



## DELAWARE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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To:	Dennis O'Neill, P.E.	From:	H. Marian Goodchild
Company:	Herbert E. MacCombie, Jr., P.E.	Section:	Administration
Date:	August 21, 2006	Phone:	
Pages:	9 (including cover page)	Fax:	610-356-5032 (Mr. O'Neill)
Re:	Tinicum Firehouse		

Urgent     For Review     Please Comment     Please Reply     Please Recycle

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As you requested, the following is a copy of DCPD File No.: 43-4945-00-05-06 – Tinicum Firehouse.  
If you have any questions or need further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

August 17, 2006

Ms. Jean L. McCoy  
Tinicum Township  
629 N. Governor Printz Boulevard  
Essington, PA 19029-1119

RE: Name of Dev't: Tinicum Firehouse  
DCPD File No.: 43-4945-00-05-06  
Developer: Tinicum Township  
Location: South side of 2nd Street at the terminus  
of Printz Avenue  
Recv'd in DCPD: July 21, 2006

Dear Ms. McCoy:

In accordance with the provisions of Section 502 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the above described proposal has been sent to the Delaware County Planning Commission for review. At a meeting held on August 17, 2006, the Commission took action as shown in the recommendation of the attached review.

Please refer to the DCPD file number shown above in any future communications related to this application.

Very truly yours,

John E. Pickett, AICP  
Director

JEP/hmg  
cc: Herbert E. MacCombie, Jr., P.E.

Date: August 17, 2006  
File No.: 43-4945-00-05-06

PLAN TITLE: Tinicum Firehouse  
DATE OF PLAN: April 20, 2006  
OWNER OR AGENT: Tinicum Township  
LOCATION: South side of 2nd Street at the terminus  
of Printz Avenue  
MUNICIPALITY: Tinicum Township  
TYPE OF REVIEW: Final Land Development  
ZONING DISTRICT: L-Industrial  
SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE: Local  
PROPOSAL: Further develop 10.07 acres with a  
38,498 sq. ft. firehouse and evacuation  
center  
UTILITIES: All public  
RECOMMENDATIONS: Disapproval, the proposed firehouse is  
not the highest and best use for a site  
on the National Register of Historic  
Places. Its construction severely  
jeopardizes its eligibility and funding  
for National Historic Landmark status  
and it is wholly inconsistent with  
riverfront development objectives  
formerly agreed upon by DCPD and the  
Township.  
STAFF REVIEW BY: James C. Long

**F. L. 4**

Date: August 17, 2006  
File No.: 43-4945-00-05-06

REMARKS:

**BACKGROUND**

This site was last reviewed by the Delaware County Planning Commission at its meeting of December 15, 2005, as a final land development of 10.069 acres with a fire department facility totaling 38,500 sq. ft. The recommendation was disapproval for historic reasons.

**CURRENT PROPOSAL**

The current proposal remains the same, to further develop 10.07 acres with a 38,498 sq. ft. firehouse and evacuation center.

**SITE INFORMATION**

At present, the site contains seven structures of varying sizes including the historic Lazaretto, all of which are to remain. Building "F" comprising 410 sq. ft. is to be relocated to make room for the proposed driveway.

**ZONING INFORMATION**

The site is located in the "L" Industrial zoning district of Tincum Township.

**EXISTING NONCONFORMITY**

Existing buildings noted as "D" and "E" have nonconforming side yards, and they will remain so on the proposed plan.

**LOT USE**

There are no listed permitted uses in this district only uses that are NOT permitted. Since a firehouse is not one of them, it is presumed to be permitted.

**FLOODPLAIN**

The municipal Engineer should verify the location of the 100-year floodplain as shown on the plan.

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REMARKS (continued)

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

The municipal Engineer must verify the adequacy of all proposed stormwater management facilities.

**SEWAGE FACILITIES**

The municipal Engineer and/or Sewage Enforcement Officer should confirm whether the developer has received any required exemptions or planning module approvals prior to issuance of any building permits.

#### **HISTORIC COMMENTS**

The findings from the Delaware County Planning Department's December 2005 subdivision review #43-4945-00-05 will be referenced in the following with some additional points and changes.

This revised plan for the fire station complex has slightly shifted the construction 30 feet west, reduced the frontage by 7', and increased the depth by 10'. **These changes do not address the critical issues raised in the last County review.**

The proposed project indicates construction of a 36,498 sq. ft. fire station complex, evacuation/banquet hall facilities, and a 197-space parking lot occupying half of the 10-acre Lazaretto site, a nationally significant historic property. To our knowledge, it is the only surviving quarantine facility in this country built before the facilities at Ellis Island in 1892.

The ground currently planned for development contained critical historic resources and was continuously used throughout several phases of the Lazaretto's history. It is also part of the 17th century Swedish settlement, the Printzhof, "where Pennsylvania started." It is indicated as a high potential zone in our Countywide archaeological management plan. **The Lazaretto is on the National Register of Historic Places and may also be eligible for National Historic Landmark status, the most elite of national designations. New construction of this magnitude would destroy the Lazaretto's historical context and integrity. In fact, the historic integrity may be so damaged that future funding and National Historic Landmark eligibility may be compromised. It is strongly recommended that the Township find an alternative location or design for the firehouse.** F. L. 4

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#### REMARKS (continued)

The site contains a very high potential for archaeological resources of national importance. The northwest corner of the 10-acre parcel was the site of the Lazaretto Smallpox Hospital flanked by an attached kitchen and morgue, two stories high and 72' by 24'. The structure was demolished some time during occupancy of the seaplane base in the early 20th century. Recent archaeology has found the location of the large burial ground in the northeast corner of the property. This was the gravesite for

passengers who died in transit or quarantine and persons from surrounding areas who died from contagious diseases. Although an exhumation and relocation of the gravesite took place in 1900, most graves were unmarked, and the degree of completeness is unknown. Other outbuildings related to quarantine function such as an icehouse and storage buildings were also situated on the north side of the property. Archaeology has discovered the location and foundation of the icehouse. **Only recently new information and important resources are being revealed. The Lazaretto site needs more intensive archaeological study and excavation as recent archaeological techniques were not adequate in assessing earlier sites related to the Swedish settlement.**

To construct upon half of the Lazaretto site would result in a massive loss of valuable information and historic integrity tied to a nationally significant historic site and an act of desecration to a sacred ground where hundreds or thousands of immigrants were anonymously buried. The full potential of this site will not be realized.

The proposed plan is not the highest and best use for the property with this level of national significance. The tremendous scale and sprawl of the proposed firehouse overtly dwarfs the main building of the Lazaretto. The enormity of the proposed parking lot encroaches drastically onto the remaining portion of the site, nearly abutting the kitchen house or "existing historic garage" and detaching the barn or "existing historic carriage house" from the main building and Lazaretto complex with which it historically had a direct relationship, disrupting the historical context. The continuous expanse of the proposed firehouse frontage on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street would cancel the historic viewshed from the street. As an historic site on the National Register of Historic Places and a strong candidate for National Historic Landmark status, this site should not be compromised or diminished by a firehouse of this magnitude or the intrusion of such a large paved parking lot.

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REMARKS (continued)

**WATERFRONT SITING AND VIEWSHED CONSIDERATIONS**

The Planning Department, in its Delaware County Compendium of Waterfront Provisions (1998), provided a great deal of information regarding waterfront planning and development. An important focus of this document was the notion of water-dependent, water-related, and water-enhanced land uses as the highest and best uses for waterfront properties. The proposed firehouse does not fall under any of the categories noted above. Therefore, the Township should give consideration to relocating the firehouse to a less "valuable" parcel of ground, if possible.

Another focus of the document was on riverfront access, whether physical or visual, and it recommended the use of viewpoints and view corridors to provide for visual access where physical access may otherwise be unavailable. Viewpoints can be in a public park without physical access to the water, or they could be removed from the water and designated in a view area such as a viewing tower with periscopes. View corridors are also identified as a useful tool for allowing visitors to see the water through or around developments. View corridors are an open air space on a lot that provides a clear view across a lot to the water from an abutting street. View corridors can be accomplished through regulation of height, side yard setbacks, and building placement. The principle of view corridors could apply to any land use (water or buildings) that one desires to feature on the landscape.

The proposed location for the Township's new firehouse is within the first landside block along the Delaware River, with only the lower half of the Lazaretto site consisting of the main building and its associated buildings lying between the proposed building and the water. While waterfront views are most desirable from and around the outside edges of the Lazaretto site, the historic structures are also landscape amenities worth preserving within their physical and cultural context along the Delaware River.

2<sup>nd</sup> Street is also the proposed route of the Tinicum-Fort Mifflin Trail and East Coast Greenway, local and national bicycle/pedestrian routes, respectively. The main building on the Lazaretto site should be clearly visible from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and encourage visitation (after the building is restored), thus increasing spending in Essington by travelers.

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REMARKS (continued)

A sidewalk should also be constucted from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the Lazaretto site structures.

#### **TRANSPORTATION COMMENTS**

The applicant should consider reconfiguring the western driveway so that the driveway lines up better with Wanamaker Avenue. The plan appears to indicate that the existing driveway has a stop sign. Will the proposed wider driveway have a stop sign? The proposed plan will likely result in more traffic from this driveway and more vehicular conflicts at the intersection. A driveway that is directly opposite Wanamaker Avenue, rather than slightly offset, with a different arrangement of traffic control devices (stop signs or traffic signal) may be safer than what is proposed.

The applicant should provide sidewalks from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street sidewalks to the building's doors for individuals walking to the site from surrounding neighborhoods.

#### **PARKING**

The regulations for parking do not include firehouse uses. Plan notes state that 186 spaces are required, and 197 spaces are being provided. Municipal authorities should determine if this provision is acceptable.

In addition, the applicant should consider reducing the number of parking spaces that are proposed to a number that is more realistic with routine needs. In order to have sufficient spaces available during times of greater need, the Township should seek agreements with nearby property owners to share parking facilities during those times. If such an agreement can be reached, Township parking lot maintenance costs and stormwater runoff can be reduced. On-street parking can also be used.

#### **CONCLUSION**

It is suggested that the Township choose an alternate location for the firehouse and use the northern acreage of the Lazaretto property for recreational activities tied to the riverfront that complement the character of the site. A feasibility study is

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REMARKS (continued)

**expected to begin toward the end of this year. To construct on this site preempts many future uses that could be compatible both economically and with the Lazaretto site's level of significance and high degree of integrity.**

Alternatively, if the firehouse location cannot be changed, the applicant should consider a different siting arrangement for the firehouse and parking lots so that individuals on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street can see the historic structures on the Lazaretto site. A different placement of the proposed building along with a reduction in parking spaces would provide a more attractive view of the main building on the Lazaretto site. The firehouse can be moved close to the western lot boundary with fire department facilities and evacuation center placed behind the engine room.

#### **RECORDING**

Should this plan be approved, then in accordance with Section 513(a) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), final plans must be recorded within ninety (90) days of municipal approval.