Country Road, voiced concerns regarding FedEx's interest to make money and he indicated that they didn't really care about the Township. He felt the Commission's only job was to

protect the residents and he asked for their assurance to protect the residents regardless of the legal aspects of the land development review process. He further felt that the development should be situated off of Interstate 78.

Ally Noble, Pinehurst Drive, questioned if the comments were being recorded and was concerned that the Planning Commission would not remember the comments. Mr. Holmes noted that the majority of public comments are reflected in the engineer's letters of review.

Chris Amato, was concerned regarding the vicinity of the trucks and pollution at the park area. She indicated she moved from New Jersey to get away from air pollution.

Judy Murphy, 5021 Saw Grass Drive, was concerned about the construction of an additional two lanes and the impact of the open two lanes. She was concerned about getting to the hospital and doctor's offices while the road was closed for construction. She was concerned with the noise that will be produced by the trucks.

Allen Treichler, 1403 Weaversville Road, indicated he was alarmed on how this is being presented to the Township and the overall impacts on the Township and outlying communities.

Don Knoll, 4040 Pine Hurst, further questioned the type of items could be addressed on a referendum. Mr. Treadwell discussed the type of items that were allowable under a referendum in Pennsylvania such as the Township's recent referendum to increase the earned income tax in order to acquire open space in the Township. He questioned the number of Planning Commission members that were also Supervisors. Mr. Holmes indicated one.

Anthony Karam, 5057 Saw Grass Drive, asked that the Commission review the entire submission and asked if any consideration has been given to the impact on the Township Fire Company should the project be built.

Rebecca Silfies, voiced concerns regarding the need for job growth in the Lehigh Valley. She thanked FedEx for considering the property for development in the area.

Betty Harding, Oak Hills Drive, questioned if the subject land could ever be zoned something else other than industrial. Mr. Holmes indicated the balance of the land south of this project is located in Hanover Township, Lehigh County.

Mike Myadicle, 2113 Bally Drive, questioned if it could be rezoned. Mr. Holmes felt the land owner would need to petition if a change were to be considered. Mr. Treadwell clarified that the Township would need to identify alternative property, within Allen Township, as industrial land.

Mr. Clater provided a lengthy summary concerning the legal framework for which the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors must review plans and address land use planning.

Ralph Sell, 4145 Pinehurst Drive, thanked Mr. Clater for his explanation and he questioned if all of the criteria is met does FedEx have the right to build. Mr. Holmes confirmed that if all the criteria are met that the project could be built.

There being no further business or comments the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilene M. Eckhart