

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township

April 3, 2013 - 7:30PM

Call to Order

Chairman Lees led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and called the meeting to order.

Present

Commissioners – Rodia, Whitig, Adler, Lees, Walter, and Hatton. Also present were Township Manager Robert Layman, one guest and those mentioned below.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted as presented (DW/BW).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of February 20, 2013, were approved as submitted. (DW/RH).

Reports

Russ Hatton reported on the March 4th Board meeting. At the Work Session the Board discussed the PECO Smart Meter project, Westtown School, the Rite Aid Zoning Appeal, and the Historical Commission. At the regular meeting there was again Public Comment on the website and residents' participation in plans for an upgrade. The Historical Commission established, There was further discussion of the Open Space Task Force. The PECO Smart Meters were the subject of many comments from the public. Residents urged the Board to take some action.

Brent Whitig reported on the March 18th Board meeting. At the Work Session the Board discussed PECO Smart Meters and the Road Program. At the regular meeting the Smart Meters were again a topic of discussion. Also discussed, Oakbourne Mansion rental policy. Advertising of the Road Program was authorized.

Russ Hatton also reported on the April 1st Board meeting. At the Work Session the Board heard a presentation for development of the parcel at Green Lane and West Chester Pike. The Work Session was reconvened after the regular Meeting to complete the agenda. At the regular meeting it was noted that the new Historic Commission had its first meeting. Future meetings will be on the last Thursday of the month. There was more Public Comment on the Smart Meter issue and questions relating to DEP's review of the Act 537 Plan. Under New Business there was comment on errors in the sewer operation report. It was announced that the Community Yard Sale will be April 27th at Oakbourne. The Open Space survey is available online. Copies are also available in the Township Office. There was a lengthy discussion concerning the website improvements.

Chairman Lees asked the Township Manager for clarification of the Smart Meter issue. The residents speaking at the Board meeting claim that the meters have caused house fires, constitute a potential health risk, and are an invasion of privacy as they permit monitoring of electric usage. The meters currently being installed are not the same as the ones originally used.

Announcements

None at this time.

Non-agenda Public Comment

None at this time.

Zoning Amendment – Alternative Energy

Present was John Snook from the Brandywine Conservancy. PC received Solicitor Adams memo dated

3/25/2013, the Caln Township Ordinance, and subsequent email comments from Adams and Snook.

At this point it appears the remaining topic for Planning Commission discussion is solar energy as a principal use or "Solar Farm." Mr. Adams recommends that the Township provide for this use. It was suggested that the Solar Farm be permitted on tracts of not more than 10 acres in the A/C District. Initially the PC had limited this use to the Township District. There was a detailed discussion of the A/C tracts which would possibly be considered for this use – Crebilly Farm, Westtown School, the Stratton properties, and the remainder of the Bayard Rustin tract. The 10 acre maximum tract size and the impervious cover limits would control the size of the installation. A visual impact study should be required. Since solar as a principal use would require Conditional Use approval, Mr. Snook suggested language such as, "the purpose of the required visual analysis would be to demonstrate which portion of the property might be used for the permissible coverage with the least impact to neighboring or nearby properties or the public view." Large setbacks can also be utilized to diminish the visibility of the installation. Screening (berming or plantings) might be required in cases where the visual analysis identified a need to diminish the impact of the installation. Fencing and other safety regulations mentioned in the Caln Township Ordinance may be included as well. It was decided it was impractical to impose production limits because the technology is developing so rapidly. Vehicular access to the tract must be provided.

The Commission decided to recommend allowing solar energy production as a principal use in the A/C District on tracts of not more than 10 acres with Conditional Use approval. Mr. Snook will prepare a new draft including the Solar Farm with the tract size, impervious cover limits, screening, and required visual impact study. He will also make the other editorial changes suggested by the Solicitor. The new draft will be referred to the Solicitor. A final draft should be available for the Planning Commission meeting on May 5th.

Public Comment

None at this time.

Adjournment (DW/BW) 8:39pm.

Elaine L. Adler
Planning Commission Secretary