

MINUTES OF MEETING
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, April 7, 2015

The Springfield Township Planning Commission (PC) held its semi-monthly meeting on the date noted above. Chairman Robert Gutowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with the following members present: Robert Gutowski, Angela Murray, James Mascaro, David Sands, George Schaefer, and Mary Holland. Absent were Joseph Devine, Mandy Helwig, and Steve Schagrin.

Rob Dunlop, staff liaison, and Commissioner Baird Standish represented the Township and Donna Fabry represented the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC). Minutes of the March 17, 2015 meeting were read. Motion to approve the minutes was made by R. Gutowski and seconded by G. Schaefer. Motion approved with two abstentions.

OLD BUSINESS: PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT ZONING AMENDMENT

The PC reviewed the revised draft proposal to amend the Industrial Zoning District and create a Limited Industrial District. Commissioner B. Standish emphasized that the task for the PC at this juncture was not to debate the merits of creating a Limited Industrial District, but rather to evaluate the specific language of the proposed zoning amendment and determine the optimal conditions. The meeting began with a summary by R. Gutowski of the proposed changes to the Industrial District and the proposed Limited Industrial District. He noted that sixteen townships in Montgomery County currently have a Limited Industrial Zoning District (list provided).

The County liaison provided a brief review and discussed allowing multiple dwellings in the proposed Limited Industrial district, but not in the full Industrial District. M. Holland noted that the Industrial zoning district currently allows residential uses. R. Dunlop noted that the Industrial district currently includes both single and multiple residential units along Mermaid Lane. B. Standish asked why residential uses should be allowed in an industrial district, concerned that this may lead to the type of conflicts the township is trying to avoid. R. Gutowski responded that allowing residential uses in industrial districts allows more flexible uses, including mixed uses which may be desirable.

Discussion of Side Yard Setbacks:

M. Holland said that part of the reason for the proposed Limited Industrial District is to mediate and create buffers between residential and full industrial uses. She noted, however, that many of the existing parcels could not be developed under the proposed Limited Industrial language because of the proposed 25-foot aggregate side yard setbacks. She noted that most industrial properties abut other industrial properties at their sides and this large setback requirement does not benefit residential uses while it significantly reduces the ability to utilize the industrial properties. The language of the existing ordinance already has provisions for increased setbacks and buffer zones between industrial and residential properties. She feels that the proposed side yard setback language should be eliminated.

R. Gutowski noted that parcels could be developed if they are aggregated. M. Holland questioned whether this is the intention or even desirable – to create larger parcels and eliminate the smaller ones.

Discussion of Impervious coverage:

The proposed language for the Limited Industrial District replaces a 70% building coverage limit with a 70% impervious coverage limit. R. Dunlop noted that the township does not currently limit impervious coverage. G. Schaefer felt that impervious coverage is a significant issue for the whole township and not just the industrial district, which covers a relatively small percentage of township land. He stated that this issue should be considered for the township as a whole before making regulations impacting only particular zoning districts. M. Holland said that the regulations need to start somewhere. A. Murray agreed that this needs to be addressed township wide, but the industrial districts are not the place to start because they are a relatively small part of the township.

Discussion of Use Limits:

Torre Vecchione, 111 Oreland Mill Rd., Oreland, expressed some confusion about the various changes being proposed, including additional restrictions on usage, impervious coverage and setback requirements. He noted that with recent residential developments in the township, specifically two on Pennsylvania Ave., the township has not required buffers by the residential use adjacent to Industrial districts. He feels that it is not fair that the full burden of buffers is placed on Industrial properties. He also expressed his belief that Industrial users are coexisting well with residential neighbors now. Finally, he said that the Industrial property owners do not want to change the current zoning regulations.

R. Dunlop noted that existing uses may continue as non-conforming uses even if the proposed changes are adopted.

Stephen Kurtz, 1100 E. Mermaid Lane, Wyndmoor, feels that the proposed changes would greatly restrict the use of industrial properties. Because of the steady turnover of tenants, grandfathering won't provide relief in the long term. He feels that industrial property owners are being punished for problems they didn't cause. In general, he feels that the proposed zoning amendments introduce too many changes at one time. The impervious coverage limitation may not restrict the use of his property, but other property owners require more parking than is achievable with a 70% coverage limitation. He feels that this change is not fair.

General Comments/ Questions:

Ed Vasoli, 1430 Ulmer Ave, Oreland: All changes will greatly reduce the property owner's ability (and flexibility) in using their properties.

Mark Vasoli, 1430 Ulmer Ave, Oreland: He doesn't see the need for the proposed changes. Also, relative to aggregating parcels to make it possible to develop with increased side yard setbacks, he notes that this would require approval through the Subdivision and Land Development process. He reiterated that tenant turnover could trigger a potential new use, which would require that the new limits be imposed. Lastly, he asked his neighbors on Mermaid Lane if they had any complaints about the industrial uses in the area and he said they had none.

Bruce Sampson, E. Mermaid Lane, Wyndmoor: He said that currently there is no conflict between industrial and residential uses in his area. Also, he could not meet the proposed impervious requirements

and that these create a barriers for future owners. He says that in 29 years, he has had no complaints from his neighbors and that the existing rules are adequate.

Mary Margaret Burke, 127 Orlemann Ave., Orelan: said that the PC was tasked to discuss only the language of a proposed zoning amendment including a limited industrial district, not the merits of creating this new district. She feels that the proposed ordinance reflects progress for the township. She says that the spirit of the proposed amendment is to create a Limited Industrial District to mediate between business and residential users.

Christine Hesser, 127 Orlemann Ave., Orelan: says that increased noise from industrial uses reduces the quality of life for residents and suggest coming to her neighborhood to listen to the noise level.

Mary Kurtz, 1100 E. Mermaid Lane, Wyndmoor: Says that properties need to work as investment and is concerned about a reduction in their property values based on the proposed amendment.

Bill Gordon, Tank Car Corp. supports eliminating the new side yard setback requirements.

Other comments:

B. Standish noted the schedule for future public hearings on this matter.

Motion:

A motion was made by M. Holland and seconded by G. Schaefer to accept the proposed modifications to the Industrial District and the language for a Limited Industrial District with the following changes:

- 1) Include the permitted uses of the Industrial District under 114-121 (A)B2, residential uses, etc., (N)self-storage facility, (P)warehouse, (Q) wholesale business, and (T) similar uses by special exception, in the new Limited Industrial District.
- 2) Replace Limited Industrial District 114-12C (B) Building and Impervious Cover requirements with Industrial building area requirement 114-123 (B). Note that the PC recommends that Impervious coverage be reviewed separately with consideration of the entire township.
- 3) Replace Limited Industrial District 114-12C5 yard setback requirements with Industrial building yard setback requirements 114-124.

Motion passed with four in favor and one opposed (R. Gutowski)

Chair Gutowski noted the recent letter of resignation submitted by Mary Holland with sadness. The PC unanimously voiced their thanks to Mary for over 10 years of service to the Planning Commission – during which time her experience as an Architect and her insights into the planning process have been an invaluable tool to the Commission. Luckily Mary has agreed to remain on the Municipal Campus Advisory Committee. On this sad note Bob Gutowski accepted a motion to adjourn from Mary Holland seconded by Angela Murray and approved unanimously at 10:05 PM. All those present offered Mary a sincere round of applause.