

Swarthmore Planning Commission

Meeting As: Fair Housing Accommodations Review Board

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date April 21, 2021

Commission Attendees	Chris DeBruyn – Chair, Acting Secretary	Rex Brien
	Steve Minton	Laura Poltronieri
	Nancy Templeton	David Virgil
	Don Jones	James Levine
	Douglas Perry	Elizabeth Jenkins
		Doug Harnsberger

Also in Attendance Betsy Larsen Borough Council Liason
Jane Billings Borough Manager

Meeting Location Online Meeting

- C. DeBruyn called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 PM

New Business

Fair Housing Accommodation for 645 North Chester Road

- Steven Schloeder presented his request for an accommodation under the Fair Housing Act.
 - Request for an accommodation from a zoning setback to permit installation of an elevator.
 - Request for relief of an ordinance feature 1298.06(g) to require removal of the variance approval at the conclusion of the protected persons tenancy.
 - Request to waive ordinance feature 1298.06(h), notification requirements.
 - Requested that public comment not be permitted in the meeting.
- Public Comment was solicited:
 - Julie Vrooman – 11 Ogden Avenue: Recent renovations on the 645 Chester Road property have created a significant runoff problem onto her abutting property, would this approval have anything to do with that?
 - David Virgil – 15 Ogden Avenue (Board member): Seconded the concerns about runoff changes onto his property (adjacent (down-hill to 11 Ogden, not abutting 645 Chester) and noted it to be a problem.
- The Board discussion:
 - Jane noted that the home owner had notified all of the abutting property owners as required.
 - Chris and Jane discussed whether storm water issues would be triggered as part of this application and it did not appear that a storm water report would be required.

- Chris asked about the reasonableness of the request, was it not possible to achieve the accessibility goals without violating the zoning code.
 - Steven stated that it was not an appropriate question, that the board did not have standing to determine what the correct solution would be.
 - Chris noted that the board in fact did have standing to determine the reasonableness of the application. He noted that HUD documentation and guidance directs townships and other organizations potentially subject to Fair Housing claims to develop a process, which Swarthmore had done, to manage such claims. He noted that township managers have an obligation to their citizens to ascertain the veracity of any such claims, and determine a reasonable course of action.
 - Chris noted that under the ordinance section 1298.07 are a list of standards for granting such an accommodation. He noted that many of the standards did not apply, and noted that many others would support the primary request.
 - Chris noted that one of the standards was whether the requested accommodation would adversely affect property values and asked if a neighboring home adjacent to a reduced setback would not in fact be less attractive to a buyer and thus less valuable than the same home with full width setbacks.
 - Rex noted that the absence of that abutting homeowner made it difficult to determine that a meaningful reduction in value would occur in this case.
 - Steven stated that the elevator would raise the property values of the entire neighborhood.
 - Brief discussion framing the language of an approval resolution.
 - Motion to vote to approve the attached resolution was made and seconded, and the vote was in favor.
- The meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting:

The next meeting will be held Wednesday May 19, 2021.

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End of Meeting Minutes