

WEST VINCENT TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

October 20, 2016

7:30 PM

Attendance: Chairman George Martin, Sara Shick, Bob Kaiser, Jim Helm, Ted Otteni, Bill Dietrich, Steve Merroth, Township Manager Erica Batdorf and Township Secretary Tammy Swavely.

Chairman Martin called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of June 16, 2016 were unanimously approved as submitted on a motion from Mr. Otteni and a second from Ms. Shick.

PLANNING/ZONING: A Planning Module has been submitted for the Goldfield Subdivision and has been reviewed by the Township Engineer. He has submitted a review letter recommending approval and to move this forward. The Planning Commission will sign this and forward it on to DEP.

NEW BUSINESS:

Weatherstone Commercial: Neal Fisher came to the Planning Commission with a plan that Hankin has for the commercial area in the Weatherstone Subdivision. This area is approved for 240,000 sq. ft. of retail and office space plus an additional 40,000 for a YMCA and 100 apartments. Since the approvals, the market has changed. Also Hankin did not own all the way to Route 100 so many large anchor stores were not attracted to the area but now Hankin has purchased the old gas station. Mr. Fisher stated that he needs to change the commercial area due to the market to make it successful. He would like to modify it to have an area more suited to the area and have a "Power Center." In his proposal the changes are to reduce the commercial area from 240,000 sq. ft. to 120,000 sq. ft. and change the apartments from 100 to 230 units. Mr. Fisher stated that the traffic impact will not change much from the approved plan. The remaining sewer capacity with Weatherstone is 9,000 gallons/day and he has reserved some space in the Brunner Sewer Plant. Since retail takes less sewage capacity, he should have enough including a re-rate of the Weatherstone Sewer Plant. Mr. Martin stated that he understood the market conditions and that the Weatherstone community is still waiting for their retail and commercial area. He would still like to see the YMCA come. Mr. Fisher stated that the YMCA could still be in one of the retail buildings, but they are not interested at this time. He plans to construct it from both sides, the commercial and residential at the same time working towards the middle. Mr. Martin would like to have the commercial/retail happen for the Weatherstone residents. He has met with the Weatherstone HOA and they are supportive of this plan. Mr. Helm stated that he feels that this plan is a long way away from the approved plan and he did not understand why he could not use his current plan. Mr. Fisher stated that he eliminated 55,000 square feet of commercial due to the market and to make it a successful plan. Mr. Kaiser asked if anyone has shown interest and Mr. Fisher stated that a convenience store has. Mr. Martin asked if he feels that this is a walking village and he said yes. A convenience store would act as an anchor at the corner of Routes 100 and 401.

Mr. Dietrich stated that he feels that the convenience store would take away from the other retailers coming in. Mr. Fisher stated that he needs an anchor to bring in traffic and that he plans to make the square attractive to have people want to come into the center. His thoughts were to have small retailers, professionals etc. but it would be market driven. No tenants have been signed at this time. Mr. Martin stated that he understands Hankins need for plan approval, but the Township needs to get it right the first time. Ms. Shick is concerned that the Township will not be getting a walkable community. Mr. Malloy stated that the retail will not survive not being close to Route 100. Mr. Helm asked if there is any move to keeping the old plan. Mr. Fisher stated that they would like to create a plan with two anchors, the convenience store and residential acting as the other anchor. Mr. Otteni stated that he understands the need to change the plan for the market. When this subdivision began, Amazon was not in existence and now much shopping is done online. He added that Weatherstone residents need to have something built and to get it moving. He asked if the residential could hold off until the commercial was built. Mr. Fisher would like to do both at the same time and that Hankin has every incentive to see it done. Mr. Dietrich disagreed that the convenience store will work in a neo-traditional neighborhood and will do more research to find out. Several Weatherstone residents spoke about the concept. All love the subdivision and the neighborhood that has been created. Even though the idea of a Wawa was not appealing the general consensus was that it was the start of something and better than nothing. Most desire the green space in the center as a drawing point for activities. Mr. Fisher stated that he will have to get Penn DOT approvals for all of the entrances. Mr. Kaiser stated that he wants to make sure that you can walk to Wawa from the residential areas. Mr. Fisher stated that not all sidewalks are drawn on the plan and the interconnecting will have to be worked out. Harriet Stone discussed the YMCA not being part of the plan. She felt that recreation was an important part of the plan. Mr. Fisher explained that, as part of the Settlement Agreement with the Township, it does not obligate Hankin to a YMCA. Ms. Shick asked if some other area can be reserved for recreation like a tot lot or dog park which would be valuable to the community. Mr. Fisher stated that he imagines the gateway to West Vincent at the corner of Routes 100 and 401 being a pond or landscape feature which would be a key focal point which would bring people into the area. The area has been cleared by DEP for residential but the site is restricted to public water anyway. Mr. Martin discussed the increase in residential. He stated that the apartments are doubling but would like it to be cut back and to have more open space. Mr. Fisher reminded the Planning Commission that Weatherstone has 160 acres of open space already, this is the final piece of the subdivision. Mr. Martin stated that the dialogue has started. Ms. Shick stated that she would like to see a fitness center that is not exclusive for the apartments. Mr. Fisher told her that he cannot reserve a site for a fitness center, but if one is interested, he would most certainly like that. The site is market driven. Ms. Shick made the motion that the Planning Commission understands that this plan is a work in progress, and they are not approving it, but the concept is acceptable and that with modifications it can be made into the 22 acre Town Center that we would like to have. Mr. Otteni seconded the motion. Mr. Dietrich asked what the next steps are. Mr. Fisher stated that technically, this visit is a courtesy and does not have to happen per the Settlement Agreement. The Settlement Agreement controls the process. He anticipates a smooth process. Mr. Martin called for a vote. The motion carried 6-1.

Meeting adjourned 10:05 PM.