

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
June 3, 2015 – 7:30PM

Present

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

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 7:30 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was approved as presented unanimously (JL/EA).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission (PC) meeting of May 6, 2015, were unanimously approved (BW/SR).

Reports

Mr. Hatton presented the June 1 Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting. At their workshop the BOS discussed the road program and Arborview subdivision dedication of public improvements. During their regular meeting the BOS had several departmental reports presented, an update on the Westtown Lake project, awarded the road bid contract, tabled the Arborview dedication of public improvements and was updated on the status of the new website. Mr. Lees stated that Ms. De Wolf at their May 18 meeting wanted her thanks for the work done on the sign ordinance to date to be relayed back to the PC.

Announcements

Mr. Patriarca stated the wireless facilities ordinance is scheduled to be considered for adoption by the BOS at their June 15 meeting, and the proposed sign ordinance as developed by the PC is scheduled to go to the BOS at their July 6 workshop for consideration of next steps. Mr. Patriarca then indicated there will be four candidates interviewed at the June 15 BOS workshop for consideration to fill the PC vacancy. Finally he stated the Malvern School/Fair Share subdivision and land development (SALDO) application will likely be before the PC at their June 17 meeting, and again in July.

Mr. Pomerantz stated the draft of the East Goshen comprehensive plan will be available for public comment on June 11. Mr. Patriarca indicated the Township has not received their copy of it for review as required by the MPC. He also stated that a draft RFP is in progress that will be inclusive of updates to the comprehensive plan, zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Mr. Pomerantz stated a company named WeedMan had been soliciting in his neighborhood after 8:00 in the evening and was unable to show a Westtown Solicitor License. Mr. Pingar stated a permit is required and that if they cannot produce one when asked the residents should call the police. Mr. Pomerantz stated an article should be considered for the next issue of the

Gazette that outlines issues with solicitors, requirements of them and include an image of the permit card the Township issues.

New Business

Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) – special exception application

Mr. Patriarca provided an overview of the application to allow for the construction of an accessory dwelling unit at 1016 Carolyn Drive. The application came about after the property owner approached the Township about permits needed to rebuild the home after it was destroyed by fire in November 2014. At that time it was discovered that a special exception had never been granted for an accessory dwelling at the property and for it to be reconstructed the special exception would need to be granted by the ZHB. Mr. Patriarca further stated the proposed accessory dwelling is fully compliant with the requirements to construct an accessory dwelling unit.

The consensus was that as the applicant met all of the requirements set forth to construct an accessory dwelling unit, the PC offered a formal recommendation of support for the application. Ms. Adler made a favorable motion as follows:

The Planning Commission has reviewed the Zoning Hearing Board application for the accessory dwelling at 1016 Carolyn Drive and suggests the Zoning Hearing Board approve the application as it meets all of the ordinance requirements for its construction.

Mr. Hatton seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

General discussion – BOS/PC chair & vice-chair meeting

Mr. Pomerantz and Mr. Hatton led a discussion of the meeting had between them and the BOS at the June 1 BOS workshop. Mr. Pomerantz stated first he felt it was a very positive meeting with a good dialogue between them and the BOS. Mr. Hatton reiterated this point and further stated they gave the BOS a full overview of all of the things the PC has accomplished over the previous year and a half. Further he stated the continuing need for the BOS and the PC to develop better communication between the bodies. Mr. Hatton further stated he felt the alternative energy ordinance was the issue that really brought the communication issue to an ahead as it took so long for adoption.

Mr. Pomerantz followed by describing the conversation had on the perceived communication issues between the BOS and PC. He stated the root of this is the delay that occurs in the time between when the PC makes their recommendation to when action is taken by the BOS. There was discussion about an annual budget meeting with the various commissions and treating all of the commissions as equals. Mr. Hatton expressed that much has been improved with communication as of late, but can continue to improve. Mr. Pomerantz also stated the BOS was overall pleased and complimentary of the work being done by the PC.

Mr. Rodia asked what the outcome of the discussion was. It was stated that there will be a future meeting either with just the PC or all of the commissions together with the BOS in an effort to continue to improve overall communications. Mr. Pomerantz then described the conversation had with the BOS about the updating of ordinances and the comprehensive plan. He noted there was discussion on the importance of doing the comprehensive plan first followed by ordinance revisions to implement the vision and also on the importance of getting the

ordinances done first. Mr. Pomerantz then stated a draft RFP was being developed to have consultants determine if it is a viable approach to undertake all three revisions at the same time. Ms. Adler stated she believes the ordinances should be done concurrently to avoid conflict and that the comprehensive plan does need to be updated, but not totally rewritten.

Mr. Pomerantz reiterated the sense of urgency from some on the BOS to revise ordinances first, and asked the question if there is risk to the Township in not getting the ordinances handled first. Ms. Adler stated she believes that it is not practical to think that an update will result in all issues being resolved. Mr. Pingar then provided for his perspective on updates to the comprehensive plan as well as the ordinances. He first stated the comprehensive plan is predominately utilized as a planning tool and that issues with ordinances are generally more procedural in nature. He further stated that he feels the more procedural fixes to ordinances should be carried out and not wait for the comprehensive planning process to be completed.

Mr. Pomerantz stated that in his conversations with planning consultants that they see updating the comprehensive plan as essential as the Township is not yet built-out as well as it has not seen a full update in over 14 years. He then compared the comprehensive plan to a more traditional strategic plan in the private sector. Mr. Pomerantz then asked if it is the role of the PC to handle procedural issues related to ordinance updates.

Mr. Patriarca then provided for some of his thoughts on the issues of updating the comprehensive plan and ordinances as a three step process. The first step is to make all of the amendments to the ordinances that are known in a round of "housekeeping" amendments. While this is being done then the comprehensive planning process can begin. He further stated that although the Township is becoming more "built-out," the comprehensive planning can serve to identify new areas of concern not considered in the previous plan. From this comprehensive look at the Township, the types of major changes that may or may not need to be made to the ordinances will come into better focus. Mr. Patriarca concluded by saying that he does not feel full rewrites of the ordinances are necessary, but strategic updates based on what is learned from the planning process will be the best approach.

Mr. Rodia asked what is the overall scope of "housekeeping" amendments for the ordinances and if the PC could start working on these. Mr. Patriarca cited a few examples and stated the Ms. Adler would know even more from her time with the Township. Mr. Pomerantz asked if the PC could work on these types of amendments as time permits. Mr. Pingar stated this could be done regardless of the point in process of updates to the comprehensive plan and/or other ordinances. Mr. Patriarca stated he could work with Mr. Pingar and Ms. Adler developing the list of amendments for the PC to evaluate and make a recommendation on. Mr. Pomerantz next spoke of the comprehensive planning process being undertaken in East Goshen.

Walter Pavelchek, of 1050 South New Street – He stated he was a member of the original group that developed the comprehensive plan as well as the open space taskforce. He stated that he views the comprehensive plan and ordinances as separate but intertwined. He further asked the PC to consider the existing plans as part of their analysis to determine what needs to be clarified or amended.

Mike Di Domenico, of 1530 Woodland Road – He stated that he believes the comprehensive plan and ordinances should be looked at concurrently.

Next Mr. Pomerantz asked about the status of the RFP and the PC as a whole, requesting to

see it when it becomes available. He then asked Mr. Pingar for his overall thoughts on the meeting with the BOS. Mr. Pingar stated he agreed with the previous sentiment that overall it was positive and also acknowledged communications will continue to improve moving forward. He then stated the two large issues that resulted in the perception of a lack of communication were the alternative energy ordinance and the Bozzuto application. He discussed both, the reasons for the delay and what can be done moving forward to provide updates on each as to prevent the “black hole” perception from occurring again. Mr. Pomerantz stated that as the PC are volunteers, feedback from the BOS on the work being done on behalf of the Township is critical in maintaining open communication and continuing to motivate the PC to do the best job they can.

Public comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

8:35 pm (SR/EA)

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Planning Commission Secretary