

**BIRMINGHAM TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
February 10, 2009**

Chairman Nick DiMarino called the regular February meeting to order at 7:30 PM in the Township Building. Present were members Scott Boorse, Janet DeCaestecker, Debbie Hineman, Eric Hawkins, Pete Davenport, Doug Marshall and Mary Pat McCarthy. Scott Towler was absent. PC Solicitor Frone Crawford attended with MMWR firm member Andrew McReynolds. Mr. DiMarino introduced Mary Pat McCarthy as a new PC member and Jacquie Roach as the new PC Secretary.

The minutes of the meeting of January 13, 2009, were approved as presented (**Hawkins**); Debbie Hineman abstained.

Mr. DiMarino announced a change in the agenda: the Boor plan was removed and the Arden Forge presentation was added.

**Metro PCS** : Mike Sheering, land use attorney of Riley, Riper, Hollin & Colagreco, introduced himself, Bruce Hoffmaster (project manager), Mario Calibretta (civil engineer), and Clement Poole (radio frequency director), to present a conditional use application. The Metro PCS plan is for an extension of an existing cell phone tower located on the Stoltzfus property at 1335 Wilmington Pike. The plan, dated, 9-26-08, last revised 11-17-08, was drawn by CMX, consisting of sheets, T-1, Z-1, S-1, S-2, S-3, A-1, E-1, G-1, and G2. It will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at a hearing on February 17, 2009. Mr. Sheering explained that Metro PCS is a wireless carrier that, in order to fill a geographical gap in their service coverage, wishes to add antennas to the taller of the two towers on the Stoltzfus site. Mr. Sheering said the new antennas require additional height and additional buildings at the base of the tower. Cabling will be inside the tower and underground to the buildings. Mr. Calibretta said the "buildings" are about the size of a small refrigerator. Sheet S-1 showed the elevations of the existing tower but not the Cricket Communications equipment presented to the township last year.

Mr. Crawford noted that Section 105 B-1 of the Birmingham Township Zoning Ordinance requires that the applicant show that the proposed height is the minimum required, i.e. the need for the additional height. Mr. Sheering pointed out that the lowest Metro PCS antenna would be at 120 feet, with 10-foot separations required between each additional antenna. Mr. Poole showed a map of the grid system with the other area Metro PCS antennas and the proposed antennas filling part of the gap in the center. He said their design is the least intrusive possible for their needs.

Mr. Boorse raised the issue of stability of the footings and the adequacy of the tower to sustain additional height. Mr. Calibretta explained that the owner of the tower does not wish to incur the expense of such engineering work unless he is assured that the conditional use will be granted. He said the zoning requirements are met with the current plan, including setbacks, and that there would be no need for tower lights (required at 200 feet +) or water or sewage.

John Abramson, 311 Brinton's Bridge Road, asked if there are cell phone use laws in Birmingham Township. Mr. Crawford replied that the state governs their use. Mr. Boorse voiced his reluctance to make a recommendation without an engineering review. Mr. Sheering said the Township Engineer had not been asked for one and that Metro PCS would welcome a recommendation conditional on sound engineering, but that the company would like zoning approval before incurring further expense.

Mr. Boorse made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend conditional use approval by the Board of Supervisors with the following conditions:

- (a) that the applicant satisfactorily supply a structural report stating that the conditional height requirement meets the burden of the ordinance (necessity) as well as structural intent engineering-wise (adequacy), and
- (b) that the plans be corrected to show the Cricket Communications information (additional antennae), resulting in a fully updated plan. (Mr. Hawkins addition)

Mrs. Hineman seconded the motion and it was passed with all in favor.

**ARDEN FORGE:** Joe Viscuso, of Stantec Consulting engineers, along with Arden Forge co-owners and developers Gary Whelan and Anthony Diver, presented an informal sketch plan for the Arden Forge property. They had engaged architect Art Bernardin to advise them about what could be preserved. The architect said the plank structure in the middle of the buildings could only be replicated, not preserved. They plan to demolish that part and build a small, one-story addition on the end of the front building. The addition will have a two-story egress tower. The property fronts two state roads and a heavy dashed line shows the existing right-of-way. A concrete porch on the Brinton's Bridge Road side will be removed to limit some impervious cover. The expectation is that the buildings be used for small offices or studios, that as much as possible be preserved, that landscaping be provided everywhere possible, that zoning-required parking be added, and that the entrance be moved to the western edge of the property on its Birmingham Road frontage – as far as possible from the intersection. Various aspects of the proposal were discussed, and Mr. DiMarino noted that the Planning Commission members are sensitive about stormwater runoff issues in Dilworthtown. Mr. Viscuso said they plan an infiltration system. Mr. Whelan explained that, with so many past changes to the buildings, it's difficult to see what is historical and what is modern.

Mr. Boorse asked about materials; Mr. Whelan said the roof will probably look like slate and the window replacements will probably be Marvin wood windows. In reply to a question from Mrs. Hineman, Mr. Viscuso said letters had been sent to the neighbors, but that tonight's exhibit was only scheduled at the last minute, so Gayle Ayers had made some telephone calls. Mr. DiMarino emphasized that landscape beautification will be appreciated. Mr. Boorse asked about lighting and signage and Mr. Hawkins said that downward-aimed lighting is important to the Planning Commission members. Mr. Whelan said signage would probably be building-mounted and that he wants the project to be residentially-scaled. Mr. DiMarino suggested that low level or residential style lighting would be preferred for this location.

Melissa Duketto, 1386 Birmingham Road, asked about waste treatment, runoff, and blocking the road during construction. Mr. Viscuso said there will be public sewerage, a groundwater infiltration system, off-road construction, and that the parking lot would have to be blacktopped if it is to be plowed.

Victor Leonhard, 700 Brinton's Bridge Road, asked if the plans are to scale. Mr. Viscuso explained that they are to scale, but not yet detailed. Mr. Leonhard expressed concern about stormwater runoff. John Abramson repeated this concern, stating that there is no percolation on the former Clouser property or on the Forge property, and that there is a sunken well on the Forge property. Dr. Abramson said he is very concerned with the current building safety (part of the roof is caving in), that Dilworthtown is the last vestige of the area not yet "butchered", that the Blue Pear employees already park at Arden Forge, and that water runoff is a huge problem in the area, especially on "Lake Clouser."

Lloyd Roach, 1025 Meetinghouse Road, said he thinks it's terrific that the applicant is going to restore the existing buildings, and that he agrees that the collapsing building should be torn down.

Colleen McFadden, 300 Brinton's Bridge Road ("the yellow house"), Chadds Ford Township, asked what the addition will be made of. Mr. Viscuso said it will be something that compliments the surrounding materials. Mr. Whelan said Mr. Bernardin wants to make it "tasteful." Ms. McFadden asked if they can re-use the stone from the demolished building. Mr. Whelan said it is just small stones filling the gaps between wood planks and is not suitable for facing. Ms. McFadden asked if the plan will be reviewed by HARB. Mr. Viscuso said it will. Dr. Abramson said the workmen should wear masks because the air quality inside the stone house has been made toxic by birds, rodents, etc.

Mr. DiMarino suggested involving HARB early in the process. Mr. Crawford suggested coming back with answers about the water, materials and landscaping questions. Dr. Abramson noted that, at a past HARB meeting, a previous applicant had walked away from the project because of insurmountable setback and parking problems.

**OTHER BUSINESS** : Mr. DiMarino announced a public forum on the future of open space, to be held at the Chester County Historical Society on February 21. Mr. Boorse announced that the West Chester Regional Planning Commission will not require the \$400 fee from the Township this year. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 (Hawkins).

Respectfully submitted,

Jacquie Roach  
Planning Commission Secretary

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