

Minutes of Meeting
Springfield Township Planning Commission
February 18th, 2014

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 6:58 PM, with the following members present: Amanda Helwig, George Schaefer, Bob Gutowski, James Mascaro, Steve Schagrin, Joseph Devine and David Sands. Robert Dunlop represented the Township and Jean Holland represented the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC). Absent were: Commissioner Tom Bell and PC Members Angela Murray and Mary Holland.

Minutes: Minutes of the February 4th, 2013 meeting were read. Motion to approve the minutes with minor amendments was made by S. Schagrin and seconded by D. Sands. All were in favor.

Commissioner Report: No Report

Old Business

The Tecce Tract will be coming back before the PC on March 18th, and they will likely want to develop the remainder of the lot if the front subdivision is granted. The applicant did supply By-Right Plans for the PC to review with AAA and AA zoning. PC Discussed and recapped their prior position that with the intensity on the front of the property that is proposed that the remainder of the site should remain undeveloped. The developer does have approved plans should they want to develop the entire site under the current zoning. The township does not have to give a reason for denying a zoning change. The PC discussed that they felt that development of the remainder of the site is in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan and existing zoning. PC does not feel the Township is interested in taking on more dedicated roads that will not be easily accessible (times of day that Ridge is a standstill) and difficult to maintain due to slopes. Discussion further focused on the fact that improvements to Northwestern Ave would be needed because of this proposed development. PC are encouraged to review the Comprehensive Plan and have points ready for March 18th meeting.

New Business

The PC was asked to review Township Zoning Code with respect to two changes:

- 1.) Separate "Light" and "Heavy" Industrial
- 2.) Limit all parcels within all zoning districts to one principle use on the parcel

The PC began their discussion with respect to the current existing industrial districts and identified their locations and the type of properties that abut them. Discussion turned to the implications of "downgrading" a zoning to a more restrictive "light" industrial and how this will affect the value and development opportunities for those property owners. Contrarily, it was discussed that by restricting zoning to light industrial it may potentially improve the quality of life by restricting intensity of use and this maybe a beneficial impact to residential neighbors. Lastly, it was discussed if it was appropriate for PC to decide what locations should be deemed light or heavy. After extensive debate a consensus was reached that the PC has reviewed the concept and that they are not opposed to it, however, the PC did not feel it was appropriate for them to make recommendations for parcels to be designated light or heavy industrial.

The PC began their discussion on respect to introducing uniform verbiage throughout all zoning that there may be only one principle permitted use in each zoning district. R. Dunlop indicated that this verbiage already existed in most of the zoning with the exception of overlays, which in those cases the more restrictive underlying zoning would apply. Motion by J. Mascaro and seconded by J. Devine to amend all the zoning to have uniform language to permit one principle use and no other.

Discussion took place. Several PC members voiced their opinion that they did not feel this restriction applied in certain zoning districts like the commercial areas of Springfield, where mixed use is prevalent. The Comprehensive Plan encourages mixed use, urban infill with the creation of apartments to support an array of affordable housing and diversity in the community. Mixed use also promotes economic development in our communities. This verbiage goes against these concepts, especially in the mixed use areas. The verbiage does seem appropriate in other districts like Residential etc. R. Dunlop commented that the proposed Village Commercial Overlay would allow for the mixed use on properties; however that was not adopted by the Commissioners. The question arose as to why this language is needed in the zoning and what prompted this to come before the PC. R. Dunlop gave two examples. One example was the recent issue with the Tank Carr Property. Another generic example would be a property owner along Bethlehem Pike may have an office and decide to convert the second floor to an apartment without coming to the Township and that this language being placed in the code assists in enforcement. R. Dunlop acknowledged that most properties along Bethlehem Pike and shopping districts are nonconforming uses. PC members voiced that perhaps there are other forms of enforcement, or perhaps educating the public is a better way to prevent these situations. Restricting the zoning appeared to be contrary to the economic development that we are seeking in mixed use areas. J. Mascaro made a motion to withdraw his motion, and A. Helwig seconded. All were in favor. The conversation was tabled pending more information from the Township.

Motion to express their extreme gratitude to our outgoing MCPC member, Jean Holland made by S. Schagrin and seconded by B. Gutowski. All were in favor.

Motion to adjourn made by J. Devine and seconded by J. Mascaro. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Amanda M. Helwig, Secretary