

**SOUTH STRABANE TOWNSHIP
ZONING HEARING BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

May 12, 2021

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

On Tuesday, May 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., after due advertisement according to law, a public meeting of the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) was held at the South Strabane Township Municipal Building (550 Washington Road, Washington, PA 15301) and the following were present:

Art Sullivan, Chairperson
James Stewart, Vice-Chair
Andy Rembert, Member

Also Present

Daniel Sharek, Red Swing Group, representing Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh, Inc.
Father Callos, Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh, Inc.
Brandon Stanick, Township Manager
Michael Cruny, Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor
Patrick Conners, Assistant to the Township Manager
Kathy Landock, KDL Court Reporting

2. Approval of the Zoning Hearing Board Regular Meeting Minutes – April 19, 2021

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the April 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Landock administered the oath to those in attendance.

3. Public Hearing: Consideration of an application of Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh Inc., requesting a Special Exception per the requirements of Section 245-118 of the South Strabane Township Zoning Code for the construction and operation of a church on Parcel IDs 600-004-00-00-0013-02 & 600-004-00-00-0013-00 in the R-2 Suburban Residential Zoning District

Mr. Daniel Sharek of the Red Swing Group, representing Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh, Inc. (Applicant) presented the application for a Special Exception for the construction and operation of a church and associated facilities on Parcel ID Nos. 600-004-00-00-0013-02 (Parcel 1) and 600-004-00-00-0013-00 (Parcel 2). He highlighted that Parcel 2 had been used for mine refuse storage in the past and as a result will be used for an overflow parking area. Parcel 1 is proposed to serve as the site for the church facility, parsonage to serve as a dwelling for a priest and main parking lot. He stated churches are allowed as a Use by Special Exception pursuant to the R-2 Zoning District standards. He continued by highlighting various events including wedding ceremonies and occasional church services will occur on the site.

Following a question from Chair Sullivan a discussion ensued regarding the mine refuse on Parcel 2. Chair Sullivan inquired if the mine refuse would be removed from the site

prior to construction. Mr. Sharek stated the refuse will not be removed, but will be encapsulated and capped with clean fill to support vegetation growth. Chair Sullivan expressed his desire to understand more about the materials found on Lot 2 given his past experience with mining operations. Mr. Sharek stated that PA Soil and Rock conducted the geotechnical evaluation of the property and the resulting report will be provided to the ZHB.

Following a question from Chair Sullivan, Township Manager Stanick provided a brief history of the property noting Washington County had donated the property to the Applicant for the purpose of relocating its regional headquarters to a more central location to better serve its membership.

ZHB Solicitor Cruny highlighted that many of the previous questions about the site will be addressed during the Land Development process with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. He noted that for a Use by Special Exception application, the ZHB is to evaluate the proposed land use requested by the Applicant.

Mr. Rembert stated that the property is now owned by the Applicant and any pollution due to the mine refuse will be the responsibility of the Applicant as property owner. Mr. Sharek advised that he is not prepared to speak on the property transfer or more specifically regarding any environmental liability. Mr. Rembert also inquired regarding the manner in which the facilities will be used.

Chair Sullivan inquired of any possible stability issues as a result of the undermined area. Mr. Sharek stated the mines are approximately 100 ft. to 150 ft. deep and the geotech studies show bedrock two to eight feet with minimal soil on the surface. Chair Sullivan asked Mr. Sharek for the Applicant to provide the soils analysis as it would be beneficial to the community.

Mr. Sharek stated the property will serve as the regional headquarters for the Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pittsburgh, Inc. Township Manager Stanick read aloud the proposed use as outlined in the Use by Special Exception application. He also read aloud the definition of Church as outlined in the Zoning Code. A discussion ensued concerning operations of the facility. Mr. Sharek stated that he would seek further detail from Father Callos regarding the operations of the facility. Mr. Sharek then proceeded to contact Father Callos.

Following a brief discussion ZHB Solicitor Cruny read aloud the following exhibits for the record:

- A. Special Exception Application dated April 19, 2021;
- B. Correspondence from the Red Swing Group dated April 27, 2021; and
- C. Washington County Tax Parcel Information Parcel IDs No. 600-004-00-00-0013-02 & 600-004-00-00-0013-00).

Chair Sullivan moved to enter Exhibits A through C as outlined by ZHB Solicitor Cruny into the public record. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. The motion carried on unanimous voice vote.

Chair Sullivan inquired regarding the proposed stormwater facilities. Mr. Sharek noted Parcel 2, the lot that will be used for the overflow parking, poses a challenge to the construction of stormwater facilities due to the presence of mine refuse contaminants. He stated that any facilities placed on Parcel 2 will trigger an Individual Permit through the Department of Environmental Protection.

Following a discussion, the ZHB entered an Executive Session at 6:55 p.m. The ZHB concluded their executive Session at 7:13 p.m.

Father Callos of Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh, Inc. came before the Board to outline the anticipated use and operation of the proposed church facilities. He stated the current headquarters (established 1955) is located in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh. He highlighted the organization has outgrown its location and has sought out a more central location. He stated the organization's territory encompasses Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. He noted the proposed site would be ideal for the territory.

A discussion concerning parking ensued. Father Callos highlighted that the proposed facility would not be replacing a parish. He noted it would primarily serve as the host location for the organization's annual meetings and its day to day operations. He continued by noting the facility would also serve various special events and occasions such as weddings.

Chair Sullivan inquired regarding the existing cemetery on the lot. Mr. Sharek stated the Cook Cemetery was established in the 1800's and an easement is on the property which provides access. He highlighted the Applicant is seeking to compliment the church by paving the access drive to the cemetery. It was noted the Applicant continues to engage with Washington County regarding the provision of direct access to the cemetery.

Chair Sullivan inquired regarding the proposed buffer yards that are required in order to screen the new development from the existing neighborhood. Mr. Sharek provided an illustration highlighting that complete site plans will be reviewed in detail during the Land Development process.

Mr. Rembert inquired how many parking spaces will serve the facility. Mr. Sharek stated that 43 spaces, including handicap accessible spaces are being provided next to the facility. There are 88 spaces proposed for the overflow parking lot located on Parcel 2. After a discussion concerning the footprint of the proposed structure it was determined that a minimum of 40 parking spaces is required per the Zoning Code.

In regards to the proposed overflow parking lot on Lot 2, Chair Sullivan noted that parking lots are not a permitted principal use on a property. He inquired if the property owner would be seeking to consolidate the parcels into one lot. Mr. Sharek stated that by consolidating,

clean Parcel 1 would then be identified as contaminated due to the remaining mine refuse on Parcel 2.

Chair Sullivan stated his preference to review the complete record prior to taking a vote on the matter to provide time for the consideration of any conditions that could accompany the final decision. ZHB Solicitor Cruny suggested the ZHB go through the application step by step with the General Criteria specific to churches. At the request of the ZHB, he reviewed the Applicant's submittal.

Mr. Rembert inquired about the status of Enterprise Dr. Reviewing a drawing, Mr. Sharek advised that Enterprise Dr. will be extended to the entrance of the property and will be finished with a cul-de-sac. The width of the street, back of curb to back of curb, is 40 feet.

ZHB Solicitor Cruny noted that the application also addresses peak traffic demand for the proposed use is anticipated to occur during non-peak hours of traffic on existing adjacent streets. Mr. Sharek stated there are generally about six people that would be attending the facilities on a regular basis during the days, which would not impact the local street capacity. It is more about the events that may be conducted or maintained by the church and would most likely occur on weekends.

Father Callos advised a mid-level council meeting, which would include roughly 35 people is typically happening on weekends to accommodate participants' schedules. He noted there are events that are date specific and may not be on a weekend. Once per year, the organization will host its annual meeting which is usually between one to several days.

Chair Sullivan opened the floor for public comment. No comments were received. A discussion followed regarding the ZHB's review of the record prior to voting. It was the consensus of the ZHB to meet again on June 2, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. to consider action on this matter.

Mr. Rembert moved to close the public hearing. Chair Sullivan seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The ZHB allocates a period of time during this item for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the ZHB on any matter. Each person addressing the ZHB is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

There were no comments from the public.

The ZHB discussed establishing a more formal monthly meeting schedule and allowing flexibility to schedule special meetings if needed. It was the consensus of the ZHB to hold monthly meetings on the second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building Meeting Room.

5. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business to come before the Zoning Hearing Board, Chair Sullivan moved to adjourn. Mr. Rembert seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick
Township Manager / Zoning Officer

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