

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
March 23, 2011 - 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 – Hatton, Whittig, Adler, Lees, Walter, and Rohrbach. Also present was Township Manager Robert Layman, Township Solicitor Robert Adams, Township Engineer Robert Pingar, Traffic Consultant Al Federico, Consultant Thomas Comitta, and Walter Pavelchek.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of March 9, 2011, were approved with the correction of the date. (BW/RH)

Reports

Jim Lees reported on the March 21st meeting of the Board of Supervisors, which was a very short meeting. There was a discussion of the parallel road through the Galbally tract on the west side of Route 202. The Arborview HOA has registered a concern about this connector road and the opening of the Hidden Pond cul-de-sac. The Board said the road is on the approved plan which would have to be revised and re-approved before any changes could be made. The Board also approved a revision of the contract with McCormick Taylor, the Township's engineering consultant, and approved advertising an amendment to Article 162 of the Township Code relating to parking. A Girl Scout has requested use of Oakbourne Park for special program after the regular scout camp session. No action was taken on this request.

Announcements

All members have received the announcement of the Brandywine Conservancy-Environmental Management Center program on April 7th.

Non-agenda Public Comment

None at this time.

Zoning Ordinance Revisions

Following the discussion at the last meeting, the PC had several questions to refer to the Township Engineer or Solicitor.

Mr. Pingar had suggested the wording of the section on obstructing easements should be changed to read "any permanent easement". Mr. Adams said he didn't feel a fence along the edge of easement would be a problem. There was a discussion of wording that would deal with the issue of fences crossing easements, type of fences, and fences as compared to walls. Mr. Adams commented that since a permit would be required for the fence, the Township could review the easement issue at the time of application. Mr. Adams and Mr. Pingar will review a new draft.

Zoning Hearing Board Application – Chester County Outdoor LLC.

Mr. Adams explained the issues involved in this application and said that while the Westtown Zoning Ordinance did provide for a sign in the C-1 District advertising an off-site product, the size limitation was such that it might be considered a de facto exclusion of such signs. He indicated that the Township had

met with the applicant and was looking into a possible agreement for a somewhat smaller sign, perhaps at a different location. Mr. Adams also announced that the applicant was agreeable to a further postponement of the Hearing to some time in April so that the Planning Commission did not have to prepare its comments for the Zoning Hearing Board at this meeting.

Mr. Adams also said that the Township's Sign Ordinance needs to be revised promptly. He reviewed the current status of billboard applications in other municipalities and the cost of opposing the applications. Mr. Adams introduced Thomas Comitta who has had considerable experience with the many applications for digital billboards that have been submitted in the Delaware and Chester County area. Copies of the draft ordinance revisions and zoning map changes prepared by Mr. Comitta and Mr. Adams were distributed to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Comitta explained that the revisions would limit a billboard sign to a section of Route 202. The zoning ordinance revision would include a new district C-2 where the billboard and certain other uses would be permitted. The area for this district would be approximately the C-1 District on the west side of Route 202. A billboard already exists in this area. The ordinance revisions include definitions of pylon and monument signs. The monument sign is considered less obtrusive and therefore more desirable.

Mr. Comitta also posed the question of the timing on signs where the ads change and recommended that it be specified in the ordinance. Other issues discussed were the color of lights, the distance from traffic signs, animated displays, setbacks, landscaping and buffering. Mr. Pingar questioned the language relating to placement of this use, and setback from utility lines. The question of clearance in case of structural failure was also discussed. The Township will measure the size of the present sign on Route 202. Mr. Federico will obtain more information on PennDOT regulations relating to the distance from traffic signs to billboards.

Mr. Adams noted in the case of complex traffic locations the Township might be able to defend denial of an application. Mr. Federico noted that there were technical issues relating to utility easements, pipe lines and overhead wires which might make it impossible to construct a sign at a given location.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the residential properties along Robins Nest Lane should be excluded from the proposed new C-2 District which would extend on the west side of Route 202 from the north township boundary south to encompass all of the existing C-1.

Mr. Adams and Mr. Comitta will prepare a draft ordinance amendment which will be submitted to the PC and the Chester County Planning Commission for review and comment.

Public Comment.

None at this time.

Adjournment (EA/RH) 9:10pm.

Elaine L. Adler
Planning Commission Secretary