

**MINUTES OF MEETING
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
March 3rd, 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 7:00 PM, with the following members present: Angela Murray, Amanda Helwig, Joe Gerber, Bob Gutowski, Mary Holland, Joseph Devine, George Schaefer and David Sands, 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 16, 2010 meeting were read. A motion to approve the minutes was made by A. Murray and seconded by M. Holland. Motion approved unanimously.

New Business

Objectionable Vegetation

The PC began to discuss the Objectionable Vegetation Regulations. The following points of discussion are to be noted;

- 1.) The current code needs to be modified to replace "Health Officer" with "Code Enforcement Officer".
- 2.) The code should be viewed to preserve the expectations of one living in a normal maintained urban development.
- 3.) Complaints filed will normally be by neighbors with concerns of health or in relation to property values.
- 4.) There is no such thing as a natural state condition anymore.

Based on the discussion the following change in language shall be considered for 11-1 C. "Riparian buffers and riparian forest buffers for the purposes of this section are exempted from 11-1 A & B. Riparian buffers, when sustainably managed with best management practices, are desirable land uses that the Township permits and encourages property owners to adopt. For the purposes of this Section, a riparian buffer and riparian forest buffer are lands adjacent to an intermittent or perennial water body that is a transition between the aquatic and terrestrial environments. The Code Enforcement Officer or Designee shall make judgment what areas are exempt from A & B when riparian buffers are managed utilizing best management practices." The following Definitions will be added to the ordinance: Riparian Buffer- The area of land immediately adjacent to any stream, measured perpendicular to and horizontally from the top-of-bank on sides of stream, Stream Buffer- The land area adjacent to each side of a stream essential to maintaining water quality (see Buffer).

Old Business

R. Dunlop reported that Montgomery County is revising their Comprehensive Plan. M. Holland requested R. Dunlop pull the neighboring sections so we can comment upon them and understand what's happening with neighboring municipalities. There is a Tree Ordinance Workshop taking place on March 16th at 7pm at Lower Merion Twp for anyone interested in attending, PC seeking guidance from the BOC regarding their desire for PC to prioritize work on: Sign Ordinance, Solar Ordinance, Comprehensive Plan etc.

Comprehensive Plan Review

The PC has begun the process of reviewing the Comprehensive Plan. The first two PC members to report their overall impressions and concerns regarding the Plan are M. Holland and Chairman B. Gutowski.

M.Holland had the following observations:

- 1.) She felt that the overall format of the Comprehensive Plan (“CP”) can be reworked to a more appealing order. For example; Ecological / natural feature elements were dated and could be moved to the rear as supplemental information. Ecological and Environmental goals need more prominence.
- 2.) Would like to see a theme of maintaining the existing character of our communities.
- 3.) There is a lack of discussion about community services, retail, and other shopping. Thought maps showing clusters of transit oriented services in relation to shopping would be useful.
- 4.) Discussion of parking issues on major arteries like Bethlehem Pike and Willow Grove should be addressed.
- 5.) Open space should address future acquisition of open space and protection of what we have.
- 6.) Historic Preservation. Properties should be identified that hint at the history of what our township was before urbanization.
- 7.) Last, we should note what is going on in the communities around us and how our residents also utilize those resources.

B. Gutowski had the following observations:

- 1.) He felt that the introduction is important and needs to be reworked to more accurately address what the true goals are for the township. Discussion is needed to determine if we want to maintain what we have or envision more growth.
- 2.) Overall density goals and locations.
- 3.) Overall impervious surface coverage goals in relation to flooding issues
- 4.) Retail Development / Business Opportunity.
- 5.) Protecting natural resource areas, like the Panhandle.
- 6.) Determining tree coverage and goals in the future for canopy coverage. Urban Forestry/ Shade Tree Commission Goals.
- 7.) Land Use needs to be expanded. There is a lack of detail in the CP regarding Infrastructure in the community. Like Electric, Sewer line, Public Buildings, Communication Lines, Public Transit. There needs to be a Commercial section dealing with economic development.
- 8.) Encourage the retention of our older housing and work force housing.
- 9.) How are we handling Local Employment and Home Employment.
- 10.) Overall storm-water and flooding concerns should be specifically addressed.

A.Helwig and J. Mascaro to contribute their reviews at the next PC Meeting. A. Helwig requested R. Dunlop to followup with the studies promised by the School District that may give useful information to guide the PC in respect to the review of the CP.

Sign Ordinance- Memo

J. Holland

J. Holland with the Montgomery County Planning Commission prepared a memo to the PC to highlight some hot topics and issues other municipalities are addressing. She recommended updating definitions of a list of terms (ordinance terminology, types of signage, purpose of signage), updating reference materials and diagrams. She suggested even providing a separate guide for signage to provide applicants. Also touched upon was sign illumination, and animated signage, the PC should consider ways to regulate this type of signage.

Motion to adjourn made by J. Mascaro and seconded by M. Holland. Motion approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:55pm. Next meeting PC meeting will be March 16, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Amanda M. Helwig, Secretary