

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the Municipal Building on September 25, 2023. Mr. Costello called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Mr. Costello stated Mr. DeLorenzo has recused himself from the item on the Agenda so he is not present this evening.

Those present:

Planning Commission:        Adrian Costello, Chair  
  Tejinder Gill, Vice Chair  
  Colin Coyle, Secretary/Supervisor Liaison

Others:                            James Majewski, Community Development Director  
  Dan McLoone, Planner  
  Barbara Kirk, Township Solicitor  
  Paul DeFiore, Township Engineer

Absent:                            Tony Bush, Planning Commission Member  
  John DeLorenzo, Planning Commission Member

TABLING APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

Mr. Coyle moved, Mr. Gill seconded and it was unanimously carried to Table approval of the Minutes from September 11, 2023.

APPEAL #Z-23-2032 – 777 TOWNSHIP LINE ROAD  
Special Exception – Expansion of Existing Medical Use  
Tax Parcel #20-012-006-005  
O/R Office Research Zoning District  
Allow an additional 21,000 square feet of medical-related space within the existing office building

Mr. Majewski stated the Applicant is looking for a Special Exception from the Zoning Hearing Board for a use that is permitted, but there are certain Conditions that are placed upon that by the Ordinances. He stated one of the requirements for a Zoning Hearing Board Application for a Special Exception is that first they need to have an advisory report or opinion from the Planning Commission with

respect to the location of such use in relation to the needs and growth pattern of the area and where appropriate with reference to the adequacy of the site area, arrangement of buildings, driveways, parking areas, off-street truck-loading spaces, and other pertinent features of the site.

Mr. Tom Weitzel, Jones Lang LaSalle, was present, and stated he has represented the ownership of the building since 2009; and he was involved in the Variance that was received in 2009 to do an additional amount of Medical Use for Penn Medicine. He stated this is a 110,000 square foot building, and Penn is currently in about 36,000 square feet of that. He stated most of their space is self-contained, and it has its own entryway, elevator, and is on the first and second floors of the north side of the building.

Mr. Weitzel stated Penn would like to grow their presence in this market and in this building. He stated they have been in discussion with them to expand them on the second floor of the building. He stated the space has recently become available from an office tenant that vacated.

Mr. Costello asked if they are proposing to expand what they currently do or are they bringing something new in that they have not done before. Mr. Weitzel stated it is expanding what they currently do, and he believes that it is a Primary Care function. He stated what has been asked for is the right to put Medical on the entire second floor and make it an expansion of their footprint; but what they have currently laid out is moving non-clinical functions out of the current envelope and moving it out of that space so that space can serve their patients, and they are adding about six exam rooms. He stated looking at the Plan, 88% of it is typical Office Use and 12% would be considered Clinical.

Mr. Majewski stated they are not planning any expansion outside the existing building walls or modifying any of the parking lot. He stated our Ordinance for parking allows for Mixed-Use, which this is as a mix of General Office Use and Medical Office Use. He added there is a provision in our Zoning Ordinance that says that the number of spaces required in a common parking facility may be reduced below the total that is required for each individual use as a Special Exception under Chapter 200-98 if it can be demonstrated to the Zoning Hearing Board that the hours or days of peak parking needed for the uses are so different that a lower total will provide adequately for all uses served by the facility.

Mr. Majewski stated they have done parking counts which were provided to the Planning Commission. He stated they did one count in January and another in August that showed that the maximum usage of the parking lot throughout the day is at 45%. Mr. Majewski stated Mr. Weitzel confirmed that. Mr. Majewski stated at the time of the first study, the building was 100% leased out, and at the time of the second study in August, it was about 84% leased out.

Mr. Majewski stated Ms. Kirk worked in that building for a number of years, and she can attest that the parking is more than adequate to handle this use.

Mr. DeFiore stated his office would recommend parking calculations to be submitted for review for the change in the use in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Costello asked if there is a problem with our current Ordinance requirements. Mr. Majewski stated the Ordinance was done approximately forty years ago; and at the time they did that, they wanted a lot of parking to make sure that they could cover every case possible. Mr. Majewski stated over time the Institute of Transportation Engineers has modified their parking counts to lower the number of spaces required for many uses. He added over the coming year he wants to work on revising our parking requirements in accordance with those modern standards. He stated he would also like to include a maximum on the amount of parking because there have been a few instances that a certain number of spaces were required according to the Ordinance, but the request was for a lot more spaces; and there is no reason for that unless a reason can be demonstrated to the Township.

Mr. Costello asked what would be required under modern calculations for what they are proposing. Mr. Majewski stated they would still be well over what would be required.

Mr. Gill asked if there will be the capability for having a larger drop-off as this was a concern of Mr. Bush. Ms. Kirk stated if they are converting the second floor, there is a carve-out in the front of the building for drop-offs in addition to what is on the side where the primary offices are. She does not believe they need more since there are already two designated drop-off sections. She stated the rear entrance is such that the first row of parking closest to the building in the rear is at least 70% handicapped spots. Mr. Majewski showed a slide of this.

Mr. Coyle stated this is where his primary care physician is; and at the drop-off on the right side of the building, he believes that there is signage that says it is for access for the office portion and not to the second floor medical facility.

Ms. Kirk stated presently you can only access the medical offices from the north side; but if they expand to the second floor as they are proposing, access would be available from the front entrance as well. Mr. Weitzel stated while it could be, as it is currently contemplated by Penn all patients and visitors would still go through the north side as it is more conducive for control and flow for them. He stated the initial tranche is about 6,500 square feet, and they are asking for a Variance to grow that even further over the years. He stated in that case, what Ms. Kirk has indicated would certainly be contemplated if visitors would be going through the center of the building. He stated at this point it is a good control point in the north, and that is how Penn prefers it as well.

Mr. Gill asked what is the current vacancy in the building, and Mr. Weitzel stated right now it is at 84%, but there is a large tenant on the third floor who is going to vacate in February. He stated this led them to think of how to use this building differently than it had been used in the past. He stated it is a great building so it should be more of a functional building than its current vacancy level.

Mr. Coyle stated while we are discussing parking, the specific request is to expand the Medical Office footprint beyond what is allowed in the current building. He asked if there is also a separate relief to provide relief from parking regulations related to the expansion. Mr. Majewski stated it is two-pronged. He stated they already have a Special Exception for the use; but with the expansion of the use, Lower Makefield has historically stated that you have to come back and authorize the expansion of the Special Exception, and the parking is part of it as well.

Mr. Coyle asked if as a result of the expansion is there a different count of spaces required for Medical, and Mr. Majewski agreed. He stated that is why Remington & Vernick indicated that they wanted that put in the Record. Mr. Majewski stated he feels that it is clear from the parking counts that for any standard used that they have enough parking, but we would like to get it on the Record at the Zoning Hearing Board of what is required and what is the nature of the relief that they are truly getting.

Mr. Weitzel asked if that request is a breakdown of number of spaces allocated to Medical versus number of spaces allocated to Office, and then adding the two together to make sure that the parking field has enough spaces; and Mr. Majewski agreed.

Mr. Costello stated what is being asked for tonight is whether the Planning Commission would recommend going forward with this based on the change from General Office to Medical Office; and Mr. Majewski agreed adding that if the Planning Commission felt that there was an issue with expanding the Medical Use from a general planning perspective, they should make their opinion on that known to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Coyle stated they are not adding an ambulance entrance or anything like that.

Mr. Gill moved and Mr. Coyle seconded to recommend approval of the request for Special Exception to expand the Medical Offices into the designated second floor area as shown on the Plan subject to the submission of parking calculations as requested by the Township engineer at the time of the Zoning Hearings.

Mr. Coyle asked if there is the need for a separate Motion to exempt an expansion of parking spaces, and Mr. Majewski stated he does not believe that is necessary as the Motion covers that.

Motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Gill moved, Mr. Coyle seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colin Coyle, Secretary