

# Swarthmore Planning Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date October 20, 2021

Commission Attendees	Chris DeBruyn – Chair <del>Steve Minton</del> (recused) Nancy Templeton Don Jones <del>Douglas Perry</del> (recused)	Rex Brien Laura Poltronieri (V) David Virgil (recused) James Levine - Acting Secretary Elizabeth Jenkins (V) Doug Harnsberger
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(V) – attended virtually

Also in Attendance	Betsy Larsen Jane Billings Mary Walk Ross Schmucki	Borough Council Liason Borough Manager Borough Council President Borough Council Member
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Meeting Location Borough Hall Council Room and Online

- C. DeBruyn called the meeting to order at approximately 7:32 PM
- Approval of September Meeting minutes – So moved, seconded and approved.

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

- ITEM 1: DELCORA ACT 537
  - Introduction by Chris
    - Act 537 is a regulatory requirement for wastewater authorities to provide a full plan of the system, including long term improvements, financing requirements, and general system condition and operation.
    - DELCORA operates a system that treats most of the wastewater from Delaware county via 2 methods – first is the Western treatment plant,(WWTP) located at the southern end of the Delaware river waterfront, this handles a portion of the county wastewater. The balance of the wastewater is pumped to be treated and released at a Philadelphia owned treatment plant. This arrangement is contractual and the contract is due for renegotiation in a few years. There are several large costs coming up both defined, and undefined, that will be required if DELCORA maintains this agreement.
  - This new 537 plan presents 4 options to revising the current system
    - Option 1 – Expand the Western treatment facility, and revise systems to flow to the Western treatment facility.
    - Option 2 – Construct a deep storage tunnel to detain heavy storm overflow events, allowing a gradual release through the WWTP with reduced upgrades.
    - Option 3 – Building a new WWTP and piping systems.
    - Option 4 – No Action, renegotiate agreement with Philadelphia.
  - Delcora is recommending Alternative 2 as the lowest cost and most feasible choice.
  - Action – James made a motion to refer the comments as circulated, Nancy seconded the motion. The motion passed.

- ITEM 2: Town Center Land Development Sketch Submission
  - **Introduction** by Chris
    - Don Delson and Bill Cumby representing, Park Avenue Owner LLC, are both long-term Swarthmore residents with active civic participation on many boards and community organizations, including local government, The Swarthmorean newspaper, The COOP board, The Planning Commission, and the WSSD Board.
  - **Land Development Sketch Plan presentation** by the Development team
    - Don Delson, Bill Cumby, David Damon, Michael McCloskey, Don Petrosa.
    - Bill Cumby introduced the project:
      - History of the borough zoning changes to create the TC Zoning district, his involvement in that process.
      - Changes to the plan based on input from the community since the initial application
        - Added retail space
        - Simplified façade
        - Parking made less prominent
    - Dave Damon – Civil Engineer for the project.
      - Described the lot consolidation.
      - Driveway easement on west edge of site.
      - Described the stormwater management scheme, which is to be in compliance with borough stormwater requirements.
      - Sidewalk will be 15' wide.
      - Sidewalk will incorporate street trees, benches and other items.
    - Mike McKlosky – presented the building elevations
      - Described the architectural features of the building,
      - Described the changes in the plan since the initial document submission
      - Noted the advantages of the current design.
      - Noted the extensive language in the TC zoning requiring window area, façade setbacks, etc.
      - Noted other “open ended” language about being consistent with the existing architecture of the town.
      - Parking – goal is to provide electrical capacity in the parking area to allow an electric car lift at each parking spot, (could also allow elec. car charging.
  - **Public Comment**
    - Robin Schaufler – 21 Oberlin Avenue
      - Represent Swarthmore energy transition task force – transition to renewable energy
      - Want to focus on more ways to minimize environmental impact – 10 ways
        - Charging stations
        - Reuse materials from existing buildings
        - New use for captured water – best practices not to irrigate
        - Go beyond the code for water management for climate resilience
        - Combine renewable sources of energy – solar PV panels and others
        - Provide a communal fleet of electric vehicles, available by reservation, like ZipCar

- Provide other shared resources – workout room that generates electricity, laundry room to save plumbing and water
  - Semipermeable surfaces
  - Reuse wastewater
  - Replace affordable housing
- Rob Oakes – 404 Vassar Avenue
  - Concern about affordability and loss of affordable housing units
  - Should promote increased density to increase affordable housing
  - Want to ensure that a range of housing prices is promoted
  - 2019 survey – need for \$250-450K housing in Borough
    - Not addressed in the plans
  - 36 luxury units with parking cuts into capacity for affordable housing
  - Questions
    - What is overall housing density goal in TC?
    - During revitalization, will there be set asides by Council?
    - How will Council consider density concerns?
    - If other similar proposals are submitted, is there nothing Council can do to prevent them from going forward?
  - Encourage Council to set up land use plan to address these questions and other concerns about diversity and maximizing density for only high-end condos
- Rachel Pastan – 509 Rutgers Avenue
  - Housing prices are rising fast – community tilting away from diversity and more toward affluence
  - As we consider plans for high end housing, should also find ways to encourage more reasonably priced housing
  - Zoning Code goal – have a diverse borough
  - Particularly concerned about rapid loss of historically black neighborhood
  - Have put together a petition for Council to establish a task force to look at these issues
- Kim O'Halloran – 300 Yale Avenue
  - President of Town Center Board
  - Board's mission is to plan events in TC and strengthen TC and business community
  - Have read comments and shared with developer principals
  - Pleased that the developers have responded to the feedback
  - Want to ensure the project is consistent with goals of TC business district
  - Encourage mixed use development, as well as different types of retail and public spaces
    - This project is consistent with TC mission
  - TC Board believes these are most important factors
    - Increase business space and support business
    - Ensure adequate parking for owners that will not impact parking availability
    - Advocate for design that is consistent with scale and design of existing TC buildings
    - Advocate for support of vendors that will be displaced

- Sharon Mester – 10 College Avenue
  - Support project
  - Need more density in TC to support businesses
  - U3 Advisors found a shortage of housing opportunities for aging residents looking to downsize but stay in Swarthmore
    - Lack of attractive options – this project addresses the issue
  - Project will bring in additional residents and increase the tax base, and new customers for our local businesses
- Melanie Rodbart – 544 Westminster Avenue
  - Small business owner
  - Need to consider that project is dependent on demolition of several historic resources
  - Zoning Code encourages the retention of TC streetscape by preserving existing buildings to the greatest extent possible
  - Existing buildings are identified in historical resource survey – therefore, they have historical significance
  - See additional comments in “Email Comments”
- Helen Nadel – 15 Woodbrook Lane
  - Concerned about loss of affordable housing and that this project will preclude future projects that are better to increase population density
  - Should not consider in a vacuum, but rather in the context of a broader plan to increase population density in town
    - Should be seeking to have multiple mixed use buildings with a mix of housing options at various price points
  - Swarthmore 2030 Plan – recommended up to 100 units for seniors and up to 80 units for families – in \$250-450K range
    - Other towns have identified strategies to seek this type of plans
      - Set asides, tax incentives, innovative housing types, accessory dwelling units, incentives to retain businesses
  - Loss of affordable housing and two businesses are of particular concern
- James Peyton Jones – 211 Rutgers Avenue
  - Appreciate thought and effort that has gone into the project to try to fit into the community, and yet it is impossible to get around the fact that the project is out of scale for the community
    - Physically, architecturally, socially, environmentally, and politically
  - Projects should maintain visual character and scale of the TC
  - This project is oversized, and if approved, in the future it will be impossible to stop the conversion of existing buildings to similar oversized structures
  - Environmental impact will be borne by entire community; including noise pollution
  - Parking scale is also out of scale with existing parking in town, and will be detrimental to walkability in front of building because of frequency of vehicles entering and existing garage – will disrupt and endanger traffic
  - Commitment to supporting retail is only aspect of the project that is downsized

- Stores will be offered for purchase only – DELSON – CHANGED AND WILL BE LEASED
    - Retail space is much shallower than existing space
    - Antithetical to Zoning Code commitment to encourage diversity of retail options
  - This is a plan for aging in place for extremely wealthy, but does nothing to address aging in place for those who cannot afford taxes and have to move out of the Borough entirely
  - Project is out of scale and contravenes policies contained in Zoning Code
- Phil Coleman – 723 Yale Avenue
  - Not opposed to project, but concerned about energy usage of building
  - Dense urban living is more energy efficient than the way most people live
  - Large increase in recent years of major weather events
  - Want to make financial case for more energy efficient building
  - Recommendations
    - Push energy efficiency beyond code requirements
    - Pursue LEED Gold or Silver rating
    - Have units separately metered – people use less energy when they have to pay for it
    - Consider an all-electric building – no need for gas hookup
    - Advocate for less parking – 1213 Walnut Street in Philadelphia – 322 units, no parking
- Jim Riviello – 405 Michigan Avenue
  - Curious about parking capacity with 2/3 of the units being 3-bedroom units
  - Very expensive building and should consider concerns of all active adults
- Alison Masterpasqua – 211 Park Avenue
  - Does this project further affordable housing?
  - What consideration is being given to people who live and work and visit the TC?
    - Are we going to price people out of Swarthmore?
  - Why is new mixed use space not adding additional retail space?
  - 102 Park Avenue is already mixed use – not sure why it needs to be removed
  - Concerned about existing parking and pedestrian concerns with existing number of cars – what happens when add a garage with 80 cars?
- Heather Schumacher – 18 Waverly Avenue, Morton
  - Longtime activist and participant in Swarthmore community, even though no longer live in the Borough
  - Zoning Code goal – support a mix of people from all backgrounds, races, creeds, etc.
  - Borough doesn't need more housing for the wealthy – TC is home to some of the only remaining affordable housing in the Borough
    - Longtime residents will be priced out and we will be opened up to additional projects that may price out additional residents
- Erum Hartung – 312 Ogden Avenue

- Don't want to lose sight of what makes Swarthmore unique
- Existing buildings are examples of historical charm that we should be seeking to preserve
- Proposed building is inconsistent with goals of TC Zoning and risks turning Swarthmore into just another suburban town
  - Especially out of scale and would dwarf surrounding buildings and alter the existing character of our streetscape
- Encourage developers to reconsider to be more consistent with character of town
- Jayatri Das – 6 Whittier Place
  - There is a meaningful need for public engagement about the current proposal and about the future of the Borough
  - Need to consider development in context of broader plan for Swarthmore and the TC
  - Last time Zoning Code was considered was 2013
  - Call for development of comprehensive land use plan before considering this proposal, and that PC and Council should consider meaningful public input and participation in the process
  - Propose that 50% of all multifamily units should be in \$250-450K range as affordable housing
- Keith Peltzman – 210 Cornell Avenue
  - Concerned about traffic and safety, and pedestrian safety
  - Existing parking situation on Park Avenue is dangerous; adding many more residential units and supporting vehicles that accompany it (Amazon, etc.) will make problem worse
  - Urge an independent traffic study to assess traffic and pedestrian safety issues in town, and especially on Park Avenue
  - Pedestrian safety – existing sidewalk compresses from 10' to 5' wide – ask that sidewalk be widened to meet the sidewalk the rest of the street
- Jon McCallum – 108 S. Princeton Avenue
  - Concerned with how ground floor will contribute to public realm
  - Need to have flexibility on ground floor space – advocate for ground floor retail that is larger than proposal, and that is contiguous and flexible and not interrupted by parking garage entrance and residential entrance
    - Ability to adapt over time for retail, community space, etc. or varying sizes and not fixed size
    - Also depth of retail spaces is too shallow
  - Building is overworked – too much going on
  - Concerns about height of building
- Samina Iqbal – 507 Riverview Road
  - Concerned about community engagement – prime location in TC
  - Concerns about Aging In Place Task Force have been largely ignored
    - Limited consideration for the goals of that task force
  - Limited community engagement in the process – store owners were blindsided

- Disconnect in various studies conducted by various community groups, and what actually happens, which seems to have an air of secrecy to it
- This project was developed over a far longer period of time than since it became public, but the public was not engaged
- Need to see a detailed solar impact study on surrounding buildings and Central Park, because of long shadows that the building will cast through much of the year
- Raise question of possible extractions for Thatcher Park and possibly others that are in need of financial assistance
- Concerns about water management plan, and lack of transparency in process and plans
- David Augustine – 102 Park Avenue
  - Resident in building to be demolished
  - By living in affordable housing unit, was able to save \$100K, but still cannot afford to buy house in Swarthmore, so has to move out of town
  - Annual Christmas display – 10,000 visitors last year, but they didn't use the town because nothing was open and there was nothing attractive to them
  - Aston is way ahead of Swarthmore in retail encouragement and the arts
  - Original plan included a museum for the Swarthmore Fire Department, but new rendering has taken it away
- Melissa McCullough – 100 Park Avenue
  - This project will be directly outside her bedroom window
  - Loss of affordable housing will be grave for residents – makes them feel like they're not welcome here anymore
  - Affordable housing residents are the ones who patronize the stores
  - Hope that there is a plan to take care of affordable housing residents
- Martha Perkins – 422 Park Avenue
  - Owner of Gallery on Park
  - Concerns about pedestrian and driver safety – parking garage entrance (1 lane) will lead to increased congestion and negative impact on pedestrian traffic
    - Having an alarm every time a car goes in or out will also lead to noise pollution
  - Can the existing parking plan provide adequate parking for these residents and their guests?
  - Scale of building is inconsistent with existing TC
  - Existing buildings should be preserved – historical buildings add to charm and quaintness of town
  - Celia building (102 Park) has a long history of supporting local businesses
    - Historically significant building
  - Existing design does not maintain goal of preserving historic buildings
  - Believe that inclusion of the building in historic survey indicates intent to preserve the building
- Shannon Elliott – 523 Cedar Lane
  - Owner of Harvey Oak Mercantile (HOM)
  - Has been a longtime champion for change in TC and advocate for improvements, especially in business and retail

- Concerned about plans and impact on business, including hers
  - No alternatives for relocation in Swarthmore at this time
  - Business may not be able to survive this change
- Agree that we need a comprehensive proposal for TC development
- Plan for retail space – with increase in square footage and rent increases, will be forced out
- Width and depth of building is a big concern
  - Monolithic wall will replace green space of variety of spaces
- Loss of historic buildings will be harmful to the town
- Reiterate concerns about parking and pedestrian safety
- Olin Otteson – 203 Park Avenue
  - Why not preserve the façade of 102 Park Avenue building? It is historic and should be preserved
  - Not believe much thought was put into design
- Steve Murray – 415 Thayer Road
  - Support development
  - Lot of people in 55-75 year-old range that want to stay in Swarthmore, but not find options to stay in town
    - This could provide an option for those people
  - Affordable housing options are important, but also important to offer a range of housing options
- Erin Ewell – 204 Dickinson Avenue
  - Surprised that developers are from Swarthmore after seeing the renderings
    - Not consistent with what we expect as a community
  - Concerned about lack of community space, lack of green space, and lack of underground parking
    - Space behind building is a community gathering space used by several businesses, and these plans will eliminate without a replacement
  - Traffic will continue to be a problem, particularly if parklets are going to remain longer term
- Chris Kenney – 321 Park Avenue
  - Concerned about traffic problems
  - This project will alter the scale of life in our community
  - This building does not give to the community and is inconsistent with any other development or building in town
    - Feels as though it was not designed by someone who lives here
- Mark Hoffman – 10 Ogden Avenue
  - We need a broader plan for development in town
  - Concerned about pedestrian safety and people (especially children) walking down Park Avenue
  - Concerned about the retail space sizes and what types of business will be able to afford rent – want independent businesses and not chains
  - Does this project set a precedent if there is no affordable housing component? What if developers purchase other parcels in town?
- Board Discussion

- Chris – explain process – sketch plan, 2 additional meetings at PC and then Council, followed by demolition permit that will take additional meetings
- Comments from Laura and the EAC read to the meeting.
- Additional public email comment summarized by Chris
- Nancy – at any point did you consider preserving the buildings and facades?
  - Don D. – not all buildings are historic; only controversial building is 102 Park
    - Building is attractive relative to other buildings, but whether it qualifies for preservation is questionable
    - The historical survey does not mean it is historical, just that it is present
    - Did consider preserving, but to make the project work for the project, better to replace it and find alternative space for the existing businesses at same rent as existing space
    - Borough had an opportunity to designate all or part of the TC as a historical preservation site, but it didn't
  - Bill – looked at preserving the building or the façade, but would be difficult
    - Also want to make new retail more accessible
- Don J. – what about using the side alley for garage access?
  - Don D. – is a 40-spot garage, not 80-spot
    - Also, doing a traffic study, but will eliminate individual driving trips to the TC businesses
  - Bill – not practical to enter from the side because of turning radius
- Don P. – questions about whether easement can be used for access to building
  - Don D. – want to redo alley to make an attractive pedestrian walkway between Rutgers and Park Avenue
    - The Code permits 5-story buildings, which indicates an intent to permit projects such as this
- Chris - Troubled by stormwater issue – need to solve
  - Suggested additional uses for greywater, toilets, etc.
  - Not expect PC to grant waiver
  - Surprised to hear so many 3-bedroom units – larger units will lead to larger families and increased cost to school district than provide in taxes
- Bill – totally random number, has not been determined at this point.
- Nancy – permitting parking in the garage for retail employees or customers?
  - Plan is to permit parking for residence and retail per code.
- Chris/Nancy – interested in less parking
- James – ask about brick wall on ground level
- Chris – request a building section to demonstrate the façade setbacks for the next submission.
  - Response from developers re affordable housing and scale
- Don D. – this project is not intended to address affordable housing
  - Scale – will work harder on the façade to keep consistent with the Borough

- Overall size and bulk – followed the Zoning Code – does not seek any variances
- Bill – will not be in scale with surrounding buildings, but that was not what was intended in the Code.
- Brief discussion about access to the building during public events that close Park.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- MMP – no action
- Accessory Dwellings – no action.

### **NEXT MEETING:**

The next scheduled meeting will be held Wednesday November 17, 2021.

Meeting adjourned at 10:34 pm.

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End of Meeting Minutes

### **ADDENDUM:**

#### **Substantive Public Email Comment Summarized**

- 1) Concern about the 2 displaced businesses.
- 2) Concern about too little retail space in the project.
- 3) Reduction in affordable housing units.
- 4) Support for developers/project
- 5) Opposition to the developers/project
- 6) Building is too big, out of scale.
- 7) Building façade is unattractive.
- 8) 3 facades not shown, probably also unattractive.
- 9) The location of the building will increase traffic and parking hazards.
- 10) Concern over expensive units reducing diversity
- 11) Parking entrance reduces pedestrian safety (revised single lane version)
- 12) Parking entrance should be 2 lanes, should be on the side, or via Rutgers Ave.
- 13) Building aesthetics and relationship to adjacent buildings.
- 14) Concern that this is not the correct site for the project.
- 15) Concern over the project financial viability.
- 16) Parking is not an appropriate use for that much of the ground floor.
- 17) Concern over reuse of existing buildings
- 18) Demolition of the building loses history of the town.
- 19) Alternative uses for the ground floor (Library relocation)
- 20) Demolition of historic resources.
- 21) Quantity of retail spaces, borough needs more, better spaces.

#### **Remote Planning Commission Comment**

1. **Laura Poltronieri** - Parking, -  
- 1256.01 PURPOSE

- (e) Encourage a walkable community by promoting pedestrian orientation of streets and buildings and providing a safe and convenient interconnected sidewalk network ...
  - (g) Provide for adequate parking in a manner that does not interfere with pedestrian traffic or the rhythm of the existing streetscape
  - 1256.05 OTHER REQUIREMENTS (e) Driveways and Parking (1) The creation of new sidewalk curb cuts for motor vehicles shall be avoided whenever an alternate point of access is available. Shared access agreements are encouraged. .... When permitted vehicle access ways shall be limited to one per property to accommodate single vehicle entry and exit widths only. Garage doors are prohibited along all street frontages.
  - My general concern is to really understand how the new vehicular curb cut will impact traffic, existing parking spots, pedestrians walking on Park Ave. and respond to safety issues of drivers visibility of pedestrians particularly as cars are leaving the building. And, I would also like to know if the potential of sharing access with existing driveways of the neighboring properties has been thoroughly explored?
2. Design –
- 1256.04 DESIGN STANDARDS
    - (e) Architectural Elements
      - (3) Exterior Walls (A.) (4) (C) Roofs, Construction material shall be in keeping with the surrounding pattern of construction. Acceptable materials shall be as set forth by resolution of Borough Council
      - In general it is my opinion and the opinion of other residents who have reached out to me with their concerns, that the front elevation is too busy and that in a well-intentioned attempt address the character and pattern of the existing town center buildings the design has actually gone too far. A simpler and cleaner façade would actually blend better with the existing town center streetscape.

Additionally I would like to add that since the very first bullet under purpose for the town center zoning district is to “1256.01 PURPOSE (a) Encourage economic viability”, it might be useful for us to discuss how this project will impact the tax base of the school district in particular. I would be curious to know if and how this project will impact that tax base.

**EAC Comment: (Environmental Advisory Council)**

1. Concern over the waiver for street trees, given the urban heat island effect already in place in Town Center.
2. Concern over the stormwater waiver.
3. Given the Borough's past commitments to green energy (Ready for 100 resolution passed by Borough Council to transition the town to clean energy by 2050, etc.) can we/how can we encourage energy efficiency, use of renewable power, and so forth.

Notes: Hydrology

From the submitted plans: “A waiver is requested from section 1459.019 to not provide infiltration for watershed stormwater management. In lieu of infiltration, the net 2-year [storm runoff] volume in accordance with MCG-1 is proposed to be captured and reused to irrigate the green roof, planters, and landscape/lawn areas.”

The proposed mitigations appear to mostly comply with the Pennsylvania Stormwater Best Management Practices (PA BMP) Manual.

However,

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Although the manual rates volume reduction as medium-high for both the green roof and the cistern, it rates the peak rate control for both as low, which may be of concern in light of climate disruption forecasts.

The manual strongly recommends against irrigating the vegetated roof, contrary to the proposed plans; therefore an alternative use for the rainwater collected in the cistern must be found.

A green roof requires a pitch of not more than 30°, but the gables are clearly steeper, and the pitch of the rest of the roof is unclear.

The overhangs in the artist rendering may be less than 30°, but certainly appear steeper than 2:12, which means they would require structural support to prevent the cover from sliding.

Roof runoff water quality is in doubt for the first 5 years or more, as the cover becomes fully established; this must be taken into account in the reuse plan.

Are we satisfied with the specifications in Chapter 1459, Watershed Stormwater Management of the building code in light of the climate disruption's forecast increase in rainfall and in extreme rainfall events?

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**Email Public Comment verbatim (reformatted):**

**Edward Adams:** 1) Why was the artist's rendering of the proposed condominium building situated hiding behind the Swarthmore Public Library bushes (seems rather sneaky) -- will there be any greenspaces? 2) How does this project provide more support for Swarthmore businesses when two highly valued retail stores need to be destroyed? The reputation of the stores (H.O.M. and The Gallery) provide charm, community, and out-of-town commerce. In addition, the current buildings in the village are unique and attractive -- there seems to be adequate availability at present for new and additional endeavors -- perhaps interesting ones. 3) Parking and traffic would be a hazard for the area. The present parking, which requires back-out, also requires extreme caution, unless one has a swivel-neck. Will 80 vehicles entering and leaving the garage add to the concern? Will the garage accommodate guests and visitors? Will the children who play and read on the library lawn be safe? 4) What about trash and recycled material? (I guess we can skip yard waste!)

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**Joe Qualtieri, 62 Magill Road** - I'm in opposed to this development because of the impact that it will have on the affordable housing in the borough. Swarthmore is a home to a college that should be trying to recruit a diverse student body from diverse economic backgrounds. We as a community have plenty of places for rich people to live. I would hate to see the diverse nature of the borough compromised so a bunch of super rich people can own everything. The owner of this land is only concerned with their own wealth and cares exactly zero about what's good for the people of Swarthmore and that's why I urge the planning commission to deny this project.

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**Catherine Crouch, 1 Oberlin Ave** - My biggest concern about this development is that the current design will significantly take away from not only the general appearance but also the walkable nature of the Town Center. The current design has as its most prominent features the entrance to its parking garage. I strongly urge the Planning Commission to request a different design from the architects which places the parking entrance at the sides or, if possible, from the Rutgers Ave side of the property via the gap between the post office and the adjacent condos. (I understand that there may not be enough room to send cars in and out from that side.) In addition, the building design should harmonize more with the buildings around it -- more attention should be paid to helping it blend in rather than be a conspicuously different style. Finally, for the Town Center to thrive it needs foot traffic and an inviting set of first-floor retail spaces that draw people in -- I think the Planning Commission should seriously consider whether the proposed building will accomplish that, or whether there is a different site that would be more appropriate for this type of project, and a different type of building could go into this space that would draw more foot traffic to the town center while still providing mixed-use development.

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**Raima Evan** - I'm writing to express my concern about the plan put forward to construct a large building on Park Avenue. I understand that Swarthmore needs to change to stay vibrant and economically viable. That said, the proposed building is way out of scale for our town. It would be a hulking behemoth and would ruin the intimacy of our streetscape. It is not only big; it is ugly. Quite apart from my concern about the size and aesthetics of the proposed building, I am very concerned that moderate rental spaces in town would be replaced by expensive units. If Swarthmore is truly invested in having a diversity of residents, not to mention allowing seniors to age in place, then tearing down moderately priced housing and replacing it with expensive new units is not the way to move forward. I am also concerned that the retail spaces in the proposed new building would be too expensive for the owners of H.O.M. and Gallery on Park. The businesses that would be able to afford those new retail spaces would probably not be distinctive, one-of-a-kind shops. We would lose two unique shops and get another Dunkin' Donuts or Starbucks. I hope that the Swarthmore Planning Commission will respect these concerns, which I know a lot of other residents share. The planning process for any new development in Swarthmore should incorporate public input, respect the need for affordable housing and retail spaces, and complement the aesthetics of our town.

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**Brigid Kelly**, 316 Maple Avenue - I think evidence of the viability of their business plan would be a good idea. (Like deposits on units, not a letter from a realtor.) The details provided so far envision substantial demand for far more expensive condos and retail units than have been paid for in downtown Swarthmore in living memory. If they know 3-4 couples that wish to "downsize" to a 700k condo there, that's nice but really does not approach adequate evidence of the financial viability of a project containing so many residential and commercial units. Ensuring that the business plan makes sense would benefit everyone involved. Regardless of its architectural details, it will be infuriating if two of the town's favorite buildings are torn down and many of our favorite people are displaced for a building that is mostly empty in the long-term.

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**Beth & Conrad Bender** - The structure proposed is enormous and architecturally out of sync with the rest of the town center. The massive footprint at 160' x 180' is not at all in keeping with its surroundings, at 5 stories tall it will dwarf everything around it, and its street-facing façade has no relationship to the rest of the downtown area. We can't speak to the side or back facades, as we have not seen and design renderings for those, but we imagine they will be equally unappealing. The parking garage that consumes the vast majority of the ground floor is not at all sympathetic with the surrounding streetscape, and certainly does not enhance it. The fact that the parking garage entrance is on the front of the building, crossing a significant pedestrian walkway, is completely out of character with our downtown, and poses some safety concerns. Additionally, the revised plan showing a single lane in and out of the parking garage seems particularly ill-conceived. Is the expectation that a car waiting to enter while another car is exiting will wait on the street or the sidewalk, in the midst of pedestrian or vehicular traffic? The structure does not promote the reuse of existing structures. The demolition of existing structures seems to run contrary to the Borough's stipulations that buildings of historic significance should only be demolished if they are structurally unsound or if demolishing them would have a substantial negative impact on the character of the Town Center. We have no knowledge of the structural integrity of these buildings, and the second stipulation is subjective; however, we would argue that losing these buildings in favor of the proposed monstrosity would have a substantial negative impact on the character of the Town Center. The proposal will cause important retail stores to close or relocate, and several affordable housing rentals and office spaces and their tenants will be eliminated. If this project moves forward, what are the implications? Are we ready to raze the rest of our downtown in favor of high-rise luxury condominiums and the few retail enterprises that can afford to purchase space or lease at much higher rates than are currently available? We

should enact more specific ordinances designed to retain our integrity, to preclude the insurgence of Starbucks and Olive Garden, and to encourage the existence of small businesses like HOM and Gallery on Park. Please do not approve this behemoth as designed, but encourage the developers to find a solution that works within the established design of our awesome downtown Swarthmore.

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**Sally Fullam** 15 Forest Lane - Over recent decades, a series of studies have all shown that the current library space is woefully inadequate and that (my personal abbreviated conclusion) borough hall is a terrible building. At the same time, the prominence of the proposed condo structure threatens the character of the borough. What if the retail/lower floor of the new building became the new home for the library? This would result in the new building being fit for its dominant position. The current library space could easily take on other functions, such as daycare or after school childcare that will be more in demand with the pending Biden programs. From a tax perspective, since enhanced revenue may be a driving force, the library could be a tenant of a shell company that would own the space. Still, I think the lease model should be based on the current per square footage lease. It might be possible to develop a model where library fundraising paid some of the development costs associated with the space. If the profits generated by this arrangement fall short of the developers' current projections, 1) their projections are unrealistic for current retail and borough conditions and 2) the negotiation on this will protect the developers by resulting in a public benefit. If incorporating this arrangement into existing plans is not possible due to the developers' cash flow issues, they could extend current leases for a planning period. The Celias were one of the handful of Italian immigrant families that initially came to Delaware County. Many, like them, were cobblers spread out one family per community. They were not initially welcomed here, and the borough's pickiness to them resulted in the high quality design of their building, which I think is the finest retail building in the borough. When I was a tenant in the 1980's, the Celia's took such intense pride in their building that it breaks my heart to think of their legacy being erased so abruptly. I do, however, think that if some larger public purpose would be served by losing the building, their legacy could be acknowledged in some way and it could all be ok.

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**Melanie K. Rodbart, PE**, 105 Rutgers Ave. - The proposed renderings and plot plan of the project at 110 Park Ave should not be considered without the understanding that this project is dependent on the demolition of several Historic Resources (namely 102 Park Ave (HOM), 104 Park Ave (Gallery on Park), and 110 Park). Swarthmore's Zoning Code ENCOURAGES the retention of the Town Center streetscape by preserving the existing buildings of historic significance to the greatest extent possible. The code states that no structure located within the Town Center Zoning District shall be demolished unless and until a demo permit is approved by Borough Council. In order for a building of HISTORIC VALUE to be demolished it must either be structurally unsound or not have a substantial negative effect on the character of Town Center. The zoning code defines "historic value" four ways - one of them is a structure that is a historic resource identified in the Borough of Swarthmore "Historic Resources Survey." These buildings are identified in the Historic Resources Survey prepared by John Pickett in 2001 which means they have HISTORIC VALUE. .. I am providing this email to you because I care about these existing buildings, the existing businesses that rent the properties, the future of Swarthmore, and the historic value of Town Center. Authorizing demolition of these buildings would be in violation of the zoning code as it would raze several buildings of historic value with no known structural issues and have a clear negative effect on the character of Town Center. If the existing buildings are not structurally sound, then the Owner is in violation for not making necessary repairs to the properties. Regardless, the Commission must do its duty and not approve a demolition permit for these properties.

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**Susanna Morikawa** - I am writing in support of the proposed Park Avenue Condominiums project which I think is appropriate to the goals developed by the Town Center planning group and local ordinances. I believe that it will add to the vitality of the Business District. Both developers of the project are long-time Swarthmore residents and have a long history of commitment and public service to the Borough. The current buildings at 102-104 Park Ave and 110-112 Park Ave are old but not of historic significance. To attempt to clarify, unlike Michael's corner which is a historically significant part of the Borough's built landscape, these structures were included in the Historic Resources Survey as part of the project to include all buildings within the business district for purposes of town planning. Individually they are not candidates for special protection - not associated with significant historical events, style, owner, or architecture. In the summary of recommendations, Delaware County Planning noted that if the Borough were to consider creating local historic districts in the future, it would be appropriate to employ a relaxed Act 167 to protect the overall character rather than preserve every building. When possible, I am a big supporter of adaptive reuse of older buildings. However, in this case, it's hard to conceive of a project that could incorporate the various buildings in a useful way that would contribute to the Borough. I have lived in Swarthmore for about 35 years. In addition to serving on the Borough Planning Commission and the Historic Preservation Task Force, I was one of the founders of the Swarthmore Historical Society and chaired the committee which did the field work for the Historic Resources Survey, published in 2001. I look forward to creative solutions to preserving Swarthmore as a very special place to live.

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**Peter Stroup**, 306 Dickinson - As a Swarthmore resident for more than 25 years, I am writing in support of the proposed development at 102-110 Park Ave., provided some design adjustments are made to better fit with our town center. I believe increased population density in town center will benefit all of the community and an increase in the local tax base will reduce financial pressure on our borough. There are three design modifications I believe would greatly improve this project: 1) Move the garage entrance off the front of the building and on to the alley on the north or south side of the new building. This would make the garage entrance safer for pedestrians on Park and would allow for more storefront space across the front of the project. 2) In order to reduce the perceived mass of the building, the third, fourth and fifth floors should be progressively stepped back from the street. While this might result in some loss of interior square footage, it would allow for terraces or balconies on the front units on the third, fourth and fifth floors, which would be a desirable feature. 3) Since the proposed project would eliminate 6 low cost rental units in the 102-104 Park building, the design should be modified to include 6 or more apartments (one or two bedroom), that would remain rental units and not sold as condos. This would help maintain a mix of income level residents in town center. I believe these three modest design changes would greatly improve this project, which has the potential to benefit Swarthmore for years to come.

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**Andy Rosen**, 221 Harvard Avenue - I ask the Borough Council and Planning Commission to not approve the proposed development project if it does not include multiple retail spaces (more than the two proposed, since it's my understanding that approximately 8 business operations need to or have moved because of this development.) It's also my understanding that almost all of the leasable space in town is currently booked, meaning that to realize the potential to grow our business district, these new condos need to accommodate more retail spaces. It's absolutely essential to keep affordability top of mind for retail spaces, especially in Swarthmore, where foot traffic is relatively low, compared to places like Media or West Chester. The developers and our town leaders should do whatever is necessary to ensure the ability of our merchants - in particular, HOM and Gallery on Park - to remain in our town and survive (even flourish) economically.

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**Linton Stables**, 285 N. Swarthmore Avenue - I write in support of the proposed development of condominium apartments at 110 Park Avenue. I urge the Zoning Hearing Board to approve the request for a conditional use permit to demolish the existing structures when such a request is made. As the Chair of the Housing Committee of the Aging-in-Place Task Force I was honored to

hear and document the needs and desires of Borough residents who wish to remain in Swarthmore during their retirement years. I am not speaking in any official capacity, but my knowledge of this topic compels me to speak out in favor of housing development that meets the criteria set forth in the final report of the Task Force. The proposed project addresses several of the issues raised in the Task Force report and goes some distance in responding to Recommendations 17 and 19. Recommendation 17 was to "Encourage the creation of a range of affordable housing options near downtown." Affordability is certainly an issue, and it may be said that this project does not address it adequately. It should be remembered that by the official HUD definition of affordability, there are NO affordable living options in all of Swarthmore. But by providing a less expensive option for living than the typical 3- or 4-bedroom single family home on a large lot, this project does permit older people to stay in town and it frees up a home that can be purchased by a young family who will take full advantage of it. Affordability must still be addressed, but that is an issue that the community itself must take up, and be ready to increase its taxes to pay for. That said, there are in fact a fair number of units near the downtown area that are less expensive to purchase or rent. This new development fills a need that is currently unmet. Recommendation 19 was to "Improve accessibility of homes." In addition, Recommendation 13 from the Transportation and Mobility chapter of the report was to "Increase accessibility in the Town Center and throughout Swarthmore." Please note that none of the living units and none of the commercial spaces to be demolished is accessible. In their place will be built several commercial spaces and many living units, ALL of which will be accessible. I see this as a major improvement to life in our Borough. Finally, I recognize that change is difficult. The Aging-in-Place Task Force recognized this, too, and at the same time made 22 recommendations to change the Borough to make it more livable not only for seniors, but for everyone of all ages. Some of the buildings to be demolished are, themselves, examples of change over time: residences turned into business locations, and business locations that have seen any number of different business types over the years. The currently proposed changes will be of long-term benefit to our town and in time will become part of the fabric that makes Swarthmore such a great place to live.

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**Jamie Shindell, RA**, 300 Cornell Ave - I hope to attend tonight's meeting but child care may prevent my attendance. In preparation of missing the meeting, please see my concerns regarding the proposed condo building (Park Ave) as currently designed: 102 – 104 Park Ave and 110-112 Park are identified on the Historic Resources Survey for Swarthmore Borough. Has the developer fully studied the options to retain the existing structure as part of an adaptive reuse design? I would prefer not to see these structures demolished. Design fails to meet requirements of the zoning and maintain the integrity of the existing built environment. Style and Mass need to be completely redesigned to be distinguished from the historic structures. Adding a Driveway crossing - Borough should reject additional crossing on this block. Access to structure parking should be from the existing driveway crossing between 102 and 100 Park Ave. This is a pedestrian safety issue. The Height of the proposed building overwhelms the streetscape. The improvement at this property should be held at the zoning limits (3 stories). Thank you for serving on the commission and listening to my concerns regarding this project.

Back up for concerns outlined above: 102 – 104 Park Ave and 110-112 Park are identified on the Historic Resources Survey for Swarthmore Borough, 2001[1] thus are both structures of "historic value" as defined by the zoning. The demolition of two of the four historic flat roof / corniced structures on Park Ave does not align with the zoning code. The Park Avenue facades of both buildings proposed to be demolished retain more character defining features than the other two structures. This will have a negative effect on the character of the Town Center. Approval for the demolition needs to be fully vetted. The design for the condo fails to address the context of downtown Swarthmore both in scale, massing, and style. The integrity of the Town Center is lost with this current proposed design Scale – The pedestrian scale is lost in the Town Center Proposed: 5 Stories, Existing neighboring buildings: 3 stories. Mass –The lower 2-story band is not solid enough to maintain the existing streetscape. The upper 3-story mass overwhelms and towers the streetscape. Style – Design Composition principles are confused. The design is not contrasting or adhering to an existing style. Not compatible with or distinguishing from the historic structures. Compatibility to compliment one of the existing historic styles. Material proposed lacks quality and depth. Achieving good design in an historic context is often the result of a

process more than explicit guidelines, a process that includes dialogues between community and preservation interests, and the architect & owner. Given Swarthmore Borough does not have Infill Standards, the board should reference established guidelines to assist in giving guidance on this project proposal. One such option is "The Preservation Alliance of Philadelphia offers guidelines for new construction within (eligible) historic districts. [2] While their guideline focuses on Philadelphia, key points can be applied to our small borough. The proposal to have parking access from Park Ave erodes the continuity of the streetscape[3], rhythm of the pedestrian experience[4], and compromises pedestrian safety. Sidewalk users should be and feel safe to use. Numerous Driveway crossings within a single block threaten that safety. This block already has two driveway crossings. The developer should study the use of the existing driveway crossing (adjacent to HOM) and as recommended by zoning code[5]. Driveway crossings are prone to limit accessibility for pedestrians if poorly designed or maintained.[6] The design shall follow ADAAG at a minimum "guidelines concerning infill development (new structures) are provided to assist in interpreting and application of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation Historic Buildings. Infill development should not copy historical styles but must be architecturally compatible with the area and adjacent or nearby historic structures. Materials used at the time of construction of structures in the area are recommended; however, other materials which are consistent with typical structures in the area may be acceptable when consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines." [7] Swarthmore needs to establish Infill Standards to avoid loss of integrity throughout the borough. Zoned – Town Center Zoning Issues Project is not meeting the following requirements of the zoning code as outlined in 1256.01 Purpose Project exceeds the building height maximum. Project 1256.04 Design Standards With only 2 structures listed on NRHP (Benjamin West, Birthplace and Ogden House), Swarthmore provides limited guidance for new construction. While Swarthmore is not designated a historic district, it is eligible based on National Register criteria for evaluation – age, significance, and integrity. A. be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or B. be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or C. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or D. have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.[8]

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Linda & Brooke Porch, 111 Columbia Avenue - Dear Swarthmore Planning Commission, We write to enthusiastically support the proposed project at 110 Park Avenue. The project will: Further the borough's Town Center goals. Create more attractive retail space. Enhance the appeal of the Town Center. Be a great place to live. Thank you for considering our support of the project.

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Birgitte Haselgrove - To the planning commission for Swarthmore. Having looked at the sketch and the revised sketch of the building this project, in my opinion, will create even more of a log jam regarding traffic in The Ville. Please consider a no-approval!

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