

LOWER MACUNGIE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING – March 9, 2021

The March 9, 2021 meeting of the Lower Macungie Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Tom Beil at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Meeting. Commission members in attendance: Tom Beil, Jon Hammer, Tim Pickel, Amy Miller, Bob Rust, Al Perez, and Wesley Barrett. Also present were Nathan Jones, Director of Planning and Community Development, Bryan McAdam, Township Engineer, CKS Engineers, and David Brooman, Township Solicitor.

Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Pickel, second by Mr. Barrett, all in favor to approve the January 12, 2021 and February 9, 2021 minutes. One addendum to add Mr. Perez's attendance to the February 9, 2021 meeting is noted.

1955 Willow Lane Barn Project Sketch Plan

Mr. Jones provided an overview of the project. This property was recently subdivided and the existing restaurant has been demolished. What is being proposed is a rehabilitation of the existing barn to be turned into a distillery/microbrewery with deck for outdoor entertaining. The barn will also have two apartments on the upper level. ZHB relief was granted due to the fact that his property is located in the 100-year flood plain. The plans show planting buffer restorations along with planting of new trees along the creek. Trails along the creek are also proposed along with a new easement.

From the applicant's team in attendance are Ron R. Beitler, Ron W. Beitler, Jason Mulligan, and Greg Smith.

Mr. McAdam states that he has not much to comment on due to the fact that this is just a discussion on the sketch plan and not an official submission.

Mr. R.W. Beitler states that along with the already mentioned uses of the property he will also want to add a shed to house lawn equipment. He will be in charge of the brewery side of operations and Mr. Mulligan will be acting as the head brewer. Mr. Davis, already the owner of Hop Hill Brewery in Northampton County, will own the distillery side.

Mr. Rust questions the concerns of smells, leakage, and noise issues. Mr. Smith advises that production will be done during daytime hours and there is no smell or noise pollution from this activity. The leakage concerns will be well contained in environmentally friendly containers and all cleaning solutions will be environmentally friendly as well. In the four years of operations in his other location, there have been zero complaints. Mr. Rust also questions the possibility of a fire that may burn down toward the creek. Mr. Smith states that there is not enough volume to reach the creek

area, and they do have plans in place to hinder the spread of any possible interior fires to include fire extinguishers.

Mr. Beil questions the requirements to obtain the liquor licenses and restrictions on them. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that this project will have two separate licenses, which are in process at the time of the meeting. He acknowledges that the hours will be limited to allow for enjoyment from the public, but not late enough to have concerns from the public. He states that this would ideally be a place where families can come and even is thinking of having a small playground for children to use like one that is located in Kutztown at Saucony Creek. Typically tasting rooms are not late-night establishments. They want to offer outdoor musical entertainment, trivia nights, and other possible events. He is planning on having the creek area open for the public use for fishing. They will be restricted by the Outdoor Entertainment Ordinance.

Mr. Pickel questions the plans for food at this location. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that the plan is to have food trucks coming on a regular basis as there will be no kitchen on site. The food trucks will line the front of the building to allow for shelter when patrons are ordering.

Mr. Beil questions matters with the training of employees of this location. Mr. Smith states that every employee is required to be RAMP certified and these are two-year certificates that will be needed to be renewed. Managers and owners will also go through training processes. Employees will have 30 days from hire to obtain their certifications, and there will also be in house training as this is part of their liquor license requirements.

Mr. Beil questions the amount of noise as a concern to the residents of the apartments. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that the leases will clearly state the noise expectations. Another brewery in the area also has a mixed use of apartments above the brewery. They are expecting to rent the apartments to tenants who will understand, but also enjoy the location and all that goes with it.

Mr. Beil asks about the number of employees and patrons at the location at the busiest times. Mr. R.W. Beitler states no more than 6-7 employees on a regular basis per day. Typically, no more than 20 patrons at a time who rotate out and on weekends a maximum of 45 patrons. For special events the combined indoor and outdoor patron totals may be from 60-80 patrons. The parking concerns detail that there are currently 38 established parking spots on the property.

Mr. Rust has concerns over Willow Lane traffic and safety for children near the river. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that the egress plan is in and out and they are not proposing to use the current north driveway. There will be signs for safety at own risk near the waterway. The depth of the Little Lehigh in this section is about one foot. The water flows quickly, and after a storm signs will state not to go near the water.

Mr. Hammer questions whether or not all production will be consumed and sold on site or if there is a chance that trucks will come to the location to sell the product elsewhere. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that the brewery has hopes to partner with hyperlocal locations and perhaps one day there may be a smaller box truck. Mr. Smith has a plan to use his personal vehicle for any distillery use.

Mr. Perez questions the delivery of production materials to the location. Mr. Smith states that there will be a 48' long truck to deliver the grain, and the brewery will use personal vehicles. Mr. Perez also states that this could be a good example for the township for future reuse projects. Mr. Beitler states that this is a labor of love and not a high margin project for them.

Mr. Rust states that the EAC will be happy to help with any insight that they may be able to give and would like to know more about the planned landscaping along the creek bed. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that along the creek there is buffer planting along with a path to the waterway and ADA accessible fishing capabilities are being explored.

Mr. Beil questions the sewer connections for this location and if there are to be any expected problems. Mr. R.W. Beitler states that this will be public sewer and Mr. Smith states that there are no expected issues with the sewer lines and that there will be traps in place to stop solids from getting into the lines.

No public comment has been made.

Mr. R.W. Beitler is looking for the needs from the PC, BOC, and well as the Township. He will be looking to request a waiver for a 150ft setback from the BOC.

Mr. Beil states that this is a great project and he gives the applicants a lot of credit for this. He requests a motion to table the project at this time. Motion by Mr. Russ and a Second by Mr. Barrett. Motion carries 7-0.

Zoning Ordinance Lookback

Mr. Jones gives a brief update on the verbiage modifications, housekeeping on definitions, and simple modifications for clarification. He asks the PC to look through these updates for comments. Temporary structure user is now a limit of 6 months, where previously there was no limit. No further questions from the board at this time.

There is a Planning Commission Workshop on Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

Other Discussions

Mr. Jones informs the board that there is a possibility for changes to meetings in the coming months due to the large amount of expected submissions. There are opportunities to use both the regular and workshop meetings as regular meetings or hold meetings as is and anticipate the regular monthly meeting to be incredibly long.

Ms. Miller questions whether or not there is a plan to have the Zoom meetings to go into the Summer. Mr. Jones states that he is unsure at this time, however, he states that the meeting room has been outfitted for digital use during meetings.

Mr. Rust states preference to use both meetings to be used as regular meetings and forgo the workshops, Ms. Miller agrees with this and the consensus is to hold the shorter meetings.

There is no Department Report.

There being no further business, motion made by Mr. Hammer, second by Mr. Rust, all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Boyer, Permit Clerk
Lower Macungie Township