

Minutes of Meeting
Springfield Township Planning Commission
March 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 7:01 pm, with the following members present: Amanda Helwig, Bob Gutowski, George Schaefer, James Mascaro, Steve Schagrin, Joseph Devine, Angela Murray, and Mary Holland. Robert Dunlop and Commissioner Tom Bell represented the Township and Brandon Rudd and John Cover represented the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC). Absent was David Sands.

Minutes: Minutes of the February 18th, 2014 meeting were read. Motion to approve the minutes by J. Mascaro and seconded by B. Gutowski. All were in favor.

Commissioner Report: Commissioner Bell reported that the BOC is split in its decision on the Tecce Tract. For his part, changing from Residential to Institutional is a dramatic change and has implications for the residents he represents in his ward. He will be voting against the change unless a compromise can be reached on the parcel as a whole.

New Business

Panhandle Neighbors Association

Rick Collier, AICP

Rick Collier presented to the PC an abbreviated version of the power point presentation previously given to the BOC. While the current proposal on the Tecce projects over 300 people plus staff versus even their prior approved plans, the neighbors sought to offer an alternative, an alternative consistent with the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan, and relieves our school district of the additional burden of school children (average cost \$17,000 per student), cuts down on population density, traffic and environmental impact. They also alerted the PC to the 60 proposed dwelling units on the adjoining Masonic site, though in Whitemarsh, will be a contributing factor in traffic.

Mr. Collier prefaced his discussion that the neighbors do not disagree that Atria is an appropriate use for the property considering the frontage and the surrounding uses. However, the back portion of the property is worth preserving like neighboring property due to its steep slopes, waterways and wooded areas. They would like to see a tradeoff for the increased density in the front for little or no development in the rear of the site. They propose 5 lots be created, one including the manor home. The remaining 4 lots, they would have 3 years to raise the 1.2 million in funds and acquire them for open space. If they are unable to acquire the lots, they revert to Tecce and maybe sold for single family dwellings, with a deed restriction that does not allow for subdivision. This would make sense because these lots sit closer to the frontage where Atria is proposed and where there is access to public utilities and a more direct access to Ridge Pike. This leaves the reminder of the 20 acres, dedicated by Atria, undeveloped and concerns for upgrading Northwestern Avenue eliminated.

At this time, Collier stated that Atria has not expressed interest in this plan, but provided examples of similar sites that Atria has developed in a similar way. At this point, Cliff David, a Conservation Economist, presented the figures of why this is a win/win scenario, and shared sources of funding used in the past on other projects he has worked on.

The final presenter of the evening was neighbor Laura Schwarz who summarized the presentation, encouraging the PC to consider this viable option, and requesting that no decision be made on the frontage without knowing the plans for the remainder of the property.

Commissioner Bell turned the conversation to Ross Weiss, Esq. present and representing the Tecce's. Commissioner Bell asked Mr. Weiss whether Mr. Tecce had considered the neighbors proposal. Mr. Ross responded no, because he did not feel the proposal was an equitable gain for his client. He also stated that for the record had a valid offer been presented to his client in the past he would have listened, but at this time he was instructed specifically by his client not to negotiate.

**Tecce Tract
9303 Ridge Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA.**

**Ross Weiss, Esq.
Dennis Glackin, AICP**

At this point in the conversation, Mr. Weiss began his presentation. He began with a recap, acknowledging that the PC at their previous meeting made a recommendation to the BOC to approve the requested change in zoning of the front seven acres as long as the remaining property revert to its original zoning and be undeveloped as dedicated open space. Their purpose was not to discuss this topic, rather the proposed amendments to the Institutional Zoning Ordinance and therefore amend the zoning map.

Dennis Glackin presented the proposed changes to the PC.

- 1.) Change in the definition, adding Personal Care Facility
- 2.) Request that "Retirement Home" be removed and replaced with personal care home.
- 3.) Front yard setbacks only for personal care / assisted living facilities be amended
- 4.) Add "frontage" and access to public street language
- 5.) Adding verbiage that traffic can be directed to a traffic signal

Public Comment & PC Discussion

Marie Griffin of 9285 Ridge Pike - Asked if a traffic study was completed because she lives on Ridge and has difficulty exiting her driveway now. Ross Weiss replied that a traffic study was previously supplied.

A. Murray pointed out that these changes are good changes and make sense. Codes need to be useful and changes are normally beneficial overall.

G. Schaefer felt he looked at this request two ways. One, is it good for the township as a whole, and on that count, the changes seem innocuous enough. On the other hand, we should be taking a more comprehensive review and that it seems inappropriate to make a decision on these changes when the decision on this property remains unresolved.

M. Holland questioned if these changes make sense on a broader scale to the community. Have all the Institutional uses been notified of the proposed changes to the verbiage in the ordinance. She also pointed out typos and ambiguous references to the SALDO in the Landscaping section which the PC all agreed needed to be reviewed and amended.

At this point Ross Weiss interjected that the applicant was not here to rewrite the entire ordinance, simply request the advertised amendments.

Gary Bromberg of 273 Northwestern Ave commented that he felt it did not look good to the general public that the township would allow a developer to rewrite out zoning code. J. Mascaro and A. Murray commented similarly that it is normal for zoning amendments to be brought forth by developers.

Motion by Bob Gutowski to recommend the proposed ordinance amendments to the Institutional Zoning District not be adopted, though they have merit, but that the entire ordinance be subject to review and to evaluate their impact on all Institutional tracts in Springfield Township. Further, that there are deficiencies in the existing ordinance and concerns with the proposed amendments. Motion was seconded by M. Holland. 6 in favor, 2 opposed.

The two opposing voted were by S. Schagrin and A. Murray. Both felt the changes were useful amendments and that there was no reason not to implement them.

G. Schaefer echoed the sentiments of the remainder of the PC, that things take time, and time to be done correctly. There is no urgency in this case, especially since there is no resolution on the outcome of the Tecce Tract at this time.

B. Gutowski furthered this by stating that the PC is in place to make sure there is due diligence, that we make sure that these changes are not adversely affecting the remainder of the properties in the zoning district. Ore responsibility is to the entire township not to one developer.

Motion to adjourn made by J. Mascaro and seconded by A. Murray at 8:56 pm. All were in favor.

Amanda Helwig, Secretary