

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
Planning Commission Meeting
September 7, 2010 7:00 pm

Present: Danelle Del Corso, Bob Eberhart, Larry Fennessey, Jordan Finkelstein, Lorin Nauman, John Stevens, Joe Tylka
Absent: Susan Steele, Township Manager; Dave Piper, Zoning Officer; Sebastian DeGregorio, CRPA
Others present: James May, CRPA; Tom Zilla, CRPA; Melissa Gartner, recording secretary

1. Call To Order

Chair Lorin Nauman called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

Mr. Jason Terosky (50 Winesap Drive) came to the meeting to ask about buying a piece of property in Halfmoon Township. There is a stream running through the land, and he was concerned that there would be restrictions on land usage. Mr. Fennessey and Mr. Nauman advised him to talk to Mr. Piper. The piece of land in question is one of the four Orchard Manor lots discussed at the July 20, 2010 meeting. It is a riparian zone and Mr. Terosky would like to graze horses on the land. Mr. May also asked one of his staff to research the riparian constraints and someone will call Mr. Terosky tomorrow.

3. Approval of July 20, 2010 Minutes

Motion. Mr. Fennessey moved to approve the minutes of July 20, 2010. Mr. Eberhart seconded. Vote: 7-0.

4. Reports

a. BOS Update

Ms. Steele was not present. Mr. May reported that the Well and Borehole ordinance will come up in October; it has been finalized. The RVD will be discussed on September 23. The Wind Ordinance has been revised based on PC comments (included as conditional use in the A1 district for residential turbines and sliding scale on height). This will also move forward in October.

b. Zoning Officer's Report

Mr. Piper was not present.

5. Halfmoon-Patton Area Plan Update

Mr. Tom Zilla presented an update on the proposed traffic analysis for the Halfmoon and Patton Area Plan. Mr. Eric Vorwald, CRPA, is also working on this project. Because of the Gray's Woods proposed subdivision development plans for this area, it has become important to study the impact on transportation. The traffic analysis will focus on Route 550 and I-99, the Gray's Woods Interchange, and roadway connections. The connecting roads are specific points of concern. Public

transportation and pedestrian/bike traffic will be studied in-house by CRPA staff, not this traffic analysis.

Benefits of connecting roads are increased access and decreased travel time; one of the main disadvantages is the “downstream” effect of increased traffic through Patton neighborhoods as more cars use connecting roads to avoid major road congestion. The current thought is to make traffic flowing through neighborhoods “locally convenient, but regionally inconvenient” to discourage through-traffic (ex: the roadway network going through Park Forest).

Major elements of the traffic analysis are travel demand modeling (a traffic model for this area), an analysis of intersection levels of service, and an assessment of the operating conditions of Route 550. In CRPA’s opinion, Route 550 should be protected so it can continue to support through traffic. Data on proposed developments include Gray’s Woods, Toftrees West, Geisinger, and Greenmoore Village. As part of the Long Range Transportation Plan, land use forecasts have also been done. Mr. Zilla showed one color-coded map that highlighted these areas of development in Halfmoon and Patton Townships.

When comparing the 2032 full build-out figures from previously completed traffic impact study development projections and the figures from the 2040 LRTP land use forecasts, Mr. Zilla and Mr. Vorwald noticed an interesting difference. They realized that if they used the full build-out potential of every known development, they would drastically exceed any realistic population projection for this area. For example, the traffic impact study projection for 2032 was 1,149 single family homes vs. the LRTP land use forecast for 2040 of 515 single family homes.

The traffic analysis will compare 3-10 scenarios on land use and road networks. One slide compared the base year 2009, the 2040 land use forecast numbers, and the 2040+ (full build-out) numbers. This raised the following question: If all of the proposed developments reach full capacity, can we afford to not have connecting roads linking the townships? This question will be considered more fully in the analysis.

Trans Associates Engineering Consultants, Inc. with the Markosky Group, Inc. has been retained for this study. The total cost of the project will be \$39,977.85, just under the \$40,000 allocated. In September and October, the operational analysis will be conducted on Route 550, with model runs for scenarios in October/November. Recommendations would be made in November/December, with the final report completed in December 2010/January 2011. The next goal would be to finalize the Land Area Plan document and incorporate the Future Land Use map in the Comprehensive Plan update in Spring 2011.

Mr. Tylka asked if the analysis would only focus on the connecting roads between Patton and Halfmoon, or could it also examine areas in which roads aren’t functioning as efficiently as they could. Mr. Zilla stated that this study is limited in its scope, but future studies could be done to examine other roads in Halfmoon Township. Mr. Eberhart asked if the bicycling on Route 550 should be considered with this study, rather than doing it in-house. Currently the road really isn’t wide enough for a bike lane, but driving and cycling don’t seem to mix well. Mr. Fennessey commented on the irony that Patton wants to send their septage from Greenmoore Village to Halfmoon, but they don’t want Halfmoon’s cars to travel through their neighborhoods. Mr. Tylka asked if Mr. Zilla’s group would advise specific speed limits. Mr. Zilla said that PennDOT plays a big role in determining

limits, but they need data from analyses to help their decision. Members voiced concern over cyclists riding side-by-side, milk trucks going over the speed limit, and pedestrians walking dogs, especially on curving roads like Marengo. Mr. Zilla took these comments and will pass them on for future studies of back roads in Halfmoon Township. Mr. Finkelstein recommended bull horns for safety, which was greeted with PC smiles.

6. Summary of Historic and Forecasted Growth in the Township

Mr. May presented information on previous growth in Halfmoon Township. In 1979, there were 717 people and 245 homes. In thirty years, population increased to 3060 and homes increased to 998. In the next thirty years, population is projected to be 4798 and homes to 1465. Interestingly, all of the eight major developments are on the south side of Route 550. Mr. Nauman added that land north of Route 550 doesn't perc well and has a lot of breakwater. Mr. May stated that this information could be used for planning the future of development in Halfmoon Township. Mr. Nauman asked that if low-density 1.0 or 1.5 acre lots are what people want, is that necessarily bad? Mr. May said that having 1.0 acre lots is too low for sewer, but it's too high for agriculture. His thought was that RVD was going to shift development to the eastern end of the Township. This type of lot might be a good niche for this area. Mr. May asked if RVD doesn't progress, what might the next step be from a planning perspective? Mr. Fennessey replied that if the RVD did develop, the result would be a population center with values closer to those of Patton residents; if they were to take municipal positions, they would probably resent the more rural, western half of the Township. He cautioned about the dangerous side of RVD. Ms. Del Corso asked, wasn't it part of the Comprehensive Plan to plan what we want the Township to look like in 30 years? Mr. May agreed.

Mr. Tylka then raised a hypothetical situation of the state selling the Scotia Game Lands to the Centre Region. Mr. May said that while this type of land transfer does happen in Arizona, for example, it traditionally has not happened in Pennsylvania. Mr. Eberhart added that the portion of the Game Lands in Halfmoon Township was previously zoned A-1, but the Township then rezoned it to protect the land. Mr. Tylka continued that perhaps one way to encourage rural-minded new residents is to publicize the proximity to the state game lands.

7. Progress Report on the Comprehensive Plan Update and Economic Development Assessment Project

Mr. May reported that they are wrapping up the first phase of the project. They hope to have the inventory and assessment to the commission this week. The next step is working on goals and objectives and policies this coming fall. Previous Comprehensive Plans have been presented at one general forum; they would like to present this Plan more slowly through several local meetings to generate more citizen interest. They will probably schedule a local meeting in Halfmoon Township in December for the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. May's group is also working on an Economic Development Assessment. In the next few years, he is anticipating higher competition, regionally and nationally, for good jobs. While Penn State has been and will continue to be a good employer, he predicts that the health care job base will also increase. Instead of relying on a local economic model developed 50-60 years ago, emphasizing things like outdated

shopping centers, Mr. May hopes that this EDA will help municipalities expand their opportunities while still preserving the cultural heritage of this area. This study will help aid revitalization in the central area of the community, work on setting up a better relationship with the CBICC as an umbrella organization to track economic development prospects in the region, and work with UAJAA for marketing beneficial use water. This study should provide information to help municipalities be positioned to continue to have good jobs in the next 20 years. There will be a community meeting on October 4 in College Township on this Economic Development Assessment.

8. Items of Interest for the Planning Commission Work Plan

Mr. May included a summary of recent Planning Commission work and future projects, including

- RVD – forwarded to BOS for public hearing in June 2010; still under consideration
- wind generation ordinance – forwarded to BOS for public hearing in August 2010; tentatively scheduled for action in October 2010
- water/geothermal well ordinance – forwarded to the BOS for public hearing; tentatively scheduled for October BOS meeting
- township codification project – staff have been working on this
- update of the Agricultural Security Area – CRPA needs to make a map before December 2010 to be recorded at Centre County
- Open Space Preservation Program review and marketing – no work yet
- township parks, sports fields, and recreation plan – no work since May 2010

Mr. Finkelstein raised the issue of Marcellus Shale and the potential of drilling in the Centre Region. Mr. Fennessey said that the geology is wrong; our clean water is more valuable. Discussion continued on the practicality of affordable housing and Halfmoon's distance from jobs, and the only jobs being the expansion of Way's Fruit Farm and Café and Dr. Miller's veterinary office. Currently the population isn't large enough to support even small convenience stores in the cold weather months.

Mr. Tylka and Mr. Eberhart raised questions about how property owners were contacted that their property would be included in the Ag Security Area. Since there was some confusion over the notification process, Mr. May offered to talk to Ms. D. J. Liggett who took over this project after Mr. DeGregorio's medical leave.

Mr. May then said in conclusion that perhaps these topics could be revisited at the next meeting after members had time to think on new projects.

9. Adjournment

Motion. Mr. Fennessey moved to adjourn. Mr. Stevens seconded. Vote: 7-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Gartner
Recording Secretary