

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Ad Hoc Ardmore Committee
Township Administration Building
Board of Commissioners Room
April 24, 2013

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Commissioner Cheryl Gelber, Chair
Board President Elizabeth Rogan Commissioner Steven Lindner
Commissioner Lewis Gould Commissioner George Manos
Commissioner Scott Zelov Commissioner Phil Rosenzweig

Nancy Gold	Christine Vilardo	Mike Coughlan
Steve Gaylon	Carl Watson	Alex McDowell
Maryam Phillips	Chad Graham	Alison Graham
Joe Bush	Jeff Love	Maria Love
Athena Phelopolis	Patricia Sandiford	Janet Long
Phil Doherty	Joe Rufo	Paul Lichman
Ron Dubin	Cindy Linderman	Anna Durbin
R. Carpenter	Carrie Kohs	Carole Strickland
Terri Simon	Wendy Sachs	Sandra Stovall
Louis Barson	Alex McDonnell	Brad Buckman

Cheryl Allison, Main Line Times

Carl Dranoff, Dranoff Properties
David Lebor, Dranoff Properties
Josh Weingram, Dranoff Properties
Matt Koenig, Barton Partners
Natalia Bobak, SEPTA
Jim Winkler, Converse Winkler Architects
Doug Cleland, Township Manager
Angela Murray, Lower Merion Twp. Staff
Robert Duncan, Lower Merion Twp. Staff
Tom Pintande, Lower Merion Twp. Staff
Eric Persson, Lower Merion Twp. staff

The meeting started at 6:05pm.

Commissioner Cheryl Gelber greeted the audience, acknowledged the commissioners in attendance and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Cheryl summarized that the agenda included a presentation on the proposed Cricket Lot Development by Dranoff Properties and the proposed Ardmore Transit Center project and preliminary planning for

temporary parking during construction by the Township. Cheryl introduced Carl Dranoff to lead the presentation.

Carl stated that the presentation was the same one given at the breakfast meeting sponsored by Ardmore Initiative last week. The PowerPoint presentation would be available on both the Lower Merion Township and Ardmore Initiative websites.

Carl reviewed the original goals of his proposal and involvement in the Ardmore Revitalization project since 2008. The initial phase was the Ardmore Transit Center (ATC) Project that secured over \$15 million in public funds for redevelopment. There continues to be a shortfall of funding needed to complete the ATC project. In addition, the project has been stalled by the overall poor economy over the last several years. Carl reviewed the second phase of the original ATC which was to be the Cricket Avenue mixed-use project and noted that the third phase was a potential residential use on the Ardmore West municipal lot. The mixed use project was placed on the Cricket Avenue lot and will now be known as "One Ardmore Place."

Carl described the overall project including the mix of apartment units and sizes in One Ardmore Place. The surface parking will become covered structured parking in the new project. By September, the Township is required to advise Dranoff of the number of parking levels to be built. Over 200 parking spaces are shown in the renderings. The project will use traditional architectural details and use of landscaping. The structured parking has several areas of pedestrian ingress/egress. An entrance to the underground private apartment parking will be off of Cricket Avenue. The public parking entry will be off the driveway through the Cricket Lot. Carl concluded his presentation by showing some of his other recent Center City Philadelphia projects that illustrate his experience working in urban environments and using traditional architectural building materials. In moving forward, Carl stated that a site survey and temporary parking planning is underway now.

Cheryl asked Carl to confirm that the residential portion of the project will stay the same if fewer levels of public parking are constructed. Carl confirmed that the residential would be the same and noted that each level of public parking represented 66 spaces. Jeff Love, one of the owners of Gymboree on Lancaster Avenue asked what the number of spaces would be if only two levels of parking were constructed. Carl responded there was a net loss of approximately 40 spaces compared to the current open lot configuration. If only one level was constructed, then there would be a net loss of approximately 124 spaces. Carl explained that the number of 105 private underground parking spaces for apartments would not change since the apartment parking is totally separated from the public parking and has its own private ingress/egress.

In discussing the construction schedule, Carl thought it would take about 18 months to build the structure and a total of about 22 months to complete the project. Depending on the land development and bid process, Carl expressed that he would like to start next summer. The warm time of year causes the least disruption and provides an opportunity to expedite the foundation portion of the project.

Carl introduced Josh Weingram as his project manager for One Ardmore Place and asked Josh to explain the construction staging and scheduling around the site. Josh stated that the staging plan is at the schematic phase and will continue to be refined as it has been since initial discussions with Cricket Avenue businesses and noted they will address the needs of neighbors on all sides. Josh reviewed the staging plan indicated on the slide by describing the counter-clock-wise traffic flow and operation: maintain one-way cartway (18ft.-20ft.) with 4 ft. pedestrian striped walkway area within the zone; the cartway is proposed to be 14 ft. during construction; the lot behind the fitness center will not change. There will be approximately 27 spaces remaining in this area.

Christine Vilardo queried whether any parking would remain immediately behind the stores during construction. Josh stated that the parking behind the Sports Club will remain and added that there will be no construction outside of the fenced area needed for One Ardmore Place. Josh noted that Athens Avenue resident's trash removal from the rear will remain the same since the residential fence is next to the existing sidewalk, and the construction fence will be a buffer from the existing residential fencing. The (red) area shown on the proposed construction staging plan PowerPoint slide indicates the proposed loading and staging area for construction deliveries. During construction one lane on Cricket Avenue is proposed to be used for construction purposes. Most materials will be dropped off and moved into the construction site the same day. There is no pedestrian zone proposed on the (western) side of Cricket Avenue in and around the 'red' zone, but the pedestrian access on the eastern side of Cricket Avenue in front of the existing businesses will remain. An audience member asked how many construction workers would be there on a daily basis. Josh answered that typically it could be 10 to 20, but up to 30 workers, sometimes going up to 40 on the site, although not for long periods. The start-up for construction will employ about 10-15 workers and will increase as the site is developed and the structure is enclosed and detailed interior work begins.

Carrie Kohs asked if there would be cranes on the site. Josh replied that there would be a mobile crane on site at times, but the design is too preliminary to determine as yet.

Maria Love, one of the owners of Gymboree, expressed her view that none of the existing businesses are being given consideration for parking. Rich Carpenter stated that he drives 18-wheel trucks for his work noting that unless Cricket Avenue was made one-way south, it would be impossible for trucks to turn on northbound streets. Nancy Gold asked how Athens Avenue residents would drive to their homes during construction if the one-way northbound direction was established. Carl Watson asked how trucks could turn 90 degrees in the back of the development. Josh explained that no trucks would travel through the driveway from Cricket Avenue to West Athens Avenue noting that deliveries are proposed to be from the 'red' zone on Cricket Avenue.

Cheryl explained that the project will go through the Township's Land Development process. Dranoff Properties will work with Township staff to refine the proposed plan and further comment will be welcome at future presentations.

Alex McDonnell wanted to confirm that traffic generated by local parking cannot be separated from commuter parking. There was general agreement that this was true. Phil Doherty asked how fire trucks would access West Athens Avenue. Cheryl reminded the group that the project will go through the Township Land Development process and these issues will be fully addressed during that process.

Doug gave the Township's presentation that included information on the current plans for the Ardmore Transit Center development and preliminary plans for temporary parking during construction of the Cricket Lot project. The presentation described the revised plans including a phased approach that would first build transit and ADA improvements as well as the foundations for the parking garage. The decision on the number of parking levels (5+/-) developed will depend on available funding.

Angela Murray introduced ATC project architect, Jim Winkler of Bala Cynwyd-based Converse Winkler Architects who presented the 3-D model graphics of the proposed station improvements now being designed and engineered. Angela also introduced project architect Natalia Bobak from SEPTA who was in the audience for the presentation.

Jim Winkler noted that the intent of the Phase 1 station improvements is to provide ADA accessibility and high level platforms. The heated waiting area and restrooms would be located in the garage facility. The design approach is to provide architecturally sensitive elements compatible with the local historic district and masonry materials similar to buildings both on Lancaster Avenue and Suburban Square to architecturally unify the 'campus' of development on both sides of the train tracks. The proposed station development will incorporate a small civic space within its boundaries.

Angela provided information on platform and ADA design for the north side of the tracks including accessible elevator and stairs and improvements to the existing pedestrian tunnel under the tracks. Parking is proposed in the garage on the inbound side for approximately 500 cars. The ingress/egress to the parking would be from Lancaster and Station Avenues, from the south across Rittenhouse Place and through the driveway of the Athensville municipal lot immediately west of the VFW. Cheryl noted that the SEPTA surface lot of about 100 spaces would be combined with the Athensville lot and replaced with the ATC parking structure.

An audience member asked if there were any other underground entries or other ways to get the additional 300 cars out of the area. Angela displayed the PowerPoint slide to illustrate all locations of ingress/egress. Jim also noted that a traffic study is underway by Pennoni Associates to study the garage's impact on traffic flow. Preliminary analysis shows that the siting of the mixed-use on the Cricket Lot positively impacts the traffic flow from the Ardmore Transit Center site.

Maria said that she thought it sounded like a traffic jam and that the project did not sound good. Jim noted that the garage would be engineered to accommodate the traffic flow. Maria thought that similar proposals were made for Wynnewood and they were squashed.

Cheryl noted that, to the contrary, the Whole Foods development has received approval to proceed to construction.

Doug emphasized that everything presented so far is not new and that the Cricket Lot project and Phase One of the Ardmore Transit Center project each have some public funding. Of the \$15.5 in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funding available, \$3.5 million has been requested to go to the Phase One station improvements. The public funding of the ATC garage still has to be secured. The number of parking levels on the Cricket Lot is to be determined by September and with the amount dependent on the funding secured for the ATC parking garage.

Cheryl asked if any of the RACP funds have been re-programmed. Angela responded that the State Office of the Budget is still reviewing this matter and that the Township is still waiting for a response.

Commissioner Lewis Gould asked what would happen if the request is rejected. Doug responded that the project may be redesigned. Lew asked if new RACP funds have been put into the new proposed state budget. Angela confirmed that the Capital Budget Project Itemization Act of 2012-2013 does include a line item for the Ardmore Transit Center project.

Teri Simon wanted clarification that if the garage funding has not been secured by September, that would result in the Cricket Lot development including three levels of parking. Doug noted that if less public parking is built in the Cricket Project, those funds could be used for the Ardmore Transit Center parking garage. Christine stated that if less parking is built into the Cricket Project, then there is still no guarantee that more parking will be built at the Transit Center. Doug stated that is a decision that will have to be made.

Alex McDonnell asked the height of each proposed level of parking. Matt Koenig, architect for the Cricket Lot project responded that each level is about 11 feet tall with the ground level at about 16 feet. Jeff Love thought that parking at one location is being sacrificed for the sake of the other location.

Janet Long noted that she was unsure of what is driving the demand for 500 spaces as she feels that there is already congestion in front of Suburban Square's Ruby's Parking Lot. It was noted that not all traffic would proceed north on Anderson Avenue. Christine stated that one of the problems the developments were trying to address is to meet the needs of parking for all (residents, businesses, customers, and commuters).

Angela stated that the Township needs to change the MUST Ordinance to allow either development to occur as proposed. Currently there is no dedicated language for structured parking within the ordinance, nor for shared bike parking or car-sharing in mixed-use structures.

Doug continued the presentation and moved to the next topic of temporary parking. Doug discussed current existing parking space use in Ardmore. Currently there are 852 total parking spaces available divided between meters and permits. The usage of those spaces depends on the time of day and day of the week. Weekday parking tends to peak around noon and on Fridays it peaks around 7 PM including the Cricket Avenue Lot. However, during that peak time, there are about 43 spaces available for use in the Cricket Lot. Throughout the rest of Ardmore at peak hour on Friday, there are another 186 parking spaces available. Utilizing a PowerPoint slide describing municipal and private parking lots in Ardmore, Doug explained that in permit lots, some of those spaces could be converted over to metered spaces during construction to replace the majority of spaces on the Cricket Lot. Additional traditional signage, marketing and promotion as well as social media could also be used to highlight the new temporary parking. In addition, new metered spaces could be added ensuring that there would always be spaces available, even during the peak times. The next steps include ongoing community involvement, proposed changes to the MUST ordinance and moving through the land development process. If all can proceed effectively, there could be a groundbreaking in mid-2014.

With the presentations concluded, Cheryl opened up the floor for discussion. Cheryl asked the community to comment on the parking location as well as the need.

Joe Rufo commented that the current development concepts are finally right. Mr. Carpenter commented that One Ardmore Place should include three levels of parking if possible. Jeff Love commented that the parking loss is being made up throughout Ardmore and he cannot ask his clientele to walk across the streets when the majority of Cricket Lot spaces are not available during construction. Cheryl asked whether valet parking could be used for Gymboree or others. Maria claimed that the problem is that her clientele come all at once and doubted valet would be utilized. Jeff questioned how the spaces behind the fitness center were going to be distributed and suggested that the spaces be tailored to fit whatever time is needed.

Brad Buckman of Buckman's Ski Shop stated that their issue is that several hundred thousand dollars of their business involves ski equipment rental and that currently customers pick up and drop off at the back of the store. Brian thinks that the plans do not appear to provide room behind the project. Christine suggested that customers stop in the driveway to drop off equipment and then find a place to park. Brian said that they moved from Bryn Mawr to Ardmore to get more parking. In his view, only parking should be built and not apartments. Louis Barson suggested that since the money for the ATC garage has not been identified, it does not make sense to provide less parking on the Cricket Lot than there is now. However, in response to Buckman's needs, Louis does not think people will park on the third floor for ski rental. He believes that what is needed is parking on Cricket Avenue and suggested that diagonal parking be installed.

Paul Lichtman suggested that there is a large unused lot at the intersection of Lancaster and Ardmore Avenues and perhaps that area could be considered for purchase or leasing during construction. Cheryl noted that this is being looked at, but timing of the Cricket Avenue development will play a big part in the vacant lot's practicality.

Carrie Kohs commented that Ardmore is supposed to be a walkable city and asked why One Ardmore Place could not have less parking. Cheryl noted that the current parking requirement in the MUST is for 1.5 spaces per unit which can be reduced to one to one if bonuses are achieved. Carl noted that at his 777 South Broad Street development in Philadelphia, there are 193 spaces for 140 units, so the one space per unit is under the normal bare minimum for parking. Josh also noted that the private parking for the apartments is not part of the public parking calculations. Patricia Sandiford stated that she lived near the site and wondered how SEPTA will access Cricket Avenue during construction. She thought they should consider a one-way direction during construction. Angela noted that one of the benefits of the revised design at the ATC is that there is an area for waiting buses which could improve bus scheduling and bring overall efficiencies to the bus routes. Natalia mentioned that SEPTA will work with the developer to maintain the bus routes.

Janet Long asked if a portion of the Cricket Lot could remain open during construction. Carl responded that once excavation of the foundation begins, the entire site is needed to create the underground parking for the apartments. Janet asked why Carl wanted to start during the summer. Carl stated that there is less conflict with traffic and other issues including weather at this time of year and more work can be done quickly. Carl added that it could be possible to get one level of parking ready for some use in 12 -14 months. Athena Phelopolis asked how wide the driveway would be behind the development. She stated her car now sticks out from beyond her building and she is concerned that it not block the pedestrian path. Nancy Gold suggested that it is more important for a parking/pullover area behind the rear of the businesses than a pedestrian path.

Carl responded that everyone should remember that parking will return to the site. He has money already invested at the site with more to come. He understands other businesses have money invested as well. He is trying to be a good neighbor just like he does at all his development projects. Most sites do not have this much access. Christine noted that other parking options should be available. The Ardmore West Lot across Lancaster Avenue could be readily accessible particularly if there was some supervised assistance in helping to cross Lancaster Avenue. This accessibility assistance would make Ardmore West very close. Christine noted that if the Cricket Lot businesses want to claim that their customers support other businesses by walking throughout Ardmore, then that position does not support the argument that clientele must have parking right behind the store.

Carrie Kohs noted that she is in favor of the project since she just moved onto Cricket Avenue. She understands that the project will be a great benefit when it is completed, but her concern is being around long enough through the construction to survive. Cheryl stated that every business shares similar concerns.

Josh restated that the proposed Cricket Avenue construction staging, with use of the 'red zone', will be one wide lane for cars, but there is not enough width for two-lanes of traffic. Carl stated that Cricket is a very challenging site, but agreed that he and his staff

will look closely to determine if the fencing can be pulled back enough to allow two-way traffic. Josh agreed to study if the road could be configured to allow one lane of traffic and one lane for parallel parking. Nancy stated there are currently some areas on Cricket Terrace that are not signed or metered for parking and asked if the street could be made one-way and open up the other lane for parking. Nancy also asked whether traffic lights should be considered for Cricket Avenue during construction and commented that business people will be suffering with losses in the area. She asked Carl to consider partnering or sharing the risk on tenant leases during construction.

Cheryl asked the attendees to comment on how and if they thought parking should be maximized during construction. The general agreement from the audience was that it should be maximized. Rob Carpenter suggested that School Lane be reconfigured with angled parking since it is a wider road. Angela noted that part of the presentation was to demonstrate how parking could be increased both on lots and on Ardmore streets. Staff will look at these other areas, plus Cricket Terrace. The owner of Buckman's asked if these new spaces could be free. Tom Pintande stated (as others also did from the audience) that free parking would be counterproductive, as the spaces would then be used by long-term parkers and employees. However, if new spaces are considered, perhaps use of time-zone enforcement could be explored.

Jeff Love stated that while he does not understand the mindset of younger customers, he feels they just want nearby parking. Carl Watson asked if we know how the parking spaces behind the fitness center are generally being used. Janet Long stated that she has plenty of people coming to Clover Market that are pushing strollers and who park all over Ardmore. Janet also expressed her concern about the loss of parking during construction and impact on the Clover Market. She estimates that several thousand people attend her market on designated Sundays, so her peak parking time would be different from what has been previously surveyed. Angela suggested that perhaps a parking survey could be conducted on an upcoming Clover Market day to better determine parking demand. Mike Coughlan noted that Ardmore Initiative has been working on ideas for more signage and kiosks to help get the word out on where there is available parking. Teri Simon asked if Township employees could use a shuttle to move employees from current parking to other satellite areas since she thought the two employee parking lots are in prime areas for customer parking. Others thought the Township's Bernicker Lot was too remote to serve the businesses.

Carrie Kohs wants more information on why trucks could not easily pass a parking lane on Cricket Avenue during construction. Rob Carpenter wanted to know more about the proposed landscaping and how it would impact current Athens Avenue residents. Carl stated that the landscaping is only proposed for his site.

Cheryl revisited the concerns and issues as discussed by the residents and businesses reminding all that the project is not yet near construction and that it must still go through the Land Development process. The owner of Merrick Pharmacy asked if there were any plans for new ADA parking after the construction is completed. Cheryl suggested that it could be looked at.

Jeff Love asked who he should continue to talk with about the project. Commissioner Steve Lindner stated that he certainly could talk to him or staff such as those in attendance tonight. Jeff stated he wanted to find a resolution to his problem at his business. He feels that he has not heard anything to help him and the ideas have just been a rehash of old ideas. Angela restated that the project will still be going through Land Development, so the issues can be studied now and addressed again at that stage.

Steve stated that what he hears are questions on how much the Township can do. He also hears that most want all the parking levels to be constructed on Cricket. Patricia Sandiford thanked the group for putting her on the email list, as hearing first-hand has been very helpful. Steve noted that things are not always what they seem, but we are all trying to look at things so that no one group is burdened.

Carrie asked how large steel beams will be delivered to the Cricket site. Carl responded that they are studying that. Carl and his team will be working with the neighbors during the entire land development and construction period. Josh reminded all that most materials delivery can be managed through use of the 'red' zone on Cricket Avenue. Cheryl recollected watching Lower Merion High School being built while school was still in session. She feels that people will figure out the way to make it work.

Christine asked how the group can express support for the three parking levels at Cricket. Board President Liz Rogan stated that she thinks that decision may be advanced since the sense of the group is to put in the maximum three levels. Cheryl requested that this issue be placed on an Economic Revitalization Committee soon.

Rob Carpenter asked if all the apartment parking was under the structure and Carl responded that the majority of private spaces were underground. Rob further suggested that a traffic safety officer be placed at the intersection at Lancaster Avenue, and have all Cricket Avenue traffic travel one-way south.

Carrie asked how quickly parking would be available on the site as construction advances. Carl responded that once construction starts it might be possible to have some parking in 12-15 months if all work falls in line. Bob Duncan noted that in order to meet this timeline, the Board of Commissioners would have to relent on at least one review step in the land development process.

A representative of the public access channel suggested there is a need for a communication campaign. She thought a marketing campaign similar to the Ardmore Initiative's Downtown Dollars should also be instituted. Christine noted that she and others have already been thinking about this topic. Nancy asked if the hours of construction have been determined. Carl stated that he is flexible and will work with his neighbors while keeping within established Township regulations. Athena asked if Carl will work with PECO to improve electrical service in the area since she already suffers temporary outages at various times throughout the year. Angela noted she is not sure of

Carl's plans, but with the ATC project, one of the items planned is the undergrounding of utilities to help reduce damage and outages from older and overhead utility lines.

Rob asked if a shuttle service could be used to ferry persons to/from the Ruby's lot on Suburban Square. He expressed his concern that the more affluent businesses will get the benefit of development, while the nearby residents suffer through the construction. Angela stated that the Ruby's Lot is private property that is required by zoning and limited by leases to provide required parking to Suburban Square tenants. Brad Buckman asked when there would be a more definite temporary parking plan. Cheryl stated that there are still a lot of steps needed in the Land Development process, and that process will help to address many of the parking space issues. Brian asked if there would be any penalty if the developer does not finish as scheduled. Liz noted that the Township does not penalize any private business for scheduling issues. Regardless, the developer has enough monetary incentive to complete the project on time.

Steve Gaylon apologized in advance if his forthcoming comment seemed insensitive but after hearing earlier comments, he could not understand how anyone could think that a mother with a stroller and children is not capable of crossing a street. Steve Lindner stated that the question shows that dialogue provides for good feedback and can possibly lead to better solutions on different issues. Carrie stated that she thinks the Ardmore Transit Center parking is the solution.

Cheryl noted that the presentation and discussion has been going on for nearly three hours. Doug stated that we will continue to discuss the project over the next several months and meet when there are important issues to discuss. Cheryl concluded by stating that we cannot minimize the issues of disruption during construction, but noted that there had been some great ideas presented. She thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.