

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Planning Commission
March 28, 2019

The State College Borough Planning Commission (PC) met on Thursday, March 28, 2019 at the State College Municipal Building, 243 S. Allen Street. Chairman Boniface called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Members Present

Zoe Boniface, Chairman; Anita Genger, Vice-Chairman; Scott Dutt; Jon Eich; and Ron Madrid

Members Absent

Richard Kalin and Mary Madden

Others Present

Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Anne Messner, Planning/Zoning Officer; Jenna Wargo, Planner; John Wilson, Zoning Officer; Mark Saville, Sweetland Engineering; Judy Larkin, The Pennsylvania State University (PSU); and Denise Dobo, Administrative Assistant

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Eich and seconded by Mr. Madrid to approve the March 13, 2019 meeting minutes. Chairman Boniface noted the minutes stated, "Mr. Eich asked if there would be encroachment at the existing walkway and Mr. Toretti said it was existing". Chairman Boniface asked what "it was existing" referred to and Ms. Messner stated it was referring to the walkway. Chairman Boniface requested the minutes be edited with the correction. Chairman Boniface further explained Trailhead, which was mentioned in the March 13, 2019 minutes, has been incorporated into 3 Dots and was a new arts organization downtown. A motion was made by Mr. Madrid and seconded by Mr. Dutt to approve the March 13, 2019 minutes with amendments. The vote was unanimously approved.

Chair Report

Chairman Boniface welcomed the PSU civil engineering class to the meeting and explained Planning Commission's duties and responsibilities.

Public Hour - Hearing of Citizens

No comments or concerns were heard during the public hour.

Land Development Plan(s)

Final Plan, The Pennsylvania State University Arboretum, Pollinator's and Bird Garden; UPD Zoning District Subdistrict 7; The Pennsylvania State University, Owner; Sweetland Engineering, Engineer; Didier Design Studio, Landscape Architect

Mr. Saville and Ms. Larkin's comments included:

- Mr. Saville mentioned the project site was located adjacent from the Event Lawn and the Children's Garden at the Arboretum.
- The majority of the structures would be located in College Township.
- The project site was located off Bigler Road and the stormwater would drain into Marsh Meadow which was a protected stormwater recharge area.
- The design team for the project designed the Children's Garden as well.
- Ms. Larkin explained the pollinator garden would be at the forefront of the its field and the garden would provide research for both undergraduate students and graduate students.
- The mission was to create a habitat for birds and to educate visitors on creating bird habitats in their own backyards.
- Several features of the garden would contain a sculptural disc, the "Bird House" structure and three water features. The space consisted of 3.3 acres and was divided into 5 zones:
 - The Pollinator zone would be a collection of plants to attract pollinators.
 - The Contemplation zone would contain the bird garden and would provide forbs and nesting for the birds.
 - The Transition zone would be the transition between the bird garden and the pollinator garden. The garden would contain a shade garden and rock and boulder outcroppings for the pollinators to overwinter.
 - The Food Production zone would contain an orchard with fruit bearing plants and shrubs.
 - The Domestication and Research zone would have small scale displays and would be the most concentrated development in the Pollinator Garden.
- The arrival plaza and sculptural disc would be covered in Corten steel which would develop a patina over time.
- The observation plaza would support 20 people and would contain a bench. The vantage point would allow visitors to observe pollinators at ground level.
- The disc would be planted in layers with flowers, grasses, and shrubs which would bloom in all seasons.
- The "Bird House" would be accessed from the boardwalk. The structure contained a slatted wall for viewing.
- The structure would utilize LED lighting and downlighting. The roof would be slate gray and constructed from southern yellow pine. There would be feeders, bird houses, and bat boxes.
- A bird bath and dripping bowl would be situated at the north corner of the "Bird House".
- The second water feature would be located in the wetland area. The water feature would be 12" deep and would be year-round with a heating and filtering system.
- The third water feature would be a pond located in the Pollinator Garden and was intended to provide an aquatic habitat necessary for pollinator feeding and reproduction.
- The edges of the pond would be heavily landscaped to deter entry of the public.
- A maintenance terrace would serve as seating as well as to provide access for the maintenance team.
- The pond would be available year-round and would have a heating and filtering system.
- She noted the gift from the 2019 Senior Class was an entry gate to the Pollinator Garden.
- She added seating and benches would be provided throughout the gardens.

PC comments included:

- Mr. Eich asked how the ponds would be heated and Mr. Saville explained the heating system would be integral with the filtration system.
- Chairman Boniface asked if stormwater would be drained to the current recharge area. Mr. Saville stated they would not be diverting drainage to the recharge area and would be managing stormwater in the north side in future developments.
- Mr. Dutt inquired of the entrance on the President's driveway. Mr. Saville remarked the entrance was for residents in College Heights for safety purposes.
- Mr. Dutt suggested the access point be removed from the President's driveway.

Staff comments included:

- Ms. Messner explained College Township's stormwater engineer was reviewing the project for both municipalities. She mentioned the project meets zoning within the district.
- Ms. Messner noted the Design Review Board (DRB) suggested limiting any access for children to enter the pond area and added PSU would have a considerable amount of vegetation around the pond to discourage access. DRB also had an interest in how pedestrians would circulate and supported the idea of having benches. Mr. Saville noted there would be many shade trees in the plan.

A motion was made by Mr. Eich to recommend the plan while incorporating Mr. Dutt's comments regarding the access off the President's driveway to staff. The motion was seconded by Mr. Dutt and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Preliminary Plan, The Pennsylvania State University West Campus Parking Structure and Roadway Connection; UPD Zoning District Subdistrict X; The Pennsylvania State University, Owner; Sweetland Engineering, Engineer; Didier Design Studio, Landscape Architect

Mr. Saville's comments included:

- The project was located west of Atherton Street near the Westgate Building which crossed over Atherton Street.
- The project was part of the College of Engineering Master Plan and would begin the initial phase of development.
- The majority of the project's stormwater would drain west to an existing basin which would be modified to handle all potential development at the site. The basin would be lined to protect a well and aquifer near the site.
- White Course Drive would be extended to access the parking deck.
- A bus drop-off would be relocated from White Course Apartments to the proposed parking deck.
- The parking deck would provide 1,676 parking spaces on 6 levels.
- The landscaping would focus on the north side access as well as the west side of the project. The future phase of landscaping would be completed after the additional building would be complete.
- The layout of the parking deck would be a double helix layout. The deck would contain one main entrance and exit.
- The parking deck would house a bike repair room and a large bike storage area.

- The garage would be a Parksmart garage and would promote green infrastructure.
- Metal fins would break up the vast amount of concrete on the 3-story building and the stair and elevator tower would have glass walls.
- An awning would be added to provide protection to pedestrians from the weather.
- The metal fins would be installed at varying angles to allow for natural air flow.

Staff comments included:

- Ms. Messner reported the DRB appreciated the façade and encouraged the design team to enhance it further.
- The DRB suggested PSU rename “West Campus”.
- The DRB recommended the addition of lighting and security cameras for safety.
- The DRB showed interest in an accelerated bus schedule such as an express bus schedule between the parking garage and campus.
- They encouraged the idea of solar panels in the future.
- The DRB was pleased a temporary bike and access through the campus was located around the construction site.
- Ms. Messner remarked the project was shared with Ferguson Township and their engineer would review the stormwater plan.
- She noted a traffic impact study was being developed and an anticipated driveway connection for West College Avenue has been removed.
- The arborist would like more detail in the landscaping plan and was interested in any techniques to remove snow from the garage.

PC comments included:

- Mr. Madrid asked if one lane each direction would remain on White Course Drive and if there was a plan to widen. Mr. Saville replied it would remain one lane each direction but there would be widenings at the entrance.
- Mr. Madrid asked how many lanes would be created at the garage and Mr. Saville replied 3 entrance and 3 exit lanes.
- Mr. Madrid was concerned with a back-up of traffic onto North Atherton Street and asked if there were plans for an alternate access. Mr. Saville replied there were none planned at this time.
- Mr. Madrid mentioned it would be beneficial for PC to view the overall plans for West Campus. Mr. Saville noted staff had viewed the plans and Ms. Messner replied the plans would be provided to PC.
- Mr. Dutt mentioned the pedestrian traffic would be crossing White Course Drive twice to travel to Rec Hall. Mr. Saville explained they have been encouraging students to use Westgate Building since it was the safest crossing at Atherton Street. He added many of the walkways were being designed to encourage access to the Westgate Building although there would still be a signalized pedestrian crossing at North Atherton.
- Mr. Dutt noted pedestrians would still cross at Atherton Street instead of trying to locate an entrance into Westgate Building. Mr. Saville mentioned PennDOT had been trying to improve the Atherton corridor to maximize pedestrian safety.
- Vice-Chairman Genger questioned the bike path and Mr. Saville explained the walkway and roadway were designed to have shared pathways. Vice-Chairman Genger asked what the plan was for connecting the bike path and crossing into off-campus. Ms.

Messner reported the Borough was in the process of obtaining a multi-modal grant from PennDOT which contained a bike multi-use path connection from North Gill Street onto campus and hoped to bid the project next year.

- Mr. Madrid asked if the results of the traffic impact study could provide a basis for disapproval of the plan. Ms. Messner replied it could, but PSU would have the option if the traffic impact study did not support this proposal to provide an alternative which could be in the form of mitigation. Mr. Madrid remarked the traffic impact study was a key component and Ms. Messner noted the land development plan would not be approved until the traffic impact study was complete and accepted by all entities.
- Mr. Eich asked about pedestrian protection features at the point White Course Drive met Atherton Street and Mr. Saville explained PennDOT's plans do not include installing pedestrian sanctuary zones for crossing Atherton Street but there was an existing sanctuary island further down Atherton Street.
- Mr. Eich remarked there was a crosswalk only located on the south side of the intersection, he added consideration be given to installing a pedestrian island at that intersection and a second pedestrian crosswalk on the north side of the intersection. Mr. Saville replied the challenge would be the turning lane which leaves little space for the pedestrian island.
- Mr. Dutt suggested removal of the crosswalk and that build up occur along the campus side Atherton Street to encourage pedestrians to cross Atherton Street at a different location.
- Mr. Eich asked if the existing stormwater pipes were large enough for the proposed development and Mr. Saville replied the plan was being reviewed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), State College Borough, and Ferguson Township to confirm the pipes would be sufficient.
- Mr. Eich asked if the well provided drinking water and Mr. Saville replied not at this time but would be available if necessary. Mr. Eich asked if the well would remain in use once the water filtration plant was complete and Mr. Saville remarked it would still be online.
- Mr. Eich applauded the plans to prepare the garage roof for future solar energy as well as their efforts to not connect the parking garage access to West College Avenue or Buckhout Street.
- Mr. Eich inquired of the amount of bike storage at the garage as well as other bike storage areas at West Campus. Mr. Saville explained 100 spaces would be available in the garage and there were additional exterior spaces near White Course Apartments as well as storage at the IST Building.
- Chairman Boniface remarked she would appreciate more thought be given to the interface with West Campus to make it more welcoming.

Public comments included:

- Mr. Boeldt suggested a review of the project by the Transportation Commission.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council (BC)

BC would be discussing the State College Area School District's lighting ordinance text amendment and operational agreement at their meeting on April 1, 2019. BC would also be

awarding the Focus on Appearance Awards which included the mural at Webster's Bookstore, located at 133 East Beaver Avenue; The Edge, a mixed-use building at 254 E. Beaver Avenue; and 517 West Park Avenue, an updated single-family home.

Land Development Plans

Ms. Messner reported a land development plan for the PSU Henning Building had been received.

Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC)

Mr. Eich reported CRPC would meet jointly with the Centre Region Council of Government's Transportation and Land Use Committee. He added items on the agenda included an update on the comprehensive plan implementation program, the commission would be reviewing accomplishments in 2018, reviewing the work tasks for Centre Regional planning staff in 2019-2020, and the CRPC would receive the 2018 annual report.

Staff Updates

Staff recommended cancelling the meeting scheduled for April 3, 2019. A motion was made by Mr. Dutt and seconded by Vice-Chairman Genger to cancel the April 3, 2019 meeting. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Ms. Messner indicated the meeting would be her last and she appreciated working with PC. She added she appreciated the hard questions, stating those questions helped her to become more knowledgeable in her position.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Boniface adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Dobo
Administrative Assistant