

Swarthmore Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes:

June 15, 2016

Members attending: Jon Penders-Chair, Chris DeBruyn Vice Chair and Acting Secretary, Rex Brien, George Wilson , Steve Minton, Laura Poltronieri & Vukan Vuchic.

Also attending: Mary Walk-Borough Council Liaison to Planning Commission

From Swarthmore College and the design team: Valerie Smith, Stu Hain, Jan Semmler, Susan Smythe, Craig Spangler, Jeffrey French, Christopher Burkett, and Don Petrosa

Meeting called to order at: 7:35 pm

New Business:

Don Petrosa introduced the presentation for the proposed Biology, Engineering and Psychology Building (BEP) on Whittier Place.

Design Summary: The new BEP building is a 160,000 square foot project that requires the removal of two existing structures (Hicks Hall and Papazian Hall).

Anticipated Timeline: Today's introduction to the project will be followed up with a formal Land Development application that will be presented at the September Planning Commission meeting. The building permit application is anticipated to occur in March of 2017, with completion of construction in 2020.

From Ordinance 1072, this building is situated in an IN-A Institutional District and will require a conditional use approval as part of the Land Development application

Valerie Smith provided an overview of the concept for the project and presented some of the sustainability initiatives that were proposed for the design. She also remarked about the close proximity to the Meeting House and how the project will be mindful and sensitive to the operations of the Meeting House and daycare center. The BEP project will strive to have a minimum impact on the Meeting House and will work with the membership throughout the duration of the project.

Craig Spangler presented additional details about the proposed design for the building and the adjacent parking lot.

The 14 space parking lot and surrounding drop-off circle have been designed for use by the Meeting House. The existing parking area was reported to have 43 parking spots. The intended design has a net loss of 29 parking spots.

The two existing structures that will be demolished (Hicks Hall and Papazian Hall), currently provide 44,000 square feet of area, so the new BEP building will provide an additional 116,000 square feet of space for classrooms, laboratories, common spaces and offices.

The overall height of the building is designed to be around 77 feet tall at the top of the screening around the perimeter of the roof. In contrast, the heights of the existing buildings that surround the area are in the range of 40 feet to 50 feet tall. The actual information of the surrounding buildings should be provided within the Land Development application.

Chris Burkett presented the proposed site design that will be incorporated along with the construction of the building.

The intended design may require the need for two waivers in the land development application.

Waiver #1: There are "Very Steep Slopes" within the limit of disturbance

Waiver #2 The design entails a straightening of the curb along Whittier Place. The straightening will create a 27 foot wide road, which exceeds the 24 foot maximum allowable width.

During, and after the design presentation, the Planning Commission asked questions and voiced concerns about a number of points.

The proposed design did not include any plans for a new sidewalk along the South side of Whittier Place, leading pedestrians to the Meeting House. The Land Development application should seek to incorporate a sidewalk in this area.

The height of the proposed structure could exceed the 75 foot maximum allowable height. The combination of a sloping grade and the incorporation of roof screening panels tend to exacerbate the height of the building in selected areas. The Land Development application should outline the methodology and clearly show the height of the building at the various facades. Also, the various heights of the surrounding buildings should be surveyed and noted on the application.

The net loss of 29 parking spots will directly affect the people who use the Meeting House on a regular basis as well as during special events. The traffic study should address the impact of the reduction in parking capacity.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 9:00.