



# Memo

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To: Honorable Members of the Bethlehem Township Board of Commissioners  
Melissa Shafer, Township Manager  
From: Nathan D. Jones, AICP, BCO Director of Planning and Economic Development  
Date: April 11th, 2017  
Re: Planning, Zoning and Construction Departmental Report

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## **Departmental Activities:**

-The Planning, Construction and Zoning Department has continued to see an incredibly busy season so far in 2017 with strong interest in residential home improvements including pools, new roofs and sheds. April so far, has seen 50+ permit applications to the Department. Additionally, the land development and site plan project pipeline remains strong with several potential applicants expected to submit to the Township in the spring for new projects.

Also, the Department has finalized the coordination of the Comprehensive Plan adoption process and after an extensive visioning, planning, crafting, outreach and statutory review procedure; the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update is ready to be adopted at this time.

## **Recent Submissions:**

**-Please note: the Planning Commission shall meet on April 24th at 7PM.**

**-2467 Baglyos Circle, Keystone Canna Remedies:** As expected, an application has been received for a medical marijuana dispensary in Bethlehem Township. The swift and decisive action of the Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission ensured that a zoning ordinance was on record prior to any applications for such a use in the Township. Bethlehem Township's centralized location and abundant regional highway access has garnered particularly strong interest in the newly emerging market for this use. The proposal consists of a medical marijuana dispensary on Baglyos Circle in LVIP VI. Procedure for this use consists of a site plan review and conditional use application and hearing.

## **Major Project Updates:**

**-Brodhead Road Distribution Center:** Brodhead Holdings, LP has submitted a Preliminary/Final Plan Application and a Conditional Use Application for a 500,000 +/- square foot distribution/ trucking facility on a 37.6 acre lot on Brodhead Road. The proposal has been recommended for approval by Planning Commission. Zoning relief was obtained for the project, as proposed, at the March Zoning Hearing Board Meeting. If approved, improvements for the project would include the reconstruction of Brodhead Road along the entire frontage of the lot to the railroad tracks as part of the development.

**-Nancy Run Estates Phases 7-10:** This proposal has been in administrative review with the Planning Commission for some time working to address stormwater management at the site, the phases represent the finalization of all Nancy Run Estates building between William Penn Highway and Carter Road. The reason for the prolonged administrative review has been the attempt by the applicant to follow the Planning Commission's recommendation that stormwater management facilities be a single development-wide facility instead on individual, on-site management structures and BMPs. By managing runoff at a centralized location, homeowners will not have severe on-lot restrictions for future use and enjoyment such as pools or patios and Bethlehem Township will not have policing responsibility for the numerous new homes. The applicant continues to attempt to perfect its engineering plan to gain support from the Township Engineer and Planning Commission.

**-Angelic Sisters of St. Paul:** Although denied without prejudice from the Board over a year ago owing to the fact that the project was in Administrative Review for over two years, the applicants resubmitted intending to bring the project to completion. Township Staff has simply continued review on the existing proposal due to the fact that nothing has changed with the project. The project consists of an addition to an existing residential structure and a change of use to a Place of Worship/ Assembly Use. Additional parking has been included on the Plan as well as a newly proposed septic treatment system. The proposal is currently before the Board for review and possible action.

**-Traditions of America at Green Pond:** The Tentative Plan Hearing process concluded on April 11<sup>th</sup> following the three hour public comment portion of the hearings. At this point, remaining entrances in the record, review, findings of fact and decision by the Independent Hearing Officer will occur over the next several months. A final decision should be rendered by the end of August. Should the Tentative Plan eventually be approved, a Final Plan submission for the proposed 55+ Planned Residential Golf Course Community shall need to be submitted to the Bethlehem Township Planning Commission for review and comment.

**-PPL Laydown Yard:** PPL has informed the Township that the project proposal is currently "on hold" until further notice. Township Staff will be ready to restart discussions and review should PPL decide to move forward once again. The project consists of a large equipment storage yard on the east and west sides of Farmersville Road, south from Freemansburg Avenue. The yards would hold poles, transformers, cables, etc. for PPL and would act as a staging area and repair supply area following traffic accidents or weather emergencies that cause regional power outages.

-**Birchwood Commons** is currently under construction and working to obtain the project's HOP. The Board of Commissioners took action recently to condemn existing ROW along Freemansburg Avenue as a procedural "housekeeping" matter to satisfy PennDOT as proposed traffic improvements near approval. The project consists of garden apartments developed in a "Smart Growth" style that include streetscape enhancements, site walkability, design review and excellence and site massing encouraging a new urbanist style with frontage immediately on Freemansburg Avenue. The project is currently under construction prior to Plans being recorded at the request of the applicant and at the direction of the Board of Commissioners to Township Staff. Numerous indemnification agreements have been executed that ensure there is no liability to Bethlehem Township and the plans shall only be recorded once PennDOT issues a Highway Occupancy Permit. A primary cause of this particular situation and delay is due to changes in PennDOT regulatory requirements during the 2008 Recession. The project, protected by the Governor's Permit Extension Act, has been in place since before 2008, however regulations have become stricter since this time and the Plan therefore needed several traffic design modifications.

-Master site planned **Madison Farms** remains active & under construction with work underway on commercial building fit outs and apartments. Phase Two residential work has commenced with Ryan Homes constructing model single family, carriage and townhomes at the site. The other recent approval of the West Village MOB and restaurant modification is under construction although a tenant remains to be found for the restaurant space. A future submission is also expected in the apartment section of the development with the installation of a large and fully planned and landscaped dog park for Madison Farms residents. Numerous new tenants continue to fill retail and office/service space at Madison Farms with Pearl Vision, Steak n' Shake and Lehigh Valley Health Network currently working on site "fit-outs" and construction.

-**William Penn Commons** has seen little site planning or management activity. This project is protected by the Governor's Permit Extension Act until July 1, 2017. The applicants have proposed multiple "Alternative Transportation Plans, or ATPs" to satisfy traffic mitigation requirements by PennDOT to be granted a Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) and record the plans and construct the project. The proposed ATPs have been presented in lieu of standard PennDOT and Township prescribed improvements and these have not been recommended for approval by the Township Engineer, Township Solicitor or Township Staff. Additionally, the development is currently in litigation between the multiple private parties acting as applicants. This is a civil matter that the Township is not involved in. Should the plans not be recorded by the expiration date of July 1, 2017- the project will be expired, null and void. Any future application for the site would be entirely new and need to start the Land Development process over again. The Township will also be working to clear or normalize the site with the assistance of the Township Solicitor should the plan expire. This would mean removal of construction materials from the site. Currently, it is Township Staff's understanding that Sheetz is seeking out alternative locations within Bethlehem Township to build and operate.

-**St. Luke's Hospital Anderson Campus** is under construction for the Medical Office Building "MOB" on the site. As part of the St. Luke's Anderson Campus, traffic construction improvements continue on Freemansburg Avenue. Bridge work for widening and expanding the road is under way and planning, design and permitting for the "Phase C" portion of work east of the Route 33 interchange is being finalized. The Planning Department and Public Works Department are working to address median plantings on Freemansburg Avenue regarding care, maintenance and possible future planting. While the hospital, emergency room, cancer center and forthcoming medical office building/ pavilion are all completed or soon to be completed, the site still has capacity for a large scale build out for numerous buildings/ pavilions and other possible uses per township zoning ordinance in the years to come.

-**The Annunciation Hellenic Church** is approved and has plans under review for finalization and eventual recording. The project is also obtaining its third party agency approvals at this time for traffic, stormwater and others. The project consists of a sanctuary, fellowship hall, offices and classroom space. As proposed and approved, the project is phased with the construction of the fellowship hall expected first, followed by the sanctuary and eventually the offices and Sunday-school class room spaces.

-**Mill Creek Corporate Center** has submitted a Phase One Preliminary Plan of the proposed professional campus just north of the PennDOT Park and Ride. The project includes Class A office space, a hotel, a restaurant and a bank as the core of a new proposed business campus. Proximity and access to the Park and Ride as well as Route 33 appear to be major drivers for this proposal. The Planning Commission reviewed a brief presentation on the project several months ago and provided feedback to the applicants and tabled the Plan. Further design review for matters involving the Township Overlay Districts, stormwater management and traffic management are necessary for the plans to progress. This site design has been taken into account with the overall William Penn Highway Corridor Traffic Study currently underway via the Township Engineer and PennDOT. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission recently released a review letter with comprehensive review and comments for the master planned site expressing recommendations for more site access to the Park and Ride and improved walkability in the road networks and building massing. The proposal also includes extensive walking trails and a public dog park off of Church Road to the north, which has been looked upon favorably by the Planning Commission and Township Staff.

-**8030 William Penn Highway/ Gerber Collision** has finalized site construction at the new facility location on Meyer Lane. Inquiries are being made about the adaptive reuse of the existing structure in a future phase with frontage on to William Penn Highway. This project would require installation of streetscape enhancements and be considered separate from the Gerber Collision development.

-**Meyer Lane Apartments** is under construction work at the project location on Falmer Drive and Meyer Lane. This project was approved some time ago and was protected under the Governor's Permit Extension Act and is now well under way with construction. The project will consist of two apartment buildings and associated amenities. A modification was approved by the Board to add new amenities such individual parking garages, a fenced dog run area, grills and a fire pit and modified garbage pick-up areas.

For updates on any other plan submissions, project status or information; please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan D. Jones, AICP, BCO  
Director of Planning and Economic Development  
Bethlehem Township, PA