

*October 4, 2019*

**TO:** Planning Commission Members

**FROM:** Andrea Campisi, Senior Planner, Building and Planning Department

**SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN – 1860 W. Montgomery Avenue & 421 Saybrook Road, Lower Merion School District, Villanova, LD# 3829PP, Ward 6**

### **Project Summary**

The School District has designed an excellent facility that the community can be proud of. The majority of staff's comments are intended to integrate the campus into the existing community rather than modify the physical/educational program that has been decided upon by the School District, which has been well thought out given the constraints of the site.

The costs associated with upgrading the existing sanitary sewer system and transportation infrastructure which will enable this project to seamlessly fit into the community highlights the need for continued cooperation and proactive discussions between the Township and the School District.

### **Proposal**

The applicant, Robert Copeland, Superintendent of the Lower Merion School District, is seeking Preliminary Plan approval for the following:

- Consolidation of the two existing properties into one 22 acre property;
- Demolition of all existing structures on the site;
- Construction of a new middle school with a 108,113 sq. ft. footprint to accommodate 1,200 students in grades 5-8 and 150 faculty/staff members;
- Construction of two surface parking lots with a total of 198 parking spaces;
- Separate parent and bus drop-off and pick-up lanes;
- Construction of an athletic track and football/multi-purpose field, a practice athletic field and four tennis courts and associated 20' tall ball stop system around a portion of the practice field;
- Installation of multiple stormwater management systems;
- Construction of a gated emergency access driveway onto Saybrook Road;
- Construction of stairs with gated emergency egress from the site onto Saybrook Road;
- Construction of a sidewalk and stairs leading to N. Stone Ridge Lane;
- Installation of a six foot high fence around the entire property with the exception of along the frontages of N. Stone Ridge Lane and W. Montgomery Avenue;
- Construction of an access driveway with separate right and left turn lanes into the site from W. Montgomery Avenue; and
- Installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of the site driveway and W. Montgomery Avenue.

A one-way parent drop-off /pick-up driveway is shown in front of the proposed building and a separate one-way driveway loops behind the school for bus drop-off and pick-up of students. A loading dock is shown on the northern side of the proposed building.

The proposal is illustrated on the attached 28 sheet plan set dated July 15, 2019, last revised September 20, 2019 prepared by Chester Valley Engineers, Inc.

The following additional information was also submitted:

- Transportation Impact Assessment prepared by F. Tavani and Associates, Inc. dated March 1, 2019, last revised September 3, 2019
- Landscape Plan prepared by Glackin Thomas Panzak dated July 15, 2019, last revised September 20, 2019
- Site sections prepared by Spiezel Architectural Group
- Architectural elevations prepared by Spiezel Architectural Group
- Site lighting plan prepared by Spiezel Architectural Group
- Pedestrian Routes prepared by TPD, Inc. dated July 15, 2019



### **Project Background**

The Planning Commission reviewed the Tentative Sketch Plan at their [May 6, 2019](#) meeting and the Board of Commissioners approved the plan on [May 15, 2019](#).

The two dormitories on the site have been demolished with work continuing to remove the foundations and haul debris off the site. The gymnasium will be demolished next with work scheduled to begin the week of October 16, 2019 followed by the carriage house, garage and the main house. Demolition will likely continue through the remainder of 2019.

### **Property Description**

The property is in the R1 zoning district, contains 21.83 acres and has frontages on Saybrook Road, North Stone Ridge Lane and West Montgomery Avenue.

### **Property History**

The property was originally the core of an estate called Clairemont Farm. At its maximum size the property extended from Matsons Ford Road to the Stoneleigh property and from County Line Road to Montgomery Avenue. Joseph E. Gillingham was the farm's original owner. Architect Addison Hutton designed the Gillingham house and possibly an associated carriage house (still standing) around 1881. Morris L. Clothier purchased the estate about 30 years later, replacing the mansion with a new, more grand estate designed by Horace Trumbauer. Olmsted Brothers, the nation's preeminent landscape architecture firm, laid out the grounds and planned the plantings. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century subdivisions resulted in the development of most of the land, but the mansion at the center and some outbuildings were left standing on a central parcel. The mansion became the main building of the Northeastern Christian Junior College in 1956 and was given the new name "Boone Hall" after donor Pat Boone. Several ancillary buildings were constructed on the property by the College through about 1982. The Foundation for Islamic Education purchased the property in 1994 and remained owner until the School District purchased the site.

The Clairemont estate remained intact through 1952, when a syndicate purchased all 136 acres for development. The intent was always to retain the mansion at the center of the property and several surrounding acres for use by

an institution. Residential developers Villa-Wood, Inc. purchased the land in 1955 and built homes on approximately 130 building lots based on 16 architectural designs with architecture ranging from traditional to modern, each house being on about ¾ acre of land. The development was marketed heavily as Clothier Estates in 1956 and 1957. Clairemont Road, Stone Ridge Lane, and Saybrook Road were all constructed as part of this development. In 1960, Carl Metz Corp. laid out a looping extension of Stone Ridge Lane north of Saybrook, most of which could not be constructed as a large portion of the remaining undeveloped property was on the site of the Blue Route.

### **Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan**

The following recommendations were included in the Community Facilities Element of the Township's Comprehensive Plan. The applicant should continue to work with the Township to further these recommendations.

- F21 – Establish an intergovernmental structure to coordinate long range planning between the Lower Merion School District and Lower Merion Township.
- F21.a – Establish a schedule of regular town meetings to publicly discuss issues common to both LMSD and Lower Merion Township. The meetings should be co-hosted by representatives of LMSD and Lower Merion Township.
- F21.b – Work with the LMSD to understand land use implications resulting from public school facility needs. Develop options permitting public schools to evolve to meet the community's needs while balancing larger municipal needs as well as land use concerns of neighbors resulting from expanded public school facilities. Evaluate current public school Zoning Code provisions against various future enrollment scenarios.
- F22 – Continue working with LMSD on joint planning, development, use and maintenance of ball fields and game courts by Township residents.

### **Historical Commission**

On [March 20, 2019](#), the Board of Commissioners imposed a 90-day delay on the issuance of the building permits for the Class II resources on the site, following a recommendation of the Historical Commission. The delay of demolition expired on June 18, 2019.

Representatives of the Lower Merion School District appeared before the Historical Commission to present the Preliminary Plan on [July 22, 2019](#). The Commission commended the applicant for the following:

- The re-use of materials including wood flooring, decorative wood elements including paneling, fireplace surrounds, and exterior masonry elements; and
- The re-use of exterior elements. The Commission always encourages re-use of historic materials and elements.

The Commission further encouraged any possible re-use and salvage of historic materials and elements.

The Commission also reacted to the design elevations and suggested:

- Further refinement to break down the scale of some of the larger elements, which seem to emphasize the verticality of the proposed building; and
- Consider changes to materials, which seem to accentuate the “larger” and “vertical” rather than the “smaller” and “horizontal.”

The Commission also noted that human-scale elements were lacking in the images presented.

### **Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)**

The EAC reviewed the Preliminary Plan at their September 24, 2019 meeting and had the following comments:

- a. The applicant should substitute the following evergreen trees on the landscape plan (*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Yoshino', *Picea glauca*, *Pinus strobus* 'Fastigiata', *Thuja occidentalis* 'Techny', *Thuja plicata* 'Green Giant') with a selection of the following evergreen trees:
  - *Ilex opaca* 'American Holly'
  - *Juniperus virginiana* 'Easter Red Cedar'
  - *Magnolia virginiana* 'Moonglow' or 'Green Mile'
  - *Pinus strobus* 'Eastern White Pine'
- b. The applicant should remove the proposed *Chionanthus virginicus* deciduous trees from the plan.
- c. The applicant should substitute the following shrubs on the landscape plan (*Buxus microphylla* 'Wintergreen', *Ilex crenata* 'Hetzii') with a selection of the following:
  - *Ilex glabra* 'Shamrock'
  - *Ilex opaca* 'Maryland Dwarf'
  - *Kalmia angustifolia* 'Hammonasset'
  - *Kalmia latifolia*
  - *Leucothoe fontanesiana* 'Scarletta'
- d. The applicant should use the following perennials and grasses on the landscape plan:
  - *Carex amphibola*
  - *Dryopteris marginalis*
  - *Juncus effuses*
  - *Polystichum acrostichoides*
- e. The applicant should indicate on the plan those trees that are non-viable.
- f. The applicant shall devine existing trees along the property boundaries rather than clear cut the trees.

Staff notes that buffer plant material must meet certain performance criteria as well as enhance ecology and habitat.

### **Montgomery County Planning Commission Review**

The County review letter is attached. The County recommends the following:

- Installation of sidewalks on all three street frontages;
- Creation of a pedestrian connection to Saybrook Road (the County reviewed an earlier version of the plan set that did not include the proposed stairs to Saybrook Road);
- Provide additional street trees along Montgomery Avenue if the white pines are removed; and
- Investigate providing alternative locations for proposed sediment traps where post-construction infiltration and biofiltration basins are shown.

### **Zoning**

The current Zoning Code does not contain institutional zoning districts for schools. Public school uses are regulated under a Public School provision contained in the RAA zoning district ([155-11.E](#)) which regulates the lot area, lot width, building area, impervious surface, setbacks, building height, parking and buffer requirements. On [November 19, 2018](#), the Board of Commissioners adopted Ordinance 4148 which amended Section 155-11.E, Public Schools as noted below.

The following table details the bulk, area and setback requirements for the existing and proposed conditions.

<b>R1 Zoning 155-11.E Requirements</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>Minimum Net Lot Area</b>	30,000 sq. ft.	968,357 sq. ft.
<b>Minimum Lot Width</b>	60'	943'
<b>Maximum Building Area</b>	18.75% <sup>1</sup> (181,564 sq. ft.)	11.2% (108,113 sq. ft.)
<b>Minimum Front Yard Set back</b>	40'	40'
<b>Minimum Side Yard Set back</b>	25' & 25'	25' & 25'
<b>Minimum Rear Yard Set back</b>	25'	25'
<b>Maximum Impervious Surface</b>	45% <sup>2</sup> (435,752 sq. ft.)	43.4% (420,480 sq. ft.)
<b>Maximum Pervious Surface</b>	5% (48,417 sq. ft.)	3% (27,546 sq. ft.)
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	65' <sup>3</sup>	48.83'
<b>Parking</b>	198 <sup>4</sup>	198
<b>Buffer</b>	10' <sup>5</sup>	10'

<sup>1</sup> The building area may not exceed the maximum permitted building area in the underlying zoning district by more than 25%.

<sup>2</sup> Ordinance 4148 increased the maximum impervious surface on public school properties to 45% and permitted porous paving used for walkways, building entrance areas, gathering areas, sports courts and running tracks to not count as impervious surface provided they do not exceed 5% of the lot area. The plan contains 27,546 sq. ft. of porous paving (not included in the impervious surface calculation) and represents 3% of the lot area.

<sup>3</sup> Ordinance 4148 increased the permitted building height of a public school to 65'.

<sup>4</sup> Ordinance 4148 allows parking spaces required for students of driving age, faculty/staff/volunteers and students to be counted to satisfy the requirements of the parking required for the largest place of public assembly on the site.

<sup>5</sup> Up to an additional 10' if a retaining wall is installed at the edge of the buffer.

## Issues

### 1. Overall Site Design

A condition of the Tentative Sketch Plan approval required the applicant to “investigate utilizing compact development principles such as constructing the proposed tennis courts above surface parking, directing height toward the center of the campus and investigating parking under the building”. The applicant stated that the current site layout considers building sightlines and places the main office in the southeastern corner of the building, providing staff with a direct sight line of the driveway into the site. The applicant noted that alternative site layouts would result in inefficient and ineffective placement of the building, impact to the stormwater management design, ineffective traffic patterns and additional expense.

The applicant indicated that the portion of the site that will house the proposed building is being lowered from existing grade approximately 15-25 feet, depending on the specific location. The building ranges in height from two to three stories. As a result, significant retaining walls are needed to accommodate the changes in grade on an already heavily sloped site. The applicant should work with staff to screen these retaining walls as best as possible from adjoining properties and street frontages. In addition staff recommends fencing around the perimeter of the property be upgraded from the chain link fencing proposed to a higher quality solid fence to help further screen the proposed improvements.

### 2. Sanitary Sewer Capacity

The new school is proposed to be connected to the Township’s existing sanitary sewer system. Sewage flows from this portion of the Township are routed to the City of Philadelphia for treatment via a series of pipes and pumps beginning with the Gulph Creek Sewage Pumping Station. This pump station is currently experiencing wet weather capacity issues. When it is raining, the pump station is at risk of experiencing an

overflow of sewage. This occurs during a rain event because the existing pipes routing sewage to the pump station are experiencing infiltration/inflow of rain water.

Without improvements being made to the system, the School District will not be able to obtain Planning Module approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The School District also indicated that they will not be able to sign any contracts with contractors until all required approvals from all entities are in place.

The Township is aware of this issue and is willing to work with the School District to resolve it since without a resolution the opening of the school will be delayed. Staff recommends that the applicant work with the Township Public Works Department and Township Engineer's office to design mitigation measures to offset the added sewage flow. The mitigation measures must be implemented prior to completion of the school and generation of the added sewage flow to the station. Staff recommends that the School District pay their proportionate share of the cost of the mitigation measures.

### **3. Pedestrian Circulation/Sidewalks**

A condition of the Tentative Sketch Plan approval states:

*The applicant shall install a five-foot-wide sidewalk along the full frontage of the property along Montgomery Avenue, Saybrook Road, and N. Stone Ridge Lane.*

The plans shows the required sidewalks on all street frontages. The applicant submitted a request for relief with the Tentative Sketch Plan, which was denied by the Board of Commissioners, to not install sidewalks on any street frontage. The applicant is again requesting relief to defer the requirement to install sidewalks along any frontage of the school property with this application until such time as future off-site sidewalk construction and connectivity is provided by the Township. While the plan shows the required sidewalks as well as stairs from Saybrook Road and North Stone Ridge Lane, the applicant has indicated that they do not wish to provide pedestrian access into the site from anywhere other than Montgomery Avenue.

The applicant stated that the installation of sidewalks creates an attractive nuisance as parents will be tempted to take advantage of the sidewalks to drop off students and therefore it poses an imminent risk to the safety of the children. The applicant also expressed concerns with multiple pedestrian access points creating possible security breaches to the perimeter of the site.

The dilemma of maintaining the safety of the students while providing community connectivity to and along the site's public road frontages is an important one that will require both the School District and the Township to work together to solve. The school property is a new community space that should be available to not only residents in the vicinity of the site but to the overall community. The use of the athletic amenities will provide important recreational and fitness opportunities for the community. Therefore, retaining community connections so that students, parents and residents can actively flow in and out of the site is one that must be solved holistically. Staff supports the installation of the sidewalks with the construction of the school. A possible alternative to a full sidewalk on both N. Stone Ridge Lane and Montgomery Avenue would be to create a path that starts along the frontage of N. Stone Ridge Lane, cuts across the School District property just below the infiltration basin and connects to the sidewalk along Montgomery Avenue. Staff will provide a graphic of this possible alternative at the meeting.



The applicant proposes to install a six foot high chain link fence around the majority of the school property with the exception of along the frontage of N. Stone Ridge Lane and Montgomery Avenue. Three gates are shown in the fence to provide maintenance access to areas beyond the fence on the school grounds. According to school safety experts, chain link fencing, although the most economical, is easy to climb and may present a false sense of security. Staff supports fencing the property but strongly believes that an opening for students who wish to walk to school as well as members of the community who wish to access the site for recreation purposes should be provided along Saybrook Road.

Creating pedestrian infrastructure that increases walkability improves the overall community as it reduces traffic congestion, results in increased property values, improves community health, supports sustainability and contributes to social equity.

The Township’s Comprehensive Plan encourages the installation of sidewalk connections to public schools.

C8	
ISSUE	Incomplete bicycle and pedestrian linkages to public schools, community facilities, regional trail network and commercial areas.
RECOMMENDATION	Implement the prioritized plan for bicycle and pedestrian improvements to create a complete network around schools, community facilities, public transportation nodes and commercial centers.

**Connections to Nearby School District Properties**

As the Planning Commission is aware, the applicant has a Tentative Sketch Plan application pending for 1835 County Line Road and 1800 W. Montgomery Avenue showing proposed athletic fields to serve this site. Unfortunately, the two sites are not directly adjacent to one another and sidewalks do not exist in the surrounding residential neighborhood, making walking between the sites difficult for students. Implementing a connected pedestrian circulation plan between the two campuses will require full coordination between the School District and the Township.

Condition 7 of the Tentative Sketch Plan states: *Grading on the site shall be adjusted to provide a future connection to the off-site fields should the ability to provide a direct connection to either Stone Ridge Lane or Clairemont Road arise.*

The landscape plan shows a small break in the required landscape buffer between the practice field and the athletic track for this purpose. Since the buffer is a zoning requirement it must be fully planted unless relief from the Zoning Hearing Board is obtained. Therefore the landscape plan must be revised to include plantings in this area with a note that this area is the proposed location for a future pedestrian connection.

**4. Traffic Impacts**

When evaluating a land development application the Township typically looks at on-site and off-site traffic impacts. On-site traffic impacts are those that can be addressed on the applicant’s property either by adding a turn lane or installation of a traffic signal. Off-site traffic improvements are those that require improvement to an area that is not within the boundary of the applicant’s property.

The following are on-site traffic improvements proposed as part of this application:

- Construction of separate right and left turn lanes into the site from Montgomery Avenue;

- Installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of the site driveway and Montgomery Avenue.

The traffic study has confirmed that the project meets the warrants for the proposed traffic signal at the intersection of the new driveway and Montgomery Avenue. Before the signal can be installed, PennDOT must approve it. Preliminary discussions with PennDOT indicate that they agree that a signal is needed in this location but they have yet to issue a final approval. The traffic study also notes that the proposed signal will be interconnected to the existing fiber optic network along Montgomery Avenue. This will ensure that timing of the signal takes into consideration traffic flow in the Montgomery Avenue corridor.

There are currently no off-site traffic improvements proposed as part of the application but several are recommended by the applicant's traffic engineer. The traffic study indicates that the traffic generated by the new school will have a significant impact on traffic flow at the intersection of Spring Mill Road and Montgomery Avenue. Measures to mitigate the traffic congestion at this intersection included in the applicant's traffic study include:

- Upgrading the signal at this intersection to be a fully-actuated coordinated signal with the other signals along Montgomery Avenue in the Township. This means that the timing of the signal is completely influenced by traffic volumes. Therefore, the light will change automatically when a significant number of cars is stopped at the signal in any direction.
- Providing new exclusive left-turn lanes on both northbound and southbound approaches of Spring Mill Road.
- Providing fiber-optic interconnect cable between the proposed signalized site driveway and the existing signalized intersections of Montgomery Avenue and Spring Mill Road and Montgomery Avenue and Airdale Road.
- Prohibiting eastbound left turns from Montgomery Avenue to Spring Mill Road either at all times or during AM and PM peak hours such as 7-9 AM and 2-6 PM.

The traffic study indicates that while the AM peak hour operation of this intersection may be constrained, it is only for a period of approximately 20-30 minutes per day from 7:45 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. during school days, even with improvements. The applicant's traffic engineer recommends that the intersection be closely monitored the first year the school is in operation to gauge the accuracy of trip generation, trip distribution and level of service predictions to determine if further mitigation measures may need to be considered.

The Township Engineer concurs with the mitigation measures but recommends that they be implemented as part of the project. The Township Engineer recommends detailed design of the mitigation measures be submitted for review with sufficient detail for implementation. A rough estimate of the cost of the improvements is approximately \$1 million.

As required by a condition of the Tentative Sketch Plan approval, the revised traffic study considered the possible cut-through traffic to surrounding streets including N. Stone Ridge Lane, Saybrook Road, Clairemont Road, Spruce Lane, Cedar Lane and Willowbrook Lane. The study recommends implementing traffic calming measures on these streets such as installing speed humps/tables with 14 possible locations identified. The Township Engineer recommends additional investigations be performed to determine what traffic calming measures are most appropriate for the areas listed above. The Township Engineer recommends that once the measures have been selected, that they be installed by the applicant if/as directed by the Township.



The Township Engineer also recommended that the proposed 30 foot wide bus loop be reduced in width to 24 feet unless the applicant can demonstrate that the additional width is necessary for maneuverability and safe/efficient operation. Staff notes that the standard cartway width for public roads in the Township is a maximum of 27 feet wide.

Finally, the Township Engineer recommends a post development traffic study be prepared of the analyzed intersections, site drive and streets to determine the accuracy of the trip projections and distributions and to determine if added mitigation measures are needed.

## **5. Stormwater Management**

Since the principal buildings on the site will be demolished, stormwater rate and volume controls must be provided considering the predevelopment ground cover condition as meadow. In addition, the stormwater systems must be capable of draining the required rate control volume of runoff in 24 hours.

The Township Engineer has reviewed the applicant's proposed stormwater management controls and determined that the proposal will greatly reduce both the rate and volume of stormwater runoff leaving the site following development.

However, the capacity of the existing storm sewers that will receive the outflow of the proposed stormwater basins have not been verified for all design storms. Therefore, it may be possible that increases in storm sewer capacity is required with this project. In addition, the Township Code mandates that an evaluation of the stormwater facilities for Code compliance exclude the exfiltration of runoff from the facilities into the ground during storm events. This has not been performed with the current submission and relief from this Code section may be required but has not been requested by the applicant.

The applicant requested relief from the Code requirement that limits more than twenty-five (25%) percent of the site from being denuded at one time but did not provide any justification for the relief with the submission.

Staff, including the Township Engineer, met with the applicant's civil engineer to review these issues earlier this week. The applicant intends to provide additional information to the Township Engineer prior to the Planning Commission meeting in an attempt to resolve the issues. The Township Engineer will report out on his evaluation of the additional information at the meeting.

## **6. Landscape Plan**

*Zoning Code Section 155-11.E.8 states: A minimum ten-foot planted buffer shall be required along the side and rear property lines when a public school property abuts a residential zoning district. A maximum six-foot-tall wall may be placed at the edge of the buffer a minimum of 10 feet from the property line. If a second wall is installed in a required side or rear yard setback, an additional ten-foot planted buffer shall be installed, and the wall shall be located a minimum of 20 feet from the property line.*

Since the property abuts residential zoning districts on all sides, a minimum 10 foot buffer is required and should be dimensioned on both the landscape plan and the civil site plans. Based upon staff's review of the landscape plan, it appears that the applicant has placed many of the plantings required under the Natural Features Code in the required buffer. Staff notes that the two Code requirements must be met independent of each other. Staff recommends the applicant revise the landscape plan to maintain the buffer areas as shown, with the exception of additional plantings to be provided as noted below. The buffer must be designed to not

only provide adequate screening of the improvements from adjoining properties but should also be designed to enhance the ecology of the site. The plantings required under the Natural Features Code should then be dispersed throughout the interior of the site.

In addition, staff recommends the following be addressed on a revised landscape plan:

- Demonstrate how the two surface parking lots comply with Natural Features Code Section 101-9.B.1
- Provide a layer of trees and shrubs between the bus loop and the infiltration area on the northwestern side of the building.
- Work with staff to refine the design of the infiltration basin closest to Montgomery Avenue.
- Elaborate on the vision for the no-mow areas and provide the proposed seed mix.
- Provide a succession planting plan for the evergreen trees along Saybrook Road and Montgomery Avenue that can be put in place when those trees decline and are removed. Any succession planting plan must include the required street trees.
- Work with staff to develop an adequate landscape screen along Saybrook Road.
- Work with the EAC on the final selection of plant material.
- Provide the details of the EP Henry retaining walls and work with staff on the final product selections.
- Eliminate any fastigate (upright) trees from the surface parking lots and replace them with canopy trees.
- Provide greater tree canopy coverage over the surface parking lots.
- Work with staff and adjoining property owners to select appropriate fencing along the perimeter of the property.

## **7. Salvage from Demolition of Historic Resources**

A condition of the Tentative Sketch Plan required the applicant to salvage materials on the existing structures, retaining stone from walls and formal garden features for use in the new design. Notes on the plan indicate areas where the applicant proposes to reuse the salvaged stone in landscape walls and a perimeter retaining/screen wall. Staff requests that the applicant continue to work with us to find ways to incorporate salvaged stone into the project. In addition, the Public Works Department has offered the School District two Township properties for storage of the stone until such time as it is needed on site.

## **8. Relief**

The Board of Commissioners granted the following relief with the Tentative Sketch Plan approval:

- a. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101-5.B.1.b, if and to the extent required not to exceed the proposed improvements shown on the Tentative Sketch Plan, should the proposal not minimize disturbance to vegetation other than woodlands which provides wildlife food and cover or visual amenity.
- b. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.a, if and to the extent required for disturbance of slopes exceeding 15% to accommodate, but not to exceed the proposed improvements shown on the Tentative Sketch Plan.

- c. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.b, if and to the extent required for disturbance of created slopes exceeding 25% but not to exceed the proposed improvements shown on the Tentative Sketch Plan.

The applicant requests the following additional relief with the Preliminary Plan application:

- d. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101.9.A, to allow 44, three-gallon ornamental grasses to be substituted for 22 of the required shrubs.
  - Staff does not support the requested relief. Staff encourages the applicant to provide the required number of shrubs in addition to the ornamental grasses.
- e. Relief from Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Code Section 121-5.A.1, to allow the percentage of bare areas on the site to exceed 25% of the lot area at any one time.
  - At the present time, the Township Engineer does not have sufficient information to render a recommendation on this request. Staff met with the applicant and his design team earlier this week and the applicant agreed to provide additional information. The Township Engineer will report out at the meeting after he has had an opportunity to review the additional information.
- f. Relief from Subdivision & Land Development Code Section [135-28.A](#), to defer the installation of the required sidewalks along the property frontage until future off-site sidewalk construction and connectivity is provided by Lower Merion Township.
  - Staff does not support the requested relief with the exception of along N. Stone Ridge Lane and Montgomery Avenue provided the applicant is willing to provide an alternate walking path.

The inclusion of the stairs to Saybrook Road and N. Stone Ridge Lane create additional disturbance to slopes between 15-25% and greater than 25% over and above the relief that was granted with the Tentative Sketch Plan. Therefore the following additional relief is sought by the applicant:

- g. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101-5.B.1.b, to not minimize disturbance to vegetation other than woodlands which provides wildlife food and cover or visual amenity.
- h. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.a, to not minimize the disturbance of slopes exceeding 15%.
- i. Partial relief from Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.b, to disturb slopes exceeding 25%.

## **9. Action**

The Planning Commission must take the following action for this application:

1. Provide a recommendation on the Preliminary Land Development Plan.
2. Provide a recommendation on the noted above.