

Restaurant plans given green light in Amity

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By Denise Larive, News Writer

On Dec. 8, The Amity Township Planning Commission unanimously approved the preliminary/final land development plans for a future Italian restaurant at Old Swede and Old Airport roads, across from St. Paul's United Church of Christ.

The board of supervisors will vote Dec. 15 on approving the waiver for the preliminary plan to be a preliminary/final plan and to also approve the final plan.

Township Engineer John Weber said the plan is "clean" for the 4,500-square-foot, 85 to 95 seat Italian restaurant and pizzeria.

Paul Brutto, Reading, owner of the Toscani Wood Fire Grill, 1101 Rocky Drive, West Lawn, formerly the Casa Grande Italian Ristorante, said his Amity Township restaurant would be similar to Toscani.

Brutto said the restaurant will have "very good homemade Italian food" and the building will have a "traditionally older, towny-type" look with stucco and shingles.

Restaurant construction will involve the demolition of Focht's Mower Shop and several other adjacent buildings at the 1.2-acre site.

The township zoning board approved in May the special exception for the current non-conforming mower shop to change to another non-conforming use as a restaurant in the medium density residential zoning district.

"This is a compliment not only to this board but to your (Brutto's) engineers (Van Cleef Engineering Association, Wyomissing) that this was reviewed and approved in four months," said township Solicitor Brian F. Boland, adding that there are "very few other municipalities that could get that done in four months."

In other business:

- The commission also approved for a sketch plan review versus a full township land development plan review of David Walsh's proposed restaurant renovations at 668 Benjamin Franklin Highway East.

Walsh, owner of The Brick House Restaurant, 152 E. High St., Pottstown, wants to renovate and open in June the former restaurant that has previously been known as Borelli's Family Restaurant, Gregory's, and also Havana Joe's.

Brian Boyer of Brian Boyer Engineering, Douglassville, said the site has sufficient parking spaces

from previous development to accommodate 12 employees and a 140-seat restaurant.

Walsh told the commission Nov. 10 that he wanted to renovate the building into a 6,200 square foot restaurant with 160 to 170 seats (and dining rooms for private parties), a separate bar room, an outside dining deck, outside access for smoking, and improved patron restrooms, and be able to open the restaurant in June.

He said the size of the restaurant would be dependent upon money and the time frame and was prepared to scale back his expansion plans if they would require land development.

- Preliminary plans for the 118-acre Leaf Creek Farm, Pine Forge Road, are moving forward with discussion of dedicating 25 percent of the land to the township for the on-site portion of the future Leaf Creek Trail.

Richard Almquist, vice president of Greystone Capital Partners, West Conshohocken, said Leaf Creek Farm will have 97 single family homes, 32 semi-detached (twins) single family units with the master bedroom on the first floor and 162 townhouse units, to replace the previous nine-building apartment plan with 351 rental units.

“The goal of this project is to dedicate land for the trail,” said Almquist.

Almquist said a recent feasibility study by Greystone indicates that this is the worst housing/residential market for areas west of Chester County and that the market is predicted to be flat for a number of years.

“We strongly believe that this is going to be the right plan for the site and hope to break ground within the next two years and hope to get national homebuilders interested in the site,” said Almquist.

“The semi-detached units with the downstairs master bedroom and the townhouses are very low for generating school kids and this should have a very low impact for generating school kids.”