

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING,
BOROUGH OF SEWICKLEY HEIGHTS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2020
HELD VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Thomas McCargo at 5:00 p.m.

Members present: Thomas R Kopf, Raymond White, Michael Sirianni, and John K. Means.

Other officials/visitors present: Craig Kinney, 934 Blackburn Road; Dr. Steven Austin 465 Scaife Road; Mrs. Brenda Roethlisberger, Dr. William McCoy, 122 Barberry Road; James Mohn, 257 Scaife Road; Drs. O'Keefe, 479 Scaife Road; Belinda Thompson; Terri Fetterolf, 528 Scaife Road; Lisa Buchser, 505 Scaife Road; Lindsey Smith, 520 Scaife Road; Marsha Zak, 315 Scaife Road; Scott Fetterolf, 528 Scaife Road; Carey Sirianni, 77 Stonedale Road; William Titus, 315 Scaife Road; Frank Cservak, 174 Barberry Road; Patricia Cady; William Sutherland, 863 Blackburn Road; Assistant Borough Solicitor Alyssa Golfieri; Borough Manager Katie Stringent.

Borough Manager Stringent made an announcement regarding meeting procedure and forum as a result of COVID-19 and the Borough's Rules of Conduct and Procedural Guidelines for Public Participation During Borough Meetings

Assistant Solicitor Golfieri made an announcement regarding the conditional use approval process.

REORGANIZATION: Motion by Mr. Means, seconded by Mr. White to appoint Mr. Thomas W. McCargo as Chair, Mr. Michael Sirianni as Vice Chair and Mr. Thomas R. Kopf as Secretary of Planning Commission for the year 2020 was approved.

Assistant Solicitor Golfieri made an announcement regarding the procedures for public comment prior to Chairman McCargo opening the meeting for public comment on matters included on the agenda.

Chairman McCargo then opened the meeting for public comment. There being none Chairman McCargo continued the meeting.

ROETHLISBERGER CONDITIONAL USE REQUEST (475-477 Scaife Road): Ben and Ashley Roethlisberger are requesting conditional use approval to allow the accessory use of property located at 475-477 Scaife Road in the Borough's A Historical-Rural Residential District as a Special or Studio School. The application is made pursuant to Section 4.04, Table 2, and Article 12 of the Borough's Amended and Restated Zoning Ordinance No. 294.

Mr. and Mrs. Roethlisberger made a presentation regarding their intended use of the property noting that they would like to host monthly overnight retreats to include five to six groups of fathers and sons, at which they would provide educational opportunities related to counseling and various recreational outdoor activities on the property to include hiking, fishing, bon fires, bee keeping, and the potential tapping of maple trees. Mr. Roethlisberger noted that their goal is to preserve the property as it currently is utilizing the land for outdoor activities to strengthen the bonds between fathers and sons.

Mr. Roethlisberger further noted that his parents will reside on the property making the property their primary residence. Mr. and Mrs. Roethlisberger will maintain the property.

Mrs. Roethlisberger discussed the manner in which applicants will be selected to attend the retreat and the background check procedures that will be implemented and followed prior to making a selection.

Chairman McCargo then opened the meeting for questions from Planning Commission members. Mr. Sirianni noted that the application as presented was quite broad, questioning if the applicant intended to narrow the scope of the application. Mr. Sirianni then questioned the frequency of the retreats to which Mr. Roethlisberger noted that the retreats would not take place more than once a month. Mr. Roethlisberger noted that he plans to be in attendance for the retreats which will take place over two nights, with the potential for some retreats to only be one night. Mr. Roethlisberger reiterated that the retreats would be one weekend per month at most.

Mr. Roethlisberger further discussed the background check process for all applicants attending the retreats.

Mr. Roethlisberger explained that he currently operates the Ben Roethlisberger Foundation and intends to pivot the foundation to the Ben Roethlisberger Family Foundation a 501c3.

Those that attend the retreats will do so free of charge. Donations to the 501c3 will sustain the operation of the retreats.

Chairman McCargo requested that the applicant further discuss access to the property noting that all site improvements will ultimately be reviewed and approved by the HARB.

Mr. and Mrs. Roethlisberger explained retreat attendees will access the property via the Hartle/Lang Road access point. The main access point off of Scaife Road will be utilized only by Mr. Roethlisberger's parents as access to their primary residence. The applicants noted that they intend to secure approval from the Borough's Historical Architectural Review Board to re-establish and improve the Hartle/Lang Road access point as a secondary means of access to the property.

The applicants noted that they intend to rehabilitate the existing Rose Farm farmhouse structure in order to utilize the structure as the housing quarters for retreat attendees.

Chairman McCargo then opened the meeting to comments from the public.

Dr. Stephen O'Keefe noted his property is surrounded by the Rose Farm property and is anxious about how this proposed use is going to be handled and managed. Dr. O'Keefe further he has concerns over the use of the Scaife Road entrance to the property by retreat attendees because the entrance is a small, private shared drive that goes directly past his bedroom window. Dr. O'Keefe stated that it would be great if traffic would be diverted away from the property's existing private shared drive entrance to avoid increased traffic past his house through the use of the Hartle/Lang Road access point. Dr. O'Keefe also noted that importance of keeping the lot forested and wooded for privacy.

Dr. Elizabeth O'Keefe expressed concern that even if the Hartle/Lang Road access point is improved and utilized, what will stop retreat attendees from going through or past Hartle/Lang Road and using the property's existing private shared drive. Dr. O'Keefe stated that she hoped the applicants would incorporate a gate on the Hartle/Lang Road access point.

Chairman McCargo then asked if there were any further comments.

There being none, motion by Chairman McCargo, seconded by Mr. Sirianni to table the application.

At the conclusion of the meeting Mrs. Geraldine Pivar was permitted to make additional public comment. Mrs. Pivar raised concerns about the qualifications of the applicants' instructors to handle and teach children. Mrs. Pivar requested further clarification on the qualification process of counselors at the retreats and the age of the children who would be permitted to attend. Mrs. Roethlisberger noted she is not sure if there are qualifications that are necessary for instructors assisting with the outdoor recreational activities, but that if they will bring in counselors for a retreat, the counselors will be qualified with proper credentials.

Mr. Frank Cservak noted that he believed the proposal to be a wonderful idea.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 5:46 pm.

Secretary

Chair

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