

MUNICIPALITY OF MONROEVILLE

PLANNING COMMISSION

AUGUST 21, 2024

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Leonard Bertoni.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

The Recording Secretary, Sharon McIndoe, called roll and the following were present: Leonard Bertoni, Heidi Lawrence, Bruce Walker, P. Lorraine Lewis-Burke, Terry Segelson, Paul Whealdon, Darren Myer, Doug Beitko and Dan Deiseroth. Mr. Massung and Mrs. Montgomery were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There being no corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes of the July 17, 2024 Planning Commission meeting, a motion was duly made by Mrs. Lewis-Burke to approve them, as submitted and Mr. Walker seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

After a brief discussion, a motion was duly made by Mr. Walker to un-table Application Nos. 24-3-ST, 24-2-C and 24-5-SUB. Mr. Lawrence seconded it and upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Bertoni reported the residents met with the developer on August 6, 2024 to discuss this issue.

OLD BUSINESS

SITE PLAN 24-3-ST

WILLOWCREST

The applicant, Primo Land Group, LLC, is requesting Site Plan approval pursuant to Article III of the Monroeville Zoning Ordinance, No. 2779, to construct a single-family residential development consisting of 95 units and associated site amenities. The property is vacant and used to be the airport located off of Logan's Ferry Road, identified as Tax Parcel 741-R-333 in the R-2, Single-Family Residential Zoning District and consists of 46.62 acres.

CONDITIONAL USE 24-2-C

WILLOWCREST

The applicant, Primo Land Group, LLC, is requesting Conditional Use approval pursuant to Section 504.VV, Major Excavation, of the Monroeville Zoning Ordinance, No. 2779 to permit a cut and fill operation totaling approximately 100,000 cubic yards of earth. The property is vacant and used to be the airport located off of Logan's Ferry Road, identified as Tax Parcel 741-R-333 in the R-2, Single-Family/Multi-Family Residential Zoning District and consists of 46.62 acres.

SUBDIVISION 24-5-SUB
WILLOWCREST

The applicant, Primo Land Group, LLC, is requesting Preliminary and Final Subdivision approval to subdivide Tax Parcel 741-R-333 into 95 single-family lots and three open space parcels in the R-2, Single/Multi-Family Residential Zoning District. The property is vacant and used to be the airport located off Logan's Ferry Road and consists of 46.62 acres.

Mr. John Spagnola from Primo Land Group came forward to give a brief overview of the project. He reported they were presenting the Willowcrest Development in the Garden City area of Monroeville consisting of 95 single-family lots and three open space parcels. He stated this is the third time they have been before the planning commission so he was open to questions.

Mrs. Lawrence requested he re-present the application because this may be the first time someone is hearing it.

Mr. Spagnola reported they met with the residents and they decided to move the mailbox cluster from the Hazelnut entrance to the center of the development to try to eliminate some of the traffic. He added they would do buffer yards around the detention pond.

Mr. Bertoni inquired whether the developer and residents discussed having one road for the access of the construction equipment and Mr. Spagnola answered affirmatively. He reported they would be doing work in the park next to the Hazelnut cul-de-sac and they would request a temporary construction access through the park to eliminate the construction traffic from the Garden City Roads of Buttercup, Quince and Hazelnut. Mr. Whealdon asserted that would be a council decision but it could be discussed. Mr. Bertoni questioned whether the developer made any progress with the residents. Mr. Spagnola reported he discussed the issues with them but he was uncertain whether he could do everything they want. He felt some residents just do not want this property developed. He pointed out they submitted a plan that meets the municipal codes and traffic ordinances and they are connecting to three municipal roads as permitted by ordinance. He asserted they are open to speed bumps but that is controlled by the municipality.

Mrs. Carla Chianese, a resident of Hazelnut Drive, came forward to read a prepared statement into the record (see attached). She reported the residents met with the developer and the conclusion was they would move the mailbox clusters and maintain a wood buffer line. She stated a major concern is the increase in traffic and the solution was to install more stop signs or appeal to the zoning hearing board for speed bumps. She added another problem is people run through the stop sign on Garden City Drive and she was recently hit there. She stated because the infrastructure is inadequate for the heavy construction equipment it is imperative they have the temporary access. She pointed out how a reduction in the number of houses was discussed and to have one access point instead of three but the issue would still be the increase in traffic through Dahlia that impacts the area. She mentioned the impact on the local wildlife was discussed because the development is surround by woods and trails. She felt the potential impact on wildlife should be investigated before it is approved. She stated if this development is approved, it is crucial that they identify an alternative entry point to alleviate the traffic burden on Dahlia Drive.

Mr. Whealdon stated the endangered species has already been approved through a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) which is part of the DEP state requirement for any project. Mrs. Chianese inquired whether it was done recently and Mr. Whealdon it was done for this project. Further discussion ensued.

Mrs. Debra Becker, a resident, came forward to read a statement. She reported she stressed at the last two meetings that the airport and the surrounding neighborhoods are built on top of the old Oakhill No. 5 mine. She stated many residents in the area have experienced trouble with mine subsidence and water and she pointed out the developer that is proposing this new development also developed Maplecrest. She reported while excavating Sandyhill, NVR or Ryan Homes hit acidic mine water that flooded neighboring properties and caused \$10 thousand worth of damage. She reported there are reports of the wetlands being destroyed and the contaminated mine soil was redistributed as top soil in the Maplecrest Development. She felt the Maplecrest 3 is stuck in development due to a lack of another entrance/exit because they built themselves into a corner over a high-powered gas line. She disagreed with approving the development because it poses multiple risks and threats to the community.

Mrs. Becker reported when the community met at Evergreen Park to discuss this proposal and alternatives and there was a suggestion to make it a historic landmark or green space and there was a disagreement then a threat was made by the only resident in favor of the development. She was upset about the terroristic threats.

Mrs. Becker reported over the past few years many concerns have been expressed regarding the redevelopment of the former airport. She was concerned because there are countless times the resident's views are not taken seriously and the municipality can only see the tax dollars. She mentioned there are Garden City residents that live on dead-ends and neighboring street that enjoy the peace and quiet of the area. She reported there are residents and a member of the zoning hearing board who have expressed concerns about the increased traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. She pointed out Garden City was built in the early 1950s and the plan consists of narrow streets with no sidewalks or speed bumps. She stated the studies provided by Mr. Staley of Trans Associates should be considered inconclusive and she reported they requested additional intersection studies during a right-to-know meeting with Mrs. Chianese, Mr. Whealdon and herself because none of those intersections were evaluated. She referred to a letter from Mr. Staley to Mr. Whitfield which stated inclusion of the intersection of Chinaberry and Dahlia Drive would have negligible impacts on the results, findings or conclusions of the studies. She stated the letter stated the developer is not responsible for pedestrian safety under existing or future condition. She felt this development should not be approved until additional studies have been done on the other intersections that will be impacted. She suggested the studies should be done when Evergreen School lets out at 3:30 p.m. to have an actuate reading.

Mrs. Becker mentioned concerns for capacity at Evergreen Elementary and the chairman indicated those concerns should be directed to the school board. She submitted a letter to be included in the minutes (see attached) referring to the influx of students. She was curious about much of the population may reside at Maplecrest and she felt the population of 95 potential homes is too much. She suggested the number of houses needs to be reduced and this development should be denied until adjustments are made.

Mrs. Becker was concerned about the wildlife in the woods and she also contacted the US Fish and Wildlife Services regarding the endangered species act. She felt it should be kept a greenspace for the wildlife and the community. She also suggested putting a community garden in the area and also producing revenue by partnering with the Monroeville Mall to bring the haunted attraction industry to Monroeville by making the airport property into an event location because there are stories that it is not just a coal mine but a profit mine that was not taken advantage of. She felt it could be made into a haunted attraction which would reduce traffic and attract the House of Horror and benefit from the tourism.

Mrs. Becker concluded by suggesting the number of houses in this proposal needs to be reduced and additional traffic studies need to be done. She suggested the planning commission should deny the application.

Mr. Jim Dallas, a resident of Buttercup Drive, came forward to express his concerns. He suggested the size of the development should be reduced to 70 or 80 homes. He was concerned with the additional traffic and the streets in question are winding side streets. He felt they were never designed for this kind of development. He explained Blueberry winds around then goes up to Buttercup Drive to the plan and it is a problem. He reported children live on all the streets that walk to the bus stop down at Valleyview and Quince and there are no sidewalks or painted areas for walking. He was concerned with all the additional traffic and the children walking to the bus stop. He questioned what would be done with the street if Buttercup and Blueberry is the main entrance to the development. He inquired whether the developer will improve or widen the streets or install sidewalks or move the utilities.

Mr. Whealdon reported the existing streets will not be widened and no sidewalks will be installed. He explained the streets are currently 22 feet wide which is the municipal standard and most of the streets in Monroeville are that width. Mr. Dallas was concerned with the increase traffic on those roads that were not designed to be a thoroughfare roadway and is a side street not a main access. He stated people walk in the streets because there is no place to walk. He felt there has to be another way to do the development with another access point. He inquired about the number of homes that require two entrances and Mr. Whealdon answered 50 homes. He added the three entrances help to disburse the traffic and Mr. Dallas disagreed. He stated it all goes to Valleyview, Dahlia and Garden City. Further discussion ensued about the number of accesses.

Mr. Dallas mentioned the entrance through Greenleaf Park was discussed. Mr. Whealdon stated it can be discussed by the planning commission but that is a council decision. Mr. Dallas felt that would split the traffic up to come in two different areas. Mr. Whealdon asserted Greenleaf is a wider road so it would be a better access point and Mr. Dallas agreed.

Mr. Dallas pointed out two houses located at the end of Buttercup that are right up against the existing development. He suggested it be moved back or eliminate the two lots to give it a better buffer zone so the transition from Garden City into the new development looks nicer. He stated the new houses would not be up against the properties on his street.

Mr. Spagnola indicated they prepared an exhibit with access through Greenleaf Park. Mr. Dallas agreed with that entrance and felt it would split the traffic up half on one side and half on the other but it would not all flow onto Dahlia and Valleyview. Mr. Whealdon inquired whether he discussed it with

his council representative and Mr. Dallas answered negatively. He indicated he wanted the buffer zone and reported he had photographs on his computer that showed cars parked on both sides of the street. He again stated the streets were made as side streets not through streets and he disagreed that they were made to be used as a main entrance to a development. He agreed they are a public access but should not be used as a direct line into a development. He disagreed that Blueberry and Buttercup should be used to get into the development. He felt there should be a straight shot into it. He again stated he would support this if those houses are eliminated with the buffer zone and something is done about Buttercup.

Mrs. Lawrence pointed out the residents have been talking about the three access points and possibly eliminating one or two of them. She questioned whether the residents on the other streets agree with keeping that access open. She felt everyone would have a complaint no matter what is kept open or closed. Mr. Dallas agreed. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Dallas mentioned the children walking to the bus stop. He reported all the neighbors in the area respect each other and no one races around. He felt the new residents of this development will not slow down and will want to get to their homes.

Mr. Dallas asserted until the concessions are made and a better plan is submitted it should be denied. He felt it should not be rushed and he mentioned the senior citizen development.

Mrs. Lois Drumheller, a resident, came forward to express her concerns about the basic functions of the planning commission. She felt that the planning commission suggested the residents meet with representatives of a development is usurping their job. She never saw any residents who come to give testimony about why or why not a project will work and she felt that is something the planning commission members should do. She reported she looked at the traffic study for this development and it does not include access to Logan's Ferry Road. She suggested after reviewing the things that were previously developed she felt that may be the reason why it was not included because it would make it difficult with added traffic coming from different areas that would go onto Center Road from Logan's Ferry Road adding great volumes of traffic because of the multi-family homes in Penn Hills and on Old William Penn. She could not understand why it was not considered but she felt that might be a condition that it should be recommended.

Mrs. Drumheller referred to a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Policy Memorandum, the Bureau of Water Quality Protection that gives guidance and recommendations concerning designing construction of replacement of wetlands. She stated there are laws on wetlands. She reported the wetlands that were supposedly non-existent from a previous development of NVR's were in the wetlands in Maplecrest Golf Course. She showed a photograph which is a screen shot of the wetlands that was presented by Mr. Graham Fairy who did a presentation on behalf of Maplecrest on January 3, 2019. She explained the screenshot shows the Maplecrest north field and it is just east of a border that would be a property that belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Henningson. She stated they have two wetlands, SP16 and SP17, that was Mr. Henningson border. She reported those wetlands have been destroyed by the development. She reminded everyone that if wetlands are destroyed they need to be moved and set into motion elsewhere. She asserted wetlands cannot be destroyed and she pointed out the wetlands that were destroyed had no course that followed it. She stated Mr. Fairy missed the acid water in the wetlands because they originated from the Oakhill No. 5 portal located close to the barn.

She explained the entire area north of the barn was a 20 percent downhill slope serving as a drainage area for a huge amount of drainage water or acid mine drainage that had a PH of 2 or 3.

Mrs. Drumheller was very concerned because this is irresponsible development and they have to make good on what they took away. She stated it is the responsibility of the planning commission to make that recommendation. She stated it is the same developer that had done things in North Strabane Township. She noted the company, Pennsylvania Soil and Rock (PSR) and Mr. Samios are parties that are being charged by NVR for their work on majestic hills which is a development that had a landslide as a result of some of the things done through various parties that are now suing each other.

Mrs. Drumheller reported she asked the municipal manager before the meeting if there was still a performance bond which was to be \$2.4 million. She suggested the amount should be reviewed because it may be needed.

Mrs. Drumheller mentioned Moody and Associates were never hired but the mine water remediation facility described by Mr. Fairy at that meeting was never installed. She reported according to an e-mail she shared with Mr. Whealdon between Mr. Henningson and Mr. Little that was presented at the meeting does not mean that the project manager would perform these tasks. She suggested the developer can paint a pretty picture then do something entirely different.

Mrs. Drumheller suggested that it behooves the municipality to not get in a situation where it goes through different developers who are developing irresponsibly and they may be in the middle of some lawsuits and the municipality should make sure it has enough money to cover the damages done.

Mrs. Drumheller suggested it is unnecessary. She felt if something is being put in and going through a 70-year-old neighborhood because Logan's Ferry Road was not even included in the traffic study, it should call something into question. She suggested the planning commission has the ability to make suggestions and conditions. She felt that traffic study should include Logan's Ferry Road.

Mrs. Drumheller reported she spoke with a county representative that informed her that down Center Road from Boyce Park on down into Plum there have been a lot of accidents which may be one of the reasons why Logan's Ferry was not included in the traffic study. She suggested what needs to be studied are the very difficult intersections that come from people leaving that plan which would be the intersection of Logan's Ferry Road and Center Road. She stated it needs to be decided whether there should be a roundabout there or there should be another approach to it. She felt that traffic moving through that area needs to be fixed for all of the added multi-family developments that have come from Penn Hills and the new apartments in Monroeville.

Mrs. Drumheller reminded Mr. Whealdon that there are wetlands because it was a very important point and she suggested something needs to be done about restoring them. She stated they cannot be destroyed and not restored.

Mr. Spagnola stated he is not involved in any lawsuits and he did not develop the North Strabane development.

Mrs. Suzanne Krompka, a resident of Willowhedge Drive, came forward to express her concerns. She reported they were not included in the discussion concerning this issue because it is a road off of Logan's Ferry Road. She stated they were greatly affected by the apartment building. She inquired

when the senior citizens complex was built whether there was an agreement with all of the people along Air Port Road that they would leave it open as rear access to their properties and it has a buffer. She explained her property is the next lot over and it may be the first lot in the development. She stated Air Port Road goes directly behind her property and it no longer is reflected on any of the plans. She reported they have lived in her house over 26 years and behind their rear property line there is a small piece of property that is a utilities right-of-way with a telephone and signs indicating there are buried utility lines, trees and Air Port Road. She stated they have always maintained that piece of ground, kept it clear and cut the grass for over 26 years. She reported someone recently cut the telephone pole down and it is laying there but there are still signs for buried utility lines. She inquired whether the developer of this plan would continue to have that Air Port Road piece. She pointed out it only affects her lot and the next lot down which is full of green and is where the parking area opens up for the airport buildings. She explained she was concerned there would be one big lot with no buffer area. Further discussion ensued. She also stated she was concerned with the ground being dug up and disturbed and it all comes down hill from the airport. She reported Willowhedge Drive has already had issues with water that ponds. Again, she indicated she was concerned about the buffer space because it is so large. She reported the traffic on Logan's Ferry Road is a nightmare and the apartment building has not even opened yet, it is just from the addition of the Maplecrest Homes.

Mrs. Krompka suggested looking at the whole layout of Monroeville, one side of Route 22 and the Garden City area is the most densely populated area with single-family homes with the least amount of green space. She pointed out everyone is concerned about the environment, green space and wildlife except on that side of Monroeville. She reported the other side of Monroeville has a lot of parks and property being purchased by Allegheny Land Trust and it continues to have green space for wild life and birds and everything else but the Garden City side of Monroeville it does not matter.

Mrs. Krompka stated she walks every day over from the end of Willowhedge to Evergreen Park which is a tiny park area. She reported it is very dangerous for people at 6:30 a.m. in the morning walking 20 yards along Logan's Ferry Road because there is no berm. She explained everyone is in a hurry to get to work and no one abides by the stop signs and speed bumps do not do anything. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Whealdon reported Air Port Road and another road will not be used and he pointed out where there would be no earth disturbance. Further discussion ensued. Mrs. Krompka inquired whether the development would not come across Air Port Road and wipe it out and Mr. Whealdon answered according to the plan there is no disturbance in the area. He stated if that road is there, it will remain there. Mrs. Krompka inquired whether someone could make a site visit because it does not look that way. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Bertoni inquired whether the professionals could comment on the traffic concerns. Mr. Myers pointed out the traffic comments made were concerning Logan's Ferry Road, Center Road and Old William Penn and the municipality is aware that they are problems but it is a matter of getting the funding to do projects to solve those issues. He mentioned capacity and reported the traffic study meets the ordinance. He explained a traffic study is not necessary because it is 95 units or less than 100 per the ordinance but they recommended the traffic study because of the nature of the development.

Mr. Joe Vantreska, a resident of Dahlia Drive, came forward to express his concerns. He stated all of the points brought up by the previous speakers are valid. He questioned why the streets cannot be widened specifically on Dahlia and Logan's Ferry Road and he felt they should have sidewalks. He

suggested the development should only be 50 homes not 95 because it will be too much traffic. He felt the traffic studies are not accurate and he was concerned because it was stated that there would be a car a minute. Again, he stated it should be 50 home and not 95 and the roads should be widened with sidewalks.

Mr. Dallas again came forward to show photographs of the street. He mentioned Buttercup Drive with cars parked on both sides of the street and a car can barely get through. He reported the delivery trucks usually park at the bottom and walk. He then showed a photograph of Quince Drive and another of Quince going toward Valleyview. He reported the roads are not wide enough and it is not Garden City Drive or Old William Penn Highway.

Mr. Ventresca reported he is very concerned with the narrow roads. He stated Dahlia and Logan's Ferry Road need to be widened with speed bumps. He felt it is critical these things are done. Again, he stated 95 homes is too many and it should only have 50 at the most. He urged the planning commission to deny the applications or table it again.

Mr. Walker inquired whether the residents agreed with giving up their properties for the widening of the roads. Mr. Ventresca indicated he would be glad to give up his front yard for a sidewalk. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Bertoni was uncertain whether all the residents would agree with giving up some of their property to make the street wider. Mr. Ventresca reported there is a three-foot right-of-way in the front yard. Mr. Whealdon explained there is a 50-foot right-of-way with most roads and the residents are responsible up to the curb for maintenance but some of that property is right-of-way. Mrs. Lawrence pointed out the residents would be responsible for maintaining those sidewalks and Mr. Whealdon concurred.

Ms. Juanita Plaskun, a resident of Greenleaf Drive, came forward to express her concerns. She reported she has lived there 22 years and they purchased the property from someone who had a hanger at the airport so he could walk from the back of the property to the airport in five minutes. He suggested it was great and protected, private and beautiful with all the wildlife. She reported she has a PhD in biology and what is being discussed for development is her backyard. She felt the mine subsidence issue is huge and they have neighbors on Greenleaf Drive who have had sink holes in their yards recently in the last two years. She reported she contacted the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to come to her home because they had some shifting and her doors and windows were not closing. She was also concerned with all the water from the development in the area would go into her back yard. She was concerned with all the wildlife because their homes would be destroyed and there would no longer be any green space. She stated she bought this home because it is floor to ceiling windows and when she looks in the back yard it is peaceful and beautiful. She asserted that she is personally invested in the community and her children attended and graduated from Gateway and she felt this is being taken from them. She stated the residents do not want the access road on Greenleaf Drive.

Ms. Plaskun suggested there needs to be traffic studies on Old William Penn and Laurel Drive; Laurel Drive and Garden City Drive; Laurel Drive and Greenleaf Drive; Greenleaf Drive and Valleyview Drive; Valleyview Drive and Dahlia Drive; and Quince Drive and Valleyview Drive. She implored the planning commission to vote no on the applications.

Mr. Whealdon reported an email was submitted by Mrs. Char Mlynar to be included in the record (see attached). Mr. Bertoni reported one of the suggestion she made was building a bridge over a high-pressure gas line and he explained the gas company would never allow it. He stated there have been concerns voiced over the last three months and a lot of the issues have been repetitive. He mentioned the mines have been addressed, the traffic flows have been addressed and the traffic studies have been done. He stated the developer and the residents were supposed to meet and this was delayed last month to allow the meeting to take place but very little was accomplished at the meeting. He clarified that in order to move forward, some of the issues expressed will only be resolved in a legal manner. He explained the planning commission does not have authority on a lot of items and holding it up in planning commission is holding the development up for everyone including the residents and developer. He suggested it be voted on at this time and all the residents will have the opportunity to bring their concerns before council and appeal any decision that is made. He stated any other adjustment discussed could be made when council acts. Again, he stated nothing is being accomplished by keeping it at the planning commission level. Further discussion ensued.

Mrs. Deborah Becker again came forward to express her concerns. She indicated she had questions that were not answered. She disagreed that all of the traffic studies have been done and there are a lots of intersections in Garden City that will be affected by this plan. She inquired how the planning commission is able to vote when some of the members are missing. Further discussion ensued.

Whereupon, a motion was duly made by Mr. Segelson to approve Application Nos. 24-3-ST, 24-2-C and 24-45-SUB and Mr. Walker seconded it. Upon a roll call vote, the motion was denied with two affirmative votes and three negative votes. Messrs. Bertoni and Segelson voted affirmatively; Mrs. Lawrence, Mr. Walker and Mrs. Lewis-Burke voted negatively.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the planning commission, at this time, Mr. Walker duly made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. and Mrs. Lewis-Burke seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard Bertoni
Chairman

LB/sam
Attachments