

MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, December 4, 2024

PRESENT:

Richard Nuttall

Keith Auerswald

Tom Piacentino

Joseph Antonelli

Ryan Leighton

Amber Watson-Tardiff

Jim Ennis – Building and Zoning Director

Dominic Cundari– Township Engineer – Remington & Vernick, RVE

Andrew Griffin – Township Solicitor Curtin & Heefner

ABSENT:

Guy Triano

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

Mr. Nuttall called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The pledge of allegiance was recited. Amber Watson-Tardiff took roll call with 9 members present.

2. Approval of Minutes – November 6, 2024

Keith Auerswald made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 6, 2024, Planning Commission meeting. Ryan Leighton seconded, and the motion passed with a vote of 6-0 .

3. Petition on behalf of Woods Schools to Rezone Woods Services, Inc., and Woods Services Foundation to Create an Overlay District for Certain Parcels

in Middletown Township, Woods Schools, Langhorne, PA 19047, TMP

Nos: 22-040-042; 22-021-084; 22-030-006; 22-030-004; 22-030-005; 22-030-003; 22-030-002; 22-030-001; 22-021-083; 22-021-055; and 22-021-055-002, R-1 - Residence District, S/LD 24-7.

Simon Kimmelman, Chief officer of Woods campus, started off by discussing the background of the Woods school and what the Woods school purpose is. Kimmelman went on with what this overlay can provide and that Woods would stay as is and not developed. Woods could expand in medical and dental. The Woods school is at capacity, and this will give them room to expand. Mr. Kimmelman went on about how this overlay will serve Wood's purpose and believes it would be an appropriate use of land.

Mr. Mike Meginniss, the attorney representing Woods School, then discussed the extra acres for the township is a benefit. He went over how the overlay ordinance provides a back stop for certain developments to take over. Mr. Meginniss stated that there have been no definite development plans filed. He had also gone over the concerns that residents have in reference to future developments that could possibly happen, stating that the Township needs to trust in Woods for these future developments but there is no guarantee there wouldn't be larger developments that could take place. Mr. Meginniss then read through the overlay ordinance and RVE letters. He then left the final question of, what would the correct re-zoning be if it weren't for the multi-use zoning?

Richard Nuttall asked the question of how this overlay was benefitting woods which was brought up a numerous number of times with Mrs. Amber Watson – Tardiff backing that statement up with questioning the affordable housing of the plan. Mr. Meginniss states that there is nothing set with the affordable housing but will be happy to discuss that item. Ryan Leighton then added that the Township does not need to dig up more land to put more of what we already have, and stating there should be an agreement set for the affordable housing. Mrs. Watson-Tardiff then asked about breaking down into smaller pieces of re-zoning instead of an entire overlay at once because they never finished the initial plan without pulling out so they never knew if that would have ever been approved. Mr. Leighton also questioned if selling the parcels was going to help Woods in the long term or if it was just a solution for right now. Mr. Kimmelman stated that Woods needs to adapt to the new reality and there is a lot of property that works against them. If they are not allowed to provide anything new that now increases the cost of maintenance, repairs, etc. If they do not act now with their choice, they will no longer have a choice with future in devours. They would only sell the property if the agreement were on paper that that establishment would benefit Woods.

Mike Markman, from BET, further discussed the possible ways this would benefit Woods. Stating this could build an interconnection that ties Woods to the community, that walking close to everything around would elevate Woods campus while also having shops close to home. Mr. Nuttall then asked again how this is benefitting Woods. Mr. Kimmelman stated that there could be a pedestrian center that would be available to the people who come to them daily and having apartments for workers. Mr. Tom Piacentino asked about the retail end of the shops and if they would be open to the public. Mr. Kimmelman stated that the Bed & Breakfast would be limited to public, leaving most for those in close relation to Woods. Mr. Nuttall asked about why such a big overlay. Mr. Kimmelman stated that it would be less time consuming. That the advantage of the overlay you could have a picture of what the entire property would look like after being carefully looked at and designed to have a full plan. Mrs. Watson-Tardiff then asked the final question of how would we stop a developer from taking all that land and developing something different due to the zoning change? Mr. Kimmelman stated that the development would have to match what is in the overlay ordinance.

10-minute break (Resumed at 9:00pm for Public Comment)

Public Comment:

Gregory Pelz: (200 Middletown Blvd Apt. 2027) – Spoke in support of Woods and believes this will help them grow and how much affordable housing is needed. Mr. Pelz said this is a way of Woods to continue to provide for the community.

Ed Termyna: (301 Penncrest Drive) – Disagreed about the “stigma” about the people who are at Woods. Also states that the Township already has enough shops, apartments, recreational, and bed and breakfasts. Left his comments by saying this just doesn’t work here.

Jeremy Sams: (39 Pinebrook Drive), Danika Lynn (328 Flour Lane), Lansanah Darley (2000 Veterans Highway), Holly Cunningham (752 Adams Avenue), Pat Mervine (960 Langhorne Yardley Road) – Residents spoke in support of Woods expanding to give others an opportunity to grow.

Eric Bruno: (79 Sweetgum Road) – This resident spoke about this being a screen for outside township developers to try and join in on. Also stating that the schools in the township are already overcrowded and there are tons of Bed and Breakfasts throughout Langhorne already. Mr. Bruno also spoke about how there is space at the Oxford Valley Mall for retail stores to go before building an entirely new development.

Joe Finch (346 Wyoming Avenue) – Mr. Finch spoke about his concerns with flooding and the traffic with the students in the area and the residents.

Karen Dalrymple (583 Valley View Road) – This resident spoke about her concerns of how and/or if this benefitted the Township and not only Woods School.

Kim Everett (170 Windham Drive) – Mrs. Everett spoke in support of Woods School. Believed that the affordable housing could bring more workers. Also, that with all the healthcare changes happening and new healthcare coming through Woods must change with that to help those who need it.

Suzann Galliani (151 N Buckthorn) – Spoke on how she moved to this Township because she did not want to be in the city any longer, and now it feels like the city is being brought here and she does not want that to happen that is what she was trying to get away from.

Paula O’Neil (678 Valley View Road) – Spoke against this overlay at Wood’s School and how there is a lot of vacancy already happening within the commercial buildings we already have and doesn’t want to see more.

Fran Grous (360 Greenridge Drive) – Residents was questioning the grant that Woods was given before the approvals and where that money had gone.

Lance Sagers (98 Queen Lily Road) – Mr. Lance spoke about the concerns he had about not hearing a definite plan of what would happen with the property.

Lauren Lareau (18 Secklepear Road) – Spoke that the EAC rejects this proposal. Stated that the deed restrictions are not kept track of and anything can change. Also concerned that once other facilities hear about the overlay possibly being passed, they will try and follow.

All members went into an executive session at 10:10pm and resumed at 10:24pm.

The Planning Commission gives a recommendation of denial for S/LD #24-7 – Petition of Woods Schools to amend the Middletown Township Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to create a Community Mixed Use Overlay District covering approximately 209 acres of land and multiple parcels in Middletown Township’s R1 Residence Zoning District and containing BCTMP #'s 22-040-042, 22-021-084, 22-030-006, 22-030-004, 22-030-005, 22-030-003, 22-030-002, 22-030-001, 22-021-083, 22-021-055, and 22-021-055-

002. Denial is based on the following: unclear on attainable housing, Bucks County Planning Commission does not recommend, argument made for not doing projects one at a time other than the inconvenience, over development and overlay there is too much commercial work, and did not provide sufficient explanation of how the overlay would benefit Woods.

4. Review of Zoning Hearing Board Advertisement

N/A

5. Other Business

No other Business was discussed

6. Adjournment

Richard Nutall made a motion for adjournment at 10:30 PM. Ryan Leighton seconded the motion, which carried on a 6-0 vote.