

Planning Commission May 17 Meeting: PA Turnpike Valley Forge Service Area and Paoli Zoning Map.

Report by Jerry Henige

There were two key issues that were covered at the May 17 regular monthly Planning Commission Meeting:

- **PA Turnpike Valley Forge Service Area renovation**
- **Proposed amendment to the Zoning Map for the Paoli Community Master Plan.**

There was also a **report from the Daylesford TOD Subcommittee.**

PA Turnpike: Valley Forge Service Area renovation

This was an update on a proposal to remodel the service area now before the planning commission because the service area is in Tredyffrin Township and falls within an area that is zoned residential. It is the only service area on the turnpike that backs up to a residential area.

The key components of the remodel are a new, larger, taller building for the food court, restrooms, etc., relocating the service station and truck parking further east within the service area and new lighting. There are at least two variances that would be required for the remodel: the new building is taller than the zoning allows and the lights throughout the service area are too tall (although the proposed lighting will be lower and the light more directed than the current lighting).

The remodel is being driven by a contractor working for the service vendor, not by the PA Turnpike. The meeting started with the representative responding to some issues raised by township staff, the Valley Forge park service (the service area is directly across the turnpike from the park) and local residents. There was strong neighborhood participation at the meeting. They raised a variety of concerns including the building height (going from 25' to a proposed 41'), the height of the lights, storm water issues, lights and noise from the service area traffic, the lack of adequate maintenance and security. The general consensus of the neighbors was that they preferred the status quo to the new proposal.

During the discussion, it was pointed out that the PA Turnpike was planning to close the Neshaminy Service Area making the Valley Forge Service Area the last service area within PA. That will make is a long drive to the next stop within New Jersey. Concern was raised that it will also cause an increase in traffic at the Valley Forge service area. It was argued that there are several reasons why it would seem to make more sense to retain the Neshaminy Service Area and close the Valley Forge Service Area: the service areas would be more evenly distributed along the turnpike and into New Jersey and the Neshaminy Service Area is not in a residential area. However a closer look at the map indicates that Neshaminy does not provide more even distribution. The PA Turnpike was not represented at the meeting.

At the end of the discussion, the contractor left with the action to respond to the issues that had been raised.

Proposed amendment to the Zoning Map for the Paoli Community Master Plan

Currently the SPDD (Special Paoli Development District) along Route 30 between Longcourse and Glenn avenues is a 200 foot wide strip starting at the middle of Route 30 and going south. There are about six lots west of Jimmy Duffy's that are about 26 ft deeper than the SPDD zoning. Thus they are split-zoned lots (the front portion is in the SPDD with the back 26 ft is zone R1). In practice, there is an ordinance already on the books that entitles a split-zone lot to include an additional 50 ft in the least restrictive zoning. What this means is that these lots are entitled to be treated as SPDD zoning in their entirety. The township staff had proposed in the upcoming Paoli re-zoning to include the full lots of these six affected parcels in the proposed new Town Center District. Note that in practice, this does not change any entitlement; it merely updates the zoning to match today's reality. Also note that Jimmy Duffy's and the office on the corner of Glenn and Route 30 are not included in this proposed change.

However, in the general discussion, it quickly became clear that there was a lot of concern that this would provide some kind of advantage to the ongoing Jimmy Duffy's redevelopment effort (the Daylesford TOD proposal). The planning commission recognized that there was probably no way to alleviate all the concerns and since this amendment would not change anything in practice, they decided that they would not take on this battle. No action was taken and the new Town Center District will retain the current 200 ft wide strip.

There was also a **report from the Daylesford TOD Subcommittee** (this was subcommittee of the developer, neighborhood and Planning Commission representatives to see if common ground could be found): It was reported that 'agreement was not presently possible'. The developer had put a revised plan forward and both the developer and neighbors negotiated in good faith. But in the end, the differences were too much to overcome. It was reported that 96% of the neighbors were against the proposal. It now will fall back to the Planning Committee and then the Board of Supervisors to determine the fate of this proposal.

Additional Agenda Items

A couple of other less contentious issues were also discussed: some proposed additional parking and general grounds improvements at Paoli Place North (the Colonial Towers) on East Central Avenue in Paoli and a new bank building on the parking lot of the Devon Square Shopping Center (the K-mart/ACME shopping center) in Strafford.