

Springfield Township Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes September 7, 2016

Chairperson Bobb Carson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with all Commissioners present.

Motion by Bobb Carson, seconded by Scott Douglas, to table approval of the August 3rd minutes.

Traditions of America sketch plan(TMP 42-1-15)—The applicant was represented by Dave Biddison and Laura Everly, PE. The applicant proposes 12 single family dwellings on the former Locust Valley Golf Course as part of a larger development in Upper Saucon Township. Per the last sketch review, the applicant investigated the feasibility of centralized water/sewer service to make use of higher density provisions in the zoning ordinance. The applicant consulted with Brand Environmental, who reported the permitting process could take as long as 5 years and the applicant is unwilling to wait that long. The applicant proposes public streets and has added a second access point in Springfield Township to ameliorate the cul-de-sac length.

The Commission reviewed the Township Engineer's letter dated September 1, 2016 and pointed out several areas that needed attention when the preliminary plan gets submitted. Mr. Biddison acknowledged that all the comments would require the applicant to comply, and he anticipated being able to do so. The Commission expressed a preference for the development to meet the physical requirements for recreation rather than offering a fee-in-lieu.

Home Occupations (version 4, 8/240/2016). The Commission reviewed the proposed amendment and made the following changes:

- Create consistency with the Municipalities Planning Code by changing "home occupation" to "home business" throughout.
- Remove references to "commercial activity" in favor of "home business" so as to not create ambiguity as to size and scale of allowable home businesses.
- Restructure the opening paragraph of the H-4(b) Limited Impact Home Business to reflect the limited nature of such activity.

Motion by Karen Bedics, seconded by Scott Douglas, to recommend the Board of Supervisors adopt the amendment with the noted revisions.

Signs—Bobb Carson suggested the original idea to regulate sign size by speed limit was impractical and suggested the regulations should be done by virtue of on-lot vs off-lot, sign type (eg. freestanding, wall mount, temporary, etc) and zoning district, with the fewest options being allowed in the non-commercial districts. The rest of the Commission agreed with that approach. There was discussion about what PennDot classifies as "Tourist Oriented Destination Signs," as directional signs, with the Commission opting to keep the requirement that directional signs have to pertain to the use on the lot which they're located. Mr. Carson will offer a text draft for a future meeting.

Animal densities for A1, A5 and H5 uses. Karen Bedics offered a worksheet that converted typical animals into AEU's. The current regulations create confusion with a mix of acreage sizes and animal counts by head and by AEU. Ms. Bedics suggested the 3 categories should be aligned for consistency by property sizes.

Jim Nilsen, Pleasant View Road, told the Commission he had to create both soil and nutrient management plans with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to qualify for different farming assistance programs. He reported that his plans allowed him a maximum animal density of 1.43 AEU's per acre by requiring him to establish several best management practices. The Commission noted that the Township's current regulations for A1 uses allowed 2 AEU's per acre, greater than the sample plan discussed. The Commission settled on allowing .5 AEU's per acre unless an NRCS approved plan allowed for more.

The Commission noted there was a gap in regulating A1 uses above 10 acres until a property triggered A5 Intensive Agriculture performance standards. This creates the potential of someone keeping their animal density just below A5 standards, but higher than good management practices would allow.

The Commission intends to develop the following regulatory approach:

- Declare that properties less than 5 acres are H-5 Residential Accessory use of animals. The minimum lot size to keep all types of livestock will be 2 acres, and the use will be regulated by head count; two acres needed for the first animal and 1 animal allowed for each full acre thereafter. The provision to exclude woodlands and wetlands from the acreage count will be struck as it's impractical to enforce and doesn't add any valuable public protection. The Commission will also address keeping miniaturized versions of livestock as pets, rather than classifying them as livestock.
- Properties greater than 5 acres may be considered A1 Agriculture uses. A1 uses will be allowed .5 AEU of livestock per acre, with an owner able to have greater density by providing an approved NRCS management plan. Establishing this limitation will allow the Township to prevent poor land management practices for those uses that don't trigger A5 Intensive Agriculture performance standards. The Commission will consider poultry density at the next meeting.
- Ms. Bedics will look into existing state regulations involving Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's), to align Township A5 regulations with existing state laws.

Historic Structure regulations—Steve Smith assumed duties as lead researcher for this section. The Commission plans to hold a joint meeting with the Historic Commission to revise and streamline the current regulations on October 20th. The Commission identified the following areas of concern for the meeting agenda:

- Emphasizing the potential for adaptive reuse over demolition by virtue of placement in the section.
- Reviewing the process burden on an applicant who wants to make use of adaptive reuse provisions so as to encourage owners to that action.
- Review the process burden on owners who want to demo historic structures. Specify what tasks should be accomplished for different classes.
- Review the validity and distinctions of the different levels of historic classification definitions.
- Ask the Historic Commission to provide a head count of the different classes of properties so as to ascertain the probable impact of these regulations Township wide.

Bobb Carson will send these items to the Historic Commission and solicit its input on any other agenda items.

FEMA flood mapping in the Saucon Creek Watershed—Mr. Brown asked if the Commission thought the Township should participate in the discovery process per the FEMA letter dated August 29, 2016. The Commission determined it wasn't necessary give the small land area in the Township and the low flood risk.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Brown
Township Manager