

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of March 20, 2019**

Present: Craig Melograno, Chairman
Michael Twersky, Vice-Chair
Patricia Latimer
Rich Valiga
Rusty Beardsley

Staff:
Ken Amey, Zoning Officer
Jim Hersh, Gilmore & Associates
Patty Furber, B&Z Administrator

Absent: Joel Mayor

Call to Order:

The meeting of the Lower Gwynedd Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM in the Township Building.

Approval of Minutes: March 5, 2019

A motion was made by Mr. Valiga and seconded by Mr. Twersky to approve the minutes of the Lower Gwynedd Township Planning Commission meeting of March 5, 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

**727 Norristown Rd.
Text Amendment**

**#18-06
MRA Group**

Present for the text amendment application for MRA Group was Larry Stuardi, President and CEO of MRA Group, Dan Fuchs, Vice President of Development for MRA Group, and their attorney, Nate Fox, from Offit-Kurman. Mr. Twersky disclosed that his law firm has represented the applicant in the past and he therefore recused himself from the commission for purposes of this application.

Mr. Stuardi began by explaining to the planning commission and audience members that MRA does not intend to add any new buildings to their campus at this time. Instead, they are asking to allow uses in the existing buildings which are not currently permitted in the D-1 zoning district. The proposed text amendment would provide for a hotel, a conference center, accessory educational uses, fitness facilities and restaurants. There is an existing barn on the property that would be repurposed for

either a brew pub or some type of food service. Mr. Stuardi told the commission that his vision includes making the campus an asset to the community; the site will become more energy efficient, and the walking trails and outdoor fitness area will be open and available to the general public.

Several members of the audience asked about previous plans that showed residential and retail uses along the McKean and Norristown Road frontages. Mr. Stuardi said that those plans have not been completely abandoned but are not being pursued at this time. If they are ever considered in the future, further amendment to the zoning ordinance would be required.

Some neighbors in attendance were concerned that changes to the site may have an impact on the surrounding community. Members of the audience from McKean Road brought up the issue of additional traffic volume as a result of the new uses. One audience member stated that there are 25,000 cars that use McKean Road on a daily basis. They asked if a traffic study had been completed. Mr. Fuchs answered that a traffic survey has been done but not a complete traffic study. Mr. Melograno informed the applicants that he met with residents of Spring House Estates and traffic is a major concern for them.

Mr. Stuardi explained that the proposed hotel will primarily be used for the trainees from Thomas Jefferson's facility along with guests of other campus businesses. One audience member noted that the entrance location for the hotel could add to congestion at the light.

Mr. Stuardi explained that parking decks may be needed to provide convenient parking for some of the buildings. Mr. Twersky asked if the applicants would agree to place any structured parking more than 400' from McKean Road. Mr. Fuchs agreed that they would look into this. Mr. Beardsley added that the parking decks should be built over existing asphalt. An audience member from McKean Rd. wanted to know how many parking spaces the decks could hold. Mr. Fuchs said he did not know an exact number but estimated around 225 spaces. Mr. Fuchs pointed out that before any new uses or buildings can be added to the site, MRA would need to file applications for conditional use and land development, which would include additional public meetings before the planning commission and the board of supervisors. The land development and conditional use process will require a comprehensive traffic study.

Following an extensive discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Latimer to recommend this text amendment to the Board of Supervisors based on the following conditions:

- 1) The parking decks may be no more than 2 levels in height;

- 2) Restaurant uses must be located in an existing building;
- 3) A traffic study for the full build-out of the site must be submitted with the first Conditional Use or Land Development application, and the scope of that study must be approved by the township traffic engineer;
- 4) The applicants are to look at increased setbacks from McKean Road for any proposed parking decks.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Beardsley and approved with a 4-0 vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 P.M. until the next regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, April 17, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Patty Furber,
Secretary