

CONSHOCKEN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT TO CONSHOCKEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

APPLICANT: Craft Custom Homes, LLC
PROPERTY: 541 East Hector Street
MEETING DATE: August 13, 2020
ZONING: Limited Industrial / Residential Overlay
ACTION DATE: August 13, 2020

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation of approval of conditional use.

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. plans prepared by Vastardis Consulting Engineers, LLC, 2 sheets, dated March 19, 2019, last revised May 1, 2020
2. architectural floor plans and renderings, 11 sheets, undated
3. decision of the Conshohocken Zoning Hearing Board, application no. 2018-17, dated December 19, 2018
4. review letter of Montgomery County Planning Commission dated July 13, 2020
5. review letter of Borough Zoning Officer, dated August 6, 2020

PRIOR ZONING RELIEF GRANTED BY ZONING HEARING BORD:

1. §27-703.E.6—special exception to expand the use of a non-conforming building
2. §27-1903(B)(2)—variance to allow a greater density than 33 units per acre
3. §27-1903(B)(9)—variance to permit parking under, rather than to the rear, of the building
4. § 27-1903(B)(12)—variance to permit a tract area of 12,000 square feet rather than 1 acre

MEETING SUMMARY:

This is an application for conditional use pursuant to §27-1903-B.11 of the Conshohocken Borough Zoning Ordinance of 2001 (the “Zoning Ordinance”) to permit a building height of 40 feet. Redevelopment of the property will consist of a 4-story building containing 12 residential units with 25 under building parking spaces.

The meeting occurred remotely using the GoToMeeting platform. The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Stacy Ellam, Chair, Elizabeth MacNeal, Vice Chair, and Judy Smith-Kressley. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael Peters, Esquire, Borough Engineer, Karen MacNair, P.E., Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, and Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Present for the applicant were Ed Hughes, Esquire, Ryan Alexaki with Craft Custom Homes, and applicant’s engineer, Mr. Vastardis.

Mr. Hughes explained the relief previously granted by the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Hughes also explained that 40' height was permitted in the underlying LI zoning district, but the relief was required for the Residential Overlay district.

Mr. Alexaki explained the project in general terms, including the number of units (12) with no more than 2 units each. There will be 25 spaces to serve the development. Mr. Alexaki explained that surrounding buildings were of similar height, and that the applicant had met with surrounding neighbors and there was a high level of neighborhood support for the project.

Mr. Johnson had no specific concerns regarding the application and explained why relief was necessary.

Ms. Smith Kressley asked why the ground floor was 9' in height. Mr. Alexaki explained that consumers are currently looking for at least 9' of first floor height.

Ms. MacNeal asked questions regarding the pitch-line of the roof, whether the roofline was decorative or functional, and whether the slope could be changed. Mr. Alexaki explained that anything less than the pitch proposed would have standing snow. Mr. Alexaki also explained that due to the elevation of the building you would not be able to identify the pitch of the roof from anywhere other than rooftop decks. Ms. MacNeal also posed a question regarding what building on the block it would be similar to—Mr. Alexaki explained that a comparable building was an old manufacturing building converted to residential units across the street.

Ms. Ellam also asked whether there are other buildings in the area of similar height, and Mr. Alexaki identified additional buildings in the area of similar or greater height. Ms. Ellam questioned whether anyone was affirmatively opposed to the development, and Mr. Alexaki answered in the negative.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the conditional use application.

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ACTION DATE: August 13, 2020

COMMISSION ACTION: Recommendation of approval of preliminary/final land development and the waivers (subject to certain specific conditions as set forth below), all subject to the following general conditions:

1. Applicant shall comply with all review letters of the Borough's professionals
2. Applicant shall include maintenance of the porous pavers within its stormwater management plan and in the stormwater management agreement
3. Applicant shall comply with all conditions imposed by the Zoning Hearing Board in its decision identified below
4. Applicant shall obtain the approval of the Borough Fire Marshal and Emergency Management Coordinator for emergency ingress and egress throughout the site
5. Applicant shall obtain the approval of the Borough Solicitor for its HOA documents

WAIVERS (AND CONDITIONS AS APPLICABLE)

1. §22-306.A(1)—waiver to excuse requirement that all existing features within 100 feet of proposed development be depicted on plan, **subject to the condition that the applicant submit all information deemed necessary by the Borough Engineer**
2. §22-308.C—waiver to permit only one submission for preliminary and final land development approval
3. §22-404.2.A—waiver to permit proposed driveways and driveway curb cuts within the front yard setbacks of East Hector Street and East Elm Street
4. §22-404.3.F(4)—waiver to permit proposed accessible parking to be located closer than 10 feet from right-of-way
5. §22-404.3.G—waiver to permit 3' curb radius for the curbing near the accessible parking spaces, rather than the required 5' radius
6. §22-409.2—waiver to permit proposed grading within 3' of the property lines
7. §22-421.4—partial waiver to permit a **fee-in-lieu of the required street trees along East Elm Street**
8. §22-421.5—waiver from providing minimum 6' high landscape screening for the multifamily development
9. §22-421.6—waiver from providing pedestrian lighting along East Hector Street and East Elm Street
10. §22-804—partial waiver to permit negotiation of a **fee-in-lieu of dedication of required park/recreational space**

MATERIALS REVIEWED: The Planning Commission reviewed the following materials:

1. plan set prepared by Vastardis Consulting Engineers, LLC, 5 sheets, dated March 19, 2019, last revised July 15, 2020
2. architectural floor plans and renderings, 11 sheets, undated
3. decision of the Conshohocken Zoning Hearing Board, application no. 2018-17, dated December 19, 2018
4. study of eco paver infiltration, prepared by Gilmore & Associates, Inc., dated December 21, 2005
5. photograph of existing conditions
6. review letter of Borough Engineer, dated August 6, 2020
7. review letter of Borough Traffic Engineer, dated June 25, 2020
8. review letter of Montgomery County Planning Commission, dated July 10, 2019
9. review letter of Borough Zoning Officer, dated August 6, 2020

PRIOR ZONING RELIEF GRANTED BY ZONING HEARING BORD:

1. §27-703.E.6—special exception to expand the use of a non-conforming building
2. §27-1903(B)(2)—variance to allow a greater density than 33 units per acre
3. §27-1903(B)(9)—variance to permit parking under, rather than to the rear, of the building
4. § 27-1903(B)(12)—variance to permit a tract area of 12,000 square feet rather than 1 acre

MEETING SUMMARY:

This is an application for preliminary and final land development. Redevelopment of the property will consist of a 4-story building containing 12 residential units with 25 under building parking spaces. The property currently contains an 8,857 square foot industrial/warehouse/office building.

The meeting occurred remotely using the GoToMeeting platform. The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Stacy Ellam, Chair, Elizabeth MacNeal, Vice Chair, and Judy Smith-Kressley. Also present for the Borough were Borough Solicitor, Michael Peters, Esquire, Borough Engineer, Karen MacNair, P.E., Borough Zoning Officer, Eric Johnson, and Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, Brittany Rogers.

Present for the applicant were Ryan Alexaki with Craft Custom Homes, Ed Hughes, Esquire, and applicant's engineer, Mr. Vastardis.

The Planning Commission had, just prior to applicant's presentation on its land development application, heard applicant's presentation on the conditional use application, and asked some questions applicable to both applications.

Mr. Hughes explained that all comments in the review letters would be complied with. Mr. Alexaki explained that most of the waivers being requested were caused by the existing nonconformities associated with redevelopment of the property.

Ms. MacNair was asked whether she had any concerns with the application. Ms. MacNair asked the applicant whether the lighting would be made to comply with the ordinance, and the applicant's engineer, Mr. Vastardis, confirmed that the plan would be made to comply.

Ms. MacNair further explained that she wanted the Planning Commission to discuss a separation wall in the parking area as compared to the building façade. Mr. Alexaki explained that the wall would be stucco with a cap on top. The applicant additionally plans on using similar design for the remainder of the building. The Planning Commission had no additional comments to the design.

Ms. MacNair explained the request for a fee-in-lieu of street trees.

Mr. Johnson explained that his only remaining comment related to lighting as well.

Ms. Smith-Kressley asked whether the units would be rental or purchase. Mr. Alexaki explained that each unit would be for purchase.

The Planning Commission had several questions regarding emergency access throughout the site and trash pickup. Mr. Alexaki explained that the HOA would address trash pickup. The applicant also agreed to obtain the approval of the Borough for emergency planning for the site.

Ms. Smith-Kressley asked how the applicant intended to address stormwater management. Mr. Alexaki and Mr. Vastardis explained that the stormwater would be directed to an existing culvert through a roof drain.

The Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the application, with conditions as set forth above.