

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
October 21, 2015 – 7:30PM

Present

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

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 7:35 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the PC meeting of October 7, 2015, were approved as presented 6-0 (EA/RH).

Reports

Mr. Whitig presented the October 19 Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting. Items discussed at their workshop included Township credit cards, Fair Share land development, 2015 road program, the Hawthorne subdivision and the Hunt Drive sewage planning modules with each item also discussed during the regular meeting. At their regular meeting, the BOS first had several departmental reports presented to them. Under old business, the BOS approved the road program, Comcast franchise agreement and the Fair Share land development. Under new business the BOS approved the credit card resolution, accepted the auditors' resignation, approved the Hunt Drive modules and reduced the on-lot fee. Mr. Di Domenico thanked Mr. Whitig for his assistance with the BOS in their Fair Share discussion at the meeting.

Announcements

Mr. Patriarca stated the Township was successful in its Vision Partnership Program (VPP) grant application and was awarded the \$25,000 requested from the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC). He then stated both the Westminster subdivision and the SUO repeal will be before the PC at the November 4 meeting, and that the Hawthorne subdivision will likely be back for a December PC meeting. Mr. Pomerantz then requested the idea of the BOS appointing an alternate member to the PC be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

There were no non-agenda public comments.

New Business

Joint Board of Supervisors/Planning Commission discussion

Mr. Pomerantz started the discussion by asking all three BOS members and all of the PC members "what they would like to walk away with after the meeting." Mr. Di Domenico indicated he would like foster an enhanced dialogue and to end with a better understanding of the overall responsibilities of and the PC and the BOS on planning issues. Ms. De Wolf indicated that she wanted to discuss communication and on-going dialogue between the groups, and focus on

what is being done well and what needs to be improved upon. Mr. Haws indicated the initial scope of the meeting was to better define roles and responsibilities, but that over the past year the direction taken by the PC is the direction he wanted to see it move and gave an example of this as being Mr. Whitig's assistance at their meeting in discussing the PC recommendation on Fair Share. He further stated he viewed the meeting as being more educational in nature with a continued discussion on roles and responsibilities as well as communications.

Mr. Rodia indicated his questions were about the development of the comprehensive plan and continuing communication improvements. Mr. Whitig indicated the biggest challenge is with communications, and that consideration should be given to more direct meetings between the groups to address this. Mr. Haws stated the PC representative assigned to their meeting should be able to walk the BOS through and answer questions about applications and recommendations made by the PC in order to give the BOS the full context of the recommendation. Mr. Hatton suggested a PC member could be assigned to a specific project and be the PC liaison for it with the BOS. Ms. De Wolf indicated the Mr. Patriarca can serve in this role, and that it would be beneficial for the BOS to have the information more in advance. Mr. Haws stated he would like to see information from both Mr. Patriarca and the PC as they offer different perspectives.

Ms. Adler indicated the timing of getting PC information to the BOS is critical and wanted the discussion to include how to better keep the BOS informed on projects throughout the process and not just when a recommendation is made. Mr. Lees indicated the larger issue historically has been communication but that it has improved as of late, and that more consideration should be given to the timing of PC recommendations to the BOS. Mr. Hatton indicated more definition should be given to communication between the groups. Mr. Pomerantz indicated he would like to know the BOS vision for the Township to assist the PC in their work on planning and development issues.

Mr. Di Domenico indicated the BOS has an interest in more infrastructure planning and seeing the PC more involved with it. Ms. De Wolf indicated quality of place and life of the Township are of most importance. A balance should be had in protecting residential areas and promoting commercial growth along limited corridors while preserving historical and natural resources and provide services to all residents. She further indicated that at times the BOS may have differing views as they must consider a wide array of additional issues in the evaluation of a project. Mr. Haws indicated he agreed with what was previously stated and indicated he views all projects through a long-term lens and discussed the road program to emphasize this point. He also indicated that he hopes through the comprehensive planning process, some focus will be placed on expanding the commercial tax base where appropriate.

Mr. Pomerantz followed by asking how the BOS sees the PC in assisting in the implementation of their vision for the Township. Mr. Di Domenico indicated that he has confidence in the PC and their recommendations as the PC works to develop consensus through a very participatory and inclusive decision-making process. He further stated the substantive recommendations made by the PC are indicative of the hard work put into them. Using corridor planning as an example, Mr. Pomerantz followed by asking the BOS if they see the PC in a more active or reactive role in how they approach projects.

Mr. Di Domenico stated that Marple Township utilizes their first meeting as a workshop only and the second for a regular meeting and suggested this an approach to improve communications. Ms. De Wolf noted PC duties as outlined by the MPC, but also indicated that she would like to

see more applicants meet with the PC and BOS directly to seek feedback on the front end of a project. Ms. Adler indicated she felt the BOS should be more informed/involved earlier in the planning process, but also acknowledged this could be burdensome as well with all of the other issues the BOS handles on a regular basis. Mr. Haws agreed that an appointed PC member to discuss projects with the BOS was a good idea, but also does not want the BOS to be too involved early on as to not potentially influence the PC and their processes. Next followed a discussion on the pros and cons of BOS members individually attending PC meetings periodically. The pros included a discussion on improved communications and the cons included a discussion on influence and politics.

Mr. Rodia stated there should be an overall vision of capital needs for the Township for the PC to consider when evaluating land use applications. He then stated the comprehensive plan should be reviewed by the BOS, PC and Historical Commission (HC) in an effort to make sure all are on the same page with the planning process. Next followed a general discussion on what the overall thoughts and expectations of the comprehensive planning process among the BOS members.

Mr. Whitig indicated that based on the overall discussion had, he feels the best approach to continue to improve communications is to have an assigned PC member to a project instead of more regular meetings between the groups.

Ms. Adler agreed with Mr. Whitig that having an assigned PC member for larger projects would help improve communication with the BOS. Mr. Lees asked the BOS for their thoughts on future commercial development. A conversation followed on broad thoughts on commercial development and how it should be approached across the Township that will be addressed in the comprehensive plan update.

Mr. Hatton next asked about how information is received by the BOS from the PC and stated he also agrees that an individual PC member should be assigned to a project to improve communication with the BOS on larger projects. A discussion followed on the Malvern School project as an example of why this approach should be considered. Mr. Pingar followed and discussed how he communicates information to the BOS and how it can be challenging at times due to the nature of the job. He then elaborated on how the BOS must view applications before them and make their judgements based on what is best for the Township as a whole which can from time-to-time differ from PC recommendations. Mr. Di Domenico then stated regular meetings with both Mr. Pingar and Mr. Patriarca has helped improve communication between the BOS and PC.

Mr. Pomerantz next raised several additional issues. First discussed was perceptions of PC recommendations falling into a "black hole" from time-to-time and what can be done to prevent this moving forward. Mr. Haws indicated after the BOS receives a PC recommendation, a perception of delay can occur based on what is happening behind the scenes and/or because the BOS may require additional information not part of the PC recommendation. Mr. Patriarca also stated more can be done from the staff perspective to help continue to alleviate this issue moving forward. Next followed a conversation with the BOS discussing the pros and cons of more direct communication with the PC after their recommendation has been made. Mr. Whitig then reiterated the PC "project manager" should help improve communication in these situations.

Next Mr. Pomerantz raised the issue of a PC budget, and the BOS stated the PC should have a budget and discussed the budgetary process. Mr. Whitig asked if there was a reason why the

PC does not have an independent solicitor to utilize on an as needed basis. He spoke to the Rossiter subdivision and the issues surrounding it being an example where the PC would be better served with their own solicitor. Mr. Pomerantz then asked if it is more appropriate for the PC set an annual budget or make requests for a consultant and/or solicitor on an as needed basis. A discussion followed that a set budget for training could be established with additional monies for outside consultants/solicitor allocated on an as needed basis. Mr. Di Domenico asked what type of things the PC would like budgeted to which Mr. Pomerantz responded the PC would need to discuss further. Next followed a discussion of the timing of an appointment of a possible PC consultant/solicitor.

Mr. Pomerantz then stated the BOS should consider an annual meeting where all of the various commissions meet as one with the BOS to discuss their previous year and the overall goals and objects for the next. He further stated there should be quarterly meetings between the PC and BOS to continue to improve the communication and review what has been accomplished between the groups.

Mr. Patriarca suggested that when possible, just to have PC recommended items on a BOS workshop two weeks prior to its being considered as part of their regular agenda. This would allow the BOS additional time to review and ask questions on the application materials.

Public comment

Walt Pavelchek of 1050 South New Street – First he commended the groups for having the meeting to continue to work on improving communications with one another. Specific to the vision of the Township, Mr. Pavelchek stated the existing *Growth Management Plan* is the vision for the Township. He further suggested that both the PC and BOS should reread the plan from time-to-time to keep this vision in focus.

Adjournment

9:15 pm (BW/EA)

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Planning Commission Secretary