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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 28, 2025

Mr. Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning Officer
Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania 19444

Re: MCPC #25-0075-001
Plan Name: 14 Marple Lane (Abolition Hall) Subdivision
(2 lots/ 10.21 acres)
Situate: Butler Pike (east) / Germantown Pike (north)
Whitemarsh Township

Dear Mr. Guttenplan:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development proposal in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on April 2, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, the Township of Whitemarsh, has submitted for review a subdivision and land development plan that proposes the subdivision of the Abolition Hall tract into 2 lots. The subdivision will create 2 new lots: the smaller 0.484 acre lot at 14 Marple Lane (Lot #2) and the larger 9.73 acre lot (Abolition Hall & Hovenden House site) with frontage along Butler Pike and a small lot frontage on Germantown Pike. The tract is situated in the township's Village Commercial District (VC).

The 10.21 tract is owned by Whitemarsh Township and is a key contributing element of the Plymouth Meeting National Historic District. In 1971, it became the first National Historic District of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The subject property is approximately 10.0 acres and includes Abolition Hall, also listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. It is a nationally significant site in the history of Pennsylvania's anti-slavery movement and important site in the Underground Railroad. The site includes Hovenden House, the

home of Thomas Hovenden, an acclaimed artist and professor at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts whose paintings hang in both the Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

It is our understanding from several conversations we've had that it has been the township's desire since acquiring the Abolition Hall property that 14 Marple Lane would be subdivided and sold through a public bidding process. The subdivided lot has frontage on Marple Lane, which is an unimproved private lane. The lane dead-ends at a 10.0-acre open space lot that is owned by the township and is accessible from Woodbine Way. (Tax Parcel ID#65-00-1309-26-040).

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) has reviewed the subdivision and land development plan for the 14 Marple Lane (Abolition Hall) subdivision and generally supports this proposal. We have identified one issue that we believe merits the township's consideration. Given the national and regional significance of both Abolition Hall, Hovenden House and the township's stated goal of creating open space connections – we believe that future public access to the Abolition Hall site from Marple Lane should be secured with a public access easement in the sale of this property. This is discussed in greater detail below.

COMMENT

Open Space Connection & Public Access Easement

The township should consider the potential open space connection role that 14 Marple Lane may provide for future public access to the Abolition Hall tract. It is our understanding that the master-planning for this important site has been delayed and has recently resumed. We suggest that future site master plans may identify the need for additional public access connections to the site. Establishing an access easement area on 15 Marple Lane would ensure that the door for a potential open space connection to the Abolition Hall site would not be closed to this area. We recommend that a public access easement area 15-20 ft. wide be established along the southern boundary of 14 Marple Lane with the sale of this property.



CONCLUSION

We generally support the proposed subdivision plan and recommend the township consider our comments as discussed above to its satisfaction. Please note that any comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Please be aware that the MCPC number #25-0017-001 has been set aside for the applicant's plan. If any subsequent plans are submitted for final recording, this MCPC number should appear on the applicant sheets within the plans in the box reserved for the seal of this agency.

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.

A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files.

Sincerely,

Barry W. Jeffries

Barry W Jeffries, ASLA, Senior Design Planner
bjeffrie@montgomerycountypa.gov
(610) 278-3444

Aaron Kostyk, Chair, Whitemarsh Township Planning Commission
David Sander, Esq., Township Solicitor
Krista Heinrich, PE, Whitemarsh Township Engineer

ATTACHMENTS A & B

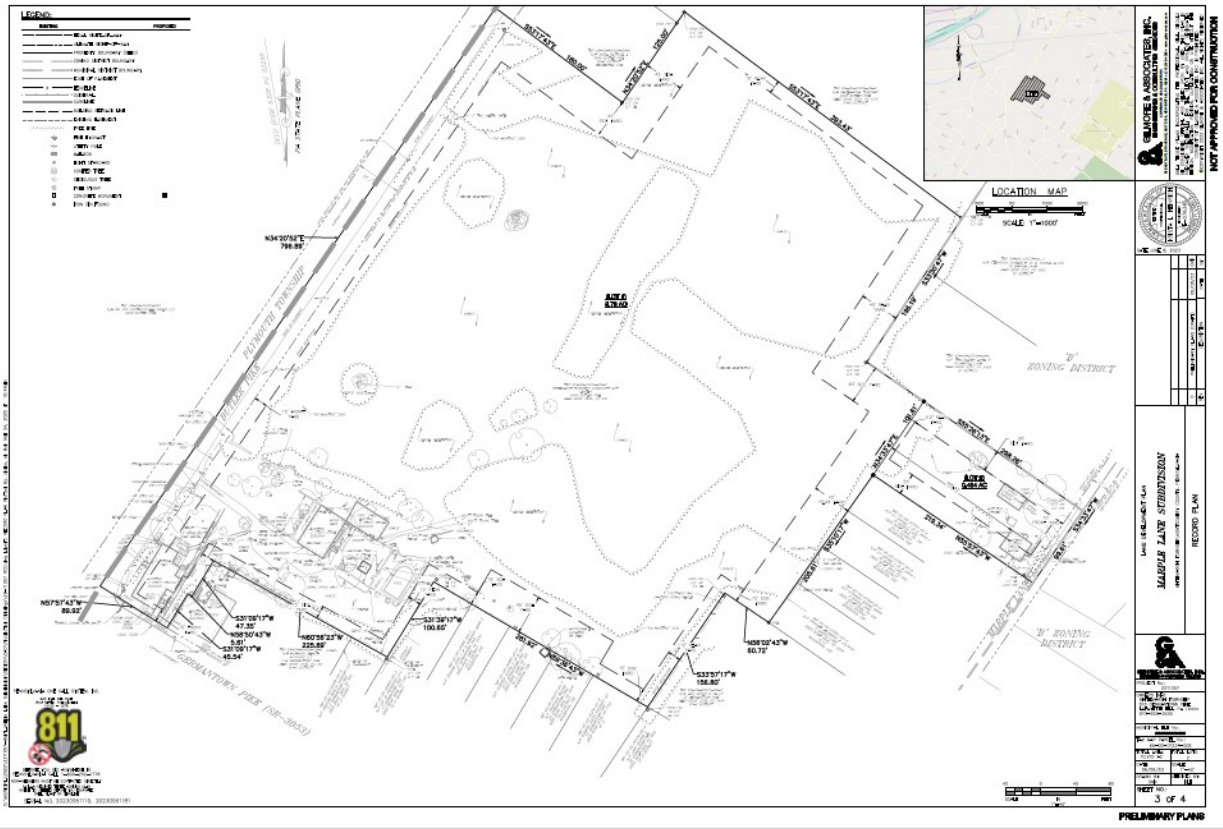


14 Marple Lane (Abolition Hall) Subdivision
MCPC#250075001

Montgomery County Planning Commission

0 100 200 400 Feet

N


LEGEND:
LOCATION MAP
SCALE: 1" = 1000'
"B" ZONING DISTRICT
"B" ZONING DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP
SKIPPACK PIKE (SR-3053)
GILMORE & ASSOCIATES, INC.
NOT APPROVED FOR CONSTRUCTION
MARPLE LANE SUBDIVISION
RECORD PLAN
3 OF 4
PRELIMINARY PLANS