



UNOFFICIAL NOTES
Edgmont Township Planning Commission Special Meeting
May 17, 2022
Compiled by Annie Thorne

Edgmont Township Introduction

1) Planning Commission Chairman – Chip Miller

- a) The issue at hand is whether to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow an elementary school to be a conditional use in Edgmont's R-1 zoning district.
- b) This is a process. The Planning Commission (PC) will either make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to approve the request, make a recommendation not to approve the request, or take no action at all.
- c) The PC's job is to vet the application. If the good outweighs the bad it will most likely have a positive approval.
- d) This is the first of a few meetings. PC will solicit information from residents, Township professionals and School District professionals on how this should progress.

2) Planning Commission Solicitor – Patrick McKenna

- a) The PC is a recommending body. They do not make a final decision. BOS does that.
- b) There are two issues to consider:
 - i) A petition to amend R-1 to allow the school use
 - ii) The District's Land Development Application
- c) The school use is not currently allowed at the 1501-1519 Middletown Road parcel, which is zoned R-1. In order to build a school, a zoning amendment will be required.
- d) Township Code § 365-201 lays out the Amendment procedure process that enabled the School District to be here this evening.

Note: The Edgmont Township Code (§ 365-201) that describes the Amendment Procedure any Township property owner may petition for is here: <https://ecode360.com/34131483>

3) Township Planner - Tom Comitta

- a) Edgmont Township's Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Amendment Procedure guide the Planning Commission's thinking and process. In the last 41 years there have been

numerous requests from property owners for rezoning. It's an administrative tool that's available.

- b) Zoning changes can be a zoning map amendment, a zoning text amendment or both. In this case the District is apply for a **Zoning Text Amendment** so the R-1 district would allow the school use that's being proposed.
- c) The School District's land development plan is not the Planning Commission's first curiosity. The first curiosity is "should the Ordinance be amended to allow that plan?"
- d) How has the Township evaluated such zoning amendment requests in the past? The first well from which they draw from is the Comprehensive Plan. Is this consistent with the Comprehensive Plan? The Comprehensive Plan currently calls for the 24 acres (RTEC parcel) to be low density residential. The church is institutional. To amend the Plan, the Township would have a public hearing to amend the Comprehensive Plan, amend the zoning ordinance and adopt the amended Plan.

Note: The Edgmont Township Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2015) is here:
<https://edgmont.org/comprehensive-plan>

4) Planning Commission Chairman – Chip Miller

- a) Reminder that tonight is not a debate of whether a new school is needed. That's a question for the school board.

Rose Tree Media School District Presentation

1) Why a new Elementary School: RTMSD Superintendent – Dr. Eleanor DiMarino-Linnen

- a) The District conducted a formal enrollment study in 2016-17 and enrollment is revisited annually.
- b) New housing developments in Middletown and Edgmont Townships are further increasing projected enrollment
- c) A new school protects small class sizes and local neighborhood schools, provides high quality education.

Note: RTM enrollment studies, facility studies, meeting presentations, planning reports and past communications are here: <https://www.roomtolearnroomtogrow.org/resources>

2) ICS Project Manager – Phil Solomon

- a) Introduction
 - i) Permanent housing stock is increasing in RTM and with that comes students and taxpayers.
 - ii) Actual enrollment is exceeding projected enrollment every year since 2016-17

- iii) All the spaces in existing buildings have been used.
 - iv) The District has looked at ways to deal with this overcrowding.
 - b) New School Plan Overview
 - i) What's on the 37-acre site?
 - (1) School Building
 - (a) 63,000 sq. ft. building for 400 students and 50 teachers/staff
 - (b) Minimal environmental impact, renewable energy, net zero emissions building pulling no energy off the grid
 - (c) Designed to foster the Four C's (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication)
 - (2) Supporting Structures
 - (a) Outdoor classroom, play areas, athletic fields with geothermal wells underneath, PV solar field with meadow.
 - (3) Open Space on remaining acreage
 - (a) Large areas of the plot will remain open space
 - (b) Minimize impervious surface
 - ii) The school protects the amount of residential development that can be done in the western part of Edgmont and protects green space.
 - iii) Exterior Design Concept – draw from local buildings (Gradyville Post Office, Grace Winery, Township Building) to capture the look and feel of Edgmont

3) Review of Proposed Text Amendment: Rose Tree Media School District Solicitor – Tom Kelly

- a) 1501-1519 Middletown Road is currently in Edgmont's R-1 residential zoning district.
- b) The School District has proposed a Text Amendment to the R-1 Rural Residential/Agricultural Zoning Ordinance to permit a school as a conditional use if the school meets certain specific requirements, including:
 - i) The school must be located on a lot of not less than 35 acres comprised of not more than 3 abutting parcels,
 - ii) the building cannot be located within 150 feet of any lot line,
 - iii) impervious coverage may not exceed 20%,
 - iv) building coverage may not exceed 10%,
 - v) the perimeter boundary open area must be 50 feet, of which 25 feet shall be planted, installed and maintained in accordance with an approved landscape plan except in those areas where natural vegetation provides the required screenings.

- c) Edgmont Township currently allows schools in the PRD-3 and PRD-4 districts, subject to certain Area and Bulk Regulations. Mr. Kelly explained that many of the regulations the District has proposed adding to the R-1 ordinance for a school are more strict than the existing regulations in PRD-3 and PRD-4. PRD-3 and PRD-4 currently allow:
 - i) a school to be built on a 10 acre lot (vs the proposed 35 acres)
 - ii) a setback of 100 feet (vs the proposed 150 feet)
 - iii) an impervious coverage of 40% (vs the proposed 20%)
 - iv) a building coverage of 20% (vs the proposed 10%)
 - v) a boundary screening of 25 feet (vs the proposed 50 feet)
- d) The proposed Text Amendment would also add a section for School Design Standards to the R-1 Ordinance. The proposed R-1 School Design Standards are consistent with the language that already exists in the PRD School Design Standards (§ 365-56) with some changes to increase the distance from a school building (150 feet) and other structures (100 feet) to a street line (compare to 100 feet and 30 feet in PRD, respectively).
- e) The District tried to be consistent with the zoning regulations that already exists within PRD-3 and PRD-4 where schools are already permitted. They increased some setbacks, screening and more strict impervious surface coverage for R-1.
- f) All of the current RTM elementary schools are in residential districts. Edgmont Township is the only municipality that does not have a school.

Note: The District's proposed Text Amendment to R-1 is here:

https://edgmont.org/vertical/sites/%7B05006893-23B5-46CE-8F41-1CE251B86F61%7D/uploads/Proposed_Text_Amendments_-_RTMSD_Application.pdf

Edgmont Township's current R-1 Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 365, Article IV) is here:

<https://ecode360.com/34064245>

Edgmont Township's current PRD Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 365, Article XI) is here:

<https://ecode360.com/34064744>

4) Civil Engineering Review: Civil Engineer – Gus Houtman

- a) The site is located 1,950 feet west of the Gradyville Road/Route 352 intersection.
- b) The RTEC parcel is 24.71 acres and the Church parcel is 12.51 acres. The District is proposing a reverse subdivision to combine these parcels into a single 37.22 parcel.
- c) Mr. Houtman reviewed the Land Development Plan Set, covering the following:
 - i) Existing use/conditions
 - ii) 50 foot wide emergency access easement for driveway
 - iii) 200 parking spaces
 - iv) Stormwater Management:

- (1) Existing stormwater management agreement in place with two properties fronting Beverly Lane.
- (2) Water quality in conformance with the requirements of Edgmont Township
- v) Landscaping
 - (1) 5 foot high landscape berm running along the eastern side of the property starting at Rt. 352
 - (2) Extensive landscaping to provide maximum screening along the eastern side of the property (Lembo) and extensive buffer planting along the Risser property
 - (3) Replacement Trees
 - (a) Trees that are taken down must be replaced at the property. They are primarily being replaced at the northern access route of the property.
 - (b) 229 trees need to be removed. Over 560 trees will be planted at the property, including deciduous parking lot trees, streetscape and replacement trees as well as the evergreen buffer planting trees.
 - (4) On-Lot Sewage Disposal
 - (a) Perc was suitable for both the primary and backup areas
 - (5) Net Zero Emission Building
 - (a) Solar panels
 - (b) Geothermal well under athletic field

Note: The District's *Land Development Plan Set* is here:

https://edgmont.org/vertical/sites/%7B05006893-23B5-46CE-8F41-1CE251B86F61%7D/uploads/RTMSD_Elementary_School_Combined_Plan_Set.pdf

The District's *Stormwater Management Calculations* are available here:

https://edgmont.org/vertical/sites/%7B05006893-23B5-46CE-8F41-1CE251B86F61%7D/uploads/Stormwater_Management_Calculations_-_RTMSD_Application.pdf

The District's *Cover Letter for the Preliminary Subdivision and Land Development*

Application is here: https://edgmont.org/vertical/sites/%7B05006893-23B5-46CE-8F41-1CE251B86F61%7D/uploads/Cover_Letter_-_RTMSD_Application.pdf

The District's *Feasibility Letter for On-site Sanitary Sewer and Public Water* is here:

https://edgmont.org/vertical/sites/%7B05006893-23B5-46CE-8F41-1CE251B86F61%7D/uploads/Feasibility_for_On-site_Sanitary_Sewers_and_Public_Water_-_RTMSD_Application.pdf

The District's *Waiver Request for plan scale, payment in fee in-lieu of replacement trees, and payment in fee in-lieu of shrub planting requirements* is here:

https://edgmont.org/vertical/sites/%7B05006893-23B5-46CE-8F41-1CE251B86F61%7D/uploads/WAIVER_REQUEST_-_RTMSD_Application.pdf

Township-School District Discussion

- 1) **If the Text Amendment to the R-1 Zoning Ordinance were approved to allow a school as a conditional use on a 35 acre parcel made up of not more than 3 abutting properties, how many other properties in the R-1 district would meet the eligibility criteria?**
 - *Mr. Houtman presented a map of Edgmont identifying parcels that could theoretically be combined to reach 35 acres. He explained there was significant overlap between these parcels and the properties that were previously considered by the School District.*
- 2) **Please provide a chart comparing the current R-1 requirements, the proposed changes, and notes.**
 - *The School District will prepare a comparison table for the next meeting.*
- 3) **How could the current property be developed by right? In other words, if the Township is comparing all of the metrics of what Mr. Houtman described, how does the plan that's now being presented compare to what otherwise could be developed? (Provide a By Right plan.)**
 - *The School District will prepare a By Right Plan for the next meeting.*
- 4) **Where else did the School District look in the PRD-3 or PRD-4 areas?**
 - *C-3 is the Regal Movie Theater/Edgmont Square Shopping Center*
 - *PRD-4 is the Sleighton School property which is divided by the ME2 pipeline, cannot put a school there*
 - *PRD-3 is the former country club, now a housing development*
- 5) **Is there any reason to believe that public sewer will need to be run to the school site?**
 - *The School District confirmed they will not be running public sewer to the school site.*
- 6) **Traffic Questions – Mike Schneider, Township Traffic Engineer**
 - a) *How will site circulation work? Consider bus stacking, parent pickup/drop-off stacking, make sure all of this stacking and maneuvering can be completed on site.*
 - b) *Site access – The analysis for the intersection of Gradyville Road and 352 is not completed yet. Expecting additional analyses.*
 - c) *Do you expect any walk-up students to this school? Or all bus and car?*

- *The School District is currently not expecting to provide for walk-up students based on the traffic on Rt. 352. The stormwater easement to the north is not meant for pedestrian access. But, having said that, if through the review process with PennDOT they require crosswalks or sidewalks those would have to go in. If there's no walk-up traffic, PennDOT does not require a 15MPH school zone.*

7) Township Engineer Questions – Nick from Yerkes

- Truck turning and maneuvering movements of vehicles at, for example, loading dock.
- Playing field and on-site sewage absorption areas. Need details of the athletic field. Is it turf? Are there provisions for storage sheds? Any access? Where will children muster during fire drills? Is the sewage absorption area delineated so no fire trucks will drive on it?
- Fire and Safety – fire truck maneuvering and turning movements. Fire Department Connection locations.
- Public use of the play area in off hours. Security fencing is important in those areas.
- Special Events like Back to School Night. What are the parking plans when you have 200 parking spaces for 400 students?
- Stormwater management questions – will go over the details as the School District gets the results from the basins.

8) Township Solicitor – Patrick McKenna

- If the Board of Supervisors votes to amend the zoning ordinance, that would make a school a “conditional use,” meaning the use is permitted, but would require a public hearing where the applicant would need to present evidence demonstrating they will comply with the ordinance. Then, assuming conditional use is permitted, the Applicant will have to go through the Land Development process. It is at least a 3 step process to get the plans ultimately approved.

9) Pipeline – Chip Miller, Planning Commission Chairman

- There are two pipelines, the Mariner East 2 and the pipeline near the school, the Texas Eastern natural gas pipeline.
- What considerations could be put into place if there was a leak or a major leak? Are there sensors to give some level of comfort to the health and safety of the teachers and students? What about notification and the School District's all hazards plan for that event?
- The map that was put out shows a number of schools sitting on top of pipelines. If there's a safer way of doing it, either at the proposed location or a different location, that should be an option that we keep on the table until the last possible minute.

Public Comment

This recap does not cover public comment. (I was standing in line for much of public comment and was not able to take notes.)

Please consult the official Edgmont Township Meeting Minutes for detailed accounts of every resident's comments, including their name and address.

Please visit <https://edgmont.org/> to download the Township's official meeting minutes.

**Questions regarding this Recap may be directed to Annie Thorne:
connect.edgmont@gmail.com.**