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Board approves zoning for Williard site

By Kaitlyn Foti
Staff Writer

Switchville Crossing, the development on the property often referred to as the Williard property, was given the go-ahead by the Abington Board of Commissioners Monday night at the public hearing for the developers.

The board voted unanimously to approve the ordinances to grant Duke Real Estate Partners the zoning needed to proceed with a shopping center that will consist of an LA Fitness, along with a three-story office building and a one-story bank, neither of which have tenants as of yet.

The property was in limbo during dis-

agreements between the developers and the Greater Glenside Civic Association for several years, but Township Manager Tom Conway gave credit to both parties for working together toward an agreeable development.

"It goes to the credit of the developer and the community leadership. They worked hard together for two or three years to get it to a point where the community would be happy with what's there and it could be a successful development," he said.

The property, which is 10.8 acres located at Highland Avenue and Wharton Road, has changed little since agreements on architectural styles were made last year. Since then, however, LA Fitness signed on as the tenant

for the then-unoccupied fitness center that was planned for the site.

"With the addition of LA Fitness and some minor changes to the office building, it has evolved, although we feel it is very consistent with the design before it," said Duke's architect, Dan Garber.

The new plans also call for the removal of concrete from a majority of the property across Highland Avenue from the development, for the land to become open space used for township recreation. This fulfills the developer's open space requirements for the site.

"There are several similar recreational fields in that area that are of the same nature. It will be made available for recreational use

for the township, but will still be owned by the developer. I suspect this would be done in the same fashion as the others," Conway said.

With 455 surface parking spaces and an additional 35 spaces next to the recreational field, the developers eliminated a proposed parking garage from the original plan, which helped assuage the concerns of the civic association.

With the property having been vacant, residents at the hearing reacted favorably to the designs and comparisons made by the developers between the appearance of the current site with projections of what Switchville Crossing and the planned landscaping will look like five years after planting.



Chronicle/News staff photo - KAITLYN FOTI

Anne Spector, director of communications for Cheltenham School District, leads a rehearsal for the Nov. 24 performance of four plays by Cheltenham students that won honors in the Philadelphia Young Playwrights competition.

Student playwrights' works set to be performed on stage

By Kaitlyn Foti
Staff Writer

Elementary school playwrights will be watching Nov. 24 as their work is performed onstage. Teachers, administrators and alumni will be acting in the four plays that won honors this year in the Philadelphia

Young Playwrights competition.

"There are four elementary schools in Cheltenham, and all of them won first prize in Young Playwrights. We're here to celebrate that," said Anne Spector, director of communications for Cheltenham School District, at the first rehearsal of the readings.

See Playwrights, Page 6

Abington OKs hiring planner to evaluate options

By Kaitlyn Foti
Staff Writer

The Abington Board of Commissioners voted Nov. 12 to hire a professional land planner in conjunction with the Baederwood Shopping Center development.

The purpose of the land planner, according to Abington Township Manager Tom Conway, is to help the administration determine which option for the parcel behind the shopping center is best for the township.

The owners of the property, Brandolini Cos., currently have an ordinance that will be up for a vote at the Abington Nov. 18 hearing on whether to create space for the entire proposed shopping center and 80,000 sq ft behind it would be zoned for the Baederwood Shopping Center development District.

If the ordinance passes, Brandolini has a curative amendment against

the township, saying the R1 residential zoning of the land behind the shopping center makes the land unusable and that it should be rezoned as PB, planned business.

Brandolini has proposed to put apartment housing in the parcel, and has suggested that 266 units could be constructed under its current preliminary plan.

Conway said the purpose of hiring a professional land planner is to gain help in determining whether the distinct BSCD zoning or the PB zoning would have a more desirable outcome for the township.

"Hiring a professional land planner is two things, in order to get some perspective on the alternatives and to see if there is a third alternative that might be better," Conway said.

The hearing for the zoning ordinance is resuming Nov. 18, 7 p.m. in the Abington Junior High Theatre, and no land has been hired as of yet, Conway said there "probably won't be a decision" at the hearing.



Members of the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, NAM Planning and Design, LLC, the Cheltenham Environmental Advisory Council and Glenside Elementary School receive their Community Greening Award.

School project earns recognition

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, producer of the Philadelphia International Flower Show and renowned urban greening program Philadelphia Green, paid tribute to Glenside Elementary School's riparian buffer planting and outdoor classroom project as a community greening champion this fall.

The project, a 10,000 square foot riparian buffer along the main stem of the Tookany Creek behind Glenside Elementary School, was initiated by Glenside fourth-grade teacher Linda Jephson and developed in partnership with the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, Glenside Elementary School, Glenside Parent Teacher Organization, Cheltenham School District, the Cheltenham Environmental Advisory Council and NAM Planning and Design, LLC. The project was funded by grants from TreeVitalize and the Royal Bank of Canada.

The Community Greening Award, a collaboration of PHS and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, recognizes

individuals, garden clubs, civic associations, businesses, municipalities and community groups who have created and maintained public green spaces that enhance their communities.

"We would like to congratulate all of the Community Greening Award participants for the impact they have made in their communities," said Blaine Bonham, executive vice president of PHS. "Studies show quality green spaces enhance the health, beauty and economic vitality of an area and often serve as meeting places. This award represents a mark of excellence."

Several entries this year included innovative ways to capture storm-water runoff such as rain gardens. Nominations included train stations, public parks, Main Street planters, church gardens and landscapes around municipal buildings and museums. Spaces were judged on a host of criteria, including variety of plant material, maintenance, design, visual appeal and use of space.

Group celebrates a decade of quilting for charities

