

**Minutes from the
DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting**

June 22, 2015

The Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular Meeting was held at 7:00 p.m., Monday, June 22, 2015 in the Doylestown Township Municipal Building, 425 Wells Road, Doylestown, PA. Members of the Planning Commission in attendance included Chairman; Judy Hendrixson, Members; Ed Harvey, George Lowenstein and Edward Redfield. Other in attendance included and Board of Supervisor Liaison; Richard F. Colello, Township Manager; Stephanie J. Mason and Township Planning Consultant; Judy Stern Goldstein.

Absent: Vice Chairman; Thomas Kelso

Review of Minutes:

In the form of a motion by Mr. Harvey; seconded by Mr. Redfield the May 4, 2015 Doylestown Township Planning Commission Work Session, May 20, 2015 Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular meeting and June 9, 2015 Doylestown Township Planning Commission Work Session minutes were approved.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Public\Commission Comments – None

Cross key Study

Ms. Hendrixson reported on the update of the Cross Key Study by the Bucks County Planning Commission as of June 15th. Chief Clerk of the Bucks County Planning Commission; Lynn T. Bush indicated the purpose of the study will serve as a tool for steering future development along the Cross Keys study area, which may be redefined. Senior Community Planner; Dave Sebastian provided an overview of the land use and economic development in the area as it exists today:

A) There is over 300 businesses in the study area, where 18% are auto related as car dealerships and related service industries.

B) The study comprises 12 different zoning district. Four different municipalities, Doylestown Airport, commercial shopping center. Biotech center and a number of vacant, underutilized properties.

C) There is general a lack of unified vision for the area with disjointed zoning and a lack of pedestrian circulation.

The biotech center would like to expand. They have an interest in the eight acre Sylvan Pool site across the street. However, a pedestrian crossing is very important to the biotech center, because many of their employees walk. The area along Route 313 has eleven different traffic lights, many of which are close to failing classifications. There is also a need for a connector road along Route 313.

Upon a discussion amongst the commission regarding the review of the overall area of interest along Route 611 and 313, Ms. Hendrixson continued; there are several options being considered for the next round of development. Specifically, three options can be done through the proposed development as opposed to using public money. One

of the options will be very expensive due to cutting through properties that will need easements. Ms. Stern Goldstein noted two roads are very close to Route 313 towards north of the Dunkin Donuts would benefit from a connector. Also, it will enable individual driveways be removed to clean up traffic issues and help with turning movements.

Ms. Hendrixson indicated the goal of the Bucks County Planning Commission is to clean up the area, but currently is too expensive. The purpose of the Cross key's study is to bring Doylestown Township, Doylestown Borough, Plumstead and Buckingham Townships together. Additionally, the idea to create a steering committee with each of the municipalities was discussed to work on the zoning. This will eliminate different zoning issues in the area. The committee will also work on definitions of the zoning to become more cohesive. Ms. Mason indicated upon a discussion with Ms. Bush, the biotech company has many employees who have an interest in walking to work.

Ms. Hendrixson stated the next steps will be to create a Steering Committee with each of the municipalities represent and the business community. After, a series of surveys is proposed to be forwarded to business communities with public meetings. The overall completion date for the study is March of 2016. Limits of the study area will be large, varied and complicated. However, there are plans to simplify the study. All information will be placed on the Bucks County Planning Commission website.

Proposed Amendments to the Township Sign Ordinance – Continued Discussion

Mr. Lowenstein commented the existing sign ordinance has more information than necessary and is repetitive. Upon a discussion amongst the commission regarding navigating the township's website for ordinance information, Ms. Stern Goldstein indicated the update was presented because of existing problems with the ordinance, such as how to use the website and where to find information. The update will also make the website more business friendly and ensure the township ordinance was matching with the directive while keeping up with current technology.

Page 13 – Section 175-11 (Non –permanent signs) Mr. Lowenstein indicated some sections have contradictions, where basically six signs can be posted for 2, 4 or 6 weeks. Ms. Stern Goldstein clarified the ordinance states greater than 30 days, up to 30 days and up to 2 weeks. Then there is a set of signs that can be utilized all the time. Mr. Lowenstein indicated a business owner can use one of the signs depending how you view the ordinance and use of the signs. Ms. Mason added; part of the issue are signs located in the shopping centers, where one business will have several signs showcased outside a store. Mr. Lowenstein suggested placing the same restrictions for different types of signs and have the business owners purchase a permit for three categories.

Ms. Stern Goldstein noted Ms. Mason and Mr. Sinclair were going to speak with business owners about their business needs. Ms. Mason responded; no discussion are scheduled to date.

Mr. Lowenstein then indicated business owners are able to use each signage for each category listed in the ordinance. Ms. Stern Goldstein responded; there is a different gradation magnitude of size for different durations. A sandwich board will fall under a different category, because it can be set up every day. Mr. Lowenstein questioned; if each non-permanent sign cannot be used for each category listed. Ms. Stern Goldstein answered; flags are not part of limited duration because for having access for less than 30 days. Limited duration is considered over 30 days and if a flag is outside consistently, they will begin to tater. Right now the township ordinance will allow a temporary or anything other than a non-permanent sign be posted twice a year at a maximum of two weeks each. Ms. Stern Goldstein suggested to first speak with business owners to receive an idea of what's needed. Ms. Mason indicated meetings with business owners can also be conducted after implementing Mr. Lowenstein's suggestion to simplify the definitions and reduce confusion. Ms. Stern Goldstein noted as per Mr. Kelso and Mr. Sinclair's

recommendation, twice a year with a minimum of two weeks is enough time to post a temporary sign. Mr. Lowenstein then questioned when the township can make the signs permanent considering the cost in proportion to the time. This will allow signage to be purchase for an allocated amount of time, such as two weeks.

Mr. Lowenstein stated there is no difference between posting a sign for two or six weeks. Some of the temporary sign can never become permanent and other situations for a one time sign during sales that can be posted a certain of times during one year, but not continuous. Ms. Mason agreed. Ms. Stern Goldstein noted an A frame cannot be a permanent sign, where it's considered under one category.

Upon a reviewing several signage categories, Mr. Redfield questioned if signage inquiries are an everyday occurrences and if there is someone in the administrative offices that assists. Ms. Mason answered; the township receives daily inquires and Mr. Salisbury Sinclair is available to assist with any approval of signage. Ms. Stern Goldstein reported the most common issues is when some issues are needed to be reviewed by the Zoning Hearing Board, where it's very expensive to simply place a sign in front of a business. Mr. Lowenstein noted business owners can take advantage of the situation by switching signs. Ms. Mason added for grand opening or special sales, signage allowances will change once the business rebrands. Ms. Stern Goldstein stated many inquires come in during the weekend when Mr. Salisbury is not in the office and signs are posted in violation and something is needed to tighten what's in place. Ms. Mason agreed by adding there are holes in the system which need to be plugged and requested direction from the commission. Mr. Lowenstein then suggested the ordinance clarify the definition to avoid completing twice the work.

Mr. Lowenstein stated the updated sign ordinance should indicate remove the thirty day time period before a notice of violation is implemented. Once the signs are passed the violation time period, it should just be taken away. Ms. Stern Goldstein noted a certain time period is required before any signage in violation can be taken away. Mr. Colello commented the current ordinance is too confusing when a sign become in violation. Mr. Lowenstein stated preparing a simple ordinance is better than a complex one. Mr. Colello agreed. Ms. Stern Goldstein noted the ordinance becomes difficult when adding layers of options which created more paper, due to the temporary component. Mr. Lowenstein suggested in having one set of rules for all three categories. Ms. Stern Goldstein requested clarification if there will be no difference between permanent and temporary. Ms. Hendrixson clarified; the definitions should layout the ordinance differently. Currently there are different rules for each segment which should be consolidated with classification that are important. The business community may not need a sign ordinance at all, because they do not want to be regulated. The regulations could be simplified because of overlapping and will cut down on verbiage.

Ms. Stern Goldstein indicated the goal is to see what the commission would like to regulate, such as with banners. Ms. Mason requested recommendations from the commission regarding their vision of what the sign ordinance should look like. Ms. Lowenstein recommends the ordinance showcase the same signs with three potential options and payment for each.

Upon a discussion regarding the consequences of a business owner posting signage without following the proper procedures, Ms. Stern Goldstein indicated a sign implementation package be designed for all business owners. The main issue is there is so much signage in violation to where it's become difficult for Mr. Salisbury to enforce and not consistent for all businesses. Ms. Mason added; Mr. Salisbury has been invited to speak with the Realtor's Association where he will discuss the sign ordinance. Mr. Harvey agreed and added a free standing letter should be distributed categorized by size. Mr. Redfield questioned if it's possible to draft a letter to all 300 businesses introducing the new rules and guidelines with costs. He recommends the letter be processed twice a year and note

before posting any signage to contact the administrative offices for guidance. Ms. Hendrixson added to supply pamphlets at the administrative office noting the ordinance. However, the commission will need to have a consensus on how the ordinance should be simplified and what exactly needs to be said. Mr. Redfield added; the ordinance should be simplified and have a lot of communication between the business owners with websites, notices in the paper and send a letter to the Realtors Association. In addition, a notice can be distributed to the sign companies with guidelines to follow.

Section C – Temporary signs (#7); Mr. Lowenstein questioned why isn't the township contacted when signs are posted. Ms. Stern Goldstein answered; temporary signs can be posted for events where township approval is needed. Mr. Lowenstein then questioned why temporary signage wouldn't serve the same purpose as with any other sign. Ms. Hendrixson explained its considered trespassing if a sign is placed on another property. This includes the sidewalk outside of that business. Ms. Hendrixson suggested to move on from the temporary signs portion until further input from Sinclair Salisbury is provided.

Ms. Mason questioned if both temporary and promotional should be considered as merging together. Ms. Hendrixson indicated yes, there is a potential but further input is needed from Mr. Salisbury. Mr. Redfield requested the ordinance be forwarded to sign companies with an indication they may be held responsible for any violations if not noted per the ordinance. Ms. Stern Goldstein noted many business owner order their signage online.

Page 14 - Section 175-111 (Regulations by Sign Type) Ms. Stern Goldstein reported the section was simplified significantly by consolidating individual districts. Ms. Hendrixson indicated the section is now smaller and more concise. She commented on her concern with the new section for electronic message centers. Specifically, how the minimum duration of eight seconds can must be a static display (item #4) be enforced. Ms. Stern Goldstein answered; the duration is enforced by personnel driving by and reporting issues to the Code Enforcement Director.

Item #3 – Audio Speakers – Mr. Lowenstein questioned how is the loud speakers enforced on businesses such as Wawa. Ms. Stern Goldstein answered; audio speakers are not allowed as part of a sign.

Page 75 – Section 175-114 G (Signs & Commercial) Mr. Lowenstein questioned if there are any other issues other than size of the signs. Ms. Stern Goldstein answered; only one sign is permitted per street frontage. At 250 square feet, the sign can be seen from a far distance. Each shopping center determines how many spots are allocated. The size each tenants receives is based upon their individual agreement. Shopping centers are limited to the amount of square feet, not the amount of tenants. Ms. Mason questioned if the commission is recommending the free standing shopping center signs become larger and begin reducing the signs at the buildings. Mr. Lowenstein agreed. Ms. Hendrixson commented addresses are important as well and street signs for each business should be prominent. Ms. Stern Goldstein referenced the draft ordinance by stating the size is up to 250 square feet for a free standing sign. The current ordinance is 75 feet, so the free standing footage went up significantly. Ms. Hendrixson requested to ensure addresses become more prominent at a certain size. Ms. Hendrixson indicated 250 square feet may be too large. Ms. Stern Goldstein responded; the sign is located on regional arterial streets, which is Route 611.

Mr. Lowenstein questioned if the signs can be divided into two at 250 square feet. Ms. Stern Goldstein indicated the ordinance allows one sign per street front that can go up to 250 square feet for each side. Mr. Lowenstein questioned; if the signage can be broken down. Ms. Stern Goldstein answered; only one sign per street frontage is allowed on the current draft. This will prevent obstruction from multiple signs. Any business requesting more than one sign would be subject to a variance.

Ms. Stern Goldstein questioned if changes discussed can be applied to everything except the non-permanent section. Ms. Hendrixson responded; any changes should be held off until input is received. However, other changes should be applied.

Section 175-116 (Abandoned Signs) Ms. Hendrixson questioned; if the township will remove abandoned signs with a charge to the owner. Ms. Stern Goldstein commented the word abandoned is a hard threshold. Ms. Mason agreed stating it's subject to non-conforming. If someone is actively selling their property and the sign is not currently being used, it's difficult to define as abandoned. Ninety days in not considered a long threshold.

Upon a discussion regarding the definition of abandonment and non-conforming standards, Mr. Lowenstein offered to create a spreadsheet to provide definition of the paragraphs. Ms. Stern Goldstein will review the enforcement section and advise if the township can place more enforcement for abandoned signs. Ms. Mason offered to discuss the issue with Township Solicitor; Jeffrey P. Garton.

90 Day Clock:

Ms. Mason reported the Bray Tract may be scheduled for the July Planning Commission Regular meeting.

The next Work session will be scheduled for July 14, 2015 at 4:00pm.

Adjournment:

The June 22, 2015 Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.