

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Building and Planning Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Conditional Use Application – 1 Belmont Avenue, Bala Cynwyd,

Prepared By: Christopher Leswing, Director Building & Planning

Date: July 11, 2025

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Authorize the reopening of a Conditional Use Hearing at the request of the applicant, KGSB LLC, for the purpose of adding additional testimony onto the public record. The applicant seeks Conditional Use approval pursuant to Zoning Code §155-8.3 to hold parking spaces in reserve for the project at 1 Belmont Avenue, Bala Cynwyd.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

Last fall, KGSB submitted a Conditional Use application to hold parking spaces in reserve. A Conditional Use hearing was held and concluded on November 11, 2024. The Township Hearing Officer issued the Recommendations for Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. After the closing of the record and prior to the scheduling of this matter before the Board of Commissioners, the applicant received information from PennDOT impacting their application.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

N/A

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

KGSB, LLC is seeking Conditional Use approval to reserve parking at 1 Belmont Avenue in Bala Cynwyd. One Belmont Avenue is more commonly known as the former GSB building, an iconic twelve story office building that serves as an anchor to the City Avenue District as well as a gateway across City Avenue into Lower Merion Township.

Reserve parking is authorized via Zoning Code section 155-8.3 through either Special Exception approval or Conditional Use approval when the proposal is accompanied by a land development application. The applicant is also seeking Preliminary Land Development approval to construct three commercial buildings totaling 17,700 square feet. The land development application is contingent upon the applicant receiving conditional use approval for the reserve parking.

The 6.8-acre subject property has frontage on City, Belmont Avenues and Saint Asaphs Road. The applicant had previously received Preliminary Land Development approval to construct a significantly larger mixed-use development, but the applicant has decided to pursue a smaller project. The previous land development approval had been extensively reviewed by PennDOT, particularly in relationship of new curb cuts into the development across Belmont Avenue at the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center and also in regard to future improvements to the intersection of Belmont Avenue and St Asaphs Road. The applicant provided traffic impact testimony at the Conditional Use Hearing and included reference to the impacts from the prior, much larger development. After the Conditional Use Hearing was closed, PennDOT issued a review letter for the new land development application with requirements for the dedication of additional right of way at the intersection of Belmont Avenue and St. Asaphs Road above and beyond what was shown on the applicant's land development plan. As a result of PennDOT's letter, the applicant was required to remove a row of parking, redesign their land development plan and to request additional parking to held in reserve.

Based on the new information staff and the applicant feel that the Conditional Use Hearing should be reopened and additional testimony provided to the Hearing Officer.

If the Board grants the applicant's request to reopen the Conditional Use Hearing, the hearing would be held in early August. It is anticipated that the Hearing Officer's revised Order could be available after Labor Day.

V. Impact On Township Finances:

This application has no impact on Township finances.

VI. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners grant the applicant's request to reopen the Conditional Use Hearing for purposes of receiving additional testimony.