

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
September 17, 2003 - 7:30PM

Present: Chairman Don Verdiani noted the following members present; Commissioners Nick Bibbo, Elaine Adler, Kevin Flynn, Carol DeWolf and Mark Purcell. Also present were Township Manager Robert Layman; Township Engineer Angelo M. Capuzzi; and three guests and those mentioned below.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Verdiani led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and called the meeting to order.

Adoption of Agenda.

The Agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting (final draft provided 9/17/03) of September 3, 2003, were approved with the correction of one typographical error (CD/KF- unanimous).

Announcements.

Chairman Verdiani announced the PennDOT meeting concerning the Westtown Road Bridge scheduled for September 24, 2003. He also reminded the PC member of the American Planning Association audio conference at the Bourse on October 1, 2003 regarding Street Design.

Mrs. Adler indicated that no one on the PC had signed up for the Master Planners classes offered by West Chester University and the Chester County Planning Commission.

Angelo Capuzzi referred to the PennDOT press release stating that the Singing Bridge replacement would begin in mid-October. This is a nine-month project. Mr. Verdiani reminded the Commission that information has been posted on the Township website and that notices will be sent to appropriate parties when more definite information is available.

Board of Supervisors. Don Verdiani reported on the September 2, 2003 meeting. The Final Plan for Tract 2002-6, the Bayard Rustin High School has been approved, the Board and the School District having come to an agreement on contributions to the upgrading of Shiloh Road. The Conditional Use Hearing on Tract 2003-11, Donnelly Office/West Chester Pike, was left open until the issue of variances was clarified. Mr. Verdiani also reported on the 9/3/2003 meeting of Westtown staff, Commissioners, emergency management, and police to discuss the 926 Road Closing for replacement of the Singing Bridge.

Old Business:

Planning Commission Membership. Elaine Adler reported that the vacancy has been posted on the website and that a notice will be included in the Township newsletter which will be mailed at the beginning of October. An ad will be placed in the Daily Local News. Mrs. Adler asked the PC members to actively search for interested residents as well. The PC will plan to interview the first applicants prior to the October 8th meeting.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments. PC received a memo from John Snook of the Brandywine Conservancy dated September 15, 2003, dealing regulations concerning Townhouses. Specifically, the width of townhouse with front loading garages (Section 170-1615.C.2.d) and the "minimum usable yard area" (Section 170-1615.C.s.d.(1)).

The draft amendment specified a 28' width for units with front loaded garages. This was added to the draft to discourage facades that are mostly garage with only narrow entrances and a streetscape that gives the impression of being all paving. There has been some question of the need for this 28' if there is only one garage. Following a comprehensive discussion of the reasons for this recommendation and the consequences of changing, it was proposed that the draft amendment be altered to require 24' for a one-car garage and 28' for a two-car garage.

The draft currently requires a 500 square foot minimum usable yard area adjacent to each unit in a multi-family building. This was originally intended to assure that there was some level area immediately adjacent to the unit, not a steep slope or drop-off. It has been suggested that this is excessive in the case of a 20' wide unit. It was also noted that the draft does not specify whether the area of a deck above the "yard" counts as part of the required square footage. After discussion it was concluded that this specification should be retained in its present form.

The Commission will discuss these issues with John Snook at the next opportunity.

Tract 2002-8, SS. Simon and Jude: PC received the plan for the new SS. Simon and Jude Sanctuary which was accepted by the Board on September 16, 2003, as a Preliminary/Final Plan. The engineering review is scheduled for discussion at the PC meeting on October 8, 2003.

Ms. DeWolf expressed a concern relating to stormwater management issues affecting the adjacent property owners. Mr. Purcell questioned the provision for traffic exiting the church parking lot.

Commissioner Mark Purcell has advised the Commission that he is a member of the Building Committee of SS. Simon and Jude and as such he will not participate in the PC decisions and recommendations on this project. PC received a memo from Robert F. Adams, Township Solicitor, dated September 16, 2003 on this subject. Chairman Verdiani suggested the PC review the memo for discussion at a future date. Ms. DeWolf stated her strong belief that the Commission members should avoid giving even the slightest impression of impropriety.

Public Comment.

Walter Pavelchek, South New St., spoke on the topic of "degrees of freedom", and observed that the Commission appears to concentrate on eliminating "freedoms". He asked the PC members to consider that they were placing too many restrictions on projects.

Jeff House, Russell Lane, suggested that the PC might like to inspect the Toll Brothers project called Riviera. This project has two-car garages with narrow units such as the PC was discussing.

Adjournment. 9:20PM (EA/KF).

Elaine L. Adler
Planning Commission Secretary