

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**June 10, 2024**

**Attendees:** Christopher Bennick, Chairman, April Kotsch, Parmita Perna-Rios, Matt Sherer, Brad Youst, PE, David Berger Borough Solicitor, Amy Burkhart Borough Manager

**Also attending:** Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) Representatives: M. Arif Fazil, Sandy Koza, Mark Stein, Courtney-Stambaugh and Mike Metzger

At 7:00 p.m. Chairman Bennick called the meeting to order.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes from May 13, 2024

|                     | Motion | 2nd | Yes | No | Abstain | Absent |
|---------------------|--------|-----|-----|----|---------|--------|
| Matt Sherer         |        | x   | x   |    |         |        |
| Parmita Perna-Rios  |        |     | x   |    |         |        |
| Christopher Bennick |        |     | x   |    |         |        |
| Patricia Lang       |        |     |     |    |         | x      |
| April Kotsch        | x      |     | x   |    |         |        |

C. Bennick introduced the Agenda Item, Preliminary Plan for the Fountain Hill Elementary School as the only item of New Business. He indicated that the preliminary plan would be reviewed, and feedback provided to the applicant.

M. Arif Fazil introduced himself and Sandy Koza noting that they represent the school and have been working with staff to make progress on this project. Additional attendees on behalf of the school include Mark Stein, Courtney W-Stambaugh, and Mike Metzgar.

A Fazil noted that the Fire Marshal’s review letter indicated satisfaction with the changes made to the project. It was said that the school would want to leave tonight’s Planning Commission meeting with direction, and hopefully recommendations, for required zoning variances. The project will be going to the Zoning Hearing Board for necessary variances. D. Berger noted that there would not be a need for the Planning Commission to make recommendations to the Zoning Hearing Board. However, the lack of recommendation from Planning would not prevent the project from going to Zoning. A. Fazil noted that at this meeting the BASD will review the portions of the project that will need relief.

S. Koza provided an overview of the updates made to the traffic patterns. She noted that the bus staging area on Church Street will be extended, increasing bus parking to accommodate up to 5 buses. Additionally, in the staff parking lot there, is a temporary pull-off for additional buses. On Moravia there will be a widening of the whole street allowing for an 8-foot-wide parking lane for parent drop off, there will be 2 20-foot-wide travel lanes, and there will be residential parking on the opposite side of the street. There will be 51 parking spaces on site.

S. Koza discussed wayfinding signage that would help alleviate traffic issues on Church and Moravia. The wayfinding will extend to Broad Street. A. Fazil noted that the wayfinding signage would be done with pawprints due to the bilingual nature of the school. C. Bennick indicated that the wayfinding addition would be beneficial.

M. Sherer asked if the intent was to have all students dropped-off on Moravia Street. S. Koza confirmed that the drop-off would be on Moravia and a bridge would connect the street to the school. The sidewalk is projected to be 10-foot-wide to accommodate snow removal. M. Sherer asked about safety concerns previously identified and if they have been addressed. A. Fazil outlined the fencing that would be in place in the areas that are elevated. M. Sherer asked about the flow of traffic. A. Fazil reviewed the various concepts that were reviewed on traffic patterns and noted that partners agreed to the current concept.

P. Perna-Rios asked Fountain Hill Elementary Principal Courtney W-Stambaugh if she was satisfied with the changes being proposed. C. W-Stambaugh indicated that she was happy with the changes to traffic patterns.

A Fazil then moved the conversation to the Zoning items that may need relief from the Zoning Hearing Board.

The family center was the next topic of discussion. The family center currently has a before and after school daycare and counseling in part of the building. The center also includes some outside support services, such as a food pantry, that will occur during after school hours. The family center, daycare, and psychologist exist onsite now. There will be some additional resources offered in the evening. C. Bennick noted that those services seem essential to the school, A. Kotsch agreed with that assessment. D. Berger asked about the square footage of the food pantry. A. Fazil noted that the foot pantry is 650 square feet. It is currently not large enough. D. Berger requested clarification on why it is carved out separately if it is part of the school. A. Fazil identified that the school wanted to physically separate it in the evening for security. M. Sherer asked the hours of operation. The food pantry would open at 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 every other Wednesday. Those hours would not interfere with bus drop-off. D. Berger noted that he felt that zoning relief would be needed for the family center.

T. DeGroot identified the additional variances that would be needed as outlined in the engineer's review letter on page 2 Section C. T. DeGroot noted the need for relief on building height which is projected to be 58'. A setback variance will be needed for the bridge which will access Moravia Street. There will also need to be setback variances for fencing requirements in the mechanical area. Additionally, some relief will be needed on landscaping and buffer zones. Clarification provided on fire apparatus access to the building. P. Perna-Rios requested clarification on the landscaping variances that will be sought.

A Fazil outlined the need for relief on parking requirements. T. DeGroot noted that the number of parking spaces will increase from existing conditions and that traffic patterns will improve. Further, BASD is in discussion with St. Ursula's to utilize their off-street parking lot. It was noted that the parking for evening events has been improved. During the day there will be a deficit of parking requiring 20-30 cars to park in the neighborhood.

T. DeGroot noted that some additional items that would need zoning variances include the dumpster area. P. Perna-Rios requested to view the elevations. B. Youst identified that noise is regulated by zoning so the design of the units and their ability to retain the noise that it would generate should be reviewed. There was a review of the front and rear elevation renderings of the building. A discussion of the landscaping and signage was had. B. Youst identified that there are a few comments that are more informational outlined in the review letter. D. Berger requested clarification on the monument sign.

A Fazil identified that SALDO waivers may additionally be needed for the project. There was a review of the engineer’s review letter on page 11 F. 2 which outlined stormwater requirements. T. DeGroot clarified that the Infiltration BMP setbacks would be 20 feet short of the Borough requirements. There was clarification by B. Youst on how to review that portion of the project and the potential need for a waiver.

There was a discussion regarding the potential barriers between parking and pedestrian walkways. With that the discussion regarding elementary school was concluded.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made.

|                          | Motion | 2nd | Yes | No | Abstain | Absent |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|-----|----|---------|--------|
| Matt Sherer              |        | x   | x   |    |         |        |
| Parmita Perna-Perna-Rios |        |     | x   |    |         |        |
| Christopher Bennick      |        |     | x   |    |         |        |
| Patricia Lang            |        |     |     |    |         | x      |
| April Kotsch             | x      |     | x   |    |         |        |

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Burkhart  
 Borough Manager / Assistant Zoning Officer