

Springfield Township Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes 5 May 2021

Chairperson Dawn Nicholson called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM with Commission members Karen Bedics, Bobb Carson, Jay Fuggiti, Brian Hague and Angela Kelly in attendance. Also in attendance was Jason Wager.

793 Mine Rd Subdivision Application – The Commission acknowledged receipt of this application initiating the 90-day period allowed for review. However, it was not received in time for the Township Engineer to conduct a proper review, so discussion on the application was deferred until June 2nd.

Alternative energy Model Ordinance – Dr Carson indicated that he and Mr. Hague were not addressing sections five through nine of the Bucks County Ordinance (BCO) at this time and would reserve them for a future discussion.

Dr Carson began the discussion by addressing Section 404H-14, Accessory Solar-powered Generating Facilities emphasizing that we were talking about private and not commercial structures. Paragraph (a) calls for a site plan. It was asked if this would require a trained engineer or if a simple plot plan was adequate. Ms. Kelly expressed concerns of not having a qualified engineer due to the possibility of a building not being structurally sound enough to support the equipment. Paragraph (f) was taken from the BCO and added to our draft. Mr. Fuggiti was concerned that it left some ambiguity in the height and suggested a fixed height should be inserted. It was agreed to make the minimum height of the parking canopy fifteen feet which would accommodate any emergency vehicle. Paragraph (K) was added but there were a lot of questions regarding the County's intent and Mr. Wager was requested to get clarification from the County. He is also going to talk to our third-party building inspector to see how a pre-inspection can be built into the building permit process. The Commission acknowledged the additional cost associated with potential inspections and discussed how these costs could be paid.

Paragraph (M) was added from the County's Ordinance but is basically in there to provide a legal out to the Township should a dispute arise between neighbors.

Mr. Hague then addressed Section 404. H-15 Accessory Wind-Powered Generating Facilities.

Paragraphs (b) and (c) were added from the BCO. Mr. Fuggiti felt (b) should be eliminated putting the responsibility on the home owner to determine if the structure was strong enough to support the desired equipment. It was determined that we would leave this in. (c) was changed to eliminate "or multiple parcels in same ownership" so that it allows one system per lot regardless of ownership.

Paragraph (h) changed the or to and so that both requirements (15 feet above grade and "be surrounded by a cage or fence") are required. Ms. Bedics questioned if we can prohibit systems on preserved farm land. Mr. Wager will talk to the Township solicitor, Scott McNair regarding this matter. Paragraph (o) was changed to "all appropriate warning signs" so that it would incorporate any new warning signs that may be created. It was agreed to remove paragraph (v).

Dr. Carson then addressed Section 404H-???, Geothermal Accessory Heat Pumps. He indicated we have nothing in our ordinance regarding this and the BCO is inadequate as they don't address open loop systems at all. Open loop systems use a great deal of water as they pull water from one well and deposit it into another unlike a closed loop system which is self-contained but uses an antifreeze. He indicated he had adopted the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's (DVRPC) Geothermal Heat Pump Ordinance by replacing DVRPC with Springfield Township. Timeframes in paragraphs D and F were left blank pending a future discussion. In reviewing paragraph H, Dr. Carson indicated that standing column wells are the most efficient. He informed everyone that Table 1 in H.3 is only for open loop systems. He raised the question if we even need geothermal systems when cheaper air to air systems are available. Dr Carson requested that everyone review these sections and forward any suggestions or questions to himself and Mr. Hague.

The BCO has a section entitled Emerging Alternative Energy Systems. Mr. Fuggiti suggested we eliminate this entire section rather than create an ordinance for things that don't even exist.

Discussion then moved onto commercial systems beginning with Section 404.F-7. Dr. Carson indicated that Commercial solar farms are illegal in Pennsylvania but the BCO allows them in all districts. Utility companies are an exception to this and generally lease land to establish solar farms. A discussion took place regarding what area in the Township would be suitable for solar farms and who would be responsible for decommissioning them and the cleanup once they had become no longer productive. It was decided that we would get input from the Springfield Township EAC regarding their position on commercial solar farms within the Township before proceeding any further. The questions that came up are do we want to expand on our ordinance and can we limit them to where we have them today.

Mr. Hague addressed Section 404. F-8 Commercial Wind-Powered Generating Facilities. In paragraph (h), we changed the or to and so that both requirements (15 feet above grade and "be surrounded by a cage or fence") are required. This makes it consistent with the non-commercial systems. Mr. Hague indicated a lot was taken from the BCO so we should read it and provide any comments to him.

Members were asked to review sections five through nine of the BCO and Ordinance 91, OUTDOOR WOOD-FIRED BOILERS and provide comments.

In other business, Mr. Wager was asked if he had an update on the Comprehensive Plan. He indicated he had talked to Mr. Hopkins and was told we would have an RFP by June 2nd. Mr. Wager then informed the Commission that we would soon be receiving plans for a proposed twelve-lot subdivision located between Passer and State Roads.

15 April 2021 minutes - The minutes were reviewed and approved following a motion by Dr. Carson and a second by Ms. Bedics.

Business being concluded, Ms. Nicholson adjourned the meeting at 9:22 PM.