

Springfield Township Planning Commission

Work Session Minutes 20 May 2021

Chairperson Dawn Nicholson called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM with Commission members Karen Bedics, Bobb Carson, Jay Fuggiti and Brian Hague in attendance. Also in attendance was Debra Pfeiffer (Township resident).

Alternative Energy Model Ordinance – Mr. Carson began the discussion by questioning if we were addressing this issue on a scale large enough to have an appreciable impact on the environment. He had previously forwarded two articles regarding global warming which indicated a major effort would be needed if we are to avert a significant and negative impact on the environment. He suggested we needed to get the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on board if we are going to take this on as a larger issue. To have a significant impact, we would have to establish solar farms within the Township. It was agreed that if established, they should be placed in areas which are currently cleared and not in areas which would need to be cleared of trees. Ms. Bedics suggested we needed to address two issues:

1. Where would be good locations for solar farms within the Township and
2. Use education and encouragement rather than regulations to expand the acceptance of alternative energy.

The question was asked if there were brown fields within the Township that could be used for solar farms rather than consuming prime agricultural land.

It was decided to hold a joint meeting with the Township's EAC to get their opinions regarding this issue. Ms. Bedics will contact the Township manager and ask him to coordinate the meeting.

Sections 5-9 of the Bucks County Model Ordinance (BCMO) were then addressed. Sections 5A and 5B address the orientation of a structure. It was agreed that depending on the lot, this as an ordinance could be impracticable and while valid concepts, should be made as suggestions to anyone coming before the township with building plans. Sections 5C and 5D address the types and location of shrubbery a person can plant on their property. It was agreed that while a person is entitled to clear airspace over his property, this was excessive regulation and would result in more problems between neighbors causing the Township to be dragged into these disputes. Sections 5E and 5F are recommendations so should be left out of an ordinance. They are items that can be recommended when an individual comes before the Planning Commission with a building plan.

Section 6 of the BCMO relates to government incentives. Mr. Fuggiti stated that offering such incentives would take money away from the Township and in fact cost money as they would have to pay someone to monitor the program. He also pointed out that there are already Federal incentives for individuals to install alternative energy systems. Mr. Carson stated that incentives, if offered, should be available to individuals and not just to developers. The consensus was that incentives should not be offered.

Sections 7 and 8, if included, would need to be modified to make them less onerous to an individual installing a simple commercially available system. It was agreed that section 9, which stipulates a requirement for a person to carry insurance, should be eliminated.

Mr. Hague suggested sections 5-9 should be eliminated in their entirety and Mr. Fuggiti agreed. Further discussion on the BCMO was deferred until the meeting with the EAC.

5 May 2021 Minutes - The minutes from the May 5th meeting were reviewed and accepted following a motion by Ms. Bedics to approve and a second by Mr. Carson.

Public Comment - Ms. Pfeiffer asked if PV panels could be mounted on the front roof (facing the street) of a house. She stated that at an EAC meeting she had attended, the EAC indicated that solar panels could not be located in the front yard. She was informed that the panels could be on her front roof but not in the yard as our ZO states, "Residential and nonresidential accessory solar-powered generating facilities shall be prohibited from being installed between the front lot line and the primary residential or nonresidential building on the lot, unless the lot is greater than 5 acres.

Business being concluded, Ms. Nicholson adjourned the meeting at 8:28 PM.