

Hilltown Township Planning Commission/Open Space Committee May 2006 Worksession Minutes

The Planning Commission met at the Township Building at 7:30 pm on May 1, 2006. Per the Supervisors' directive, the Open Space Committee joined the Planning Commission to discuss a proposed text change to our present zoning which allows for non-contiguous open space. Planning Commission members present were Brooke Rush, Chuck Kulesza, Denise Hermany, Mike Beatrice, Bill Bradley and Joe Marino. Ken Beer was absent due to a family death. Lynn Bush from the Bucks County Planning Commission was also in attendance. Open Space members present were Jeff Lapp, Donna DiMella, Sandy Williamson and Jeanne Scanlon.

Supervisors, Barb Salvadore and Jack McIlhinney also attended the meeting. Members from the public included: Marilyn Teed, Kirk Hanson, Nancy Boice, and John Alff.

Public Comment – none

Approval of the Minutes – Joe Marino requested that the “Comprehensive Plan” be added to his statement “we should first review our current zoning, the MCP, and the Comprehensive Plan. Denise Hermany made a motion to approve the minutes and Joe Marino seconded the motion. The minutes passed 5-0-1 with Mike Beatrice abstaining since he did not attend the previous worksession.

Summary of Supervisor Meeting

Brooke discussed with the Supervisors the process for sketch plan review. Previously, it was agreed that applicants would present their sketch plans to the Supervisors after the Planning Commission minutes were published of the sketch plan review. Brooke questioned who allowed the Orleans/Bennett applicant on the Supervisor's agenda one week after the applicant's presentation to the Planning Commission. There were numerous suggestions made by the PC to the applicant which were unknown to the Supervisors.

Brooke suggested the need for a Township liaison who could improve the communication process between the Supervisor and the Planning Commission..

There was a suggestion that the Open Space Committee, Park & Rec. Board and the Planning Commission have joint meetings early in the process when there is a large development being proposed. Donna DiMella suggested that all recommending boards be required to walk the sites.

Proposed Zoning Ordinance – Non-contiguous open space text change

Brooke informed the Open Space Committee that the Planning Commission made a motion at their previous worksession to attempt a draft text change to the zoning to allow for non-contiguous open space.

Mike Beatrice asked Lynn Bush her opinion of the open space proposal. Lynn commented that the county is always in favor of saving open space and cited an example in Doylestown Township where non-contiguous open space land was preserved along the Neshaminy Creek. She also mentioned that 50% of a 200 acre site in Buckingham was preserved by doubling the density on a parcel. Rather than 1 house/2 acres, the township agreed to 1 house/1 acre.

Joe Marino commented that he has no problem drafting a zoning text change, but it shouldn't be designed solely for the Cinnabar/White Chimney property. Brooke commented that the applicant is moving forward, at this time, with their original plans.

The members of the Open Space Committee believe that this is an opportunity to preserve open space and Jean Scanlon made a motion, Donna DiMella seconded, to draft a text change to the zoning to allow for noncontiguous open space. The Open Space Committee motion passed 4-0.

Chuck Kulesza mentioned that criteria need to be established for this type of zoning, i.e. parcel size, % open space, distance between primary site and open space parcel, Township Boards' involvement, and appropriateness to Township Open Space Plan. Chuck questioned whether the ranking system in the Open Space Plan could be used.

Mike Beatrice suggested a minimum of 20-40 acres. Open space could be preserved using deed restrictions, development rights and easements.

Brooke Rush completed a version of a possible text change amendment for review with the boards and provided copies for the committees. After a lengthy discussion, several recommended changes were incorporated into the draft. Everyone agreed that the Open Space Committee and Park and Rec Board should be part of the review process. It was recommended that existing open space plans should be incorporated along with the current open space criteria. Some people didn't want distance limited to 1/2 mile between parcels, but in the end it was agreed to leave it in. It was discussed that a non-contiguous open space parcel not be limited to 200 ft. of road frontage, but rather have road frontage and be accessible. Since we are trying to preserve appropriate open space, Section 8C was eliminated, therefore open space parcels need not be adjacent to other open space parcels. It was also discussed that if a builder has the opportunity to cluster homes on one site, then the land on the other site should be deeded to the Township for them to do with as they deem appropriate, i.e., sell development rights or keep for active or passive recreation. Brooke was to incorporate all of the changes into the draft and forward copies to the committees. The final draft text change will be forwarded to the Supervisors on Monday night at the reporting meeting.

Ordinance Review

Brooke informed the commission that we were to review only those ordinances that had revisions from the Bucks County Planning Commission. Lynn Bush mentioned that most ordinances had some type of revision.

CR1 – Questions from last review: Lynn changed the lot size back to 30,000 sq. ft. and said that she was adjusting the open space percentage. The density/acre was a typo and should be 2.0 and not 2.25.

Planning

Sunoco- Brooke mentioned that the Fire Department still has not responded to Sunoco. He also recommended that trees not planted on the property, be allocated to some other location in the Township. Brooke also wanted to know how the current intersection was improved.

Denise Hermany handed out the Growing Green booklet (provided by Barb Salvadore) which talks about conservation designs. It was suggested that the PC review the information. Mike Beatrice mentioned that Ann Hutchingson, the author, had made a presentation several years ago to the township regarding the original cluster ordinance, which was subsequently revoked due to a density bonus.

Brooke Rush asked who could attend the bus tour on May 19 to Chester County where there is a community which incorporates the conservation design. Denise Hermany and Joe Marino were to get back to Brooke by May 10 so that he could contact Ken Bennington about the RSVPs.

Brooke asked who could not attend the special worksession meeting on May 11th. Mike Beatrice and Bill Bradley said that they weren't sure if they would be available.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise Hermany
Planning Commission Secretary

Note: These minutes were written based on a review of tapes taken by Joe Marino. (*These minutes are not considered official or approved until voted upon by the Planning Commission at a public meeting).