

March 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
Sheldon Brymesser, Vice-Chairman	Mark Bruening, Engineer
Sharon Nelson, Secretary	Marjorie Metzger, Secretary
Dave DeNicholas	Kirk Stoner, Cumberland County Planning
Carl Kuhl	Greg Rogalski, Zoning Officer

MINUTES

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 February 4, 2015 regular meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Stoner provided information on a three hour planning seminar being held. Members were encouraged to attend. Ms. Nelson and Mr. Brymesser said they have attended and it is a very good training.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

CHARLES SWARTZ – FINAL SUBDIVISION PLAN

Eric Diffenbaugh present. He has addressed the engineer's comments. He has applied for the driveway permits, but has not received them yet.

Engineer's Comments:

Mr. Bruening reviewed his comments dated February 24, 2015. There are no waiver requests.

Board's Comments:

There was a discussion on whether the public sewer can be required for the large lot since the line is in front of the property. The existing house is on the sewer, but the proposed home on

the large lot is planned for an on lot septic system. Mr. Pykosh and Mr. Bruening said the requirement to hook to the sewer is for a home placed within 150' of the sewer line. If the new home could be placed within that 150' without complication, could the sewer connection be required, even if the owner would place the home beyond the 150'. Mr. Paulus thought the connection requirement was 200'. If this area was originally planned for sewer, and included in the Act 537 Plan, then it was contemplated for homes to be connected to the sewer. Mr. Paulus agreed the lot should be sewer, regardless of distance. Mr. Pykosh suggested the sewer question be an open issue until he has a chance to review it.

Mr. Diffenbaugh said the owner wants to keep the residual lot for himself to build, maybe not for 5-10 years. Mr. Paulus questioned if more than one lot could be subdivided there, by using a flag shaped lot configuration. That would provide several more sewer connections.

Mr. Kuhl is not in favor of dictating where a house can be placed. Ms. Nelson said when the Act 537 Plan was created, the distance requirement was put there to protect the existing homes, especially the farms. The distance was not designed for future development, which was not the intent.

Mr. Paulus mentioned the Sam Leib property that was subdivided into five lots, and they were required to hook to sewer, as part of a variance approval, regardless of distances. We are not asking them to extend the line. Sewer is a touchy situation and people don't understand why these types of distance exemptions are allowed and people get out of connecting to sewer.

Mr. Kuhl questioned if it is economically feasible to connect to the sewer and put the house where they want it? Mr. Bruening said there is not an issue of gravity with the low pressure system.

Mr. Diffenbaugh said he would request a waiver from the sewer connection, because now is not the right time to ask because his client already paid for the percs and probes and was told the distance for hooking up. Mr. Rogalski said based on the ordinance, it was his understanding the distance was 200'.

Mr. Paulus questioned if there would be relief from the sewer if the existing house is tore down until the new house is built. Mr. Bruening said the sewer rate must be paid for the first year. If they want to disconnect, they would have to cap off the sewer and then pay the tapping fee to re-connect. There are rules and regulations before the Authority and Supervisors right now to clarify this issue.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. Brymesser, and by majority vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the Charles & Azlynn Swartz final subdivision plan, contingent upon the township engineer's comments dated February 24, 2015 being addressed, as well as the Solicitor's investigation of the sewer connection issue. Mr. DeNicholas abstained from voting.

NEW BUSINESS

JOHN BORDELON – CONDITIONAL USE

John Bordelon present. He owns a horse boarding facility and would like to get out of that business. He wants to make the place pretty and use it as a venue for weddings and things like that.

Mr. Rogalski said the reason for this being a conditional use is because it is for something the Zoning Ordinance neither permits or denies anywhere in the ordinance. There is no specific criteria for this use. Section 415 is for commercial recreational facilities, which would be close.

Mr. Bordelon said he would like to host about 15 weddings a year, nothing on the peak time like Labor Day when the tractor show is in town. It will be calm and quiet, a four hour wedding inside the barn. Ms. Nelson was pleased to see the depth of reuse.

Engineer's Comments:

Mr. Bruening reviewed his comments dated February 24, 2015. There are a number of outstanding items. Mr. Brodelon has a good bit of work to do prior to the hearing date.

Board's Comments:

Ms. Nelson is hopeful the items can be worked out. It sounds like a very good idea. Mr. Bordelon said it is more than he expected, but he will do his best.

Mr. Kuhl said he is all for it if we can make it work and meet all the requirements.

Mr. DeNicholas likes the concept.

Mr. Brymesser said it is a wonderful idea. Hopefully we can make it work.

Mr. Paulus mentioned the operation at Strock's, which is very successful. The township needs more businesses. He hopes it can be worked out. Mr. Bordelon said Strock's holds 50-70 weddings a year. Mr. Paulus said it is a good starting point. A plan needs to be drawn up and the idea must be sold to the Supervisors.

Mr. Pykosh said the next step is the full blown hearing on March 19. If Mr. Bordelon can't get things together and is not ready, the hearing can be pushed back or be continued. Mr. Bordelon said he would do his best to be ready for March 19. Mr. Pykosh suggested Mr. Bordelon meet with Mr. Rogalski and Mr. Bruening to work through the outstanding items. The Board could grant some type of approval with contingencies. A written decision must be made within 45 days.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. Kuhl, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the John Bordelon conditional use concept contingent upon satisfying the township engineer's comments dated February 24, 2015, and the Solicitor's comments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Mr. Rogalski reviewed his memo dated February 5, 2015. The Supervisors made no changes to this memo. One issue was related to rezoning of parcels to allow building, which they need more time to discuss. The Supervisors may decide to have a joint workshop with the Planning Commission to discuss the zoning map. The February 5 memo is ready to be approved to be advertised for a public hearing.

Mr. Rogalski provided a handout showing a very rudimentary analysis of the southern sewer financial issue. Kirk Stoner also provided information on growth projections. The handout showed how many units would be needed to reduce the sewer rates by small amounts, compared to the growth projections, which are not a large number. Also, the costs do not reflect any breaks or repairs, people who stop paying their bill, unfunded mandates, or the age of the system.

Ms. Nelson mentioned that adding more units would also require more services, affect the school, etc. She is in favor of cluster and village, but don't push for something that will change the entire character of the township.

Mr. Paulus said the bond payments haven't shrunk from the original loan. We are always refinancing. We put band aids on the system in White Rock. Mr. Rogalski said the \$9 million debt is for the past, and the \$3 million is for the plant upgrade. Mr. Pykosh questioned how you pay the debt quicker without raising the rates? Mr. Bruening said when the refinancing was done, it saved money, but it also extends the bond out longer.

Mr. DeNicholas said the original bet was made on development, and it has never happened. Mr. Bruening said the township owed a million dollars when they acquired the system. And the township already paid a million dollars, so we started out in the hole. This is all paid through user fees. Mr. DeNicholas said if there is no real growth in the next five years, there will be hell to pay.

Mr. Rogalski said there is no huge market demand in Monroe Township or Cumberland County, except in South Middleton and Upper Allen Townships. Developers won't take on the extra costs of sewer when South Middleton and Upper Allen have it available. There is no incentive of the residential side.

Mr. Brymesser suggested South Middleton take over the Monroe Township portion and add it to all their customer base. Mr. Rogalski said they would not want it. Mr. Brymesser asked

if there are any grants, and Mr. Bruening said no, it is frustrating. There is no money for sewer. The number of units on the books are all in northern and Dillsburg areas, so it won't help the southern district.

Ms. Nelson thanked Mr. Rogalski for providing the numbers. It is important to all of us. It gives us something to talk about. There has been a series of unfortunate events, a lot of which we can't control.

Mr. DeNicholas questioned what amount is outstanding for the southern sewer? Mr. Pykosh said it started at \$107,000, had gone down to \$67,000, and is up now around \$80,000. Mr. DeNicholas questioned if anyone's water service has been shut off, and Mr. Pykosh responded no.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. Kuhl, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the February 5, 2015 memo of proposed amendments to the zoning ordinance, with no changes.

Mr. Paulus asked if the Supervisors approved the memo with no changes. Mr. Rogalski said the vote was 2 – 1, with the one vote related to signs.

ZONING MAP

Mr. Rogalski said the Supervisors may want to come to the next Planning Commission meeting to meet jointly in a workshop to discuss the zoning map. The Planning Commission agreed that was a good idea.

Mr. Paulus the re-zoning is needed, especially for the sewer in the agriculture zone. When the initial map was done we knew about Ashcombes. We did all of our planning for twenty years and it hasn't happened. There is more agriculture security and preservation. We don't want to isolate one tract of land.

Mr. Stoner mentioned agriculture security is the first step, and do you want that in the sewer areas. Mr. DeNicholas said it would be good to have the agriculture security and preservation mapped out for the sit down meeting with the Supervisors. There is also more Mennonite farms on roads like Boyer, Shuman, and Pepper.

Mr. Brymesser questioned if we have enough zones. Mr. Stoner said what we have is okay. You have to decide where you want growth or not.

Mr. Kuhl said the traffic flow is number 1 for major thoroughfares. Mr. Stoner agreed. Mr. Paulus mentioned clean and green is not the same as agriculture security, it deals more with paying back taxes.

Mr. DeNicholas said it is the economy. It is the developer driving the train. Hopefully if we make a change it will come to us. But we have sewer capacity and other issues.

Mr. Brymesser mentioned Monroe Township has 67% of Class 1, 2, and 3 soils. The ground we are losing to development is prime. Once you lose it, it is gone.

Mr. DeNicholas questioned if we are doing an exercise when we don't know where it will take us. The debt service has changed dramatically.

Ms. Nelson questioned if the new Governor's speech on reducing the property tax would help the sewer rates? We didn't ask for the sewer to begin with. Mr. Paulus said it was all banked on new development, and it hasn't happened. Mr. DeNicholas said the sewer had to be, but all the refinancing is questionable. He doesn't see the growth.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION None

STAFF COMMENTS None

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie E. Metzger, Administrative Assistant