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Regional Planning Board Amends Master Plan; Approves Subdivision

Ellen Gilbert

At its Thursday evening meeting last week, the Regional Planning Board of Princeton passed an amendment pertaining to the future of development and growth in the Borough and Township as it relates to educational and non-profit institutions, including Princeton University.

“Reviewing the campus plan for the last two years has prompted us to recognize that there was relatively little in the master plan that got down to the specifics of campus planning,” said Master Plan Subcommittee Chair Marvin Reed. Mr. Reed was elected Chair Pro Tem at Wednesday evening’s meeting after Planning Board Co-Chair Wanda Gunning, who had been presiding at the meeting that evening, recused herself from the discussion because of personal ties to the University.

“Because of general questions we were receiving, we recognized that it would be important to develop principals that would be common to all of the educational institutions we have in town,” Mr. Reed added.

The resulting amendment consists of 14 general principles encouraging institutions to strike a balance between their “need for new facilities” and their consequent “impact upon a neighborhood and the entire Princeton Community”; to study and respond “with great care” to the purchase of land by tax-exempt institutions; and to place “increasing priority” on transportation alternatives that “reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.”

The University was specifically “encouraged to site its nonresidential development away from Nassau Street and avoid development north of Nassau Street”; to cooperate in the development of a “well thought out and managed Transportation Demand Management strategy”; and to supply “benchmark” measures of “total traffic impact” in the years to come. In response to Board member Yina Moore’s questioning of the word “benchmark,” Planning Director Lee Solow noted that the word had been used in the past, and that “we can’t force” compliance, but would, rather, “work with information as it comes in.”

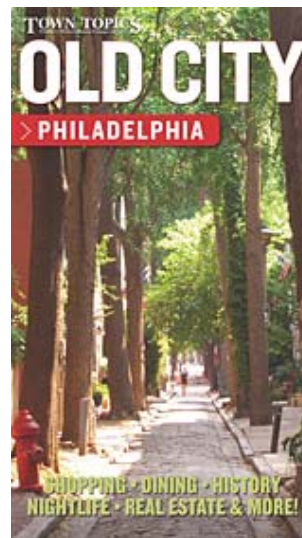
Earlier in the evening, the Board unanimously approved developer Roman Barsky’s request for the subdivision of a lot at 49 Fisher Avenue where he plans to build two new homes. Prior to the Board’s vote, neighborhood residents spoke out against the proposal, offering a petition of some 50 names of community members against the subdivision.

Members of the Board argued that two 2,970-square-foot houses were preferable to one 6,000-square foot “McMansion.” They suggested that the Borough engineer provide oversight during the construction process, and asked the developer to replant any trees that come down during the construction process and to be mindful of drainage concerns.

Susan Connelly of 41 Fisher Avenue was among the neighbors who expressed displeasure with the proposed project, describing it as a “brand-new Barskyville” being built for the sake of exorbitant financial gain. Noting the existence of similar lots on the street, she worried about opening “a Pandora’s box” with the subdivision



This Week’s Supplement:



of four lots emerging in the form of eight new houses.

Another neighbor, Lorraine D. Simbala of 55 Fisher Avenue, noted that she was living in the original home that her parents built 58 years ago, and that she was “concerned with the aesthetics and integrity of the neighborhood.” She said that two additional houses would “increase density,” and she expressed concern about the removal of trees, water runoff, and off-street parking.

Mr. Barsky’s son, Daniel, presented the plans in a power point presentation that Ms. Moore described as “one of the best presentations” she’d seen “in a long time,” especially “for someone just coming out of college.”

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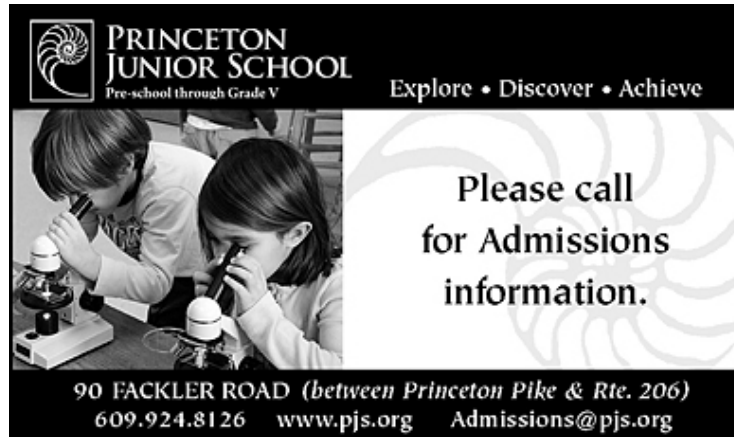
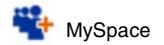
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