

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
Planning Commission Meeting
September 18, 2012 7:00 pm

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

1. Call To Order

Chair Ms. Del Corso called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

As a member of the public, Mr. Eberhart discussed his concerns about the intersection of Houtz Lane and Mahala Street. He distributed a photo of the intersection, which serves 17 residences. At the intersection, there are 17 mailboxes and 14 newspaper boxes. Mr. Eberhart's concern is that this intersection has a high activity level in the morning and evening when people are attempting to access their mail and paper boxes. Last year, there were two school buses that turned around in that intersection; this year, there is at least one bus turning here. Mr. Eberhart stated that he has lived there since 1988 and there hasn't been a large problem until this summer. Since the western part of Houtz Lane has been paved, residents are driving at public street speed and creating a hazard. Ms. Steele said that the Township can install a stop sign on the public right-of-way on West Mahala Street, but the Township cannot enforce a speed limit on a private road. Her suggestion was that Mr. Eberhart could organize a meeting with the other property owners to decide how to regulate speed on their private road. Township staff could attend this meeting to answer questions in terms of what the Township is allowed to do. Mr. Eberhart asked if the Township Engineer had ever visited the intersection, and Ms. Steele said that he had.

3. Approval of August 21, 2012 Minutes

Motion. Mr. Tylka moved to approve the minutes of August 21, 2012. Mr. Nauman seconded. Vote: 6-0.

4. Reports

a. BOS Update

Ms. Steele said the BOS is working on budgeting. They had their first budget session on Monday, September 17, and started going through the general budget. They have a long list of policies as a result of the retreat, but Ms. Steele will narrow the focus to four topics. Ms. Liggett spoke to the BOS about the future land use map, and the BOS will hold work sessions on this through December. BOS approved Mr. Maloney's planning module and sewer plan. Ms. Liggett said that the BOS wanted to proceed with the Official Map that was reviewed during the Parks Plan discussions, and she said she will bring that back

to the PC for final review before forwarding to the BOS. Ms. Steele also said staff met with Township Engineer to put together hard costs for the recreation improvements the public suggested at the town meeting.

b. Zoning Officer's Report

No report, because Mr. Piper was not present. Ms. Steele reported that there have been three new structures this year, totaling \$685,000. Mr. Houtz is building a single-family three-bedroom home along Route 550 in Stormstown.

c. CRPC Update

Ms. Del Corso said that the CRPC did not meet in September, and will meet in October. She reported that the DRI vote to expand the RGB and Sewer Service Area for Harvest Fields Church failed 5-1 (Ferguson).

5a. Centre Region Comprehensive Plan (Housing)

Ms. Liggett reviewed the discussion from the August 21 PC meeting and asked for member comments on the Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Tylka asked if the Centre Region had a Habitat for Humanity plan for affordable housing. Ms. Liggett said there is a Habitat development located in Patton Township behind the new Trader Joe's location. She said they lost 60 mobile homes from the Mellot Mobile Home Park at that location in order to accommodate new commercial development, but gained 16 Habitat homes there. Mr. Tylka said that he has participated in Habitat projects previously; the process to qualify for a Habitat home is rigorous and students would not be eligible. Ms. Liggett said one issue is finding affordable land; Mr. Tylka said that perhaps the developer could assist, rather than the tax payers. Mr. Eberhart asked for details on the Trader Joe property. Ms. Liggett said the property owner asked to have the property rezoned for commercial, and Patton agreed to rezone the front portion if the developer provided for affordable housing units on the back portion.

Mr. Eberhart then asked if affordable housing should be encouraged outside the RGB since those residents might have transportation issues. Members discussed this, and concluded that there are already several types of "affordable" housing located in the Township. Affordable housing in outlying areas may not be an option for all, but it could address housing needs for those with transportation. Mr. Fennessey asked about trailer parks since that was also discussed at the previous meeting, and said there is no language in the Comprehensive Plan to encourage the protection of these housing situations. Mr. Tylka said in New York City, with Section 8 buildings, 20% of the units must be made available for affordable housing. Mr. Tylka asked if the Chamber of Commerce or business community were involved, since their employees would benefit from affordable housing. Ms. Liggett said the Chamber was represented on the Affordable Housing Coalition at one time, but is not involved currently. Mr. Tylka said that in the 1980s, the University of California Irvine had a major problem recruiting professors due to a housing shortage. Then, the University bought houses near campus and sold them to faculty at a reasonable rate. Members supported the addition of language encouraging the protection of existing affordable housing.

5b. Centre Region Comprehensive Plan (Community & University Relations)

Mr. Vorwald presented the next two elements of the regional Comprehensive Plan, Community & University Relations and Sustainability. The Community & University Relations element encompasses transportation, land use integration, student housing, communications, and contributions to the community. This is a new chapter for the Comprehensive Plan, and much of this material came from the State College Area Plan. Mr. Tylka asked Mr. Vorwald to elaborate on the openness of this relationship. Mr. Vorwald explained that there is some cross-participation in advisory bodies between the University and the community and CRPA has been invited by Penn State to participate in some strategic planning. Penn State representatives sit on several municipal boards, and share pertinent information when necessary. Mr. Eberhart said this is a good time to discuss this relationship because Penn State is currently working on more public accountability and openness.

Transportation

No comments.

Land Use Integration

Mr. Finkelstein asked about a Health Matters notice recruiting community members to participate in recreational programs on campus as a "Friend of Penn State," but the recent news story that Penn State is closing public access to athletic facilities is sending a mixed message. Mr. Fennessey said that recreational facilities are managed by different departments (Intercollegiate Athletics vs. Education & General), and therefore allow different levels of public access. Mr. Tylka asked if Penn State could contribute to affordable housing for employees. Ms. Del Corso supported incorporating such language into this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and also in the next section.

Student Housing

Mr. Vorwald said that this section has raised the most public comments. Ms. Steele suggested adding another goal to encourage Penn State to work in partnership with municipalities to expand and diversify economic development through University research and other initiatives.

Communications

No comments.

Contributions to the Community

Mr. Tylka suggested adding the Air National Guard to the list of emergency responders and encouraging a good relationship with them since they would be first responders in the event of a major riot or unrest.

5c. Centre Region Comprehensive Plan (Sustainability)

The Sustainability element encompasses water and sewer services, transportation, alternative energy, municipal resources, and economic opportunities. Mr. Vorwald said that many of these topics are also covered in other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Water and sewer services

Mr. Nauman commented that currently, there is not sustainable development outside of the RGB because the outlying areas can only develop in an unsustainable way. These outlying areas are not permitted to use microfiltration systems for higher density/lower land consumption developments. The RGB might want the outlying areas to provide open space or agricultural uses; however, eventually the land will be consumed with large area land developments using soil remediation (septic systems), which are not sustainable. Mr. Vorwald said they will look into adding language to make it more sustainable in this regard.

Transportation

No comments.

Alternative energy

No comments.

Municipal resources

No comments.

Economic opportunities

No comments.

Mr. Fennessey suggested eliminating the Sustainability chapter because these topics are already well addressed throughout the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Del Corso said the Centre Region has been sensitive to sustainability issues; therefore, sustainability language is already incorporated throughout the document. Mr. Vorwald said he would take this suggestion back to the committee.

6. Future Land Use Map

Ms. Liggett introduced the Future Land Use Map, noting that land use is what you see on the ground; zoning is what implements what's on the ground. Land use is your vision for what you want the community to look like; zoning is what you use to make that happen.

Ms. Liggett distributed copies of the Halfmoon Township Existing Land Use map, the Halfmoon Township Future Land Use map, the current Zoning Map for reference, and the Halfmoon/Patton Area Map. Currently, on the Existing Land Use Map, much of Halfmoon is shown as agricultural and parks/recreation/conservation. However, the Possible Future Land Use Map shows that at full build-out, most of the map is shown as residential development, with only the properties currently in the

Act 153 Open Space Program shown as agricultural areas. With the Township's current zoning, this map shows what could happen, since the Township's A-1 zoning permits residential development at a density of one unit to the acre.

Ms. Liggett reported that the BOS is continuing to work on and discuss the Future Land Use map through the end of the year. This map will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, which will reach a much wider audience than typical Township maps.

Mr. Fennessey recommended that there be additional residential areas shown on the Existing Land Use map because he thought there were more lots used for housing than are shown. Ms. Liggett and Mr. Vorwald said this map is based on the 2000 land use map, but can be revised to more accurately reflect the current situation. Ms. Steele said that showing the land as residential would be a good idea, because the public perception is that this land is protected as agricultural, but nothing is legally protecting the land from residential development.

Ms. Liggett then asked where the Township thinks future development is best placed. She referred to the Halfmoon/Patton Area Plan Map, and shared what the BOS suggested: the area east of the Wildlife Corridor to the Halfmoon/Patton Township line would be targeted for higher density, mixed-use development, and the area west of Smith Road could be kept as agricultural. This would also include alternative agricultural uses (horse farms, niche crops such as hops, etc.). The middle of the Township surrounding the Village of Stormstown is currently shown as mixed-use and the BOS is in favor of maintaining that status. Ms. Liggett noted that the BOS discussed several steps to implement the future land use map, including approaching farmers and asking about voluntary down-zoning. In Ferguson Township, farm owners agreed to down-zoning to 1 unit per 25 or 50 acres to protect agricultural practices. Anyone who is already participating in the OSP or Clean and Green in Halfmoon Township might be interested in preserving their land with different zoning.

Mr. Fennessey suggested keeping the Future Land Use map as is, because the coloring points out a striking message – the Township does not have agricultural zoning in place. Ms. Del Corso said that if the BOS wants to change the colors on the map, they have to change the zoning. Ms. Liggett said that identifying the western end of the Township as agricultural presents an opportunity for the OSPB to seek out the properties in that area of the Township and give them a higher priority for acquisition of development rights. Mr. Eberhart reminded the PC that in the 1970s, there was an earlier effort to down-zone but the farmers themselves rejected the idea because development was their opportunity to profit from their property and retire from farming.

Mr. Nauman said that there are only two options: down-zone to keep land as agricultural or allow public sewer (or a satellite treatment facility), because commercial development is not viable without it. Mr. Tylka asked Ms. Steele if the Township could reject that type of sewage facility because it doesn't want to assume the liability. Ms. Steele said Halfmoon could only reject if the project does not comply with Act 537. The risk to the Township is if the Region allows for new advanced wastewater treatment systems under Act 537 that does not use soil remediation but allows for high density development without having to extend the

UAJA sewer. Ms. Liggett said that Stormstown is an example of a location that could use a small satellite sewer plant, but there are many challenges and issues the Township would have to address before such a plant could be considered. Mr. Tylka said that someday, advanced wastewater technologies will be available and because the Township is in the State College Area School District, people will want to live here.

Ms. Liggett said that land uses and zoning should guide development, not the type of sewer service available. Ms. Del Corso suggested targeting an entire meeting as a work session on this topic, instead of partially addressing it at several meetings.

7. Shared Driveways & Private Roads

Ms. Liggett reviewed the previous discussion from the August 21 PC meeting. The definitions and criteria are listed below:

- Shared driveway
 - serves no more than 2 lots
 - house numbers required at end of driveway and visible on the house
- Private road
 - serves no more than 4 lots
 - road name and house numbers required at end of driveway
 - 50' right-of-way
 - public road sub-base
- Public road
 - serves 5 or more lots
 - 50' right-of-way
 - asphalt top over public road sub-base

Ms. Liggett would like to take this information to the BOS and obtain their general approval before proceeding with ordinance language. Mr. Fennessey asked what the width requirement for a private road would be. Ms. Liggett suggested reviewing the fire protection regulations; she thought the minimum width for vehicles to pass is 18 feet. Mr. Fennessey's concern is that a private road should not be required to have a public road width, because requiring an 18' width would add 33% to the cost and might be a burden to property owners. Ms. Liggett said she would check fire standards for other municipalities. One possibility is a minimum cartway width with pull-offs every 500 feet to allow vehicles to pass.

Mr. Eberhart suggested requiring a stop sign where a private road joins a Township road. Ms. Steele said she would check on that because it falls under the State rules for roads. He also suggested adding a road maintenance agreement requirement to the criteria for private roads. Ms. Liggett agreed, noting that an agreement can be required when a subdivision plan is submitted, but the Township does not have a mechanism to enforce compliance with the maintenance agreement.

8. Matters of Record

- The next PC meeting will be held on October 2. Agenda items may include a continued discussion of the future land use map. Discussion of fire protection may occur on October 16, depending in the availability of Port Matilda and Warriors Mark Fire Chiefs.

9. Adjournment

Motion. Mr. Nauman moved to adjourn. Mr. Fennessey seconded. Vote: 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Gartner
Recording Secretary