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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 7, 2024

Henry Sekawungu
Director of Planning and Zoning
Cheltenham Township
8230 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA, 19027

Re: MCPC #24-0198-001
Plan Name: Cheltenham High School Football Stadium Improvements
1 lots comprising 62 acres
Situate: 309 Expressway and South Easton Road
Cheltenham Township

Dear Mr. Sekawungu:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on September 10, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The Cheltenham School District has submitted a plan to redevelop most of their high school football stadium area. The field, currently turf grass, is proposed to be replaced with a synthetic turf surface. The existing bleachers, both for the home and away teams, are proposed to be removed and replaced with larger bleachers, including the addition of a press box. The 6-lane running track will be removed and replaced with a new 8-lane track. The field house building will be replaced with a larger building that will also accommodate ticketing and concession functions. The high jump area, chain link fencing, goal posts, and asphalt paving areas are all proposed to be removed and replaced. A new stormwater basin is proposed under the turf field. The replacement structures and objects will result in an increase in building area and impervious area.

Cheltenham High School is currently a non-conforming use in the C-1 Commercial District. Although the entire site is over 60 acres, the earth disturbance for these improvements is anticipated to be less than 6 acres.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the school district and the township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

ZONING

A. Use Designation. In the zoning table on the plan set, the applicant lists the current and proposed use as a "Commercial School." The township's zoning ordinance states that a Commercial School "shall not include K-12" schools. The appropriate designation in the township's code is use D-12: School, Public/Private. The applicant should update the plan set to reflect this correction. (See. $295-405.D.(12) of the zoning code.)
B. Nonconforming Status. This site is located in the C-1 Commercial Zoning district. Use D-12, a public or private school, is not permitted in this district, thus making the current use a legal nonconforming use. A legal nonconforming use can expand on the site, but only one time, per $295-2502.D. The School District should be aware that they may not be permitted to expand the area in use for school purposes again in the future without requesting a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board.

STORMWATER AND IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE

A. Plan Information. The applicant has included a total figure for impervious coverage post construction, 917,820 square feet, which is 43.69% of the total site. However, the applicant did not include an existing impervious coverage area, so it is not clear exactly how much the figure is changing. We suggest the applicant update the plan with this information. We recognize that the resulting impervious coverage is below the limit of 65% of lot area for this zoning district, but feel that it would be helpful to understand the amount that impervious coverage is increasing.
B. Stormwater Management. An artificial turf field will have different draining volumes and patterns than a grass turf field. The applicant has accommodated for that change with a new stormwater basin beneath the proposed turf field. While we expect that this will adequately manage the stormwater from the turf field, we also encourage the applicant to observe whether there are any problem areas on the site now that may be improved with a rain garden or bioswale elsewhere on site. A small project such as a rain garden could potentially improve stormwater management elsewhere on site if needed.

OPEN SPACE AND VEGETATION

A. Open Space and Natural Features. The applicant has requested a waiver from $260-31 of the subdivision and land development ordinance. This portion of the township's code requires preservation of sensitive natural areas such as steep slopes, woodlands, and floodplains. Though we feel that it may be appropriate to grant the waiver, we suggest that the applicant identify any of the features that are mentioned in this section of the code, such as slopes greater than 15%, on the plan set prior to a discussion of the waiver request.
B. Landscaping. The applicant has requested a waiver from $260-49: Landscape and Screening Buffers of the Subdivision and Land Development ordinance. It is also not clear if the applicant proposes to comply with $260-34: Preservation and Protection of Existing Vegetation.

    1. Preservation and Protection of Existing Vegetation ($260-34). It appears that the applicant is removing some trees on the site for these improvements. The applicant should include a calculation of required replacement trees on the plan set and indicate whether they are meeting

the requirements or requesting a waiver. (See §260-34.D.) Any trees that are to remain on site during construction should be protected with appropriate tree protection fencing. This should also be indicated on the plan set.

2. Landscape and Screening Buffers (§260-31). While the applicant has requested a waiver from this section, the applicant proposes to plant 12 shade trees, 10 evergreen trees, and 23 shrubs. We recognize that the applicant is mostly rebuilding existing structures and there will be new landscaping included as part of this plan. We have no objection to this waiver request.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal. Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this letter are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. Please print the assigned MCPC number (*#24-0198-001*) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Chloe Mohr, AICP, Principal Planner
chloe.mohr@montgomerycountypa.gov – (610) 278-3739

c: Joshua Sweigard, Applicant's Representative
Roger A. Phillips, P.E., Township Engineer
Thomas Cross, Chair, Township Planning Commission
Adam Schantz, Montgomery County Planning Commission
Jessica Buck, District Manager, Montgomery County Conservation District
Scott Burton, PennDOT
Paul Lutz, PennDOT
Fran Hanney, P.E., PennDOT
Justin DiBerardinis, Executive Director, Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership

Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan

ATTACHMENTS A & B



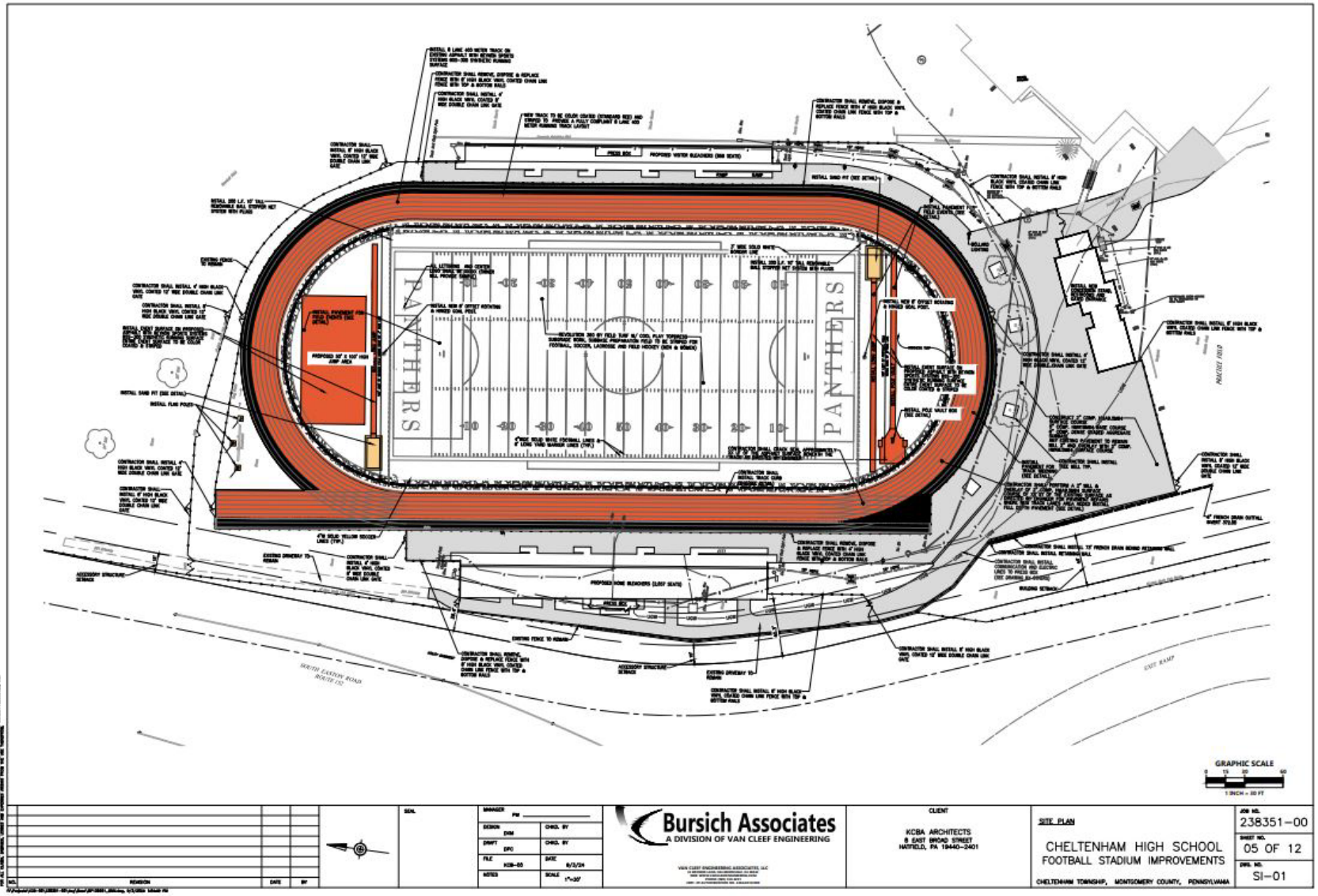
Cheltenham High School
Football Stadium Improvements
MCPC#240198001

Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

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SITE PLAN
CHELTENHAM HIGH SCHOOL
FOOTBALL STADIUM IMPROVEMENTS
CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
JOB NO. 238351-00
SHEET NO. 05 OF 12
DWG. NO. SI-01