

**MINUTES OF MEETING
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
February 16th, 2010**

The Springfield Township Planning Commission (PC) held its semi-monthly meeting on the date noted above. Chairman Bob Gutowski called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM, with the following members present: Angela Murray, Amanda Helwig, Joe Gerber, Bob Gutowski, Mary Holland, Joseph Devine, George Schaefer and David Sands. Absent: James Mascaro. Commissioner Doug Heller and Rob Dunlop, Staff Liaison represented the Township and Jean Holland represented the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) this evening.

Minutes

Minutes of the February 2, 2010 meeting were read. A motion to approve the minutes was made by A. Murray and seconded by M. Holland. Motion approved unanimously.

Board of Commissioner Update – No Report

D. Heller

**“Green” Energy Workshop
Montgomery County Planning Commission**

Jon Leshner

Jon Leshner, Environmental Planner of the Montgomery County Planning Commission made a presentation to the Planning Commission regarding current efforts by municipalities to develop effective zoning and planning measures regarding the use of new “green” energy sources. As part of his job, Jon has been researching and compiling case studies, professional contacts, and regional ordinances. They are working on educational materials, ordinance reviews and public outreach such as the “Renewable Energy” mailings, a series on alternative energy sources. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has formed the Alternative Energy Ordinance Working Group (AEOWG). An 18 month project, the group has been given the task of creating a guide that has model regional ordinance language concerning solar, wind, geothermal and other alternative energy resources.

While Federal and State governments are making it more economical to implement, the expense is still costly – generally about \$9.00 per watt of generating capacity, cost of the average 4 kilowatt residential system will be near \$40,000.00. Solar Power Purchase Agreements (SPPA’s), are becoming an alternative solar purchasing option. A company comes in and installs solar panels at their expense, the energy is sold to the owner of the property at a reduced rate. The SPPA gets tax credits (SREC’s – Solar Renewable Energy Credits) and gets to sell the electricity being generated.

The two major forms are Solar Thermal Systems – sun’s energy is used to heat liquid and Photovoltaic Cells (PV Cells) – sun’s energy is converted into DC electrical current that is changed to household AC current by an electrical inverter. These forms of harnessing the suns energy allow for a cleaner energy, but with considerable up-front costs. Owners benefit from net metering, electricity being created that is not used flows back to the PECO electrical grid as a credit against future electrical use when the system cannot generate electricity. From a regulatory stand point, municipalities are concerned with appearance, set back and height, ground solar arrays versus roof mounted solar panels, and where solar should be permitted to be installed. By having an ordinance in place it makes it easier for a municipality to address the issue and gives them a measurable amount of control.

Things to remember:

- 1.) As you plan for today, think about regulation for tomorrow.
- 2.) When you know what you want to regulate, then decide how you want to regulate it.
- 3.) Think about who will use the power; is it for primary use on a property, for net metering, for SPPA's?
- 4.) What size will the ordinance regulate, should it be permitted and if so where; Residential, Commercial scale, or Solar Farms?
- 5.) Heights and Setbacks; roof mounted you should consider height above roof and distance from edges. Ground Arrays you should consider total height, setback from property boundary, and should it be treated as an accessory structure.
- 6.) Solar Access; should Solar Easements be considered between neighbors? Should it be a "first come first serve" basis?
- 7.) Remember to include verbiage about abandonment / decommissioning.
- 8.) Permitting process should be clear.
- 9.) Compliance with the PA Uniform Construction Code (PA UCC) and the National Electric Code, and International Residential code (IRC).

Discussion

In questioning Mr. Leshner, he relayed most municipalities are considering ground arrays as accessory structures. Most give exemptions to any solar panel under 2 sq ft, this would cover solar lighting along paths and house flood lights.

R. Dunlop relayed we have had 6 or 7 permits issues for roof top solar in the township. No neighbors have commented either way. Most have fit in well with the architecture of the homes, they have been handled as an exterior extension of the household electrical system. Should ground arrays be requested our current code would likely handle the structures as accessory structures, therefore they would have to adhere to setback requirements etc. R. Dunlop commented he would prefer a new section of the code to deal specifically with Solar Panels rather than modifying sections of existing code to address the new technology.

A. Helwig provided a copy of a recently passed Whitmarsh Township Solar Ordinance. Having had the presentation, the PC is now prepared to review the Whitmarsh Ordinance as potential framework for Springfield's own. J. Holland to review the Whitmarsh ordinance and comment to PC at next meeting. D. Heller will poll the BOC to see if they would like the PC to move forward with creating its own ordinance.

Old Business

The PC was presented with a Solicitor reviewed copy of the amended Zoning Code definitions covering "Family" and "Group Home". The goal of the changes was to bring the code up to date with Federal legislation. Motion to recommend adoption of the language to the BOC was made by A. Murray and seconded by B. Gutowski. 7 in favor, 1 opposed (Gerber).

The PC began to discuss the Objectionable Vegetation Regulations. Chairman Gutowski felt a simpler definition needed to be provided and that a review of Chapter 11 of the code was needed prior to initiating review. Topic will be tabled until the next PC meeting.

Motion to adjourn made by J. Gerber and seconded by B. Gutowski. Motion approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:04pm. Next meeting PC meeting will be at 7:00 p.m, March 2, 2010.

Amanda M. Helwig, Secretary