

**MINUTES OF THE
EAST COVENTRY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018 AT 7:00 P.M.**
(Approved April 18, 2018)

Call Meeting to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Walt Woessner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following Planning Commission members in attendance: Kathryn Alexis, Lawrence Tietjen, and Lance Parson.

1. Minutes.

Chairman Woessner called for a vote to approve the minutes of the December 20th, 2017 monthly meeting. Walt Woessner motioned to approve the minutes with Solicitor Marge Brown's suggested text change to the first paragraph on page 2 as follows: *...an 18-month guarantee agreement for the trees' maintenance or replacement.*

Kathryn Alexis seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-1, with Lance Parson abstaining due to his absence at the last meeting.

Organizational Items.

Kathryn Alexis motioned to keep the present commission structure in place with Walt Woessner serving as chairman and Mary Goheen serving as secretary. Lance Parson seconded the motion. Chairman Woessner called for a vote to continue with the present structure of the Planning Commission. The motion carried 4-0-0.

Lance Parson motioned to accept the meeting dates as presented showing the Planning Commission meeting on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Kathryn Alexis seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0-0.

2. Citizen Comments.

There were no citizen comments to come before the board.

3. Subdivision and Land Development Project Review.

Walt Woessner informed members that Solicitor Marge Brown is proposing some minor changes to the Vaughn Road resolution which may be available at the February meeting. He mentioned the Township Engineer suggested an inter-municipal agreement may be needed in regard to sewer service.

4. Additional Items to be Brought before the Commission.

Annual Report. Chairman Woessner called for a vote to approve the Annual Report. Kathryn Alexis motioned to accept the Annual Report as written. The motion was seconded by Larry Tietjen and the motion carried 4-0-0.

Variance and Conditional Use. Chairman Woessner asked Kathryn Alexis to present her findings regarding variance and conditional use. Ms. Alexis related there are two types of variances: Bulk – which deals with lot dimensional issues and Use which deals with uses permitted within the zoning district. She stated East Coventry Township's variance process does not make those two distinctions and most of our variances have to do with bulk and not use. Regarding the recent Zoning Board Hearing's decision on the J.J. Kane use variance request, she felt the correct decision was made because the auction sale of farm and heavy equipment was so similar to the already permitted use of vehicle

sales. Although she was unclear as to why they requested a variance rather than a conditional use. She also noted the Zoning Hearing Board decision must adhere to only the relevant Finding of Facts not necessarily all five.

Further discussion ensued regarding conditional use and the standards and criteria used to grant or deny. In seeking greater clarity on the conditional use process, the question was raised on who decides what type of relief from zoning requirements is pursued, is it the applicant or staff?

Open Space. Using the Township’s formula outlined in the Open Space ordinance, Chairman Woessner shared his findings on different scenarios he used for calculating open space. He noted the Township’s Open Space Plan calls for 50% open space with all new development plans and also noted that some of our zoning districts already allow for cluster development. However; according to his calculations, there is not much incentive for a developer to go with the open space option. By factoring in the “takeaways” in his calculations there is not much land left for a developer to cluster homes or increase density. Kathryn Alexis stated that is because of the way it is calculated here, not all Townships use our formula. She said wetlands, stream buffers, floodplains, etc. should be included as open space and not deemed a takeaway, because they are in fact – open space. Larry Tietjen commented that could penalize a landowner with acreage that is fully developable, with no wetlands, floodplain, etc. making it less valuable; whereas, a neighboring property’s value with floodplain, wetlands, etc. would be increased. Kathryn Alexis responded it would equalize property values. She said an open space option should offer the incentive of making acreage once deemed unbuildable marketable. In doing so, desirable natural features such as viewshed, woodlands, and streams could be protected by clustering development away from those features. Discussion ensued on the changing trends and tastes of today’s homebuyers and whether developers would appreciate a viable choice in higher density building for targeted markets. Chairman Woessner stated he would run additional calculations based upon points brought up at tonight’s meeting. All in attendance agreed it was an interesting discussion tonight and if the Township truly wants to accomplish 50% open space than further discussion and review of the Open Space ordinance and its definitions may be warranted.

5. Northern Federation Update.

There was no information to come before the board.

6. Historical Commission Update.

There was no update to come before the board.

7. Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee Update.

There was no update to come before the board.

Adjournment.

Chairman Woessner called for a vote to adjourn. Kathryn Alexis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Lance Parson. The motion carried 4-0-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.