



**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION OF
LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
February 17, 2015**

The Lower Pottsgrove Township Planning Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, February 17, 2015. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Frank Cebular, at 6:30 p.m. and the following were in attendance:

Frank Cebular, Chair
Ronald Dinnocenti, Vice-Chair
William Wolfgang
Anthony Cherico
Scott Fulmer

Edward C. Wagner, Manager
Chad Camburn, Township Engineer
Joseph Groff, Director of Code Enforcement

Mr. Cebular announced the meeting was being recorded.

REORGANIZATION

Mr. Wagner called for nominations for Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Dinnocenti motioned to nominate Frank Cebular and Mr. Wolfgang seconded the nomination motion, provided that Mr. Cebular was agreeable to continuing to serve in that position. Mr. Cebular was agreeable to the nomination and no additional nominations were made. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

Mr. Wagner called for nominations for Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Wolfgang motioned to nominate Ronald Dinnocenti and Mr. Cherico seconded the nomination motion, provided Mr. Dinnocenti was agreeable to continuing to serve in that position. Mr. Dinnocenti was agreeable to the nomination and no additional nominations were made. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

APPROVAL OF 2015 MEETING SCHEDULE

Mr. Cebular introduced the meeting schedule for 2015. All meetings are held at the Lower Pottsgrove Township Municipal Building, 2199 Buchert Road, Pottstown, PA and will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Wolfgang made a motion to approve the following meeting dates for the year 2015: March 16, April 20, May 18, June 10, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 16 and December 21. Motion was seconded by Mr. Dinnocenti and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Wolfgang noted a recommendation of the Pottstown Medical Building Associates planning module was listed on the November 17, 2014 meeting agenda. According to Mr. Wolfgang's notes, the Planning Commission took action and recommended approval; however, this action was not documented in the minutes of that meeting. Mr. Wagner said he missed it and he will amend the meeting minutes to reflect the action taken.

Mr. Fulmer made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2014 meeting, as amended by Mr. Wolfgang. Mr. Cherico seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

ACCEPTANCE OF NEW APPLICATIONS – None.

SUBDIVISION & LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW – None.

AUTHORITY BUSINESS – None.

PLANNING & ZONING

Discussion on Off Street Parking & Loading Ordinance—Mr. Wagner advised Joe Nixon is no longer with the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Mr. Dinnocenti asked if Mr. Nixon worked on Open Space and Regional Planning for the County. Mr. Wagner advised Mr. Nixon did not work on the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Wagner presented the proposed Off Street Parking and Loading Ordinance, which was drafted by Joe Nixon, to Planning Commission members for review. Mr. Wagner, Chad Camburn and Joe Groff worked as a team and tailored the ordinance to suit the Township's needs. Sections were added to address tractor trailers, RVs and pods being stored on the street. They also worked on making the ordinance more user and business friendly.

Mr. Dinnocenti said the new ordinance was very detailed and there was nothing to compare it to. He asked what was changed. Mr. Wagner advised the ordinance was totally revised and offered to provide copy of the original ordinance to Planning Commission members.

Mr. Cherico asked what happens when an ordinance is revised, approved and implemented. He asked if there are grandfathered features or does everyone have to abide by the provisions of the new ordinance. Mr. Camburn said any projects that have submitted an application are grandfathered. Mr. Cherico then inquired about preexisting projects. Mr. Wagner advised if modifications or alterations are made to a preexisting project, the applicant would then have to comply with current ordinance standards.

Mr. Cebular was concerned that people may not be aware of the new ordinance and asked how violators are notified. Mr. Groff said he would handle violations and the first notification would be a courtesy letter, not a fine.

Mr. Wagner advised Planning Commission approval is the first step in the ordinance adoption process. If the Planning Commission recommends approval, a public hearing to receive public comment would then be scheduled and advertised. Mr. Wolfgang felt the new proposed ordinance was much simpler and the public can understand it. Mr. Groff said that was the intention.

Mr. Wolfgang had questions about the following provisions of the ordinance:

1. Page 3, last column. Is the correct reference “one space per employee on highest shift” or “one space per employee on largest shift?” Mr. Wagner said for consistency, the reference will be changed to the “highest shift.”
2. Page 9, #5. §250-204. Under Parking Reserve Areas. Regarding the financial guarantee, Mr. Wolfgang thought 18 months seemed like a long time to hold someone's money. Mr. Dinnocenti asked if the Township would be asking for money or a bond. Mr. Camburn used the example of a start-up business, saying it would take some time to generate business and that's what a maintenance agreement is for.
3. Page 10, §250-208. Major Recreational Equipment. Mr. Wolfgang said the ordinance states “No such equipment shall be used for living, sleeping or housekeeping purposes...” He asked if a person's house was damaged and being rebuilt, would the owner be permitted to live in a trailer temporarily while the work was being done. Mr. Groff's opinion was that the ordinance sets the ground rules and each situation would be assessed individually. Mr. Camburn clarified that a modular is not a vehicle. Speaking from

experience, Mr. Groff said insurance companies usually arrange for homeowners to temporarily live in a hotel or rental unit in these situations.

Mr. Fulmer asked about two recreational vehicles parked in his neighborhood. One is parked on the side of the house. The other is in the driveway in front of the house, covered with a tarp, and it is an eyesore. Mr. Groff advised this is occurring throughout the Township and it is one of the reasons the ordinance was revisited. Mr. Wagner explained under the proposed ordinance, the vehicle parked on the side, beyond the front façade, would be allowable. The vehicle parked in the driveway in front of the house would be in violation.

After discussion, it was decided that Mr. Wagner will present the final draft of the ordinance to the Planning Commission in March for consideration.

Discussion on Sign Ordinance—Last year, Montgomery County passed a 132-page model sign ordinance. Mr. Wagner reported he and Joe Groff met with Marley Bice of Montgomery County Planning Commission to discuss incorporating provisions of the County’s model sign ordinance into our existing ordinance, which was enacted in 2007. Ms. Bice will attend the March 16, 2015 Lower Pottsgrove Planning Commission meeting and will be looking for feedback on what you would like to see in the ordinance. Of particular concern is the location, placement, size, etc. of digital signs, which are now only allowed in the Interchange District. Mr. Dinnocenti felt digital signs are a sign of the times and Mr. Cebular agreed they are the future. Mr. Wagner pointed out on Page 5 of the model sign ordinance there are provisions addressing speed limits, number of times the message can change, etc.

Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan Update—Mr. Wagner reported the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee is updating its 10-year Comprehensive Plan. It was last revised in 2005 and a summary of the most recent changes was provided. Mr. Wagner advised there will be a public hearing on the matter and he wanted to make the Planning Commission aware of it.

Mr. Cebular asked how much the changes affect the map for future land use. Mr. Dinnocenti asked for clarification of “residential fair share” as mentioned in the plan. Mr. Wagner will provide clarification at the next meeting. Mr. Wolfgang liked the statement on Page 12 emphasizing that the Township will still have some say in our development.

Mr. Wagner advised Regional Planning offered to deliver a presentation to the Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission. Mr. Cebular felt it would be worthwhile to hear the presentation. Mr. Wagner will try to schedule John Cover to provide an update on the Regional Plan on March 16 when Marley Bice discusses the sign ordinance.

ENGINEER REPORT

Mr. Camburn asked if there were any questions regarding his report. Mr. Wolfgang asked if there was something wrong with the Rupert Road Bridge. Mr. Camburn explained that Bridge, which is owned by the County, has been up for discussion for many years. Originally, the Bridge was required to be reconstructed or replaced during the Ravensclaw project. There was an agreement made between the Township and the developer and essentially the Township would accept funds from the developer. The Township is now attempting to enter into an agreement with Montgomery County and, according to this agreement, the County would agree to replace the Bridge and the Township would assume ownership of it.

Mr. Wolfgang asked for a timeframe. Mr. Camburn said we are looking to put in a pre-fab arch, which would take a few months once the process starts. Mr. Wagner advised it is a spring/summer project because there would be no bus traffic and the road would be completely closed. Mr. Wolfgang asked if the County would plow and maintain the Bridge. Mr. Camburn advised once the Township accepts ownership, it’s the Township’s responsibility.

Mr. Wolfgang commented that the floodplain ordinance deadline has been extended again to November 15, 2015. Mr. Camburn advised the County has adopted a model ordinance, which is comprehensive, and the engineers recommend that the Township modify the model ordinance to meet its needs. Mr. Camburn said it is not recommended that this take place yet because FEMA has not finalized their maps.

Mr. Camburn stated that the Italian restaurant is now open for business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Dinnocenti made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cherico seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor. Public meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward C. Wagner', written in a cursive style.

Edward C. Wagner, Township Manager