

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

JUNE 16, 2021

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

On Wednesday, June 16, 2021 at 6:08 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.
Thomas Lonich, Solicitor representing the Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh, Inc.
Gary Sweat, Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor
Brandon Stanick, Township Manager

2. Approval of the Zoning Hearing Board Meeting Minutes – May 12, 2021

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the May 12, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

The stenographer administered the oath to those in attendance.

3. Public Hearing: Consideration of an application from All American Mobile Restaurant requesting a Use by Special Exception pursuant to Section 245-79C(1)(f) of the Zoning Code to all the operation of a mobile food truck at the Victory Soccer Fields Property located at 265 Berry Rd. in the I-1 Industrial Zoning District

The ZHB took this item first and it was determined that an application had not been received by the Township and the applicant was not in attendance.

4. Public Hearing: Continued Consideration of an application from Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh Inc., requesting a Use by Special Exception for a proposed church (Parcel No.: 600-004-00-00-0013-02) pursuant to Section 245-31 of the Zoning Code, as well as a proposed off-site parking area (Parcel No.: 600-004-00-00-0013-00) pursuant to Section 245-182I(1) of the Zoning Code, along Enterprise Rd. in the R-2 Suburban Residential Zoning District

Chair Sullivan introduced the item before the ZHB and the public hearing was opened to continue the ZHB’s consideration of an application from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis Pgh, Inc. (“Applicant”) requesting two Uses by Special Exception for a church and adjoining overflow parking lot along Enterprise Rd.

Mr. Thomas Lonich, Solicitor representing the Applicant, came before the ZHB advising that a petition in opposition to the proposed church was submitted to the Township. He noted that the issues identified on the petition were those related specifically to land development. He stated that the Applicant will be subject to the Township's existing noise regulations and advised that the proposed use will not present any adverse issues with traffic.

Chair Sullivan acknowledged the ZHB also received a copy of the petition. He advised of the role of the ZHB in considering the Uses by Special Exception for the church and adjoining parking lot noting that the Zoning Code currently allows these types of uses in the R-2 Zoning District although they must be considered by the ZHB. He stated that after the ZHB, the Applicant would then submit for land development approval to the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Chair Sullivan noted that due to the past mining operations, the Applicant will undergo permitting processes with the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") to satisfy any additional requirements.

Mr. Lonich commenced with questions to Father Callos of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh, Inc. In response to Mr. Lonich's questions, Father Callos confirmed the details of the proposal, which includes administrative office space, a chapel, sanctuary and parsonage where the Bishop will reside full-time. With this being the case, the Bishop will be available for normal pastoral work, including services, religious education and counseling. Religious and worship services will be held from time to time. Regular services will not be held at this facility and the construction of this facility is not replacing any existing parish.

Father Callos continued stating the proposed facility is not designed to be as large as the church in Canonsburg. The neighboring property, identified as Parcel 2, will be used for any overflow parking that will need be needed for special events. In response to a request from the ZHB, the Applicant would be able to provide the Township with three days notice before an event is scheduled to occur.

Mr. Rembert asked why will people come to this facility. Father Callos stated the Bishop will have ministry with individuals and those who are preparing to be ministers. He noted the facility is not intending to have festivals or fundraisers.

Chair Sullivan inquired of any outside activities on the property. Father Callos stated on rare occasion large gatherings will occur. He also noted walking trails through the woods will be constructed. Any activity that will involve crowds will not generate any more than 150 people and the facility will accommodate those functions inside. In response to a question, Father Callos stated that having music or chimes has not been considered by the Applicant at this point.

Mr. Lonich continued with questions to Daniel Sharek, engineer representing the Applicant. Mr. Sharek provided copies of a revised site drawing to the ZHB.

A discussion ensued regarding the land development procedures involving stormwater and mine subsidence issues. Mr. Sharek noted a geotechnical report is being prepared that will determine the support loading of the structures on site. Shallow geotechnical studies have been performed on Parcel 2 to a depth of six to eight feet.

Mr. Sharek shared pictures of the existing conditions of the property noting there is evidence of trespassing. He stated that he met with Chief Reese to review the proposed access to the facility and will be able to meet the fire and emergency related requirements.

Chair Sullivan inquired of potential traffic issues as a result of the proposed church. Mr. Sharek stated the Enterprise Rd. right-of-way dead ends at the property line and is currently completed with a cul-de-sac that will serve as the entrance to the facility. Chair Sullivan expressed his preference for the Applicant to review access and any proposed extension of Enterprise Rd. with the Township. Mr. Sharek stated that after speaking with Township Manager Stanick it will be reviewed with the Planning Commission whether to extend Enterprise Rd. as a public street into the site.

The ZHB then opened up the public hearing for public comments.

Mr. Jack Marshall (Fairway Dr.) inquired if all the trees on the property will be removed resulting in increased noise from I-79. Mr. Sharek stated that the plan is to preserve as many of the trees as possible.

Mr. Bruce McCrerey (Enterprise Rd.) expressed concern with the traffic that will be generated as a result of the facility and noted his opposition to making Enterprise Rd. a private street. Township Manager confirmed that Enterprise Rd. will not become a private street as a result of this development. Mr. Sharek noted that a landscape buffer, per the requirements of the Zoning Code, will be planted along the perimeter of the property.

Ms. Lori Lawton (Fairway Dr.) expressed concern over land subsidence should the facility be constructed behind her property as she already has an air shaft in her backyard. Chair Sullivan expressed his opinion the risk in the land moving as a result of the construction is marginal. He encouraged her to speak to the DEP about filling the air shaft on her property. She continued and noted her concern for the increase in noise. Chair Sullivan noted the Applicant will have to abide by the existing noise regulations in the Municipal Code.

Mr. McCrerey inquired if weddings would be performed at the facility. Father Callos stated that weddings are not typical of the Applicant as there may have been two weddings in the past 60+ years of the organization.

Mr. and Mrs. Kevin and Sherry Franks (Fairway Dr.) stated they have already emailed comments to Mr. Stanick prior to the meeting and those concerns were addressed during the meeting. Mrs. Franks stated the church needs to be respectful to the neighborhood as there is only one way in and one way out through Enterprise Rd. She confirmed her understanding that the Applicant only anticipates high traffic a couple time per year.

Noting that Enterprise Rd. is the only access to and from the property, Chair Sullivan asked Mr. Sharek to address any access issues. Mr. Sharek stated the property is currently landlocked between I-79 and private property and no other means of access can be established without purchasing neighboring property. He noted that more traffic would result should this property be developed under traditional zoning rules.

Following the public comment period, the ZHB entered the following exhibits into the record:

MAY 12, 2021 HEARING:

- A. Application dated April 16, 2021- Red Swing Group;
- B. Letter with Supplemental Application Information dated April 27, 2021 – Red Swing Group Advertising Notice;
- C. Washington County Tax Assessment – Parcel Information;
- D. Advertising Notice(s) of Hearing in Observer-Reporter – April 28, 2021 and May 5, 2021; and
- E. Township’s letter providing written notice of hearing and list of owners within 300 feet.

JUNE 16, 2021 HEARING:

- F. Resident emails from Bruce and Linda McCreery, Lori Lawton;
- G. Petition of Residents objecting to the Application for Special Exception;
- H. Legal Advertising Notice(s) of Hearings; and
- I. Resident email from Kevin and Sherry Franks.

APPLICANT EXHIBITS:

- 1. Preliminary Site Plan dated April 1, 2021, prepared by Red Swing Group; and
- 2. Series of Photos taken of the Subject Properties showing motor-cross activity, hunting tree stands, dumping of garbage, and general trespassing, etc. (Photos are numbered 1-11)

Mr. Lonich objected to including the petition and the email comments in the record.

The ZHB adjourned to executive session at approximately 8:12 p.m. and returned to the regular meeting at approximately 8:22 p.m.

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the request for Use by Special Exception to allow a church on Parcel 1 (600-004-00-00-0013-02) per Section 245-31 of the Zoning Code. Mr. Rembert seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the request for Use by Special Exception to allow an overflow parking lot on Parcel 2 (600-004-00-00-0013-00) per Section 245-182I(1) of the Zoning Code with the condition the parking lot area be constructed per the specifications testified by Mr. Sharek during the May 12 and June 16, 2021 hearings. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

5. 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.

6. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business to come before the Zoning Hearing Board, Mr. Stewart moved to adjourn. Mr. Rembert seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick
Township Manager / Zoning Officer