

Borough of Crafton
Special Public Hearing
Monday, December 9, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Perry called to order the Special Public Hearing of the Crafton Borough Council, Monday, December 9, 2019 at 8:02 PM.

Ms. Perry thanked everyone for their attendance and announced the order of the meeting as Presentation, Community Comments, Council Discussion and then a Vote.

2. PRESENTATION

ARMSTRONG/GIANT EAGLE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Bill Sittig, Armstrong Development, spoke regarding the prospective development of the property on W. Steuben Street stating that he is representing both Armstrong and the arrangement with Giant Eagle to develop the Get-Go. Mr. Sittig noted that he has worked with Giant Eagle and Get-Go on other developments and added that he represented Save A Lot with facilitating bringing Planet Fitness to Crafton. Mr. Sittig stated that the Gas Station/ Convenience Store/Restaurant is one of the strongest retail applications on the market. He added that Armstrong will work with the Borough to obtain the proper zoning approvals and making the highest investment while generating the most business. Mr. Sittig stated that the Get-Go will sit on the corner of W. Steuben Street & Linden Avenue (current day Mini-Golf and Athletic Field) and added that they hope to have future discussions to purchase the three adjacent properties along W. Steuben Street and plan to incorporate plenty of green space to keep up with the look of the community.

Mark Zimmerman, Armstrong Development, spoke regarding the site layout noting that the plan includes a strong emphasis on pedestrian connectivity. Mr. Zimmerman noted that the site drawings include a walkable path around the property, multi-use landscaped area and patio with seating and added that Armstrong will work with the Borough on a Welcome to Crafton sign. Mr. Zimmerman stated that there will be one main entrance on Route 60 (W. Steuben Street) with an additional right-in, as well as two entrances off Linden Avenue.

Mr. Levasseur inquired about the process of controlling light pollution.

Mr. Zimmerman noted that they will follow the guidelines of best practices and plans will be submitted to the Borough as they are drawn up and completed.

Ms. Perry inquired about plans to re-locate the ballfields.

Mark McCall, Echo Retail, noted that Giant Eagle did indicate that they would contribute to the re-location of the ballfields.

Ms. Perry noted at this time comments will be taken and asked for everyone to hold their applause or comments.

Manager Susko reminded those that wish to speak should state their name and address prior to comment.

4. CITIZEN COMMENT

Greg Wozniak, 1773 Barr Avenue, spoke against any Council Member that would vote for the proposed development. Mr. Wozniak stated that there is a growing number of young families moving into Crafton that will utilize the green space and ballfields.

Crystal Boehm, 57 Belvidere Street, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Boehm urged the Carlynton School District to consider other options, such as, a better recreational facility and/or green space development for the community.

Kathryn Olexa, 20 Elmwood Street, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Alexa cited concerns such as the loss of green space, light pollution, congestion, as well as the increase in crime and alcohol sales within close proximity of the Borough's recreation facilities and pool.

Richard Gaitens, 60 S. Grandview Avenue, 52-year resident, spoke against the proposed development. Mr. Gaitens stated that the current recreation facilities available to the community are unkempt and in need of maintenance and added that Crafton Borough should consider acquiring this land and increasing the community's recreational facilities. Mr. Gaitens noted that having a Get-Go will not draw new residents to move to Crafton.

Sharon Gaitens, 60 S. Grandview Avenue, 52-year resident, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Gaitens stated that she has been involved in the Crafton community since age fourteen through working at the pool, serving on the recreation board, Crocodiles swim team and many other Borough recreation activities. Ms. Gaitens added that families want to move to Crafton for what the community offers and its small-town feel, not a Get-Go.

Elvira Hoff, 48 Lincoln Avenue, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Hoff stated that the increase traffic and congestion are a concern considering the close proximity of the pool and recreation facilities that are located across the street and noted that this can be a safety hazard with the children of the community traveling to and from the area.

Leslie Tarlow, 96 S. Linwood Avenue, 10-year resident, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Tarlow stated that the community needs better recreation facilities and added that this development will hurt the many small local businesses in the area.

David Lesondak, 10 Baldwick Road, 25-year resident, spoke about the potential safety hazards citing the proposed traffic pattern issues, potential congestion and the location being directly across from the communities park and recreational facilities and added that he would rather see a development that can help the School District increase revenue but also focus in a way that enhances the Community.

Lisa Smith, 50 Walnut Street, 18-year resident, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Smith noted she would rather see a plan of residential dwellings and added that the Get-Go will cause congestion and light pollution for the current residents living directly near the planned development. Ms. Smith also suggested that residents attend the School Board meetings and take part in discussions regarding the district's future.

Reese Smith, 50 Walnut Street, spoke against the proposed development stating that he would like to see the athletic field stay as a recreational facility for the community.

AJ Pescuric, 75 Bradford Avenue, 32-year resident, spoke in favor of increased tax base and the design of the proposed development but opposes the location. Ms. Pescuric stated that the location is not ideal for traffic congestion, community safety and the potential blight that will arise from closing the current Get-Go. Ms. Pescuric added that she would like to see something that will help the small businesses in a way that will fit the community.

Tom Kennedy, 45 McMunn Avenue, spoke in agreement with the many community comments and added that the area in question also serves as overflow parking for events that are held in the park such as the Crafton Performing Arts, Concerts in the Park.

Karen Joyce, 36 Home Avenue, 37-year resident, also agreed with the other community comments and added that she feels Carlynton School District is asking too high of a price for what is being asked of Crafton residents and disagrees with the development being located across from the park.

Joe Balobek, 170 W. Steuben Street, spoke against the proposed development. Mr. Balobek stated that his home is located directly adjacent to the proposed development and noted that Council should take into consideration all the comments against the development.

Michelle Balobek, 170 W. Steuben Street, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Balobek stated that the location to the ballfield was a leading factor in the purchase of her home. Ms. Balobek added that living next to the athletic field has been a joy as she has had the opportunity to watch all the youth organizations and sports that utilize the field and noted that she does not want to look out her back window and see a Get-Go.

Tom Kanavy, 80 Woodlawn Avenue, spoke against the proposed development. Mr. Kanavy stated that he is against giving away Crafton assets to benefit Carlynton and agreed with Mr. Gaitens statement of Crafton acquiring the property to better the community's recreation facilities.

Anthony Saba, 568 Broadhead Avenue, what options would the School District have if Council would vote against the agreement.

Matt Greiner, Crafton Resident, noted that the property is zoned as R-2 where only residential developments can be made unless the Borough would approve a commercial overlay like the Shopping Center.

Christin Sciulli, N. Emily Street, asked Council to clarify whether Crafton would have to approve the re-zoning for commercial development.

Sandy Caine, 24 Warren Street, spoke against the proposed development. Ms. Caine noted that there are concerns with a decrease in property values and added that she feels the Borough should purchase the property and keep it as a green space.

Beth Carlini, Union Avenue, stated that she also feels Crafton should purchase the property.

Reese Smith, 50 Walnut Street, also noted that the sale of this property would decrease the property value market in the area.

Crystal Boehm, 57 Belvidere Street, noted that her husband researched the property title back in 2012 which turned up with handwritten notes and added that there is a historical land marker noting that the land was once the place of a well-known hospital.

Solicitor Korbel stated that the property is currently zoned R-2 and added that for this development to go through Crafton would need to approve a zoning amendment or variance.

Ms. Perry added that in response to Ms. Boehm, the Historical Society had determined that this historical marker is not the actual location and the true location is unknown but is somewhere near the area.

Ms. Perry thanked the community for attending, participating and stating their opinions.

Mr. Sittig thanked the community for the respect given and the manner of which comments were presented this evening.

Solicitor Korbel stated that if Council approves the agreement, the next step would be to declare the front lot as unnecessary for municipal use and file a new deed downtown which would then turn the property over to the School District. Solicitor Korbel added that the school district would then need to file a development application with the Borough through the Planning Commission to request a zoning variance. Solicitor Korbel reminded everyone that this is only the first step and if approved there will be multiple open meetings going forward.

Mr. Crouse added that residents will be able to follow the processes by attending the School Board Meetings.

Ms. Perry noted that if a Council Member makes the motion to vote and it is seconded Council will then discuss together prior to making a vote.

Ms. Perry responded to a citizen comment stating that the Borough would receive twenty four percent of the sale if the agreement does go through.

5. BUSINESS AGENDA

A. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGREEMENT

MOTION #1: It was moved and seconded (*Valcheff/Levasseur*) for the Consideration of an Ordinance to enter into a Temporary License and Cooperation Agreement with Carlynton School District for the purpose of allowing the sale of real property located on West Steuben St.

Solicitor Korbel stated that the School District could sell their portion of the property without the Borough's front portion but could only develop in accordance with the R-2 requirements set forth in the zoning ordinance and added that the School District has the right to take the property back if they can prove it is needed for school purposes.

Ms. Perry stated that the School District had already declared their portion unnecessary for school purposes.

Solicitor Korbel noted that he did not have enough information to comment on that matter.

Council continued discussions with the community and developers regarding the legal matters and eminent domain.

Mr. Levasseur stated that he had met with the School Board President, Jim Schriver, early on to discuss the sale of the property and the tough choices the Board has been facing. Mr. Levasseur added that the School District Board Members voted in favor of the development unanimously. Mr. Levasseur read from an email that discussed all the parameters that had been taken into light regarding the sale and development of the property, for the long term, in a way that would benefit the community economically and also have an athletically pleasing presence. Mr. Levasseur stated that this development he feels is a high-grade development and added that Council will have the final say going forward.

Mr. Crouse stated that Crafton has a fiduciary responsibility to the Borough regarding tax revenues and added that he is in favor of the potential benefit to Crafton based off the terms stated in the agreement. Mr. Crouse noted that although it is not an easy decision, he feels that Council can guide the process of the potential sale to be in line with the Comprehensive Plan and help boost the community and the Crafton Ingram Shopping Center. Mr. Crouse also added that this is the best time for Crafton to move forward with this development due to the involvement of the Council Members and the residents.

Mr. Amendola called for the vote.

Ms. Perry stated that each member of Council should have their say before the vote and stated that some questions asked by residents may not be answered tonight.

Ms. Glaser asked Council Members to consider the community comments and urged them to vote on the side of those comments.

Mr. Valcheff stated that he feels the plan is adequate for the community and many amenities have been included to go along with the Comprehensive Plan and has the best interest of the community in mind. Mr. Valcheff added that there are a few safety and infrastructure concerns

that could be considered as well as a plan to relocate the fields and mini golf for future use by the communities and youth organizations.

Mr. Amendola stated that he had heard the community comments and is prepared to vote.

Ms. Perry thanked the community for the resident turnout and the insight, comments and questions in each of their statements. Ms. Perry urged Council to side in the direction of the comments heard from the community, and stated that if the vote fails, discussions will continue with the School District for future potential and plans for the property that will be more aligned with the community's vision.

ROLL CALL VOTE: MR. CROUSE (NO), MS. DAMITS (NO), MS. GLASER (NO), MR. LEVASSEUR (NO), MR. VALCHEFF (NO), MR. AMENDOLA (NO), MS. PERRY (NO).

MOTION #1 fails to carry by a Roll Call Vote (7-0).

Ms. Perry urged the community to get involved and continue to get involved in discussions with Council and the School Board going forward.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The public hearing was adjourned at 9:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Carissima Kerns, Borough Secretary

(Presentation drawings can be viewed in the Borough Administrative Office. The full presentation and discussion can be viewed on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/3zM3tEfpvS8>).