

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
Planning Commission Meeting
February 5, 2013 7:00 pm

Present: Danelle Del Corso, Bob Eberhart, Sam Evans, Jordan Finkelstein, Lorin Nauman, John Stevens
Absent: Allen Wilson
Others present: D. J. Liggett, CRPA; Jim May, CPRA Director; Mark Boeckel, CRPA; Eric Vorwald, CRPA; Tom Zilla, CRPA Transportation Planner; Melissa Gartner, recording secretary

1. Call To Order

Chair Ms. Del Corso called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Meeting Date Change

The PC's second meeting in May is scheduled for May 21. This is also the date of the Municipal Primary Elections, which are held in the Township Meeting Room.

The PC decided to set an alternate meeting date for the previous week of May 14.

Motion. Mr. Nauman moved to change the PC's meeting date from May 21 to May 14.

Mr. Finkelstein seconded. Vote: 5-0.

Mr. Finkelstein also said there was an error in the minutes with the PC meeting dates in October. The PC will meet on the 1st and 15th, not the 2nd and 16th.

3. Citizen Comments

None

4. Approval of January 15, 2013 Minutes

Motion. Mr. Nauman moved to approve the minutes of January 15, 2013, with the corrected dates for October's meetings. Mr. Finkelstein seconded. Vote: 5-0.

5. Reports

a. BOS Update

Ms. Steele was not present. Ms. Liggett said the BOS is planning their Strategic Planning session for February 28. At the March 28 meeting, the BOS is planning to discuss the Share the Road signage, additional shoulders, berm improvements, etc. Scott Brown, Township Road Master, and Trish Meek, CPRA, will be present.

b. Zoning Officer's Report

Mr. Piper was not present.

c. CRPC Update

Ms. Del Corso said the CRPC will meet this Thursday for their reorganization meeting.

d. Open Space Board Update

Mr. Eberhart said there are 27 properties (just over 2,000 acres) in the Open Space program. The program is currently on hiatus because the BOS has decided not to accept any new applications at this time. There will be an OSP meeting on February 6).

6. Draft Centre Region Comprehensive Plan & Future Land Use Map

Mr. Vorwald gave a brief overview of this stage of the draft review process. PC members previously received full copies of the document, which is also being reviewed by the other five participating municipalities. He said that CRPA is asking the municipalities to prioritize and note any specific issues that will be beneficial to the municipality. The next step is to work on the implementation plan for the projects outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Eberhart asked about the Regional Growth Boundary and the Sewer Service Area. Mr. May said that the SSA is governed by Act 537 while the RGB falls under the Comprehensive Plan, which is guided by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. There is on-going discussion about whether they should continue to be identical, or whether the RGB should be larger than the SSA. He explained that currently the RGB and SSA are combined in one line, so that an expansion of the RGB automatically gets SSA benefits. Mr. May explained that some people see development occurring outside the RGB, which has no sewer service, so they think the RGB should be a separate delineation from the SSA. He said, in his opinion, the RGB and the SSA should stay the same because they indicate urban-type services.

Mr. Eberhart then asked about the Open Space and Conservation and Recreation Element. He objected to linking those three areas together, since he felt they were philosophically different. Mr. Boeckel said he combined them because they had many similarities. Since open space is not defined the same way across the region, and open space can be used for recreational purposes, these concepts were combined. Natural resource areas would not be utilized that way, and those concepts were discussed in a separate element. The other PC members said they were fine with the section as written.

Mr. Eberhart then asked about the Community and University Relationship Element. He said it bothered him that while the University has a voice on COG, the municipalities do not have an equal representation in the University decision-making process. Mr. May said that he and Mr. Zilla participate in the Intermodal Transportation Committee, and there are a few other links, but it is true that there is not a full reciprocation from the University. Mr. Eberhart asked for language supporting more municipal representation in University decision-making. The other PC members agreed with this addition.

Ms. Steele shared written comments with members prior to this meeting and submitted them to the BOS. Mr. Nauman asked the PC to review Ms. Steele's points as follows:

- Pg. 3: Add a section similar to the MPC's section 303-305 under Consistency in making growth and development decisions to ensure clear understanding of the Comprehensive Plan's legal status when using it as a policy document. Ms. Liggett summarized Ms. Steele's point that this document is for guidance, and the municipalities decide how to implement it at the local level. Mr. May

- noted that the plan will be as strong as municipalities want it to be. The PC agreed with this.
- Pg. 10: Ms. Steele disliked the phrase general consistency because she felt it was vague. The PC felt that since the phrase was defined in the MPC, it should be used
 - Pg. 15, Policy 1.1.1: This was a question from Ms. Steele to the BOS on whether Halfmoon wanted to develop uniform zoning designations and criteria. The PC agreed that zoning should be complementary rather than uniform.
 - Pg. 18, Policy 3.3.1: Should the detailed report every 5 years include developed land outside the RGB? The PC agreed with this.
 - Pg. 19, Policy 4.2.2: A possible revision – “Locate new housing concentrations to zoning areas and add within municipalities that are zoned for high concentration in addition to the RGB.” Ms. Liggett explained that this would represent a major policy change. Ms. Steele wrote that zoning controls growth, so if zoning is inconsistent with the RGB, either zoning needs to change or the RGB needs to change. The PC asked for more clarification on this item from Ms. Steele.
 - Pg. 24, Policy 7.2.5: This policy might affect Halfmoon’s current ag zoning, and where residential development is allowed. If the intent is to keep land in agricultural use, a municipality should start looking into how to bring that into conformance. Mr. May said there are other tools the Township can use besides downzoning to preserve agriculture. Ms. Steele’s comment is to note that Township should consider updating zoning ordinances to properly designate and provide minimum lot sizes for ag districts to promote farming. The PC agreed to this.
 - Pg. 64-65: Ms. Steel wanted to mention including natural gas within new developments. Ms. Liggett said that Ms. Steele fielded many questions from residents about this. Columbia Gas has said that the extension of gas service is regulated by PA Utilities Commission and has to be done in a cost-effective way because the cost is shared across the entire Commonwealth. Ms. Liggett said the Comprehensive Plan suggests that the extension of utilities occur wherever practical and appropriate. The PC decided to leave the Plan language as is.
 - Pg. 73, Objective 1.2: Ms. Steele wanted to add a policy about interconnection of sewer systems that was similar to the policy about interconnection of water systems. Mr. Vorwald said that while there are only two sewer providers, there are many water providers. Mr. Wilson said that Ms. Steele was asking for a 1.2.2 to go along with 1.1.2. The PC asked for more clarification on this item from Ms. Steele.
 - Pg. 76, Policy 3.1.1: Ms. Steele asked if Halfmoon wanted this as an objective to require sidewalks for new land developments and redevelopments. Ms. Liggett said that while Halfmoon has few sidewalks, this is a regional document so the language would not have to be implemented in all municipalities. I could still pertain to the other municipalities. The PC decided to leave the language as is.
 - Pg. 78, Objective 5.1.2: Ms. Steele suggested adding a policy that Centre Region COG should develop and deliver a service survey to member

municipalities every five years to ensure that services provided are needed. She felt services should be assessed regularly so they remain pertinent. The PC agreed with this.

- Finally, Ms. Steele made a general recommendation to share the Economic Development Assessment (EDA) with the CBICC and CRPA and work with them to implement it. Mr. May said previously, the COG had authorized the CRPA to conduct an EDA and analyze obsolete shopping centers, etc. to help new businesses find homes in the Centre Region. PC members said they did not support adding this language.

Ms. Del Corso then moved discussion onto the Future Land Use Map. Mr. Vorwald reviewed the two listening sessions held in Halfmoon Township on January 28 and 29. Several people were interested in having their properties changed back from the proposed land use to the former land use. Mr. Vorwald explained that the map only showed how the municipality would like to see the land used. Currently the Township has no zoning for forestry, so all ridge land is zoned for ag, but the Township would like to encourage forestry on areas with steep slopes. Someone at the meeting wanted his ridge property identified as an agricultural land use rather than forestry. Another resident living near Autumn Meadow Park wanted her property changed from residential to ag land use because she currently raises horses. Several residents wanted the Game Lands given a specific delineation, rather than just the same parks/recreation coloring as other park land, since it was purchased for hunting. A property owner wanted the property on the north side of Route 550 across from the south side mixed use area changed back to mixed use. The PC had discussed this previously, considered the soils and slopes there, and recommended keeping that area for ag/forestry instead of mixed use.

Ms. Del Corso said residents were also concerned that the land use map would limit what they could do with their land. One suggestion was to resubmit the land use map from the 2000 Comprehensive Plan with this update, then make appropriate zoning changes, before creating a new Future Use map. Ms. Liggett said there were two conflicting perspectives: Some felt that before the Township created a vision, it should nail down the zoning details. Others felt that before the Township spent time on the details, it should have a vision for the final outcome. She explained that the zoning discussions will take a long time, with public hearings and meetings. Mr. Vorwald said that just because some future land uses were shown on the map, does not guarantee or lock residents into that land use.

Mr. Eberhart said many people wanted to see the 2003 or 2006 resident surveys. He suggested at that meeting that another survey should be conducted. Ms. Del Corso said that the Comprehensive Plan is a planning tool to spur conversation, and suggested submitting the Future Land Use Map as is to gather more information. Her comment was to leave it as is, and use it as a tool to collect information.

Ms. Liggett said it is a bit cumbersome to change the Comprehensive Plan once it is adopted because five other municipalities would have to agree with it. However, she added that the 2000 Future Land Use map showed a lot of land as ag use, even though the zoning allowed for residential development. The land has been developed, and the map was not amended to reflect the residential land use areas.

Mr. Nauman asked about the properties behind the Village of Stormstown between Municipal Lane and Way's Fruit Farm which is now shown as residential

and should be listed as ag. Mr. Eberhart asked about some property east of Stormstown. Ms. Liggett agreed to review these areas.

Mr. Eberhart said he felt the open space land should be shown with a separate color to designate them as protected lands. Ms. Liggett said that because the Halfmoon Future Land Use Map will be combined with the other municipal maps to form a regional Future Land Use Map, and since Halfmoon is the only municipality with an open space program, it might not be appropriate to add a separate land use feature to the map. Mr. Vorwald offered to review this on the other municipal maps. Ms. Del Corso also said that open space is a designation, rather than a separate land use; since this is a land use map and the open space land would still be used for agriculture, it would not need to be shown separately.

Mr. May said that in the next ten years, the Township might grow by 100-150 dwelling units, and this map could help determine where those units will be placed in the future. Mr. Eberhart said that including this map as is would give the impression that it is the will of the Township, and he disagreed. Ms. Del Corso, Mr. Vorwald, Mr. May, and Ms. Liggett noted that the map is only a planning tool, and the BOS could at any time decide to limit development. Mr. Nauman said that if the residential land use areas he questioned earlier were changed to agricultural use, he could support this map as a potential vision. Mr. Eberhart then asked to have the PC added to the map disclaimer.

Ms. Del Corso then informally polled the PC. It was recommended that the PC submit the Future Land Use map as is, with Mr. Nauman's changes, to the BOS.

7. Fire Protection Regulations

Ms. Liggett reviewed the suggested language changes from the last PC meeting:

- Eliminate the requirement for water storage tanks,
- Eliminate the requirement for property owners to contact the water service provider and obtain the water fire flow rate,
- Eliminate the requirement for sprinkler systems,
- Eliminate the reference to the Centre Region Fire Administrator, and
- Change the recommendations for street width (shared driveway: 12' cartway, private road: 12' cartway with 2' shoulders).

Ms. Liggett provided these revisions to Mr. Sam Connor, Port Matilda VFC, and Mr. Roy Ellenberger, Warriors Mark VFC, for comment. Mr. Connor said that the Port Matilda Fire Company would use the water storage tanks if the fire company knew their locations and if the tanks were properly maintained. He acknowledged that the fire company does not currently use them, and he asked for more time to review the information with the rest of his fire company. Mr. Ellenberger said he was fine with the revised language because Warriors Mark's policy is to haul its own water supply to fire incidents. He also wanted Mr. Bruce Cox, another company member, to review the information. Ms. Liggett recommended that the PC table final action until the two companies have more time to review the information.

Mr. Nauman added that in this area, fire companies have a 30-minute response time and their mission is fire suppression only. He said, by the time these companies are on-site, the fire has done its damage and the 4,000 gallons sitting in a cistern will not save the property. Ms. Liggett reviewed Mr. Cox's comment that builders are now required to present homeowners with sprinkler information. Mr. Nauman said that his cement water tank lasted five years at most, even located

more than 50' from trees. He put 1,000 gallons of water in it and it drained away in a day after the roots penetrated it during a drought summer.

Mr. Eberhart asked about the following language under Exceptions: "Subdivisions and land developments located outside the RGB and served by a community water system, may, if a waiver is applied for and approved by the municipal PC and the BOS, utilize water storage tanks or a combination of water storage tanks and fire hydrants and automatic fire sprinkler systems to meet the water supply requirements." Ms. Liggett said this was an oversight in the revisions and the language should be deleted. She noted that if a property is located in a community water system and the homeowner wants to install a water storage tank, he/she does not need a waiver to do so.

Ms. Del Corso wanted to invite Mr. Connor to the next PC meeting to clarify his past and current comments. She also asked the PC to review the whole fire protection ordinance and check for inconsistencies in language for the next meeting.

8. Annual Report

Ms. Del Corso prepared a bulleted draft for the members to discuss and edit. It listed a summary and explanation of activities from the 2012 PC meetings. The Shared Driveway/Private Road ordinance has been forwarded to the BOS, but the BOS has tabled it several times. The Yield Plan has also been forwarded to the BOS but they have not discussed it yet. Members thanked Ms. Del Corso for her work on the Annual Report and accepted it as is.

9. Matters of Record

- Ms. Liggett shared some resident comments on the Official Map from the January 28 and 29 listening sessions. One resident was concerned about the Shanelly Drive cut-through, and others were concerned about possible tax increases to maintain the trail system. The BOS will consider the comments and schedule a formal public hearing prior to adoption of the Official Map.
- The next PC meeting will be held on February 19. Agenda items may include discussion of the 2013 PC work program and the fire protection regulations.

10. Adjournment

Motion. Mr. Finkelstein moved to adjourn. Mr. Nauman seconded. Vote: 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Gartner
Recording Secretary