

February 4, 2015
7:00 PM

The regular meeting of the Monroe Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Paulus. The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

ATTENDANCE

Steve Paulus, Chairman	Mike Pykosh, Solicitor
	Mark Bruening, Engineer
Sharon Nelson, Secretary	Marjorie Metzger, Secretary
Dave DeNicholas	Steve Hoffman, Cumberland County Planning
Carl Kuhl	Greg Rogalski, Zoning Officer

MINUTES

Ms. Nelson pointed out that a “Mr.” needs to be added to the last sentence on page 3.

On the motion of Mr. DeNicholas, and seconded by Ms. Nelson, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2014 regular meeting, as amended.

CORRESPONDENCE None

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION None

NEW BUSINESS

AGRICULTURE SECURITY REQUEST FROM JOHN MUSSER

Mr. Pykosh explained this is a request by John Musser to include 103.4 acres located at 133 Old Stone House Road to the Monroe Township agriculture security area. The deed has been supplied, as well as an aerial map from county. The county report and the township engineer’s report both state the soils criteria has been met and is acceptable, as well as the other factors to be considered.

The Agriculture Security Committee met prior to the Planning Commission meeting this evening and they recommended this parcel be added to the agriculture security program.

Steve Hoffman explained the process of getting approval from the township first and then being put on a list to be considered for the agriculture easement. Each year all the farms on the list are ranked with a scoring system. It does not go by the amount of time on the list. The ranking can change each year.

Harry Musser was present as the POA (power of attorney) for John and Mary Musser. They are 89 years old and in Messiah Village. They desire the farm to remain as farm land and selling off the development rights was suggested as a means for cash flow. There are 9 siblings.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. DeNicholas, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the John and Mary Musser request to include their 103 acres in the agriculture security area of Monroe Township.

CHARLES SWARTZ FINAL SUBDIVISION PLAN

Eric Diffenbaugh present. This plan is for 8 acres on Simmons Road, which used to be the Charles & Marion Waggoner tract. It is proposed to be divided into two lots. There is an existing house on the property that sits right at the road. This house is proposed to be removed and a new home built, which will connect to the sewer that is currently there. The second lot is larger and the home will sit back far enough to allow for an on-lot septic system. Mr. Swartz will be building a home on Lot 1. Mr. Diffenbaugh has no problems addressing the engineer's comments.

Mr. Diffenbaugh said a driveway permit cannot be issued for lot 2 until the house is removed because it interferes with the site distance. Mr. Bruening said this could be made a condition of the plan to supply the driveway permit once the house is removed.

Engineer's Comments:

Mr. Bruening referred to his comments dated January 28, 2015.

County Comments:

Mr. Hoffman referred to the county comments dated February 4, 2015.

Board's Comments:

Ms. Nelson questioned if the house to be removed is a log home or frame? She would be interested in taking pictures to put in the township history files.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. Kuhl, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to table the Charles Swartz final subdivision plan.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Greg Rogalski was present to review his memo dated January 22, 2015.

Section 302.1 - Unenclosed Storage – There was an addition of a 5’ setback from the edge of cartway. Also, a gravel or paved surface is required for storage of Class 1 vehicles.

The following three sections were added to the Communication, antennas, Towers and Equipment.

Section 417.5 – This was added, which refers to the size of panel.

Section 417.6 - This refers to the access being paved or not. Mr. Bruening explained the difference between an access drive and a driveway and the relationship to the Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). Mr. Rogalski will coordinate this with the driveway definition.

Section 417.7 – This allows the township to have a tower placed on its property. A reference to “lease” will be added.

Section 313.3 - Changes were made to the Sign sections. All changes are shown on the handout as highlighted information.

Mr. Kuhl asked about grandfathering signs. Mr. Rogalski said an existing sign that is in compliance is okay.

Mr. Paulus asked if agricultural signs are included in the offsite directional signs for non-residential fixed facilities, and Mr. Rogalski responded yes.

Mr. Paulus said a permit is required, but there is no fee for agriculture signs, and Mr. Rogalski said that was correct. Mr. Paulus questioned if this is more in line with the county model ordinance. Mr. Rogalski said the sign ordinances are all over the place, so he did the best he could. Mr. DeNicholas mentioned it would be easier to enforce.

Mr. Paulus asked about the limit of signs under the Temporary Sign requirement for Agriculture Fields. Farmers may use test plots and have numerous types of a crop planted, may use different fertilizers, multiple seed companies, etc. There should be no limit on the number of signs for this type of use. Mr. Rogalski will make the change.

Variable message signs were discussed. Mr. Rogalski provided a copy of the county’s model ordinance. Mr. Kuhl asked how many requests the township received for these types of signs over the last year. Mr. Rogalski said there have been three requests. The issues are the brightness and the amount of flashing or changing is allowed.

The model ordinance was reviewed. Section 1 is not needed. Section 2 will be added to the definition section. Section 3 is not needed, as it is already addressed in the current ordinance. In Section 4, the following items will be incorporated: #2; #4; #7; #8a (with 8 seconds); #8b (with instantaneous); #8c (with 10’); #8d; #8e (with .3); 8ii; and 8iii. The following items are not needed in Section 4: #1; #3; #5; #6; #8e.2b&c; and #8f. Section 5 is not needed.

Zoning Map – There was considerable discussion concerning the zoning map and options available to allow for more development in order to help with existing sewer situation and high rates.

Ms. Nelson does not want the cookie cutter layouts. Cluster development is needed. She is not sure if additional development will make a difference with the sewer rates. There is no capacity available. Is it the right time to be zoning for growth? The market the way it is, at this stage it is prohibitive.

Mr. Paulus said no one wants to see development, but when something is broken it needs to be fixed. The plan reviewed this evening was in the southern sewer district, but because of the distance, the one lot will have an on-lot septic system. He feels the distance needs to be changed, especially for new homes. The cost of sewer could be added to the cost of the new home.

Mr. Rogalski suggested certain sections of the ordinance could be applied. With the Gish property, it could be made Suburban Residential or Village with the village overlay, or cluster ordinance. Cluster is the only one that allows for townhouses. But that also requires both public sewer and water.

Mr. Rogalski met with Fine Line Homes, the Ashcombe development. They units went from 300 a year to 50 in Lower Paxton area, and most of that is not single family homes. It is the market.

Mr. Paulus mentioned the Gish farm and Weber farm are next to the school and close to the parks. He does not believe commercial is the way to go. Let the people with the finances decided what will be profitable.

Mr. Kuhl suggested having some professional offices, such as doctors and dentists, in the single family kind of setting. It is not a warehouse. These types of offices fit into the village concept.

Mr. Bruening said there is capacity at South Middleton if someone wants to pay for it. The plant has available capacity, but is more expensive because of the plant upgrade. The township would be stuck paying and being the banker. Let the developer's enter into agreements with the Municipal Authority to pay for the capacity.

Ms. Nelson suggested canvassing the township to see where the interest is to do something before making changes to the zoning map. Mr. Rogalski said it is the impact of the greater good to keep in mind. Mr. Paulus questioned if the current land owners could tell us what their intentions are because they could change over the years for various reasons.

Mr. Rogalski suggested changing the village overlay, instead of R1, call it something else and allow tracts of a certain size through a conditional use.

Mr. Bruening mentioned Allenberry has a proposed development of 120 units. They are the closest to the sewer and the water, and they are doing nothing. He suggested the area between Cockley and Long Road is close to the sewer and water, but there are a lot of restrictions in that area for flood plain.

Mr. Rogalski questioned what magnitude of development would be needed to affect the sewer. He thinks it would be in the thousands. We can encourage development, but at the end of the day would it make a difference?

Mr. Kuhl questioned what a new sewer system would cost for the township to go on their own. Mr. Bruening said DEP would not allow that. Mr. Paulus said the way the loans are structured, the township can't put all the districts together.

Ms. Nelson said the goal to lower sewer rates is not going to happen. It would be good to take advantage of the sewer system, but the market is not there. Mr. Rogalski agreed that trying to lower the minimum lot size is not enough on its own.

Mr. Hoffman noted that if the zoning is changed and that is not addressed in the comprehensive plan, then funding and grants are questionable.

Mr. Kuhl questioned if there are any strategies to help reduce the sewer rates. Ms. Nelson said it doesn't sound like it. She said if we don't commit to making changes in zones, then what about using the village overlay in more areas. It would leave the door open. Mr. Rogalski said we could easily say the village overlay could be used on any agriculture parcel.

Mr. Kuhl said it is very firm that adding 500 people will not lower the sewer bills. Mr. DeNicholas said it is going to take a lot. Mr. Bruening said the inflow and infiltration needs to be taken care of to fully utilize the capacity. The only way that is going to happen is to invest more.

The Board agreed that additional discussion is needed before making any recommendation on the zoning map.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. Paulus, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the suggested text changes as they were discussed for the Zoning Ordinance, and to table the zoning map for future meetings.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION None

STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Bruening introduced Chris, an associate from Barton & Loguidice.

Mr. Paulus said it was a good meeting with a lot of food for thought.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie E. Metzger, Administrative Assistant