

REGIONAL NEWS

South Whitehall planners endorse Ridge Farms

Development phase gains approval, but latest design called into question

By Emily Baxter  
Special to The Morning Call

Ridge Farms marked a significant milestone in its development Thursday night, as the South Whitehall Planning Commission endorsed Phase 1B and forwarded the housing and retail complex for final approval to the board of commissioners.

However, this progress was not without its share of design-related technicalities.

The controversial development presented a design that appeared more abstract

and flat in style, a departure from the initial conditional use hearings, prompting raised eyebrows among a few members.

Brian Hite, a member of the planning commission, voiced concerns on behalf of the residents, emphasizing that the new design did not align with the concept of “skyscrapers.”

“Integrating Ridge Farms into the community is my top priority,” Hite said.

Initially, the luxury apartments featured gabled roofs, offering a more “traditional” housing aesthetic that harmonized with the

surrounding area.

Commission member Dave Wilson argued that adhering strictly to the previously showcased renderings of gabled roofs “is not a concrete requirement according to the manual of design standards.”

Phase 1B of the project encompasses five apartment buildings featuring 60 units and 14 two-unit townhomes.

Since its inception, Ridge Farms has been no stranger to controversy. Residents expressed opposition to its location near the bustling Walbert Avenue and Cedar Crest Boulevard intersection from the outset. Concerns about increased traffic and an influx of new

residents were fervently discussed on social media. Nevertheless, the township greenlit the project in 2019.

The mixed-use development envisions retail shops, restaurants, apartments and single-family townhomes.

One of the initial structures to be erected will be a 30,000-square-foot St. Luke’s medical office at the intersection of Cedar Crest Boulevard and Walbert Avenue.

Roadwork, in conjunction with stormwater management and utility work, has been progressing steadily.

Ridge Farms was not the only topic deliberated during Thursday night’s meeting.

Residents voiced appre-

hensions about the St. Paul Orthodox Church project at 670 S. Cedar Crest Blvd. regarding a thoroughway within the property, which could potentially lead to traffic issues in the adjacent neighborhood.

Resident Don Melber questioned the necessity of two access points sought by the developer, as most storefronts along Cedar Crest Boulevard typically have only one entrance.

“If you wanted to go to CVS pharmacy and you’re coming from Allentown, you’d have to travel down the street and come back down the other way. All the other businesses operate the same way. I don’t really see it as being a significant

burden if Cedar Crest is the only entrance,” Melber said. Alan Fornwalt of Keystone Consulting Engineers suggested the installation of gated access to deter people from cutting through the property to avoid traffic on Hamilton and Cedar Crest boulevards — an idea that found favor among commission members.

St. Paul Orthodox Church plans to demolish existing structures and construct a 28,000-square-foot place of worship, a 20,000-square-foot, two-story building for a Sunday school, office and fellowship hall, plus a parking area with about 300 spaces on the 8-acre parcel, the former site of Kuss Brothers Nursery.

LOCAL BRIEFS

BETHLEHEM

Forecast cancels Showing of the Tartan parade at Celtic Classic

Expected rainfall from a coastal storm has prompted the Celtic Classic to cancel its Showing of the Tartan parade, which had been scheduled for Saturday morning.

The Celtic Classic, the annual Celtic festival held in Bethlehem, kicked off Friday and continues through the weekend.

Organizers said in a social media post that while the parade is canceled, the rest of the festival is held rain or shine.

Additional closures due to severe weather, if necessary, will be announced on social media.

Forecasters are expecting rain and strong winds throughout the weekend. The National Weather Service anticipates between 2 and 3 inches of rain will fall this weekend in the Lehigh Valley.

— Christopher Dornblaser

LVHN offers free drive-thru flu shots

Lehigh Valley Health Network will administer free flu shots for the 26th straight year for adults and children age six months and older during two drive-thru flu shot clinics in November.

Vaccines will be available 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 4, at Dorney Park, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 5, at Lehigh Valley Hospital–Hecktown Oaks, 3780 Hecktown Road, Lower Nazareth Township.

Everyone receiving a flu shot at either location is asked to fill out a consent form and register online at LVHN.org/flushot, by scanning the QR code on postcards being mailed, or by calling 1-835-215-5438, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Fri-

day. The line will be open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the clinic dates.

For the past 25 years, LVHN’s community influenza vaccination campaign has administered over 206,000 free flu shots and collected almost 164,000 pounds of food for area food banks.

LVHN is once again partnering with area food banks and shelters to accept donations of unexpired, nonperishable food items during each of the drive-thru sessions. Food donations are optional and not required to receive a shot. Volunteers also will be collecting other items to assist those in need in our community, including diapers, personal hygiene products, coffee pods and disinfectant wipes.

— Ann Lowy

Lehigh Valley now has lowest gas prices in Pennsylvania, AAA says

AAA conducts daily surveys of pump prices in all states, including most counties and 19 metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania. Friday’s report shows Northampton County can boast the state’s lowest price, \$3.846, with Lehigh coming in second at \$3.849. The state’s average is \$3.859, down fractionally from \$3.896 a week ago.

The highest prices in Pennsylvania are generally along the northern tier of counties bordering New York, according to AAA. Warren County is the highest among them, coming in at \$3.999.

That contrasts with Warren County, New Jersey, which has the Garden State’s lowest retail price, \$3.643, down from \$3.680 last week. The current New Jersey average is \$3.724, also down slightly from \$3.734 last week.

Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration show that gas prices in the Central Atlantic region inched up during

the week of Sept. 18 after five weeks of moderate declines. The price for a gallon of conventional regular unleaded stands at \$3.899, still among the highest values of the year, but 23% lower than \$5.083 price reported in June of last year.

— Eugene Tauber

CHESTER COUNTY

Report: Missouri escapee arrested, housed in jail that Cavalcante left

A man who escaped a Missouri jail earlier this summer was arrested by U.S. marshals in Pennsylvania on Thursday and was put behind bars at the same place that Danelo Cavalcante crab-walked his way out of several weeks ago.

Barry County Sheriff Danny Boyd says Mario Che-Tiul — who was being held in Missouri on felony child molestation charges — pretended to be sick in order to lure two correctional officers into his cell, WPVI says.

Then, six other inmates ambushed the officers, choking them and stealing their keys, the story says. The six other individuals were quickly arrested after they escaped, but Che-Tiul avoided authorities for months.

Che-Tiul was arrested around 1:30 p.m. Thursday in Avondale, Chester County, after marshals received a tip he was hiding out in an apartment on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Che-Tiul is being held in the Chester County Prison until he is extradited back to Missouri, the story says. Police were searching for Che-Tiul in the same area Cavalcante was hiding out in.

The Chester County Prison recently announced plans to improve security, including fully enclosing their exercise yards.

— Tribune News Service

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Publication Date: 09/23/2023

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Tix: \$10 Adult, \$5 Ages 4-12, \$5 Parking Discount Admission Tickets Online Thru Sept 29 \$8 Adult, \$4 Ages 4-12, \$5 Parking Balloon activity weather permitting. Tickets sales are final.

BalloonFestNJ.com

Event Activities and Highlights

- Food Trucks • Vendors • Balloon Launch (5:15pm)
- Balloon Glow w/ Fred G Monster & US Flag Balloon (7:15pm)
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- DP Golf SNAG - bucket of balls \$10 • Bounce House - \$5

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