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Baltimore County Design Review Panel
September 15, 2010

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Minutes
Baltimore County **Design Review Panel**
September 15, 2010

Call to order

Chair, William Monk, called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Baltimore County **Design Review Panel** to order at 6:12 p.m. The following panel members were:

Present	Not Present
Ms. Betsy Boykin	Mr. Thomas Repsher
Mr. John DiMenna (Arrived at 6:35 p.m.)	Mr. Donald Kann
Ms. Magda Westerhout (Arrived at 6:17 p.m.)	Mr. Scott Rykiel
Mr. William Monk	
Mr. Christopher Parts (Item 1)	

County staff present included:
Pat Keller, Lynn Lanham, Jenifer Nugent, Krystle Patchak

Mr. Monk outlined the purview of the Design Review Panel to all members of the public in attendance of the meeting. He also discussed the public hearing guidelines and advised speakers not to make repetitive comments.

For full disclosure, Chris Parts is a DRP Panel Member, therefore he will be reviewing the McDonald's project but not the Towson Swim Club project.

Minutes of the July 14, 2010 meeting

Ms. Westerhout moved the acceptance of the draft minutes as written and the motion was seconded by Mr. DiMenna and passed by acclamation at 6:40 p.m.

The approved minutes are filed as Appendix B.

* See page 7 for statement added to minutes, regarding SWM.

ITEM 1

PROJECT NAME: McDonald's, 934 York Road

DRP PROJECT #: 520

PROJECT TYPE: Commercial, Towson

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Robert Goldman, of The Chesapeake Design Group Architects, Inc., presented the project to the panel. McDonald's Corporation is embarking on a national re-branding program that includes a modification to the exterior of their buildings as well as signage and interior upgrades to areas within the existing facility. Part of the program calls for bringing older buildings into compliance with regards to ADA. This work will not increase seat count.

The proposal for the McDonald's located at 934 York Road calls for modifying the existing mansard roof, applying new finishes to existing exterior walls, and incorporating new building signage. The existing facility is being converted into the new branding aesthetic. All of the changes are to ensure that the building is able to be in sync with it's current and future needs, as well as new corporate standards. The renovations will not increase square footage of the building or change the layout of the site.

Materials proposed for the exterior of the building include EIFS along with parapet banding elements and cultured stone in a chocolate color scheme. New building signage is also being proposed to go along with the new McDonald's look.

A landscape plan for the project has been submitted and approved by Baltimore County's Landscape Architect, Avery Harden.

Under a prior proposal to rework the drive-through window area, the applicant was given a waiver of the DRP by the Director of the Office of Planning.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS:

Mr. Parts questioned the applicant on the HVAC equipment being replaced. He was concerned with its visibility on the site. Mr. Goldman assured the panel that the project will not call for replacing any of the equipment and the freeze band should hide the equipment from sight.

Mr. Monk commented on the pedestrian walkway and markings on the site being moved to the front of the site to avoid pedestrian and car conflict. Mr. Goldman stated that this was done to meet their new ADA requirements and allow pedestrian access to the site from the street. Mr. Monk also commented on the proposed signage. The applicants stated that the signage varies slightly from project to project but all have to meet the McDonald's Enterprise Sign scheme. Mr. Jeff Bell, of McDonald's Corporation, assured the panel that the only signage that will change at this point is the building signage. The freestanding sign will not be changed at this time. However, the applicant noted that they may modify the freestanding sign in the future and that variance(s) may be required at that time. The DRP may need to revisit the (signage) issue at that time.

Ms. Boykin questioned the applicant on the use of irrigation on the site. Mr. Bell stated that he believes it already exists on site, but if not it will definitely be put in.

A copy of the Office of Planning comments on the project are filed as Appendix C.

SPEAKERS COMMENTS:

There were no members of the public in attendance to speak on behalf of the McDonald's project located at 934 York Road.

DISPOSITION:

A motion was made by Mr. Parts to approved the project as presented, with no changes to the existing free-standing sign. The motion was seconded by Ms. Westerhout and approved by acclamation at 6:26 p.m.

ITEM 2

PROJECT NAME: Towson Swim Club

DRP PROJECT #: 518

PROJECT TYPE: Commercial, Towson

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Chuck McMahon, of the Towson Swim Club, along with Christopher Parts, of Hord Coplan Macht presented the project to the panel. The Towson Swim Club is a new community pool located on a parcel that was the former Women's Detention Facility for Baltimore County. The site is a backwards L-shaped lot of 2.08 acres at the northwest intersection of Towsontown Boulevard and Bosley Avenue. A separate .23-acre leasehold parcel was created on the site for the Warden's House, a historic property that is being restored and developed independently of the swim club property. The main portion of the property sits within a RO zone. The west leg of the property sits within a DR 5.5 zone. All of the developed area of the site consisting of structure, retaining walls and deck area, occur in the RO zone. A play area is proposed in the DR 5.5 portion of the site.

The pool and pool deck will be set approximately at the middle of the site and will consist of a 25 meter 6-lane pool, with a shallow walk-in end and a diving well at the opposite end. A baby pool will also be located to the south of the main pool. A "sport court" area is proposed at the northeast corner of the site as well as a play structure, which is proposed between the baby pool and picnic area. A clubhouse is proposed at the southeast corner of the site, which will include a manager's office, vending area, toilets, showers, locker rooms, and storage areas. The entrance to the facility will be through the north end of the Clubhouse from Courthouse Court (former Baltimore Avenue).

At this time, no zoning relief will be required for the project. The clubhouse has been moved so that "street corner side yard" meets the 35 foot setback per the Zoning Regs./CMDP. Parking will also meet the required number of spaces based on DEPRM review, rating swimming pool density based on number of lifeguards (1 lifeguard to 50 swimmers). The pool would require 29 spaces, with the Towson Swim Club proposing 37 spaces. The Swim Club also proposes to use the Baltimore County Revenue Authority parking garage during times of peak demands, as well as for larger events which will be held approximately 4 times per season.

Project History:

The Towson Swim Club was initially reviewed at the July 14, 2010 Design Review Panel meeting. At that time the applicant was asked to re-visit the plans to address the following issues:

1. Revise the architectural details of the pool house to conform with the surrounding area (Building materials)
2. Study the pedestrian circulation on the site (Including pathway from Old Bosley to the pool)
3. Study the ravine area – preserve as many mature trees as possible
4. Revisit the lawn/quarry area

The applicants were also asked to engage in communication with the surrounding neighbors to address the outstanding issues that the community has raised.

To this date, the applicants have revised the pedestrian circulation on the site and moved the pathway out to Towsontown Boulevard to reduce the impacts on the residential neighborhood. A 6-foot wide grassed buffer with street trees is proposed between the curb and sidewalk to improve pedestrian safety.

The primary pool house structure has been moved 30ft closer to the Warden's house on the site, thus removing the need for zoning relief. The building will be split into two components separated by the main entrance to the pool. One side of the building will serve as the bathhouse, complete with a family changing area and the other a lifeguard/snack shop area with a pool equipment room downstairs. Materials for the building include concrete masonry with a sand finish block and clear story windows/tiles.

Due to the structure being moved on the site, the baby pool, tot lot, and picnic grove along with the sport court have all shifted.

A revised landscape plan was also presented to show the addition of the tree lawn along the pedestrian pathway along with the fence extension. Evergreen/deciduous trees were also proposed along the site to serve as a buffer.

Lighting on the site is proposed as presented at the previous meeting. The applicants will provide site lighting cut-off fixtures as well as deck lighting, all of which were selected due to the low impacts on the surrounding residential neighborhood. These plans must be reviewed and approved by Avery Harden.

Mr. McMahon stated that the Towson Swim Club has been working with Matis Warfield Engineers and Eco Science consultants regarding grading, sediment control and SWM regulations. It was stated that the site is a redevelopment site, therefore they must adhere to current stormwater management regulations. The applicants met with DEPRM in August of 2009 and a letter dated August 14, 2009 stated that no forest buffers, or qualifying forest areas were present on the site. This would include the ravine, which is proposed to be an active play area.

Mr. McMahon also outlined the evolution of the project and assured the panel that the ravine area was shown on the plans beginning in September of 2009. The applicants also stated that they have met with the neighbors in August to discuss the ongoing evolution of the project, as recommended by the DRP.

A copy of the Office of Planning comments on the project are filed as Appendix D. Correspondence from the community members that was distributed to the panel members is filed as Appendix E.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS:

Mr. DiMenna questioned the plans for SWM on the site. Mr. McMahon stated that this issue has not yet been addressed. They are awaiting a response from DEPRM to see if it will be required on the site, considering it is a redevelopment site. Mr. DiMenna also questioned the type of block to be used on the building. The applicant stated that it will be a sand finish block (Rockcast masonry product).

Ms. Westerhout questioned the panel on the path along Towsontown Boulevard. The applicant stated that the path will sit 6 ft from the face of the existing curb, with a tree line between the path and street. She also commented on the main access to the site and its relocation.

Ms. Boykin would like the applicant to provide a planting schedule.

Mr. Monk suggested that the applicants meet with Mr. Harden regarding the proposed lighting plan. He also questioned the details of the open play area. The applicant will maintain mature trees along the border of the ravine and provide additional plantings to buffer the area from the neighborhood.

All of the panel members commented on the revised site layout.

COMMUNITY SPEAKERS COMMENTS:

Mr. Richard Reinhardt was concerned with the growth of the project. He feels that a swim club accommodating 400 families will bring more automobile traffic to the area. He stated that the Jemicy School is also trying to get additional parking in the area for a day care. His main concerns were the safety and welfare of the children in the area and the use of the county garage, which is accessible only by crossing a multi-lane road.

Ms. Elizabeth McHenry, representing the Friends of the Green Ravine (FROGR), stated that their group is not against development. They support the swim club, but not the use of the ravine. Ms. McHenry showed the panel pictures of the existing ravine and explained their proposals for the Towson Swim Club applicants to consider.

Ms. Molly McConnell presented a letter from Jim Smith, dated September 9, 2010, which agreed with the FROGR organization and suggested that the ravine be preserved. It was also stated that the County Recreation and Parks Department as well as the Office of Planning will not support development of the ravine.

Mr. Carroll Cook made a suggestion to the minutes of the July 14, 2010 meeting, regarding the SWM issue. Mr. Monk agreed to have the following statement added to the minutes:

To date, a decision on the SWM being grandfathered in has not yet been decided by DEPRM.

Mr. Cook also stated that he is concerned with the deceptive practices of those involved with the project. He stated his facts on the ravine.

Mr. John Fisher stated that he is not against the original swim club plans. He does not support the use of the ravine and feels that it serves as a needed buffer.

Ms. Theresa McAllister, Vice President of the Southland Hills Improvement Association, stated that after numerous discussions with the Towson Swim Club, the group fully supports the Towson Swim Club design and the development of the ravine. Her group is a highly active group in Towson. Although they are concerned with parking and a few other issues in the area, they feel that this will be a nice addition to the community and they feel it should be approved.

Ms. Patricia Wright shared her support for saving the ravine. She also stated concerns regarding traffic.

Mr. Michael Linkinholter, a member of the Towson Swim Club, stated that the ravine will not become a place for overflow parking. He feels that it will add more green space to the site.

Ms. Cathy Church-Balin, treasurer of the Towson Swim Club, stated that the ravine is not in a good condition. She feels that the ravine should be used as a play area to allow a safe place for kids to play. It was also noted that if the swim club is not built, all members paying dues will be repaid.

Ms. Jessica Kozera stated that she is in support of the project.

Ms. Startler, of Colonial Court, stated that she is not against the pool, but would like the ravine to stay. She referenced letters from Mr. Bob Barrett, of the Department of Recreation and Parks and Jim Smith.

Ms. Louise DeLaVergne stated that she supports tree buffers.

Ms. Lauri Scally stated that she is in support of saving the ravine. She also questioned the applicants on the possible May 2011 opening date.

Ms. Rona Kobel stated that the swim club will add to Walkable Towson and will encourage walking. She expressed support for the project.

A resident of 309 Alabama Avenue stated the importance of converting the ravine to active open space. It will allow for a open safe area for kids to play in.

Mr. Ed Dorsey stated that he does not object to the pool, but feels the site is too small. He is concerned with parking, traffic, and pedestrian safety issues.

Mr. Andrew Brooks was concerned with the landscaping and proposed trees that are to act as buffers. He suggested that the panel look closely at the plans to make sure that the areas will be buffered around the site.

Mr. Mark Rudolph supported the use of the ravine. He feels that it will serve as a good buffer into the residential community.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

Ms. Boykin commented on the improvements of the plans. She requested that the applicant provide a planting schedule and stated that she was in support of the project and active play area.

Ms. Westerhout also commented on the site layout improvements and stated that all outstanding issues have been addressed.

Mr. DiMenna was supportive of all changes. He felt that the ravine should remain as is.

Mr. Monk stated that lots of thought has gone into the project and there have been a number of concerns that the applicant has tried to address. He was not in support of the use of the ravine. Mr. Monk also stated that the parking issues will be determined by Planning and Zoning and DEPRM will resolve the SWM issue. He also suggested a possible covenant agreement regarding the use of the ravine.

DISPOSITION:

Ms. Westerhout made a motion to approve the Towson Swim Club project, without the use of the ravine. A planting schedule is to be provided to the Planning Office for final approval.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Boykin and approved by acclamation at 8:36 p.m.

Another motion was made by Ms. Westerhout to approve the use of the ravine as an open play area. The motion was seconded by Ms. Boykin and Messrs. DiMenna and Monk voted against the motion, thus the motion failed at 8:38 p.m.

Mr. McMahon then addressed the panel and offered that the Towson Swim Club would move forward with their plans as approved. They will withdraw the use of the ravine from the plan at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Code Statement: Section 32 – 4 – 203 (i) (2) of the Baltimore County Code states, *The Panel’s recommendation is binding on the Hearing Officer, and on the agencies under subsection (l), (Directors of the Office of Planning, the Department of Permits and Development Management and the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management), unless the Hearing Officer or agencies find that the Panel’s actions constitute an abuse of its discretion or are unsupported by the documentation and evidence presented.*

Approved as of 11/10/2010