

**TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION**

***Building and Planning Committee***

**Issue Briefing**

**Topic:** 1 Belmont Avenue, Bala Cynwyd:  
Conditional Use and Preliminary Land Development Plan

**Prepared By:** Christopher Leswing, Director Building & Planning

**Date:** September 10, 2025

**I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:**

Consider a request from the applicant, KGSB LLC, to grant 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. Following the July 16, 2025 Board of Commissioners decision to reopen the Conditional Use Hearing for the purpose of adding additional testimony to the public record, a second Conditional Use hearing was held and concluded on August 7, 2025. The Township Hearing Officer issued a revised Recommendations for Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order for consideration by the Board of Commissioners.

**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. Formerly known as the GSB building, the KGSB building is 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 §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 accompanying 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 Avenue, Belmont Avenue and Saint Asaphs Road. The applicant previously received Preliminary Land Development approval to construct a significantly larger mixed-use development but has since decided to pursue a smaller project based on post-pandemic construction costs. The previous land development approval had been extensively reviewed by PennDOT, particularly in relationship of new curb cuts into 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 to remain, redesign their land development plan and to request additional parking to held in reserve.

The Township Hearing Officer received testimony and evidence in consideration of the applicant's conditional use request and her revised Recommendations for Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order and recommends approval of the requested conditional use approval to allow up to 107 required off street parking spaces to be held in reserve subject to the following conditions:

- a. The Applicant shall construct the proposed parking structure if, and when, it is required, as determined by the Township's Zoning Officer.
- b. The Applicant shall provide to the Township reasonable financial security in a form and amount approved by the Board of Commissioners, which may be adjusted from time to time based on market considerations, and which shall be held until the parking structure is completed and approved for usage or the property's usage decreases its overall parking demands such that reserve parking is no longer needed.
- c. The Applicant shall receive preliminary land development approval of its land development application for within six (6) months of this approval.
- d. Any modification of the proposed design of the parking structure shall require further land development approval.
- e. The Applicant shall comply with the comments contained on page 2 of the Township Engineer's Review Letter dated 6/27/25, to the satisfaction of the Township Engineer.
- f. The Applicant shall allow reasonable access to organizers and vendors seeking to use the property for a farmers market on terms similar to past practice.

g. The development and use of the property, including but not limited to the construction and use of the proposed parking structure, shall be consistent the testimony and evidence offered during the hearings.

h. The development and use of the property, including but not limited to the construction and use of the proposed parking structure, shall at all times be compliance with all applicable laws, ordinances, and regulations not modified by this grant of zoning relief.

**V. Impact On Township Finances:**

This application has no impact on Township finances.

**VI. Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners adopt the Resolution accepting the Hearing Officer's recommendations and Preliminary Land Development Plan approval.