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To: Honorable Members of the Bethlehem Township Board of Commissioners
Melissa Shafer, Township Manager
From: Nathan D. Jones, Planning Director
Date: January 12th, 2016
Re: Planning, Zoning and Construction Departmental Report

Departmental Activities:

-The Bethlehem Township Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee met for a workshop on January 7th, 2016 to discuss major critical topics of the forthcoming Plan. The workshop focused heavily on Township infrastructure needs with a segment where representatives from LANTA engaged the Committee to discuss future public transportation needs and enhancements, there was also a segment hosted by the Township Engineer regarding traffic issues and possible projects, such as the William Penn Highway Corridor, that should be included within the Plan and finally a lively segment that discussed stormwater management and flooding issues within the community and what can be done via study, infrastructure enhancements and ordinance amendments to mitigate and ameliorate the issue.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 4th at 6:30 PM at the Township Municipal Building. At this session, the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee will further review and compose specific action items from the topics listed above to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan Update.

- Department Staff has begun annual harvesting and archiving of permitting files. This annual process populates the Township archives and creates filing space in preparation for the next construction season beginning in 2016. Staff is also nearing completion on the Department's major re-filing and plan hanging file system efforts.

-Unseasonably warm weather has led to continued intensity in permitting and construction activities in the Township. Inspectional Staff is remaining busy with a rate of scheduled inspections much higher than this time in 2014. With mild weather possible through the rest of January, construction activity is proving to remain constant.

Recent Submissions:

-Please note- the Planning Commission shall meet on January 25th at 7PM.

-McDonald's on Route 191 has submitted a Preliminary/ Final Plan for a complete site rebuild. The application is being reviewed by staff and the Township Engineer currently and will be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their January 25th, 2016 meeting. Staff is highly recommending interconnectivity between adjoining developments in the area.

-A landowner on Wilson Avenue immediately adjacent to the Freemansburg Borough line has submitted a sketch plan for a minor subdivision for review. Township Staff and the Township Engineer have begun review and the Zoning Officer has determined that relief through the Zoning Hearing Board shall be needed. The applicant may choose to appear before the ZHB before seeking any further review by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will review the sketch plan at the January 25th, 2016 meeting.

-Nancy Run Estates has submitted a Final Plan for review of Phases 7 through 10 of the subdivision. The plan is currently under review and shall be contemplated by the Planning Commission at their January 25th meeting.

-Madison Farms has submitted a Preliminary/ Final Plan for Modification of the Phase 1 West Commercial Village for consideration by the Planning Commission on January 25th. The proposal reduces the number of restaurant pads from two to one in the West Village and now includes a medical office building, or MOB, to be occupied by Lehigh Valley Health Network. One restaurant pad on this area of the site shall remain, with decreased square footage. KRE continues to work towards finding a quality dining tenant for this pad.

-Traditions of America at Green Pond has submitted a modified Tentative Plan for consideration by the Planning Commission on January 25th. The modified plan reduces the number of proposed housing units from 261 to 229. The plan has also removed the original entrance on Farmersville Road and has now moved the main access to Green Pond Road. The clubhouse is now proposed to be in the northern portion of the development. Finally, the plan has provided increased buffer space surrounding the wetland area in the northwest corner of the site. The applicants are asking the Planning Commission to consider affirming all previously recommended waivers and deferrals for the modified plan that were granted to the original submission.

Major Project Updates:

-Master site planned Madison Farms remains active & under construction with work underway on commercial building fit outs and apartments concurrently to the proposed modification. Phase Two residential work is expected to commence in the near future.

The previous mild weather allowed the Developer to proceed with winter planting and construction of streetscape features on Freemansburg Avenue. These improvements are per the manual of design guidelines and the Master Site Plan.

-The BAVTS “Skills Hill” project has begun site work. Site work is planned to continue as long as weather allows.

-Birchwood Commons site work and construction is underway. The Board of Commissioners granted permission for indemnification and other agreements to be signed for building permits to be issued prior to plan recording, as such the Department has released building permits for two of the apartment buildings in December. The applicant continues to work with PENNDOT to address traffic concerns in order to gain an HOP for the project.

-William Penn Commons representatives scheduled a meeting with Township Staff on Friday December 18th to discuss project status and William Penn Highway Corridor traffic concerns for the project and PennDOT HOP issues. Since this time, it appears parties involved with the project are working towards moving forward to address traffic issues for the site. Additionally, site work is currently underway to address two sinkhole issues.

-St. Luke’s Hospital Anderson Campus is engaged in site work for their internal roadway system and the previously approved medical office building or “MOB”.

-Mill Creek Corporate Office Park submitted sketch plans for review several months ago and has a subdivision approved for the property. The subdivision has been recorded following final PennDOT approval. The applicant has partnered for the William Penn Highway Traffic Study. The applicant is also currently in the process of working on site concept and design to comply with Township overlay district design guidelines. A submission in early 2016 is possible.

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
Planning Director
Bethlehem Township