

Minutes
Walkersville Planning Commission Meeting
April 26, 2022

Commission Chairman David Ennis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with members Mike Kuster, Dick Brady, Ray Santullo, Russ Winch, Nathan Shatto and Gary Baker present. Also present were Town Planner Susan Hauver, Burgess Chad Weddle, Commissioner Mike McNiesh, and Communications Specialist Ashley Bailey. The meeting was also live-streamed on the Town's website.

Burgess Weddle opened the meeting in prayer remembering the loss of former Town Burgess Orley Bourland and his contributions to the Town.

Burgess Weddle swore in newly appointed member to the Commission, Nathan Shatto.

1. Minutes

Member Brady made a motion, seconded by Member Kuster, to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2022 meeting. The motion passed on a vote of 5-0-2 (Winch, Shatto).

2. Site Plan: Lonza Demolition Plan

Planner Hauver presented plans submitted by Lonza to demolish eleven structures on the east side of their property. Most of the buildings are agricultural and block buildings used when the company worked with animals. The largest building slated for demolition is the 14,266 sf two story brick building along the railroad tracks and formerly used as a cannery. The demolition plan calls for the elimination of 129,932 sf of impervious surface, for which the Town can get credit on the MS4 (stormwater management) permit.

Mr. Bill Brooks of EA Engineering, Science, and Technology Inc. and Mr. Ned Brnilovich of Lonza spoke on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Brnilovich said that Lonza had had a company assess the cannery for possible rehabilitation but it was estimated that the cost would be \$20 million.

In response to questions, the applicants said that there were no public easements to abandon in association with the project. The fire hydrant on Mill Road will remain active and part of the Town system. Staff will request that the public works staff check that the hydrant is active and maintained.

The applicants noted that the demolition method will include crushing the pavement and block. There will be excavating equipment and a crusher on site. There will be no explosives used. Testing and abatement for lead and asbestos has been completed. The area was served by steam lines and valves which have all been abandoned. Member Winch noted the potential impact on neighbors, including vibration, noise, and dust.

Member Winch requested that they wet down the roads to keep dust and debris down. He also requested that all trucks entering and leaving the site utilize Biggs Ford Road rather than Pennsylvania Avenue or Maple Avenue.

Member Brady felt that the cannery building is past its time in terms of rehab. There is graffiti indicating trespassing on site and the roof is gone. Removing impervious surface will be beneficial to the Town.

Member Baker made a motion, seconded by Member Brady to approve the demolition plan based on Commission comments and with the condition that demolition be delayed 60 days to provide the Town the opportunity to document and photograph the cannery building. The motion passed on a vote of 7-0.

3. Comprehensive Plan Update Discussion

Planner Hauver reviewed the documents distributed to Commission (summary of property owner requests from Fall 2021, Draft Housing chapter).

Commission members opened the floor to comments from the applicants, since the Commission membership had changed recently.

Mr. Mike Staley submitted a letter summarizing his request to designate his farm for residential development and providing justification for the change.

Mr. Jeremy Holder, Ms. Darby Jones, and Mr. Eric Soter all spoke on behalf of Square Acres Farm. Mr. Holder noted that the property is well-suited to developed and that they had changed their request from Medium Density Residential to Low Density Residential in response to comments they had heard from the Town. The development potential would be 225-250 units. The project would likely take 10-15 years to finish. They would treat the frontage on MD 194 sensitively. They respect the Town's concerns about traffic and schools.

Ms. Jones noted the time that the property owners have waited to develop the property, and feels their time has come. The development team assembled by the property owner is known for listening and collaboration.

Mr. Soter noted that they would propose a new process for reviewing plans, by adding a master plan step, and would propose new zoning performance standards for residential developments.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh welcomed the new members to the Commission. He noted that the Planning Commission needs to consider what the community wants and doesn't want when preparing a Comprehensive Plan. He asserted that the community development does not want additional development, even with Adequate Public Facilities standards in place.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Hauver