

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, August 28, 2023 at 7 PM

Community Meeting Room, 425 Wells Road

Meeting Minutes

The Doylestown Township Planning Commission Regular Meeting was held at 7:00 pm on Monday, August 28, 2023. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included Tom Kelso, Chairman; Judy Hendrixson, Vice Chairman; members Jill Macauley and Robert Repko. Others in attendance included Stephanie Mason, Township Manager; Sinclair Salisbury, Director of Code Enforcement; Jennifer Herring, Board of Supervisors Liaison.

Not present at the meeting was member Michael Kracht.

The meeting officially began at **7:00 pm**.

Public Comment

N/A

Review of Minutes

On motion of Ms. Macauley and seconded by Mr. Repko, the June 26, 2023 minutes were unanimously approved as prepared.

Old Business

Zoning Non-Commercial Backyard Poultry – Continued Discussion

Mr. Kelso asked if there were any further comments regarding the previous discussion.

Jeff Bekos of 15 Windy Way Lane spoke to some of the issues he has experienced as a neighbor of someone who owns chickens. He explained that the chickens would often come into his yard, and that the neighbor exceeded the allowable number of chickens. In addition, he noted that they have a rooster that crows at 5 or 5:30 in the morning.

Ms. Hendrixson asked how many chickens the neighbor has now.

Brook Henningsen of 788 Sandy Ridge Road, whose property backs up to Mr. Bekos, explained that this is a personal issue between the neighbor and her family. She currently has 6 chickens, but occasionally other neighbors with chickens will bring theirs over too. She has put up a 6-foot-high fence to stop the chickens from leaving her property, and this has solved that issue. She also noted that she has a hen that crows but has had her DNA assessed and she is female.

Nick Henningsen of 788 Sandy Ridge Road questioned what damage has been done to the neighbor's property.

Mr. Kelso responded that this is not an issue of damages, but about the ordinance itself, and whether or not it should be revised.

Nicole Rafael of 1135 N. Easton Road in Plumstead Township commented that in Plumstead Township because it is agricultural, she is permitted to have 200 pounds of livestock per acre. She added that she has personally taken in roosters from citizens in Doylestown Township because they are in violation of the zoning ordinance. She noted that there needs to be some kind of change or compromise with neighbors.

Mr. Kelso said that he had done some research on model ordinances for adjoining counties and boroughs and found that the numbers are consistent with the Township's ordinance. He added that he is comfortable with the ordinance as it is being applied.

Ms. Mason noted that this is not an isolated incident, and that another complaint came in the week prior regarding a rooster.

Nancy Santacecilia of 24 Mystic View Lane asked for the specifics of the ordinance, and if the Township is seeing more interest in raising chickens.

Ms. Mason replied that 5 chickens are permitted for the first acre and 1 additional is permitted for each $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. No rooster is allowed on any lot less than 5 acres. She added that the ordinance was last amended in 2019.

Ms. Hendrixson replied that it is something a lot of people are starting to do.

Mr. Kelso added that the ordinance provides for chickens and does not prohibit them.

Ms. Rafael added that her neighbors can hear her hens laying eggs, so there can still be noise without a rooster. She further noted that this is not just a problem in Doylestown, and the problem is not going away. The ordinance needs to be amended.

Mr. Repko made a motion that the ordinance remain as it is now. Ms. Hendrixson seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Kelso clarified that the motion will be a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Henningsen asked if she needed to meet with the Board of Supervisors next.

Ms. Mason said that now that the planning commission has reviewed the ordinance, their recommendation will go back to the Board and they will make a decision from there, which would happen at a public meeting.

New Business

Bucks County Crisis Center – Doylestown Hospital – Sketch Plan

Kelly McGowan, Land Use Counsel for the Bucks County Crisis Center presented their plan for a dedicated center located on the grounds of Doylestown Hospital, which would be a joint effort between the County of Bucks and the Lenape Valley Foundation. It would be situated adjacent to the Lenape Valley Foundation and would offer behavioral health, mental health treatment and crisis services. These services are currently overseen in the ER, but this would allow for more efficient, better, and safer services for those suffering from a mental health crisis. Ms. McGowan also noted that the parking was brought up in some review letters. For the sake of this plan, they are looking at parking on a campus wide basis. The plan also proposes a new access to the main road from the new lot at the facility. A

traffic study will be done here as well. The proposed building is 22,000 square feet, primarily on the first floor, with some office space on the second. The building will have a voluntary entrance at the front and an involuntary entrance with a secured sally port at the rear. The plan also aims to pull the existing bike and hike path at Shady Retreat Road/Limekiln off of the Hospital Drive access road. Ms. McGowan concluded that the plan comes close to compliance with zoning and SALDO, but that the applicant will also be looking for a couple of waivers when that time comes.

Mr. Repko asked about the number of staff and their usage of the parking spaces.

Ms. McGowan said that they are working on those numbers now. The commonwealth of PA is updating its regulations regarding crisis center facilities, so there are some items that are dependent on those changes. She also noted that there is some space for reserve parking should additional parking be needed down the road.

Ms. Hendrixson asked how the building will be used, if there will be beds, extended stay, etc. She also added that the ordinance often provides for more parking than is needed.

Ms. McGowan said that it will be an outpatient facility first. There are 26 total beds, separated into adult and youth at a ratio of 17/9, and 19 chairs, at 10/9, respectively. Services offered are crisis stabilization and treatment, with the goal to start treatment immediately, including counseling, behavioral health observation, peer support and recovery, and medical withdrawal management. They will also offer a referral service to longer term therapy and treatment, psychiatry, medical management, and suicide prevention.

Chris Thompson, COO of the Lenape Valley Foundation added that he expects 25 staff during the busy time of day.

Mr. Kelso asked how the services will differ from Foundations, and asked if everything from the hospital would be moved to the new facility.

Mr. Thompson said that Foundations is strictly adolescent, and there is no crisis treatment there. Most patients will be there 24 hours or less, but some could stay up to ten days. None of the 500 building services will move to this building.

Mr. Repko asked if they envision this facility serving the local area or the whole county.

Ms. McGowan said it would serve the county.

Mr. Thompson added that the focus would be on the central and lower part of the county, with St. Luke's currently serving the upper part.

Ms. Macauley asked if they are seeing full use of the other area crisis centers.

Mr. Thompson said that they are seeing an increased need in the county.

Mr. Kelso asked about the plans for minimizing elopement from the facility.

Ms. McGowan said that they have already been in conversation with the Chief of Police, Board of Supervisors Chair and Township Manager to work on a policy to address these concerns. In addition, they have contracted a consultant who does safety and security plans.

Mr. Kelso reiterated the question about the alignment of the roads Limekiln/Shady Retreat and Hospital Drive.

Ms. McGowan said that this question has come up frequently, but that it is too costly to include in the plans for this project, but that it will be looked at.

Mr. Kelso noted that there are transportation grants to address problems like this and asked that the design not inhibit improvements to the intersection in the future.

Ms. Hendrixson added that it has a lot of parking, and with so much underutilization, it would be nice to see more greenspace there.

Mr. Repko questioned whether the parking was enough, especially with the potential for parents wanting to see their children at the facility but likes the fact that there is some parking in reserve if needed.

Ms. Santacecilia asked about walkers from Doyle Elementary using the bike and hike path.

Ms. Macauley said the students are bused because it is not safe enough.

Ms. McGowan said that they hope to move pretty quickly on this project and will be back soon with a preliminary plan.

Margie McKeivitt from the County added that they have some grant funding for the project which adds certain time constraints as well.

In Other Business:

Mr. Kelso asked Ms. Mason for an update regarding projects that have come before the Planning Commission.

Ms. Mason noted that the County's RFP received some interest, and they are taking those proposals under advisement. In addition, the Barn Cinema location is looking to go to retail, but there are no plans received yet. And lastly, we are still awaiting a new proposal for the Tilley property.

Mr. Kelso suggested a joint meeting with our neighboring municipalities.

Ms. Mason said she would reach out to BCPC to propose the idea.

Adjournment

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaitlyn Finley
Office Manager, Code Enforcement