

**MINUTES OF THE
EAST COVENTRY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2017 AT 7:00 PM
(Approved 9/20/17)**

Call Meeting to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Walt Woessner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance: Kathryn Alexis, and Lawrence Tietjen. Township Solicitor, Mark Hosterman, was in attendance for Marge Brown, Planning Commission Solicitor. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

1. Minutes

Chairman Woessner called for a vote to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2017 monthly meeting. Kathryn Alexis motioned to approve the minutes with corrections made to the spelling of her name. The motion was seconded by Lawrence Tietjen and the motion carried 3-0.

2. Citizens Comments

There were no citizen comments to come before the board. Commissioner Paul Lacon joined the meeting; he extended his apologies for his late arrival stating he was delayed by work travel.

3. Additional Items to be Brought Before the Board

Chairman Woessner opened the floor to Mark Hosterman, Township Solicitor. Mr. Hosterman stated he was filling in for his colleague, Marge Brown, and thanked the Commission for moving discussion of proposed Ordinance No. 216 – Amendment to Sign Ordinance ahead of other items on the agenda. He stated, due to a prior commitment, he had to leave after the Commission’s consideration of this item.

Citing budgetary constraints, Mr. Hosterman explained that the Board of Supervisors intends to only address electronic, changeable text signage at this time (rather than an entire overhaul of the existing sign ordinance). He noted that the proposed changes to the sign ordinance before the Planning Commission tonight had been duly advertised. He further related the Board of Supervisors is poised to vote on the ordinance amendment (with the inclusion of any Planning Commission recommendations and subsequent re-advertisement) at the next Supervisors’ meeting in September. Mr. Hosterman offered an overview of the proposed ordinance amendment and its regulations concerning size and display parameters. He then invited Commission members to share their input.

Mr. Woessner questioned why marquee signage was not referenced in the new ordinance text. Mr. Hosterman replied only the conditional use stipulations related to marquee signage were eliminated. This was done to eliminate the costs incurred by the Township associated with a conditional use permit submittal.

Mr. Woessner asked for clarification on who may install signage in the Township. He asked if a resident would be permitted to erect changeable copy signage in his/her front yard to advertise church-related activity. Mr. Hosterman replied the sign ordinance specifically refers to institutions such as houses of worship (churches), or public institutions such as Fire Companies. A private residence's primary usage would not be considered institutional.

A typographical error was noted in Section II- Amendment to Code., Section 1314.6.D; portion of sentence should read: "places *of* worship..." – not *or*.

Mr. Woessner inquired as to the difference between full and partial color changeable sign text. Mr. Hosterman stated full color would allow other color choices of text to be displayed, unlike the Township building's existing sign which only displays red text. Kathryn Alexis suggested full color text be allowed by default and fellow commissioners agreed.

In Section III – Amendment to Code. 1314.6.L (3) Mr. Woessner suggested a text change from residential *structure* to residential *dwelling*. Members were in agreement with the change, noting the sign's location could impact those is a residential dwelling and would not necessarily impact an accessory structure such as a shed.

Mr. Woessner brought up the dimming restrictions outlined in Section III. and a brief discussion ensued concerning the dimming and turnoff requirements as proposed. Commission members concurred dimmability was not easily measurable and no one would be monitoring the late evening dimming and early morning turnoff requirements. Therefore, they recommended striking the dimming and turnoff requirements, noting the terms were ill defined and would be hard to enforce.

Prior to calling for a vote on the sign ordinance, Mr. Woessner asked for clarification of an off-topic definition, namely, private driveways and a brief exchange on driveway definitions occurred. Upon reading the definition of private driveway Mr. Woessner asked for clarification on the text citing "principal(s) structures." He asked how a private driveway could serve multiple principal structures; wouldn't other structures be considered accessory? Mr. Hosterman replied the plural designation would be applicable on commercial sites with multiple pads.

Ms. Alexis asked what is considered a shared driveway? Mr. Hosterman stated that would fall into the private driveway category. Resident, Gary Gaboriault, offered his interpretation; he stated he read a shared driveway was based on driveway width dimensions to accommodate twin dwellings. However, he could not recall where he saw it. Ms. Alexis noted she did not see shared driveway defined in our ordinances.

Returning to the sign ordinance amendment, Mr. Woessner called for a vote on the sign Ordinance amendment. Mr. Hosterman outlined the recommendations proposed by the Planning Commission: Amend Section 1314.6.L(2) to delete color restrictions for changeable copy signs for places of worship and firehouses; amend Section 1314.6.L(3) to allow changeable

copy signs for places of worship and firehouses a minimum of 50 feet from any dwelling; amend Section 1314.6.L(6) to delete required reduction in the level of lighting from sunset to 10:00 A.M. and delete the requirement for changeable copy signs to be extinguished from 10:00 P.M. to dawn.

Kathryn Alexis made a motion to recommend adoption of Ordinance 216 – Amendment to Sign Ordinance as outlined by Solicitor Hosterman. The motion was seconded by Lawrence Tietjen and the motion carried 4-0.

4. Subdivision and Land Development Project Review

Discussion of Byrncroft Farm Sketch Plan – 601 Ridge Rd. - Gary & Elizabeth Gaboriault

Chairman Woessner opened the floor to the Gaboriaults. Mr. Gary Gaboriault introduced himself and his family. He presented each Commission member with a printed excerpt of Township Ordinance 179, adopted 8/8/2011, which defines a Minor Subdivision Plan. Mr. Gaboriault read the Minor Subdivision definition aloud and offered a brief explanation on how their proposed subdivision plan complied with all the stated requirements of (a.) through (e.).

Mr. Gaboriault reiterated he felt they met all qualifications as defined. Mr. Woessner agreed but maintained they would have to note certain deed restrictions on the plat. He read aloud the private street definition and felt that all abutting property owners would own to the centerline of the road; therefore, these lot line readjustments would need to be redefined on the plat.

A brief discussion ensued among Commission members and Mr. Gaboriault as they reviewed the subdivision plan showing the property owners' actual holdings and their neighbor's access points. The definitions of private driveway vs. private/public streets were discussed and the question of non-conforming usage was mentioned. Ms. Alexis noted the Gaboriaults' roadway does not appear to meet any definition adequately other than that of a non-conforming use which is not definitively addressed in the ordinance. Ms. Alexis read aloud the private driveway definition from her ordinance binder and Mr. Woessner noted that the Supervisors adopted a new definition at their last meeting two nights ago.

Mr. Gaboriault asked if his submittal would have to comply with the new definitions; he expressed disappointment if this was the case and noted that his subdivision process was started well in advance of the Board's recent adoption of these new definitions. A brief discussion occurred as to what constitutes an "official" submittal. Mr. Woessner stated he felt an official application would include engineered plans. Paul Lacon stated he thought plans would need to be sealed because unlike a submittal for a deck permit; whereby, the homeowner would accept responsibility for construction – a subdivision would be the Township's responsibility. Mr. Lacon further related it was his understanding the intent behind the adoption of the new subdivision ordinance and its definitions was to protect future homeowners and the township should any of the properties sell in the future. All parties agreed that immediate answers to their questions would be best answered by an attorney.

In the meantime, Chairman Woessner pointed out a few items the Gaboriaults should address on their subdivision application. Responses to numbers 6, 10, and 13 on the form need to be corrected, responses should reflect each lot proposed and not the tract in its entirety.

Mr. Gaboriault thanked the commissioners for their time and stated he will make those few application corrections and further research the Planning Commission's findings regarding the adjoining lot line issues in relation to the newly approved ordinance.

5. Additional Items to be Brought before the Commission

There were no additional items to be brought before the Commission.

6. Northern Federation Update

There was no update to report, the Federation meets quarterly.

7. Historical Commission Update

Lawrence Tietjen reported the historic bridge on Halteman Road is being replaced. An agreement was reached to leave its stone foundation intact with limited change to the metalwork above. The style of construction is unique to Chester County.

Commissioner members briefly discussed some of the other historic bridges in the Township slated for repair work. Mr. Tietjen noted plans will be submitted to the Historic Commission for their review. The objective is to retain original stonework while making improvements to the overall structure's integrity.

8. Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee Update

There was no update to report, the Committee does not meet in the summer.

Adjournment

There was no other business to be brought before the Commission and Chairman Woessner called for a vote to adjourn. Lawrence Tietjen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Kathryn Alexis and the motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary M. Goheen
Secretary