

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, May 24, 2021 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, May 24, 2021. Members of the Doylestown Township Planning Commission in attendance included **Judy Hendrixson, Chairman; Gregory Reppa, Vice Chairperson; members Tom Kelso, Ted Feldstein, and Jill Macauley. Others in attendance included Judy Stern Goldstein, Planning Consultant, Stephanie Mason, Township Manager, Sinclair Salisbury, Director of Code Enforcement, Nancy Santacecilia, Board of Supervisors Liaison, and Jen Herring, Board of Supervisors Liaison.**

The meeting officially began at 7:03 pm.

Review of Minutes

On motion of Mr. Kelso and seconded by Mr. Reppa, the April 26, 2021 minutes were unanimously approved.

Public/Commission Comments/Presentations

None.

Plans Scheduled for Discussion

Penn Color – Revised Final Land Development Plan

Attending the meeting were several representatives from Penn Color, including Kevin Putnam, president and Jonathan Reiss, counsel for Penn Color. Mr. Reiss gave a summary of the plan and reminded the planning commission that they received conditional approval in June 2014, but the plan was put on hold at that time. The purpose is to consolidate their six tax parcels into three. Nothing on the plan has changed, except that there is a new zoning ordinance that would affect signage on the plan, which Penn Color will remove. In addition, all waiver requests are the same as those approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2014, and they will comply with all current review letters. Penn Color is seeking a recommendation from the planning commission for conditional final approval to go to the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Goldstein explained that the plan will follow the most recent ordinance adopted in February of 2021. She further explained that they may not be in total compliance with a second ordinance regarding native plants, but that the native plants are a suggestion. Penn Color is making a good effort to substitute an invasive plant with something non-native.

Mr. Kelso brought up the “should” vs “must” aspect of the ordinance. Ms. Goldstein said that the wording was meant to offer flexibility where appropriate.

Mr. Reppa suggested that the plan revisions are in order and this seems to be a straightforward plan.

Mr. Kelso made a motion to recommend approval with the understanding that they agree to comply with review letters, and that the planning commission further endorses the revision and waiver request. Motion was seconded by Mr. Reppa and passed unanimously.

Items for Discussion

Bucks County Planning Commission Strategy

Ms. Hendrixson opened a discussion regarding the county property on Almshouse Road.

Ms. Mason said that she spoke to the Chief Operating Officer for the county, who said they have a draft RFI, which will be reviewed internally on Wednesday, and that they are working with the procurement department so that it will meet requirements. They are trying to fit RFI into an RFP format. Ms. Mason expects that the information would be shared by the county at the June planning commission meeting.

Mr. Kelso brought up Adam Goodman who owns Doylestown Point and recently purchased the AAA building, he suggested he may have some interest and that he has experience with a mixed-use approach. He asked whether the planning commission should bring in Adam and the county to discuss the area together. He also suggested that the area be used as institutional over commercial.

Ms. Santacecilia suggested a recreational use for the property, as it could be beneficial from a tourism perspective, bringing in tournaments, filling up the hotels, etc. She further inquired as to whether a boutique medical facility may have interest in the area as well, because of the central location.

Ms. Macauley asked if the township receives inquiries from developers regarding the space and if there is any data on such.

Ms. Goldstein answered that the township does not receive inquiries of that volume, but that most developers would come to a staff meeting and later to the planning commission with their proposal.

Ms. Macauley then asked at what point the township would conduct a needs assessment for this area.

Ms. Goldstein explained that the township readopted an updated comprehensive plan last year, which included land use, demographics, population projections, etc. Ms. Hendrixson also commented that Covid could have an effect down the road, with more people working from home, less office space needed, and that we don't know yet how that will change the projections.

Ms. Macauley asked what the vision is of the township, citing a goal of 1/3 open space/natural resources, 1/3 residential, and 1/3 business and industrial.

Ms. Goldstein explained that the goal is maintaining a perceived balance, in accordance with already established patterns between the township and borough. The issue as a municipality is that we have a zoning ordinance and subdivision land development, so the planning commission can make recommendations, but the BOS can't deny a plan if it complies with township ordinance.

Mr. Kelso added that when discussing a zoning change, that all goes out the window. It should always be accompanied by supporting demographics and needs analysis, traffic patterns, infrastructure, schools, etc., with the goal of putting together a framework to accompany a zoning change.

Mr. Reppa commented that it is important to look at court decisions and trends. We want to find the best location for a developer, otherwise something may come in that we don't necessarily want but can't be turned down because they have a legal right to pursue it.

Ms. Santacecilia asked if we should propose a partnership with DelVal. She then asked if there was a way to produce a cost analysis to maintain roads, infrastructure, etc.

Ms. Goldstein answered that as part of the zoning amendment, they would do a fiscal impact analysis showing the cost to the municipality, county, and school district, as well as revenues for those entities.

Ms. Hendrixson also commented that with a change in administration at DelVal this may be a good time to invite them in again and discuss future goals.

Ms. Mason added that the township has a very good relationship with DelVal, the majority of which is in the township. She also encouraged the planning commission to look at "what if" scenarios for some of the larger properties/institutional uses in the township, and what future impacts could be to the Township. Ms. Goldstein added that these are the biggest employers in the township, but if some portions of these properties were turned into for profit, this would increase revenues to the county and school district, and in a small part, the township.

Ms. Hendrixson asked if the planning commission should schedule a workshop to discuss the county property so that it is the only thing on the agenda.

Ms. Mason recommended waiting until after the county's Wednesday meeting. Mr. Kelso added that the RFI has been sitting at county for six months.

Ms. Santacecilia asked if the Township had heard any update from Mr. Duckworth regarding the North Broad property.

Ms. Goldstein said he did reach out and was told that he should take the planning commission comments and work to adjust the plan to meet his goal and the township's.

Ms. Santacecilia then asked how the township dedicates a property to make it not buildable.

Ms. Mason explained that the township would have to buy it. In the past they had money from the county and acquired some easements that provided for a variety of properties that now can't be developed. That money is all gone, and the township has since sun set the farmland and open space commission.

Ms. Hendrixson informed the planning commission that the EAC has a meeting in September to discuss some concerns regarding the goals of the planning commission and bike and hike committees. Ms. Mason suggested that a public meeting be set up where they could all dialogue together.

Ms. Macauley asked if there were examples of what the EAC's concerns are.

Ms. Hendrixson said the concerns have been well documented at the EAC meetings, and further added that they would like to get their questions and an agenda to review ahead of time.

Ms. Goldstein commented that the township has very passionate and educated volunteers, who are all passionate about their own committees. This is the common ground to start with. Ms. Mason added

that the EAC isn't as familiar with the zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development, and it can get confusing how it comes into play.

Mr. Kelso suggested that the comp plan should be the guide for these committees, and discussions should be framed in this way. The plan's main goals and objectives have not changed for decades, even with major changes and political shifts. Ms. Goldstein reminded the group that the comp plan does have contributions from the EAC, and there will be more in the future.

Ms. Santacecilia suggested adding a cost analysis for the long term and short term, as it may mold some of the decisions and the reason why we make them. Partnerships and relationships should all be part of the conversation as well.

It was then suggested the meeting with the EAC be held out at one of the park pavilions on September 14th at 6 pm, just before the EAC's regular meeting at 7 pm. Ms. Mason encouraged the planning commission to also think about what they want to communicate to the EAC.

Ms. Hendrixson added that it could get difficult coming to a common ground when each committee has a different vision and goals. Ms. Goldstein further added that all volunteer boards and commissions make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, and that these may differ among boards and that is okay. It is the Board of Supervisors who makes the final determination.

Ms. Herring suggested that the board can always request more information if needed, to make their decision. Ms. Goldstein added that the boards and commissions can use their own expertise to back up their recommendations, the Board does not have to rely on precedent.

Ms. Hendrixson also said that they will hear from neighbors and residents on these issues and that should be considered as well.

In addition, Ms. Herring said that the EAC often has an interesting perspective on things like waterways and runoff, so although there can be competing priorities, it is interesting to hear as a board member.

Ms. Mason suggested that Ms. Goldstein moderate the meeting between the planning commission and the EAC, as she has the background knowledge and experience with the township. The committee chairs will set an agenda. Ms. Goldstein also suggested attaching the resolutions for each of these committees to be in contact with their mission.

Mr. Feldstein added that in the end it is okay to disagree but not be disagreeable.

Sketch Plans Scheduled for Discussion

None.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kaitlyn Finley, Township Code Secretary