

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
April 9, 2014 – 7:30PM

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 7:34 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present

Commissioners – Rodia, Whitig, Adler, Pomerantz, Hatton, Lees and Criddle. Also present were Planning Director Chris Patriarca and those mentioned below.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted and approved as presented unanimously (EA/DC).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of March 19, 2014, were approved as amended unanimously (DC/SR).

Reports

Ms. Adler presented the April 7 Board of Supervisors meeting. Items discussed at the BOS work shop included; retirement parties, new citizens committees and the 2014 roads program. At their regular meeting, items discussed included; storm debris removal, road repairs, notification procedures to the Historical Commission about demolition of historic properties, adoption of a Brandywine Battlefield resolution, approval of the phosphorus reduction contract and discussion of how public notice for the Township appears in the newspaper.

Announcements

Mr. Patriarca announced the continuation of the Bozzuto conditional use will be on April 24, the receipt of the Papenfuss traffic study and the Open Space Update will be going before the Board for their consideration on May 5.

Ed Penry, of 202 Jacqueline Drive – Asked about availability of the Papenfuss TIA and if it will be available on the web or prior to the meeting. Mr. Patriarca indicated he would try to get it on the website prior to the meeting.

Tom Breslin, of 211 Jacqueline Drive – Asked if the TIA was done for an apartment complex, to which Mr. Patriarca said yes.

Non-agenda Public Comment

Mr. Pomerantz brought before the PC the idea of requesting formal party status as part of the Bozzuto conditional use application in order to more appropriately respond and

represent concerns of the PC as part of the hearings. Mr. Pomerantz made a motion for the planning commission to have party status as part of the Bozzuto. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hatton and approved unanimously.

Old Business

Alternative Energy Ordinance presentation and discussion

Mr. Pomerantz introduced the history of the ordinance and that the PC was considering amendments to the ordinance to address fire hazards associated with solar panels. Brian Gallagher noted the ordinance as written was well done and would likely be utilized as a model ordinance for other municipalities in the County. Ms. Adler made a motion to approve the ordinance as follows: *The Planning Commission recommends to the Board of Supervisors that they consider the revised alternative energy ordinance dated April 1, 2014, in place of the draft originally forwarded to them by the Commission. This draft contains revisions suggested in the solar energy section to improve situations when firefighters are called to a building with a solar installation.* The motion was seconded by Mr. Criddle and approved unanimously.

Mission statement discussion

Mr. Pomerantz first provided a brief synopsis of the reasons for going through this exercise. Mr. Patriarca next read the proposed mission statement and other duties of the PC based on a synthesis of the discussion from the March 5 PC meeting. Overall the PC liked the initial draft subject to some minor revisions based on further conversation. Mr. Pomerantz discussed the inclusion of volunteers, sustainability and the integration of development into the existing community into the statement. Mr. Hatton next discussed about what the “community” is in the statement.

Bob Dilullo, of 1004 Supplee Way – Asked the PC to consider a single statement to identify the core function of the PC. The additional tasks listed should be separate from the mission statement as they are dynamic, but the statement should be permanent.

Doug Anderson, of 606 Jacqueline Drive – New resident who commented that the PC should encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures and include that as part of the mission.

Walt Pavelchek, of 1050 South New Street – Stated he did not feel the draft as presented was a mission statement in that many in the audience still do not understand what the PC does.

Greta Montes, of 134 Hidden Pond Way – Asked the PC what sustainability means to which Mr. Pomerantz said it depends on the overall context of its use.

New Business

SCOWT (Stop Commercialization of Westtown Township) Citizens Group presentation and discussion

The discussion started with one of SCOWT's leaders Janice Oakey starting the conversation after Mr. Pomerantz provided for a brief introduction and explained the constraints that the PC must operate. Mrs. Oakey stated that the main concerns of the SCOWT group is to stop the continued commercialization of the Township. They are seeking for the Township to maintain existing zoning and not amend it to accommodate developers. Concerns expressed include additional traffic pressures/congestion, concerns with an influx of renters over owner and issues associated with this trend, overall aesthetics, reduced property values, increased crime, increased pollution/litter, protection of forested areas and riparian buffers, maintenance of clean well water/streams, farmland protection, pedestrian/bicycle amenities and additional recreation amenities west of 202.

Specific to the renter issue, Mrs. Oakey noted a higher number of renters can result in lower test scores for the WCASD and that the schools are presently overcrowded and overcapacity. She indicated the number of potential schoolchildren presented by Bozzuto will not accurately reflect the reality. With aesthetics, she noted the importance of the view of Crebilly from 202, of forested areas on the Papenfuss property and historic properties in the Township. Mrs. Oakey also stated the residents would like to see public trails developed at the expense of the developer on open space lands that

are ultimately developed. She noted the extreme concern with additional traffic conflicts that will result from the development of apartments at the Papenfuss property. Additionally she noted the traffic study was not undertaken when school is letting out.

The PC followed with several questions. Mr. Hatton asked first about the overall scope of the group to which Mrs. Oakey indicated the group does not want to see any zoning changes made to benefit commercial developers. Mr. Pomerantz followed-up by asking if the single-family option was preferable to the apartment option to which Mrs. Oakey responded neither is preferable, but the single-family option is better than the other. She further stated the CCRC proposal is also better than the one for apartments based on school and traffic impacts associated with it. Mr. Rodia noted details will still need to be hammered out on how the large lot residential properties will be guaranteed as only large lot, single-family homes through deed restrictions and the like, and he later spoke about how renter/apartment dynamics have changed over the past few years with the shifting economy. Mr. Pomerantz then asked Mrs. Oakey for her definition of the word “transient” to which she framed it in the context of schoolchildren in her previous experiences in Upper Darby. She indicated as rentals in the area increased test scores decreased in the school district. A brief discussion was then had about the relationship between traffic congestion and police response.

Megan Bruns, of 4 Jacqueline Drive – Spoke about the recent WEGO data collected on traffic on Jacqueline Drive warranted a further analysis and potential traffic calming measures. She indicated that only recently had she seen police patrolling Jacqueline Drive, and that the officer she spoke with stated the majority of persons being ticketed were parents taking their children to school.

Mrs. Bruns indicated she would prefer to see the property developed as single-family homes and not as apartments for the same reasons mentioned by Mrs. Oakey previously. She further spoke about her concern with how apartment communities will function 10-20 years down the road and traffic impacts. She then asked the PC how much weight do citizen concerns have when recommendations are being made on land use applications. The general consensus of the PC was to state all projects are evaluated individually and impartially based on their own unique merits when recommendations are made to the BOS. Mr. Pomerantz indicated that the PC is

listening to all in attendance but that they are still bound to make their recommendations based on code and law. Mrs. Bruns noted the common thread between Bozzuto and Papenfuss is that each require a zoning change to construct apartments, and that the citizens want the PC and BOS to uphold the zoning already in place.

Tom Breslin, of 211 Jacqueline Drive – Spoke of his concerns with increased traffic on Jacqueline Drive due to cut-thru traffic from 202 and New Street. His main concern with development on the Papenfuss property was its impacts on well water and overall quality of life issues.

Ed Penry, of 202 Jacqueline Drive – Argued that both projects together are seen as one due to traffic and that there is no improvement that will improve the 202/926 intersection. Reiterated concerns expressed by previous speakers on traffic along Jacqueline Drive. He also brought up concerns with sewerage and roads for 400+ homes on Crebilly instead of apartments.

Denny McFadden, of 1010 General Greene Drive – Indicated he researched the proposed road improvements at 202/926 and found that PennDOT has dropped any proposed improvements at that intersection. He then spoke of his concern on how the monies proposed from the developer to the intersection have been reduced. He then concluded with stating his concern with changing existing zoning to allow for apartment construction and how it would negatively impact existing roads. Believes increased traffic on Jacqueline is due in part to West Goshen's making of Rosary Lane one way.

Bob Dilullo, of 1004 Supplee Way – Noted his concerns with the Bozzuto traffic study. First that the data was collected in May during a time of lower traffic volumes. Additionally he expressed concerns with how the traffic was calculated, analyzed and projected into 2021 and that it shows future traffic in the vicinity being underestimated. The PC noted the Township's traffic engineer will review the study as well.

Doug Anderson, of 606 Jacqueline Drive – Stated that the trust between the Township and the citizens west of 202 had broken down. He first expressed concerns over the demolition of the Faucet House on the Papenfuss property. He then expressed that planning is not a choice between the lesser of two evils, and should be more proactive and work towards adaptive reuse of historic structures. To this point he talked about Bozzuto and the demolition of several serpentine homes associated with the project. Mr. Pomerantz followed up by asking what has caused the breaking of trust with the Township. Mr. Anderson responded the main issue that comes to mind is the 202 billboard on Old Wilmington Pike. He finally questioned the viability of large, residential lots adjacent to an apartment complex. Mr. Patriarca followed up with an explanation of the process involved with the demolition of the Faucet House and indicated the demolition was permitted by the Township.

Bob Mastrovito, of 825 Sharon Circle – Expressed his concern with existing Township

roads and impacts placed on them by additional development. He further stated the Township should reevaluate the parallel road, not have it constructed and redirect monies to be used for it to upgrade existing road infrastructure (add a center turn lane to West Pleasant Grove and South New). He further stated any development in the Township should reflect existing zoning and accommodate additional traffic through improvements at the cost of the developers. This includes the Township not accepting dedications of new roads.

Jim Mutter, of 604 Jacqueline Drive – Indicated he is a police officer in a neighboring Township. Expressed his concerns with not just existing traffic issues, but also issues moving forward, especially with increased traffic volumes. Noted from his professional experience that crime increases with apartment construction, and from a law enforcement standpoint, single-family homes are more desirable than apartment homes. He also questioned if WEGO has the manpower to handle the additional issues that will likely arise from apartment construction.

Desiree Cresta, of 610 Spring Line Drive – Gave a very personal account of her concerns with additional development in the community. She specifically spoke of why she decided to move her family to the Township and her concerns with increased traffic and development and how it affects her special needs child. She further expressed her concerns with additional students entering Starkweather Elementary School as a result of the apartment development and the impacts they would have on her child's special needs program. Further spoke of her concerns with the additional number of renters brought in with apartments and the negative impacts associated with them. Wants to ensure her neighborhood is safe not only now but well into the future. Would prefer to see development of single-family homes over apartments in the Township.

Seamus Lavin, of 613 Spring Line Drive – Noted he has been a lifetime resident of Westtown and that he has experienced the growing pains and changes experienced here. He then discussed the changing markets and why apartments are being built, but that he felt additional apartments in the Township are not necessary and that the argument cannot be made that the Township has not provided for them. He understands that all applications submitted have to be considered, but that the PC needs to take into account the views of the existing residents within the extent of the law. He expressed the PC should defer to the preferences of the existing residents when making their recommendations to the greatest extent possible within the law. He concluded with agreeing with much of what was previously stated with regards to traffic and apartment construction and asked the PC to not change the zoning ordinance to accommodate new apartments.

Matt Kelly, of 22 Robins Nest Lane – Noted he was also a long-time resident and spoke of the traffic issues along 202. He then spoke of the potential commercial component of the Papenfuss property and the large amount of traffic associated with a car wash as shown in a previous sketch plan. To address speeding on Jacqueline Drive he suggested the addition of speed bumps and stop signs to slow traffic. He further spoke

of how he hopes the SCOWT group continues to grow throughout the Township and compel the elected officials to better represent the existing citizens. Further feels zoning changes should not be done to the benefits of the developers, but rather to benefit of the citizens. He concluded the PC should spend their time doing more long-range planning and not be as reactionary to issues as they arise. Mr. Pomerantz responded long-range plans are in place, but the PC could be more proactive in the future.

Walt Pavelchek, of 1050 South New Street – Spoke of his greater hopes for the SCOWT group moving forward and spoke to the changes he has seen during his 50+ years residing in the Township. He hopes the group continues to remain active in the community even after the Papenfuss and Bozzuto issues are settled.

Janice Oakey, of 10 Jacqueline Drive – Concluded the discussion by stating to the PC the existing residents are generally all against apartment construction, and that moving forward Township officials should be more direct with developers within the confines of the lay, expressing the residents' desire to not see additional apartment construction.

Mr. Pomerantz then closed the meeting after allowing all of the member of the PC to offer their thoughts on the evening's discussion. Each member thanked the audience for their insights and presentations made before the PC. Further it was expressed that those in attendance will become more involved with the Township moving forward.

Adjournment

11:00 pm (SR/DP)