November 12, 2020

Mr. Justin Keller, Borough Manager
Pottstown Borough
100 E. High Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

Re: MCPC #20-0045-002
Plan Name: The Hill School New Dormitory
(1 lot comprising approx. 38.99 ac)
Situate: 860 Beech Street
Pottstown Borough

Dear Mr. Keller:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, “The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code” as you requested on October 20, 2020. We forward this letter as a report of our review and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, The Hill School, proposes to demolish an existing school building and build a 14,395 SF dormitory with 40 single rooms and 4 double rooms. The development includes 47 parking spaces. An additional improvement shown at this time includes extensive landscaping along the collector road and throughout the property. The property is located in the borough’s TTN Traditional Town Neighborhood zoning district.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

This area of Pottstown Borough is identified as Town Residential Area in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, Montco 2040: A Shared Vision. Town Residential Areas are traditional residential areas that are more oriented towards pedestrians than automobiles.
In addition, the Future Land Use Map of the Pottstown Borough Comprehensive Plan shows this area of the borough as Institutional. This area is intended to be reserved for the borough’s institutional uses, including schools.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant’s proposal. However, in the course of our review we identified the following issues that we feel should be addressed prior to moving forward with the land development. Our review comments are as follows:

**REVIEW COMMENTS**

**PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION**

The east portion of the building frontage that abuts the parking lot lacks a sidewalk, leaving no space designated for pedestrians on that side of the parking lot to safely access the front entrance of the dormitory. We recommend providing a 5 ft wide designated space for pedestrians along the building frontage. While we understand that adding a new sidewalk in this area may be difficult, the pedestrian space can be implemented with a different paving pattern or materials for this portion of the aisleway, to signal that the space is also for pedestrian use. This will provide a safer route for pedestrians to access the front entrance while also slowing traffic in the parking lot.

**LANDSCAPING**

The planting plan shows the proposed planting of four Green Mountain Sugar Maple trees. In recent years, sugar maple trees have been declining in the region. We recommend the use of Swamp White Oak, *Quercus bicolor* trees instead.

**CONCLUSION**

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant’s proposal to expand an existing institution; however, we feel that the above design comments would enhance the development. We also feel that a designated pedestrian walkway along the east frontage of the building, abutting the parking lot, would improve pedestrian circulation and provide a safe space for pedestrians to walk from the parking lot to the front entrance.

Please note that the review 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.
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. Please print the assigned MCPC number #20-0045-002 on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Danielle A. Baer, Community Planner

610-278-3751 – dbaer@montcopa.org

c: The Hill School, Applicant
Robin Rhoads, Applicant Representative
Pennoni Associates, Inc., Applicant’s Engineer
Jim Derr, Chr., Borough Planning Commission
Keith Place, Borough Director of Licensing and Inspection
Charles D. Garner, Jr., Borough Solicitor

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