

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Planning Commission
June 18, 2020
Virtual Meeting

The State College Borough Planning Commission (PC) met on Thursday, June 18, 2020 for a virtual Zoom meeting. Zoe Boniface, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Members Present

Zoe Boniface, Chair; Scott Dutt; Jon Eich; Anita Genger, Vice-Chair; Mary Madden; Mallory Meehan; and Ron Madrid

Others Present

Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Greg Garthe, Senior Planner/Zoning Officer; Isabel Storey, Senior Planner; Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant; Mark Saville and John Fisher; HRG; and Ed Poprik, State College Area School District

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Madden and seconded by Ms. Genger to approve the May 21, 2020 meeting minutes as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Chair Report

Ms. Boniface, Chair, had nothing to report.

Public Hour

No comments or concerns were heard during the public hour.

Land Development Plans

Final Plan - PSU West 2 Building; The Pennsylvania State University (PSU), Applicant; UPD Zoning District; HRG, Engineer; Payette, Architect

Mr. Saville's brief overview included:

- The site was located on PSU's West Campus UPD subdistrict 4, adjacent to the future West Campus Parking structure.
- Intent was to shield the new parking deck and enhance the quads.
- The plan proposed demolition of several concrete walkways, retaining walls, and small landscaping areas, and the construction of a 98,000 ft² academic building.
- The building would contain a multipurpose high-bay space, research labs, research cores, teaching and studio spaces, administration and faculty spaces, and undergraduate and graduate student spaces.
- Replacing older facilities with newer construction.
- Installation of a fire lane access between the Leonard building with the new West 2 building.
- Stormwater management was mostly collection and conveyance to the western, regional water basin.
- Extension planting adjacent to the building.
- Create bike lanes and accessibility

Design Review Board (DRB) comments: Mr. Garthe stated the DRB suggested PSU revisit these projects in the context of the pandemic. Also, showed interest in the design of the building ventilation system, and suggested moveable outdoor furniture for social distancing.

Borough Staff comments: Mr. Garthe stated the review was still ongoing. This final plan submission was very good.

PC comments:

- Ms. Boniface asked if bicycles/pedestrians used the same path and how would it be managed. Mr. Saville stated there would be different colored elements used to designate.
- Mr. Eich asked, if to the south, there was a link to bicycles/pedestrians to downtown. Mr. Saville stated there would be.
- Mr. Dutt asked about connectivity to Sparks Street. Mr. Saville stated PSU and the Borough were working together to create connectivity for bicycles coming south. Mr. LeClear stated Council voted to vacate the northern extent of Gill and easements were achieved.

Preliminary Plan - PSU West 1 Building; PSU, Applicant; UPD Zoning District; HRG, Engineer; Payette, Architect

Mr. Saville's brief overview included:

- The site was located on PSU's West Campus UPD subdistrict four, to the north of the Earth and Engineering Science Building.
- The plan proposed demolition of several surface parking lots, concrete walkways, and landscaping areas, and the construction of a 279,000 ft² academic building.
- The building would contain research labs, teaching spaces and administration, faculty spaces, and student spaces.
- Create a West Campus College of Engineering.
- Pick up with where West 2 walkways left off.
- A significant element would be creating plaza space.
- Proposed service yard to consolidate waste management.
- Adding a Loop bus stop.
- Stormwater management was mostly collection and conveyance to the western, regional water basin.
- Continuation of some utilities and creating for future connectivity.
- An interesting element would be the completion of the utility tunnel
- Proposed food service in the West Campus area.

DRB comments: Mr. Garthe stated the DRB appreciated the LED lighting, noted layout fit well with the rest of West Campus, and suggested using stone furniture, benches and walls to provide more outdoor seating opportunities to promote social distancing. Mr. Garthe stated the DRB suggested PSU revisit these projects in the context of the pandemic.

Borough Staff comments: Mr. Garthe stated Borough staff had nothing to report.

PC comments:

- Ms. Madden stated the planned walkway space between the West 1 building and ESS Building looked like a "dead space". She asked if there were any entrances, lights, etc.? Ms. Saville stated all of the pathways would be lit to pedestrian scale and for pedestrian safety.
- Mr. Madrid asked about start dates for both projects. Mr. Saville stated a start date for West 1 would be several months after West 2 start date sometime in September with a 2-year period of construction. Mr. Madrid asked where the construction area would be located and where the construction traffic would be coming. He asked if the construction site would be the old O.W. Houts or Buckhout street areas. Ms. Saville stated no.

- Ms. Boniface asked about the notch on the West 1 building that looked like an entrance and seemed a little dark and forbidding. Mr. Saville stated all would be safety lit for pedestrian access. Ms. Boniface stated she would like to know more information about the notch area.
- Mr. Eich discussed access to the site for construction. He understood there was a staging area on site and asked how the workers and materials would get there. Mr. Saville stated the existing park area would be the staging area. The majority of materials would come through the PSU access points.
- Mr. Eich asked if West 1 would be built to LEED standards. Mr. Saville stated yes.
- Mr. Dutt asked about the location of the LOOP bus stop and asked if it was really needed. Mr. Saville stated the LOOP was proposed after a meeting and coordination with CATA to create the pickup and drop off areas adjacent to the parking deck.
- Mr. Madrid stated he wanted assurance construction traffic patterns would not adversely affect Barnard, and Buckhout Streets and Patterson Street.
- Mr. Eich asked if the O.W. Houts property would be used as a pedestrian or bicycle access point. Mr. LeClear stated that area had some issues.
- Mr. Dutt was concerned about equipment placement regarding the noise level and suggested some special consideration for rooftop screening be used. Mr. Saville stated the mechanicals for this building would be in the basement.
- Ms. Meehan asked what kind of impact this would have on the rugby fields. Mr. Saville stated they would create safe pedestrian access to the fields.

Preliminary Plan - PSU Lasch Football Building Renovation and Addition; PSU, Applicant; UPD Zoning District; HRG, Engineer; HOK, Architect

Mr. Saville's brief overview included:

- The site was located along Hastings Road, near University Drive UPD subdistrict 9.
- The plan proposed demolition of some surface parking, sidewalks, and landscaping areas, and the construction of a 14,000 ft² building expansion.
- The expansion included upgrades to the sports performance/weight room and expansions to the second-floor office areas.
- Exterior improvements included upgrades to the rear lobby entryway and associated landscaping, sidewalk, and parking upgrades.
- Stormwater management was underneath the existing parking lot.
- Created a new entry plaza.
- Mr. Saville noted there was limited space for landscaping and there would be some reduction of impervious area.

DRB comments: Mr. Garthe stated the DRB noted this was a nice, modern design and suggested PSU revisit this project in the context of the pandemic.

Borough Staff comments: Mr. Garthe stated Borough staff had nothing to report.

PC comments:

- Mr. Dutt noted the current parking spaces seemed to be small and asked where the displaced parking was going to be. Mr. Saville stated there were no plans to create any new additional parking but were creating some ADA spaces closer to the entrance to the building.

Preliminary Plan - PSU Lasch Football Building Quarterback Lab Position Room; PSU, Applicant; UPD Zoning District; HRG, Engineer; HOK, Architect

Mr. Saville's brief overview included:

- The site was located along Hastings Road, near University Drive.
- The plan proposed demolition of a small area of sidewalk, and the construction of a 1,100 ft² building expansion intended to be a new quarterback position room lab space.
- Exterior improvements included associated landscaping and sidewalks.

DRB comments: Mr. Garthe stated the DRB suggested PSU revisit the project in the context of the pandemic, noted the new addition was well hidden, and appreciated the façade was identical to the surrounding buildings.

Borough Staff comments: Mr. Garthe stated the Borough staff had nothing at this time.

PC comments:

- Ms. Boniface stated she was concerned about the long, narrow notch in the infill being too dark and potentially unsafe. Mr. Saville stated there were certain items the architects needed to maintain for Code requirements.

Public comments:

- Mike Harding, project Architect on the project noted they planned to make sure the notch area was safe.

Community Planning

Proposed Amendment to Sign Ordinance to Allow Increased Height

Mr. LeClear stated staff had received a request regarding the Borough's current sign ordinance. He noted staff was looking at the sign ordinance in its entirety. The State College Area School District (SCASD) would need to move quicker than our review would.

Mr. Poprik and Ms. Childe's presentation included:

- The SCASD submitted a request for a text amendment to the Chapter XV: Signs of the municipal Code of Ordinances.
- The proposed amendment would allow signs to be installed at a height of 35 feet from grade; an increase from the current limit of 25 feet in all zoning districts except Planned Commercial 1 (CP-1).
- The reason for the request was SCASD's desire to install a sign on the new press box that was currently under construction at Memorial Field.
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Mr. Garthe stated Council referred the request to the PC for review and a recommendation.

PC comments:

- Ms. Boniface asked how many feet the sign would be from the elevation on Fraser Street. Ms. Childe stated she did not know and would check on this.
- Mr. Eich asked what kind of sign it would be. Mr. Poprik stated it would be to recognize a donor.
- Ms. Madden asked how the sign would be measured. Mr. Garthe stated typically it would be measured from the average curb line and this was measured from the concourse line.
- Ms. Genger asked if it was appropriate for a school district to do this. Mr. Poprik stated the district tied the size of the recognition to the size of the donation. Ms. Genger stated the sign would send the wrong message to the public. Ms. Maddens stated, at the end of the day, a sign was a sign and would be legally regulated no matter what it said.
- Mr. Eich asked if the signs could be taller than the structures. Mr. Garthe stated in the ordinance stated signs couldn't be taller than the structure it was mounted on.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council (BC): Mr. LeClear reported on:

- Mr. LeClear reported the multi-modal grant the Borough received in November must be moved on quickly and noted the Borough should have a nice facility.
- Mr. LeClear stated Council asked staff to look at wider sidewalks in the downtown and discussing with business owners their thoughts on this. He also noted staff would start to recommend permitting and engineering design process with PennDOT to remove one lane of parking on both Beaver and College Avenues to be prepared for Council. He also noted there could be a future discussion on removing parking on Allen Street.

Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB): Mr. Garthe reported on:

- Variance - Days Inn Penn State
On June 9, 2020, the ZHB heard a request for a variance from the 25-foot height limit of the Borough's sign ordinance from Days Inn Penn State. The applicant intended to relocate an existing exterior sign to another part of the building but retain the non-conforming height of 45 feet. A decision was expected at the June 23, 2020 ZHB meeting.
- Variances - Scholar^x Hotel
On June 23, 2020, the ZHB will hear a request from Scholar^x Hotel for four variances from the Borough Code. The project was currently underway and involved renovations to the Glennland Building, located at 205 East Beaver Avenue in the Commercial Incentive District (CID) zoning district. Requested variances related to the height and size of a projecting sign, number of projecting signs, height of accent LED strip lighting, and outdoor lighting levels.

Upcoming Land Development Plans: Mr. Garthe reported there were no plans at this time.

Staff Updates: Mr. LeClear reported staff received the final draft of the parking study. He also noted staff was working toward a joint PC/Transportation Commission meeting at the second meeting in July. And, working on a joint PC/Zoning Revision Advisory Committee/BC meeting aimed for first meeting in August.

Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC): Mr. Eich reported the CRPC reviewed a land consumption study area inside the regional growth boundary and sewer service area. He noted the study looked at 17 parcels in that area and reviewed items such as: 1) when built; 2) what kind of use and size of lots, and 3) where the growth spurts were. He stated the draft was still being worked on.

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, July 8, 2020 at Noon

Thursday, July 23, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Madden adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads
Administrative Assistant