

Summary Notes from the Sept. 30, 2009 Zoning Committee Meeting

In Attendance:

Jeff Pierce, Chris Rearick, Hal Turkowski, Phil Miller, Dallas Leonard, Les Mlakar, Al Lonzo, Paul Knapp, Donna Muller, Chuck Horvat, Bruce Light, Mike Ginsburg, and Lynn Young.

Everyone in attendance received a notebook from Mr. Pierce titled: Project Book, Public & Private Improvements Code, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, dated September 2009.

Mr. Pierce began by summarizing how this process will begin: The committee will perform a section by section review of the zoning ordinance followed by review of the subdivision and land development ordinance (saldo). He and Mr. Mlakar stressed that this process will not be considered an amendment to the existing ordinances, but rather will be completely new ordinances which totally replace the existing zoning and saldo sections of The Township Code. The zoning district map will be done concurrently with the work on the zoning text.

The purpose of updating the ordinances is to finally move towards implementation of the concepts approved within the Township Comprehensive Development Plan. As the meeting progressed, Mr. Pierce gave everyone the “homework” assignment of reviewing the Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary prior to the next meeting. Mr. Light distributed copies to Mr. Lonzo and Mr. Young; all other indicated that they were in possession of the summary. (Mr. Light ordered a dozen additional Ex. Summary Copies in preparation for additional members to the committee.)

Next, there was discussion of the need for structure to the meetings and committee. After discussion, it was agreed that Phil Miller will serve as the Chairman of the Zoning Committee and Bruce Light as the secretary. Meetings will be held on the last Wednesday (not necessarily the 4th Wednesday, as for example this meeting is the 5th Wednesday) of each month starting promptly at 7:00 p.m., and effort will be made to end the meetings within about 1 ½ hours.

All meeting are to be advertised and open to the public, but without public comments. Due to holiday schedules, date changes and/or cancellation for the November and December meetings will be discussed at the October meeting.

Mr. Mlakar and Mr. Pierce said that an early task will be to review the existing 14 or so currently existing zoning districts in an effort to reduce them to perhaps 6 or 4 zones. The new ordinance will specify which uses are permitted in which districts, based upon performance standards. Using performance standards, it is not so important where certain uses are permitted, but rather how they impact surrounding uses.

Mr. Lonzo expressed a concern that this committee needs to know and share a vision of what the Township is to become, such as what’s to become of “downtown” Harrison City and where new residential developments might be located. Having a vision would result in a much cleaner process for the committee. Mr. Pierce replied that the Comprehensive Plan spells out the vision – hence its importance for everyone to re-read.

Mr. Mlakar cautioned the committee saying that we need to agree on what uses will be allowed in what districts. The committee cannot create a new district map first, then force uses into the

various districts. Mr. Pierce reminded everyone that the overriding concept of the Comprehensive Plan is the desire for Penn Township to remain largely a rural residential community, but that there is a need for a more equitable distribution of land uses.

Mr. Horvat asked how we as a township entice an outside entity such as the Penn Township Sewage Authority (PTSA) or PennDOT to do expansion project within the Township which would then allow more growth. Mr. Pierce said that when push comes to shove, the expansion sometimes ultimately reverts back to the Township for taking the responsibility at a local level to provide what's needed for expansion.

Next, Mr. Rearick summarized the first section of the notebook titled "preliminary land use definitions," and he noted that the committee will need to carefully review definitions as listed in this section since they will ultimately determine what the township ends up looking like.

There was discussion about the various zoning districts, and Mr. Pierce suggested that the committee strive towards creating four districts: (1) Residential (2) Agriculture (3) Business, and (4) Industrial.

Mr. Miller asked how we can keep the public involved in this process, and he suggested that meeting summary notes be posted on the Township's web site. Mr. Mlakar said as the process develops, the committee will hold public meetings (not public hearings) to discuss specific subjects such as a meeting for agriculture uses, a meeting for industrial uses, probably two meetings for non-conforming uses, etc. Mr. Miller suggested that if committee members know of a resident and/or business person who would be an asset to the committee, they should get that name to Mr. Light and let him make the contact.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 28th at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Pierce closed by reminding everyone to re-read the Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary.

The meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.