

PLANNING COMMISSION 2019

MEETING DATE: MAY 15, 2019 7:30 PM

Jim Reading called the meeting to order at 7:50pm. Members of the Planning Commission in attendance were Curtis English, Eric Rahe and Barbara Cohen. Current elected Board of Supervisors in attendance in the audience were Martha Majewski, Jim Morrisson, and Fred Parry. Susan Guerette arrived at 8:45pm. Township Solicitor William Brennan was also in the audience.

The minutes from the April 17, 2019, meeting were approved.

Ann Hutchinson, from Natural Lands Trust, presented proposed changes to the existing SALDO design standards and updating the Townships current cluster development standards with a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance (CSO). The CSO would be an overlay to the existing FR & R1 districts. The significant difference of current ordinances to the CSO is that it would affect properties of 7 acres or more in the FR district and 5 acres or more in the R1 district. The CSO allows for the same number of homes that can be built but they will be clustered together to create more open space. The open space is maintained normally by the HOA or the developer could donate the land to the Township for a park. The CSO gives the property owner 3 options to develop. Jim Reading questioned street widths. Ann Hutchinson stated that was not within her scope, but most townships go with narrower streets to slow traffic through the neighborhoods. Eric Rahe asked Bill Brennan, Esq., about any legal ramifications the township may run in to with putting an overlay on existing properties. Brennan stated that the developers rights are not affected. Rahe questioned about the property owners rights. Brennan stated that he is not aware of any cases of "taking" that have been in court over an overlay district being adopted. Barbara Cohen stated that the overlay is a good use and tool to have for preservation and that it makes the township's current cluster development standards better to preserve open space.

Jim Reading made a motion to recommend approval of the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance and SALDO changes to the Board of Supervisors. Curtis English seconded the motion and all approved to recommend approval to the Board.

Curtis English provided an update to the Commission on the Regional Comprehensive Plan. The plan is being updated with current demographics, developments, ages of populations, etc. The number of school age children in three surrounding districts (Phoenixville Area, Owen J. Roberts, and Great Valley) has doubled in the past ten years. English stated that the township cannot write ordinances that go against the Regional Comprehensive Plan and that ours coincides with it. Bob Cooney, township resident, asked if there was a certain number of proposed units to be built that automatically kicks the plan up to the Regional Planning Committee. English stated yes, there is however he was unsure of the exact number at this time. English stated that if the Township adopts the Regional Plan it saves the Township

Committee. English stated yes, there is however he was unsure of the exact number at this time. English stated that if the Township adopts the Regional Plan it saves the Township money and time from creating and updating its own comprehensive plan. Barbara Cohen stated that she feels it's very beneficial to the Township to be part of the Regional Plan. English agreed and recommended that the Township remain part of the Regional Planning Committee and adopt the updates when they are completed for our comprehensive plan.

Barbara Cohen asked Curt English if there are any updates on the rail service being proposed and where in Schuylkill Township would there be a station. English said there is room for another rail line at Columbia Station in the Borough of Phoenixville and behind the Conference Center on Route 23 in Schuylkill Township. English said there are many issues that need to get worked out with Norfolk Southern not wanting passenger rail service on their rail lines, site issues, SEPTA, and money to fund the development of the passenger rail service. There is additional talk of extending the existing Norristown train line to Valley Forge Park. Bob Cooney, township resident, asked about a station in Valley Forge Park. English stated that was a Federal land and that has even more issues. Cooney then asked about a possible train station in the area of Whitehorse and South Second Avenue. Another resident who lives in that area spoke up against that location saying there is already too much traffic on Whitehorse Road and a train station would just add to that. Barbara Cohen asked Curt English if the rail plans from 1996 that were approved, the Schuylkill Valley Metro Plan, were consulted. As she recalls, the cost was around one million. English stated that they had been looked at and that would be around 100 million now and SEPTA would need to be included.

Discussion about the proposed changes to the Townships existing streets ordinance ensued between the Planning Commission members and members of the Board of Supervisors that were in the audience. Barbara Cohen was not present for this discussion. The main change to the language in the current ordinance would be to add that existing single access streets including loop roads and cul-de-sacs shall not be extended. Any proposed cul-de-sacs shall not be constructed to an abutting property line. Susan Guerette explained that the Township needs to protect the residents who buy in to a cul-de-sac believing that it will always be a cul-de-sac and then find out that it is able to be opened up and connected to another development. She stated that the changes need to be an easy read for the residents and the developer. The Planning Commission understood the changes and agreed to remain neutral on the issue.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kimberly Yocom
Zoning Officer/BCO

NEXT MEETING DATE: WEDNESDAY JUNE 19, 2019 7:30 PM