

**RICHLAND TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2021**

The meeting was open to members of the public who chose to attend virtually using the Zoom meeting application. The Officials present were:

**MEMBERS**

Tim Gaichas – Chairman  
Diane Pontoriero, V. Chairman  
Bob Goetz, Secretary  
Joe Pillart

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Scott Shoup – Zoning Officer  
George Anderson – Land Use Admin.  
Grace Portuesi – Recording Secretary

The meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:05 pm by Mr. Gaichas. There were thirty-six (36) people in the audience.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Goetz made a motion to approve the minutes from the Planning Commission meeting of January 11, 2021. Ms. Pontoriero seconded the motion and it was approved by all.

**NEW BUSINESS.**

Paul R. & Virginia A. Goebel – Consideration of a two (2) lot Preliminary subdivision. Property situate 103 Wedgewood Drive, Gibsonia, PA, Lot & Block No. 1832-B-155. Zoning District “RA”, One -Acre Residential. Plan dated January 20, 2021. Deemed approval date, May 17, 2021.

Mr. Gaichas entered into the record: a) Richland Township Subdivision and/or Lot Line Revision application dated January 19, 2021, b) Transportation Impact Fee Calculation of \$1,265.00, and c) review letter dated January 25, 2021, from Shoup Engineering.

Mr. Shoup commented on his review letter, dated January 25, 2021, regarding a sewage facility planning module.

Virginia Goebel, owner of property, answered questions of Mr. Gaichas. Items discussed: a) inclusion of the new proposed lot in the Wedgewood Plan, and b) Dickey Road access. Ms. Goebel stated that the new lot would not be part of the Wedgewood Plan.

Mr. Pillart made a motion to recommend approval of the Preliminary and Final two lot subdivision plan dated January 20, 2021 contingent upon: a) Richland Township Solicitor’s review of the Wedgewood Plan Homeowners Association (HOA) agreement concerning if there is a need to separate this lot from the Wedgewood Subdivision and clarifying HOA requirements, b) payment of a Transportation Impact Fee of \$1,265.00 upon issuance of building permit, and c) meet the requirement of Shoup Engineering letter dated January 25, 2021. Ms. Pontoriero seconded the motion and it was approved by all.

## **OLD BUSINESS.**

**Chatham Rachel Carson Ecovillage** - Consideration of Campus Master Plan Revision, specifically in the Elizabeth Meadows precinct of the campus. The Rachel Carson Ecovillage originally proposed a 15 residential unit community. This revision would increase the amount to 35 total units in the relative same location as originally approved. Property situate 6035 Ridge Road, Gibsonia, PA, Lot & Block Nos. 2380-R-162, 2380-R-243 and 2380-L-199. Zoning District "RR" Rural Residential. Plans last dated December 28, 2020. Public Hearing must be held on or before March 28, 2021.

Mr. Gaichas entered into the record: a) the application dated December 28, 2020, b) Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc. (CEC), comment letter dated February 11, 2021, description of Ecovillage, dwelling units and density calculations, and summary of three (3) neighborhood meetings, and c) letter dated February 15, 2021, from Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc., requesting modifications of Richland Township Zoning Ordinance, Section 27-901 (2), Maximum Distances of Parking, and Section 27-901, Table 7, Minimum Parking and Loading Requirements.

In addition, the following emails were received in favor of the Rachel Carson Ecovillage: email dated January 11, 2021, Jill M. Brethauer, 4046 Dickey Road; email dated January 30, 2021, Dave Scheid, Florida; email dated January 31, 2021, Lisa Erb, 4020 Glasgow Road; email dated January 31, 2021, Karen Hite, 4129 Grandview Drive; email dated February 1, 2021, Renee Ford, 356 Forestwood Drive; email February 2, 2021, Bill and Cathy Dambach, 106 Meadowbrook Avenue; email dated February 4, 2021, David and Sherry Geis, 6006 Cunningham Road; email dated February 5, 2021, Kenda and Dave Hammer, 129 Weybridge Road; email dated February 10, 2021, Brian J. Conroy and Carly Dale Schmidt, 3875 Anderson Road; email dated February 11, 2021, Ray Pader, 3821 Kim Lane; and email dated February 11, 2021, Charles Brethauer, 420 Ridge Road.

Email dated February 11, 2021, James Chapman, 3805 Kim Lane, concerns of location of garage, parking lot lighting, and drainage issues, landscaping due to lighting, noise, and view. Mr. Chapman requests that there be consideration for moving the parking garage and lot to another area.

Email dated February 15, 2021, Joyce and Richard Chalfant, 3779 Bakerstown Road, concerns of current and future increased traffic on Bakerstown Road from Ridge Road to William Flynn Highway, (Rt. 8), already a dangerous road. Glasgow also not built for more traffic.

Mr. Shoup responded to CEC's letter dated February 11, 2021 and was satisfied with their responses.

Walt Fowler, Vice President of Finance & Administration at Chatham University, Stefani Danes, Professor of Architecture at CMU, and Chris Remley, Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc., presented a narrative and answered questions of the Planning Commission and Richland Township residents.

Chris Remley, CEC, commented that the entrance off of Ridge Road will be a shared driveway for the Ecovillage parking lot and the future Elizabeth Meadow parking lot. CEC's letter dated February 11, 2021, proposed the resident population projection would consist of 55-59 people, maximum and population density 1.6 persons per unit, and a total building area of 42,000 - 44,000 SF. The proposed residential units would be studio, 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units. At this time, 3 families with children are currently interested.

Mr. Gaichas questioned if 59 people would be the maximum number of people in the residential unit development. Ms. Danes, commented that the number is only a projection.

Mr. Gaichas questioned Mr. Fowler about future phases of the Ecovillage. Mr. Fowler responded; that at this time, Chatham University has no intent of future phases for the Ecovillage. Mr. Gaichas commented that the intention of the original master plan was to be for campus life.

Mr. Gaichas questioned if deliveries would be made to individual townhouses. Ms. Danes commented that all deliveries would be made to the Common House, not individual units. A sign, demonstrating the Common House address for all deliveries, would be erected. The residents would be willing to walk to the Common House to pickup all of their deliveries. In addition, the residents would walk to the driveway area for ride sharing and ride pickup. No vehicles would be allowed into the residential unit area. Parking along Ridge Road would not be allowed. Ms. Danes said that if issues come up regarding parking along Ridge Road, Ecovillage will address the issue through their handbook.

Mr. Goetz questioned the number of proposed parking spaces. Ms. Danes responded two (2) parking spaces for each unit and an additional four (4) spaces for visitors, approximately 74 spaces.

An agreement with Chatham University, for possible overflow parking, would need to be obtained.

Mr. Pillart questioned if development of the Ecovillage would be in phases. Ms. Danes replied, "one phase". He also questioned the planting of trees. She replied, planting of trees would be part of their ecological plan with the intent of being an element in the long range part of the campus, particularly the parking area.

Tom Trempus, 1005 James Lane, appreciated the Planning Commission's comments and questions regarding future development. He mentioned that thirty (30) years ago, the residents were told Eden Hall was in a Trust and would never be anything other than a farm. The property then turned over to the Heinz Trust, and now Chatham University. Chatham's plan was to be a student campus, now changed to the Ecovillage. His concerns: 35 residential units-too many units; situated close to any other residential property in that area; parking lot area; lack of student population in the units; and decline of neighboring property values. The parking lot should be relocated to another area. Future development could be an issue.

Ms. Danes remarked that the refuse area has not been determined yet.

James and Debbie Chapman, 3805 Kim Lane, had concerns that the current location of the parking lot is too close to their property line. Requests that alternate locations for the parking lot be considered. They also had concerns of motorcycles, diesel trucks, and garbage trucks backing into the parking area. If the parking issue can be resolved, they are in favor of the development.

Monica Obsheatz, 3809 Kim Lane, concerns that her property borders the parking lot, and lighting of the area will be an issue. She feels that this is the first step in an ongoing process. Ms. Obsheatz commented "why not increase the number of student attendance at this college and provide a work study program for labor needed for the Ecovillage system and not build houses. What percent of student housing is actually occupied today? I am opposed to the Ecovillage".

Dave Geis, 6006 Cunningham Road, questioned the original master plan, parking along the back property line of Kim Lane, much more extensively than what is proposed for the Ecovillage. Mr. Fowler responded, original parking on master plan will remain in the same place.

Aaron Cassisi, 4059 Willow Creek Drive, concerns of traffic using the Fairwinds Plan as a short cut to William Flynn Highway (Rt. 8).

Ms. Pontoriero made a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for the approval of the Campus Master Plan Revision for Chatham University, specifically in the Elizabeth Meadows Precinct of the campus, to revise the Rachel Carson Ecovillage that was originally proposed for 15 residential units to be 35 residential units. Lot & Block Nos. 2380-R-162, 2380-R-243 and 2380-L-199, Zoning District "RR" and also "Planned Campus Overlay". She also recommended that the Board grant relief from Section 27-901, of the Richland Township Zoning Ordinance, allowing an increase of separation between the furthest residential unit and the furthest parking space by 450 feet for a total of 750 feet for visitor parking and an increase of 550 feet for a total of 750 feet for resident parking. Also, Chatham University should look at how they could provide accommodations to the residents along Kim Lane in regards to the garbage, dumpster, noise, and lighting.

Mr. Goetz made a motion to amend Ms. Pontoriero's motion that Chatham University should take another look at alternate parking lot locations for the Ecovillage in order to minimize, if not eliminate, the impact of concerns of neighboring residents. Mr. Pillart seconded the motion as amended and it was approved by all.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20pm.

Approved by,

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Gaichas – Chairman

Grace Portuesi – Recording Secretary

cc: Richland Township Board of Supervisors  
Zoning Hearing Board