



# *Borough of Pottstown*

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POTTS TOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION  
Pottstown Borough Hall Council Chambers Room  
100 E High Street  
January 22, 2009  
7:30 PM

## MINUTES

**Present:** Dan Weand, Chairperson, Stephen Toroney, Vice Chairperson, Terry Fetterman & Thomas Hylton

**Also Present:** Charles D. Garner, Borough Solicitor  
Doug Dilliplane, P.E., Bursich Associates  
Joseph Fay, architectural consultant  
& Michelle Borzick, Zoning Work Leader

**Absent:** Karen Weil

Meeting called to order by Mr. Weand at 7:30 PM

### Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hylton motions to approve the minutes of the December 2008 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Motion carried.

### 538 & 540 High Street, architectural review

Bill Mann & Jim McCormick contractors, Stuart Smith, owners legal representative & Doug Campbell, owner, present to represent the project. Mr. McCormick states that they met with HARB and asked for opinion of changes that were talked in part with Mr. Hylton. Mr. Fay advises the commission that HARB has not approved this plan, trying to work together with planning to utilize all resources.

Mr. Hylton advises those present that he emailed the previous documentation to Mary DaNadai, historic preservation architect, and he has not heard back from her. Mr. Hylton states that he has reviewed the zoning ordinance and spoke with Maria Gerber. Maria has stated that she has not made a determination in writing. Mr. McCormick indicates that his understanding is that it is being replaced on the same footprint and square footage with modern and approved coding. Mr. Smith indicated that verbally they spoke with Maria Gerber and she has told them twice that they are in good shape. Mr. Hylton states that considering that it would be unlikely that Pottstown would allow 38 units in two houses he thinks that they should get an affirmative determination before we move along on this, deferred to Mr. Garner for comment. Mr. Garner states that after last months meeting we thought that they were going to get something confirming the zoning, he acknowledges seeing correspondence to confer with Ms. Gerber. He has not seen anything from Ms. Gerber. Mr. Smith, although not present at the last meeting, indicated that they understood they were just dealing with architectural review here, and why and how this is contingent with zoning? There are concerns about the ordinance that says they have to start construction

within 6 months. Mr. Garner advises, that if during the course of the review there is a delay that you can't start because of the review, they will not be charged with that time and it is not something that the commission is trying to do. The question is up to the planning commission do they want to look at the elevations?

Mr. Hylton responds that he emailed the earlier copy of the plans and regrets that he has not heard back. When he does hear back, he will be in contact with Joe Fay and allow Joe to be the contact person. What has been done with Ms. DaNadai in the past, is that she will consult with Joe Fay. Mr. Hylton acknowledges that he will forward the latest plans to Ms. DaNadai.

Mr. Garner questions the original receipt of the application. Ms. Borzick advises Mr. Garner that the original application was received 12/11/07. Mr. Hylton states that he will try to expedite the elevations ASAP. Mr. Mann will email the PDF file of the latest elevation to Mr. Hylton so that it may be reviewed.

Mr. Fay advises the commission the primary difference from last months plans is cornices and brackets. They are trying to replicate what was there. The contractor shares pictures of the buildings dated in the 1900's and advises that they are trying to replicate the building structure. Mr. Hylton will forward the pictures as well to Ms. DaNadai.

There were discussions regarding approval with planning, HARB and council. Mr. Smith questions if they need a zoning determination in writing. Mr. McCormick thought that the solicitor was going to look into it this last month and nothing came back to them. Mr. Garner acknowledged that he did email Ms. Gerber and to date has not received anything back from her, acknowledging the holidays and illness.

#### **606 Beech Street, architectural review**

Rick Gallo, owner, present and explains 3 step elevation. Ms. Borzick advises the commission although it is evident that the project has already started Ms. Gerber is concerned that all parties be involved in the process.

Mr. Fay shares pictures of the property with the commission. Mr. Gallo discusses agreements with the adjacent property owners. Mr. Dilliplane explains they are working through the storm water management permit and currently is not satisfied with the grading. The planning commission must review the pad and deck elevations. Mr. Fay indicates that it is seen from the side street, some good points are the large posts and with the grade work will look fine.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve the elevations as submitted, seconded by Mr. Fetterman.

Motion carried.

#### **572 Wilson Street, architectural review**

Stephen Stancato, contractor & Bridget Schrack, owner present to represent project. Mr. Fay shares pictures with the commission of the location and advises that the intention is to replace with similar character. Mr. Stancato explains the building must be demolished due to an environmental issue at the property.

Mr. Stancato states that the old cast sewer line, three pipes came together in one spot, there was a small leak, no one knows how long this was going on, but over the course of time the soil under it gave way and the pipes settled and they opened even more. We also had subsurface HVAC ducts in the slab, the house was built in 1952, they were galvanized ducts that were rusted and rotted out which is what was found when the work was going on in there before he was involved. There was grey water that had leaked out of the sewer system and filled up the ductwork. There were people living in the house, they were getting sick, the air was blowing through that ductwork and all that bacteria was causing health issues for the family.

They called the insurance company, the insurance company sent someone to in to investigate the problem and find a way to remediate. Unfortunately that turned into some work that shouldn't have happened and the structural integrity of the house was destroyed because of what went on inside. The slab was jack hammered up into about 8 or 9 pieces. They channeled through the house and tore all the ductwork out. So basically you had a 34 x 22 slab that was about 10in thick and it was chopped up into 8

or 9 different sections. After a couple of weeks, doors started to shift and we had a structural engineer come in and we have a report on that. He gave us a plan for remediation to repair it. It is just not cost effective; the house wouldn't be the same. Since then the Borough of Pottstown has condemned the property.

We want to tear it down and replace it with something new. This is an insurance claim. Our proposal is to build on the exact same footprint. Build a house, one story, the only difference is on the outside elevations of the house are now that a new home is being built of course everything will have to comply with the new codes. You will have egress windows, stairs and risers conditions being met. All the setbacks front side and rear being met and are exactly the same as they are now. The floor plan inside might change a little bit. As far as the outside it will meet all the energy requirements and vinyl siding similar to the neighborhood. The one change on the exterior elevations was the existing one story addition has a shed type roof, there is currently no access to the crawl space, so the whole thing is going. The rear elevations now show a gable roof turned which provides a nicer aesthetic look and is much more functional and will have access and be properly vented.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve as submitted, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Mr. Toroney questions crawl space? Mr. Stancato indicates they are considering a crawl space basement. There are a couple of things that the Code Official, Rick Stuber, will require on the plan details. Mr. Stuber has requested a spot survey and engineered drawings to comply with all of Mr. Stuber's requirements.

Motion carried.

## **21 Robinson Street, architectural review**

Representative from Boyertown Home Improvements present for the project. Mr. Fay states that he was out at the building. This will be located at the front of the building, a roof coming off the front of the building with two columns, to compliment the façade. A reverse gable with architectural shingles for loading and unloading people. There is a 16ft walk area from the building to the drop off area and it is going to be used for protection from the weather.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve as submitted, seconded by Mr. Fetterman.

Motion carried.

## **Public Comments**

### **Pottstown School District – Franklin and Lincoln Elementary Schools, sketch plan**

Architects and civil engineers for the school district are present to describe renovations and additions as part of a consolidation concept. This is very early on in the process after some concepts they would like some input and feedback to the key issues.

Presentation by Jim Hocker, Landscape Architect, works primarily on school projects. The main focus of the plans is the two schools that have been identified. Advises that Lincoln Elementary at maximum enrollment capacity of 725 and Franklin Elementary with maximum enrollment of around 600 students and would serve grades 1 thru 5. They have reviewed Borough ordinances and planning criteria and would like to work with the planning principles that are written on the hand out provided. The main focus with site planning is to work within the context of the neighborhood and that neighborhood character and the character that is Pottstown.

Plan two story elementary schools as they are currently, want to maintain and improve the walk ability and the pedestrian environment. They are looking to locate parking lots out of the front yards and more towards the interior of the site, capture and enhance the open space that will be open to the community as well.

Specific plans for Lincoln: pedestrian, vehicular, drop off, deliveries, landscape improvements throughout the site, as well as streetscape and street tree plantings to revitalize the block. The block property values would remain unchanged. They are not acquiring any land or doing any type of condemnation, working within the context of the school sites. The existing building wing on Lincoln would be renovated and be replaced, which would change the footprint on that end of the building.

Describes parking improvements (doubling the number of spaces), drop off lanes, parent traffic and buses would be maintained on York St. These plans are in the early development stages. There are floor plans, if interested, which include a new gym, auditorium, entrance, parent drop off and branch out to classrooms.

Still getting site surveys and as the plans development will be working with staff and the Codes Office. Mr. Hylton asks if the parents will be driving into the parking lot for the drop off. Mr. Hocker affirms that is what they are showing right now. It was developed with the understanding that those parking in those spaces should be there well in advance of a drop off. There are discussions regarding the number of buses and capacity of students per bus. Discussions regarding goal date, construction costs, traffic studies & sloped roofs including costs and maintenance vs. a flat roof. . Mr. Weand indicates that the commission needs to look at the elevations.

Plans for Franklin Elementary, Mr. Hocker describes the bus drop off and pick up, being a smaller building footprint than Lincoln, with a center courtyard bringing light into the classrooms, relocating the parking lot to more of the interior of the lot, parent parking and drop off along Washington St, playground / fields to the north and accessible to that side of the building where the gymnasium will be.

This site is more level, but with both sites there will be storm water management in place. Mr. Dilliplane comments to the Lincoln site pond area. He would suggest subsurface under the parking lot or somewhere to preserve as much of the land as possible. Their initial look was to do as much underground at the Franklin site and the Lincoln site with a lower lying building area there lended itself to this but it is worthwhile looking at the benefits there.

The playground areas are designated but will get into more detail of the surfaces that may lend them as alternate parking for special events only. Franklin loses its baseball field and what is being shown would be a junior size soccer field. There may be a possibility of re-implementing the baseball field. If not at this site, someplace else.

Discussions regarding courtyard maintenance and use, this is still to be developed. Mr. Hylton questions these two schools combined have a of student total of 1325 students and indicates there are about 1800 kids, the other 400 / 500 students are going to be where? A school district representative advises that the two buildings for grades 1 thru 5 have 1325 capacity including special education. The enrollment is at 1200 and the highest projected enrollment is around 1378, maximum reimbursement from the state is at 1320, started planning with the notion of 1325 to 1375. The school district has no formal plans but is looking at the possibility of pre K and K at the Edgewood site, has been discussed as an option, with the ideal plan of pre K, K and 1<sup>st</sup> might go over there, with 2 thru 5 at the other sites.

Mr. Armato indicates that there was a decision of pre K & K for next year will be housed at Edgewood Elementary depending on pre K enrollment will be approximately 400 students. Mr. Hylton confirms with Mr. Armato that if they have pre K and K at Edgewood they would have enough space for 1 thru 5 at the elementary schools. Projections include regular education programs and in addition to the regular rooms there is additional capacities for autism rooms, life skills, occupational / physical therapy rooms, the 1325 is regular education.

Mr. Toroney expresses his concerns including traffic patterns. Mr. Hocker indicates there is some preliminary information already available and indicates he would like to consult with the borough regarding what areas should be incorporated in the traffic study.

## **Old Business**

**Blighted Property Committee** – Mr. Weand states that there was not a quorum but they were able to discuss progress. Vacant property committee followed this meeting. Mr. Weand indicates because of the attendance issues it will be suggested to council that the committees should be increased to a total of five (5) individuals to assist in the process of conducting meetings.

**Pottstown Regional Planning** – Mr. Toroney indicates that Ray Lopez will be sitting in next weeks meeting for him at the meeting. Mr. Ennis advises that this will be a reorganization meeting. Mr. Hylton questioned and Mr. Ennis advises that the meeting minutes are available electronically and will be forwarded.

**Electronic Signs & Solar Energy Equipment, Zoning Ordinance** – Mr. Garner advises that over the last few council meetings the recommendations by the planning commission were presented with respect to the LED signs including the exceptions. Council has authorized him to prepare an ordinance and incorporate those exceptions and advertise for a public hearing. Mr. Garner reviews the process including time frames for notice and a hearing. Mr. Weand questions the measurement of intensity of the LED / neon lighting. Mr. Dilliplane will attempt to find some information on lighting intensity, discussions ensue. Mr. Garner advises that the second part of that is the solar energy portion. There was contact by Mark Connelly of Gov. Rendell's Solar Working Group and advises Borough Council he is reviewing the information to provide comment. Mr. Garner received and shared with Borough Council literature information with respect to solar energy installations. Council has redirected the Planning Commission to review that information and come back with recommendations. Mr. Weand receives confirmation from the commission members that they are in receipt of that information. Discussions continue regarding the purpose of the ordinance, use of solar energy, the type and look of equipment.

### **New Business**

- a. **Letter from LTL Consultants Ltd regarding Endorsement Request, H2O PA Program, Upper Pottsgrove Township** – Mr. Garner provides a synopsis of the request. This is a new grant and part of the guidelines is that adjacent municipalities are contacted and this is not going to provide any negative impact. Mr. Garner provides a history of a series of sewer and water issues in Upper Pottsgrove that will benefit from the grant. It is acknowledged that the Borough of Pottstown has interest in the increased capacity for the sewer plant. Discussions continue regarding county input. Mr. Weand confirms with the commission that they do not fore see this creating a negative impact on the Borough. Mr. Weand questions if the commission would like to have a letter written on the Planning Commissions behalf or if Borough Council should forward a letter, discussions continue. The Planning Commission will request Council to decide who should write the letter.
- b. **Designer Home Show, Valley Forge, PA** – Mr. Weand spoke to a preservation magazine that had an exhibit at the show. They were pleased to hear the actions taken by Planning Commission regarding the Yohn Farmhouse. We will be in touch with the magazine. Mr. Toroney questions the next step in the process. Mr. Garner advises that the next step would be to appeal to the zoning hearing board. There are discussions regarding the integrity of the building, interest in preservation of the building, the owner's intentions & cooperating with the owners.
- c. **538 & 540 High Street** – discussions regarding 2008 license application and inspection. Mr. Hylton asks if Mr. Garner could discuss information with Maria Gerber regarding her issuing a letter, looking into the matter of the 2008 license as per ordinance, cause of the fire, and the consensus of the room is concern over the density of the property.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.