

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
Planning Commission Meeting
February 15, 2011 7:00 pm

Present: Danelle Del Corso, Bob Eberhart, Larry Fennessey, Jordan Finkelstein, Joe Tylka
Absent: Lorin Nauman, John Stevens
Others present: D. J. Liggett, CRPA; Susan Steele, Township Manager; Tom Zilla, CRPA; Melissa Gartner, recording secretary

1. Call To Order

Chair Ms. Del Corso called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with her new gavel.

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Approval of January 4, 2011 Minutes

Motion. Mr. Eberhart moved to approve the minutes of January 4, 2011. Mr. Tylka seconded. Vote: 5-0.

4. Reports

a. BOS Update

At the last meeting, the BOS took care of minor business and then went into executive session to discuss a few legal issues.

b. Zoning Officer's Report

No report.

5. Halfmoon/Patton Area Plan – Traffic Analysis

Mr. Tom Zilla, a Transportation Planner with CRPA, works for the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which is a federally mandated organization responsible for coordinating county-wide transportation planning. Any metropolitan area must have an MPO to coordinate their highways, bridges, and transit. During the September 7, 2010 PC meeting, Mr. Zilla presented an introduction to the traffic analysis for the Halfmoon/Patton Area Plan (HPAP) being conducted by Trans Associates Engineering Consultants, Inc. (TA).

Because of increased development in the Halfmoon/Patton region and the proposed RVD zone with higher density, CRPA felt it was necessary to examine existing roadways and interchanges and the impact that more residents would have on these systems. The Halfmoon Township Official Map also showed a few roadways from Route 550 connecting to Grays Woods Boulevard, and Patton Township officials had concerns about resulting traffic. Mr. Zilla said that Route 550 is the key to maintaining through-traffic so vehicles do not divert through neighborhoods to reach the I-99 interchange or Circleville Road. One additional outcome of the analysis will be to develop a future roadway configuration that discourages traffic cut-through traffic in neighborhoods, while providing accessibility

for residents and public services. The analysis will include an assessment of the current operating conditions of Route 550 in the HPAP Study Area, and will identify improvements to protect Route 550's ability to carry through traffic and to discourage traffic from diverting to other areas. Components of the project are a travel demand model for roadways in the study area that includes land use, and an operational/safety assessment of the Route 550 corridor.

At this stage of the project, consultants have completed seven model runs predicting future traffic patterns by year 2040:

- **Staff Scenario – Full Build:** This was a “worst case” scenario and used a full build-out of the study area by the year 2040. It included Grays Woods, Toftrees West, Geisinger, and other land parcels. It also included a build-out of the proposed RVD area in Halfmoon.
 - Predicted a residential increase from 1082 units to 5275 units
 - This would create 13 “unacceptably congested” intersections in the area road network (using existing standards for urban areas)
 - Predicted an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 18,800 vehicles per day on Grays Boulevard west of Meeks Lane *[For comparison, current traffic on South Atherton Street in front of Meyer Dairy is approximately 17,000 vehicles per day; current traffic on Route 550 is approximately 6,200 vehicles per day.]*
 - Traffic signal warrants satisfied for 7 new lights
 - Left turn lane warrants satisfied for 23 locations
 - Right turn lane warrants satisfied for 19 locations
- **Existing Zoning Scenario:** This run used the Halfmoon Township Official Map. It included a build-out of vacant land in Halfmoon and Patton Townships under existing zoning conditions (no RVD). The configuration eliminated a cluster of “spaghetti” roads along the Township boundary line.
 - Predicted a residential increase from 1082 units to 3853 units
 - Created 5 unacceptably congested intersections
 - Predicted ADT of 15,500 vehicles/day on Grays Woods Boulevard west of Meeks Lane
 - Three Alternate versions of the Existing Zone, closing or altering different sections of road, were also analyzed:
 - **Alternate 1/Closing Meeks Lane south of Route 550:** traffic on Meeks Lane dropped to zero but ADT rose to 17,000 vehicles/day on Grays Woods Boulevard, indicating people would use the Halfmoon cut-through
 - **Alternate 2/ Closing Meeks Lane south of Route 550 and closing Deerbrook Drive north of Merganser Way:** traffic on Meeks Lane dropped to zero but ADT rose even higher to 17,400 vehicles/day on Grays Woods Boulevard; 7 unacceptably congested intersections
 - **Alternate 3/Widen Grays Woods Blvd to four lanes from Brynwood Drive to I-99:** ADT at 16,100; 7 unacceptably congested intersections
- **Existing Zoning – 1/2 Build:** This predicted a build-out to half-capacity (50% of a full build-out).

- Predicted a residential increase from 1082 units to 2597 units
- Created 5 unacceptably congested intersections
- Predicted ADT of 9,500 vehicles/day on Grays Woods Boulevard west of Meeks Lane
- **Existing Zoning – 2/3 Build:** This model predicted a build-out to two-thirds (66% of a full build-out).
 - Predicted a residential increase from 1082 units to 3005 units
 - Created 5 unacceptably congested intersections
 - Predicted ADT of 11,600 vehicles/day on Grays Woods Boulevard west of Meeks Lane

In addition to the model runs, TA consultants also conducted a Route 550 Safety Study from Carson's Corner to Sawmill Road. In the last five years, there were 51 reportable crashes, eight reportable crashes after the opening of I-99 but only one crash at Carson's Corner (322/550 intersection). Ms. Del Corso asked to compare the previous level of accidents and Mr. Zilla thought there had been five accidents at that intersection alone in the year before I-99 opened. In the last five years, there were also three fatal crashes and seven crashes categorized as "Struck Animal." Potential mitigation efforts could include adding rumble strips in the centerline or adding a median to divide traffic along Route 550 near Mattern Lane and adding a left turn lane on Route 550 (south bound) at Sawmill Road. The level of service deficiencies could be fixed with a left turn lane on Route 550 into Grays Woods at Deerbrook Drive and adding a signal/left turn lane on Route 550 at Meeks Lane.

The Highway Safety Manual was recently published by PennDOT, to help evaluate the benefits of particular improvements related to safety. The manual predicts or projects crashes under certain conditions. If an MPO would make certain improvements, the manual attempts to predict whether these improvements would reduce crashes at that location over time. The Federal Highway Administration now closely regulates the use of their money to correct a traffic deficiency. Even if an MPO used an area where several crashes had already occurred, it must prove that its proposed actions would actually correct the problem before using the money.

Mr. Zilla concluded his presentation by listing the next steps in the project. They were as follows:

- review the results of the final model runs, based on the 2/3 Build assumptions, in Spring 2011
- consider any final Route 550 operational/safety recommendations
- recommend mitigation addressing the congestion at Route 550/Old Route 322, Old Route 322 between Curve Hill Road and Route 550, and Grays Woods Blvd east of Meeks Lane
- consider traffic-calming options for Meeks Lane
- consider a neighborhood-friendly street design for Grays Woods Boulevard
- coordinate responsibility for mitigation measures for developments (Grays Woods, Toftrees, Geisinger, other developers) and official agencies (PennDOT, Centre County MPO, municipalities).

After Mr. Zilla's presentation, Mr. Fennessey brought up a previous discussion of plowing and signage for private roads. Apparently the Township previously purchased "private road" signs but did not install them due to some concerns by the BOS. Ms. Steele said the Township is now systematically replacing road signs to

meet the new PennDOT reflectivity standards, and perhaps these signs could be incorporated into this work project. Mr. Eberhart and Mr. Finkelstein said that they do have existing signs on their lanes (end of Houtz Lane and on Toms Lane), stating "This road is not owned or maintained by Halfmoon Township." Ms. Steele will look into this matter to discuss at a future meeting.

6. Halfmoon Park, Sports Fields and Recreation Plan

Ms. Steele reviewed that the BOS asked the Park Board or the PC to begin implementing the Park Plan. The PC had planned a tentative trail route based on an existing trail and contacted property owners along that route. Two property owners responded that they were not interested in a trail connecting park lands, and others questioned the need for trails in Halfmoon Township. According to the Park Plan adopted in 2009, trails were a priority for the Township; this came from a 2008 citizen survey listing trails as the #1 concern. Ms. Steele suggested using 2011 to educate the public on the Park Plan rather than purchase land or build trails, in case public priorities have changed. Mr. Fennessey noted that on the Halfmoon Township Official Map, none of the public areas are connected and as the PC is a planning board, it should be proactive in connecting public spaces for the future.

In reference to land acquisition, Ms. Steele also said that the owners of the property adjacent to Autumn Meadow Park are not willing to sell at this time. They are holding the property as an investment for the future.

Ms. Steele suggested scheduling a joint meeting with the PC and the Parks & Recreation Board to review the goals and objectives of the Halfmoon Park Plan. She and Ms. Liggett will coordinate schedules and contact the Parks & Recreation Board for a joint meeting.

7. 2011 Work Program

Ms. Del Corso asked the PC members to suggest work plan items. Mr. Finkelstein asked if the PC could work on a Township Emergency Plan. Ms. Steele suggested asking Mr. Shawn Kauffman, hired as the Township Emergency Management Coordinator, to report what he has done. Mr. Finkelstein stated that it is important to identify every household in the Township and their specific needs for emergency services. He felt it was critical for emergency responders to know if there are residents with special needs, but Ms. Steele said that since a law was changed, households cannot be required to post signs stating "Senior Lives Here" or "Child's Room" due to kidnapping incidents. Mr. Finkelstein felt that households with special needs should be identified, because this had never been done. Ms. Steele will bring this to the attention of the BOS and ask Mr. Kauffman to speak to the PC.

Mr. Tylka said that some issues may arise from the Five-Year Plan, with a meeting this Thursday on February 17, 2011. Discussion continued on the Open Space program and ways to adjust the lease requirements to encourage others to join the program. One suggestion was to allow limited subdivision on properties in the Open Space Program; another was to reduce the lease from 99 years to 50 (or 20) years. Ms. Steele said that the OSPB budget only has about \$30,000 left for property purchase. Ms. Liggett also mentioned that OSPB members had discussed asking the school board to freeze property taxes, because it might encourage more

owners to join; however, since Governor Corbett recently cut school budgets across the state, school boards would probably be even more reluctant.

Mr. Eberhart asked about the codification status. Ms. Steele said this was up to Ms. Kathleen Yurchak, because everything has been reviewed at PC, OSP, and BOS. Ms. Steele raised the question if it made more sense to take a year and not have a law in place, or put it in place and spend the time to go through it while in action.

Ms. Steele then asked Mr. Fennessey about Chapter 102 (a new requirement for developers to obtain an erosion sedimentation permit), since the Township staff will be trained on this information. Mr. Fennessey said he felt it would not be helpful to have a County representative come in and present information. Ms. Del Corso suggested waiting until after the staff completes the training and then perhaps they can brief the PC on pertinent information. Ms. Steele and Ms. Liggett will compile a work plan and present it to the PC for approval.

Ms. Steele also mentioned the possibility of revisiting the Village zoning, since there may be some property sold soon for development in the Stormstown Village. Mr. Eberhart and Mr. Fennessey then discussed revisiting the Ag zoning in the Township.

Ms. Steele stated that the Centre Region General Forum passed the Greenhouse Gas resolution and asked each municipality to list which item(s) it wants to implement. Some of these items might be difficult to implement; for example, one stated "Relax your zoning ordinances." Discussion continued, and the PC will review these options at the next meeting.

8. Census Information

Ms. Liggett provided recent U.S. Census Bureau information from the American Community Survey. Municipalities the same size as Halfmoon Township will now receive information every five years, instead of waiting for results from the decennial census. This information would be helpful to get a sense of Township trends. For example, 83% of Township residents are driving alone to work. Ms. Liggett will condense this information and prepare a table summarizing the information so it is more user-friendly. Ms. Del Corso asked what the PC should take away from the data to focus efforts on certain areas, or are there certain expectations for infrastructure or park land for similarly-sized townships. Ms. Steele said that there are certain park land standards based on demographics, but others do not want to extend the Regional Boundary to include public sewer.

9. Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Gartner
Recording Secretary