



Halfmoon Township

100 Municipal Lane
Port Matilda, PA 16870
Phone: (814) 692-9800
www.halfmoontwp.us

REGULAR MEETING PLANNING COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 21, 2023

PRESENT: (in person) Chairman Andrew Meehan, George Stine, Rick Bates and Mark Hartle. Other Staff in Attendance; Mark Boeckel, CRPA and Amy Smith, Halfmoon Twp Clerk, (by video conference) Nicole Harter

ABSENT: David Pick, Mr. Zack Rice, Solicitor

VISITORS: Ron Servello and Rose Ann Hoover, Halfmoon Twp BOS, (by Zoom) Reed Moyer and Karen Miller, citizens

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

CHAIRMAN COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. January 17, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Bates motioned to approve the January 17, 2023 PC meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hartle and passed unanimously.

BUSINESS

A. REVIEW OF SALDO AND ZONING ORDINANCES

Mr. Boeckel stated that he has prepared a memo that outlines the review of the Twp's ordinances to date with issues identified and possible remedies provided. Staff would like to get feedback from the PC and BOS on how to proceed and direction on the changes.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the first item for discussion is Chapter 166, Parkland Dedication. The ordinance requires dedication of land for all subdivisions and land developments, whether residential or non-residential regardless of the size or intensity. A fee in-lieu of is also an option for the applicant, however needs to be revised for non-residential developments. A question for the Twp to address is how much parkland does the Twp envision and how much does it want.

Mr. Meehan stated that for large housing developments, parkland would be nice to have for the residents, but for smaller projects it may not be necessary.

MS Smith stated that there have been recent projects where the applicant has paid the fee in-lieu of and that the monies have gone to the existing parks.

Mr. Servello questioned the parkland and open space differences.

Mr. Boeckel stated that in the RPD standards, there is a 50% open space requirement and that the land it is still owned by the applicant or someone else and the parkland is an additional requirement and that land is dedicated to the Twp.

Mr. Servello stated that there needs to be a threshold where the Twp is going to request the parkland and the costs involved to the Twp to maintain it needs to be evaluated. There also seems to be a disparity between the value of the land dedication and the fee-in-lieu of amount, with the fee-in-lieu of being too low.

Mr. Bates stated that the developer should be responsible to provide parkland or a fee toward an existing park because the developer is the one who is bringing more residents into the Twp who are going to use the parks. However, there needs to be a threshold on when to require the parkland dedication.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 181, Sewers and Sewage Disposal. The Twp adopted in 2013 a regional growth boundary and sewer service area implementation agreement that defined how growth and wastewater would be managed. However, the ordinances have not been updated to be consistent with that agreement. The agreement stated that any development of more than 15 lots outside of the service area would need a community on lot disposal system and that a sewage treatment facility would be prohibited.

Mr. Meehan stated that the current ordinance requires the UAJA to operate and maintain the system and that should not be changed.

Mr. Boeckel stated that would remain and that the SALDO and Zoning ordinances need to have consistent language.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 215, SALDO General Provisions. There are numerous definitions which need to be updated, revised or added. They do not need any direction of this item and will provide revisions in the future.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 215, SALDO Plan Review Procedures. These updates will provide better criteria for submission of plans and will have a process to deem a plan incomplete at the time of submission.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 215, SALDO Plan Requirements. These updates will outline the information required to be on every plan submitted. A statement explaining the purpose of the project will be necessary along with signature requirements for the Fire Chief and SEO on the plans.

Mr. Hartle and Mr. Meehan agreed that the purpose statement was strongly needed.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 215, Design and Improvement Standards. This is the section where the details for the improvements are located and needs to be updated. There are items that lack criteria and specificity in order to be able to enforce the requirement and needs to be revised or maybe eliminated. There is a sidewalk standard and does the Twp want or require sidewalks in a subdivision. There isn't a regulation for how long a temporary cul-de-sac can be in place. The ordinance has design standards but there is to regulations after they are constructed.

Mr. Servello stated that the ordinances need to be updated and revised so that it is enforceable.

Mr. Boeckel stated that there is a requirement for new homes to have water storage tanks installed for fire protection and that fire companies typically do not want to use that water so this may want to be deleted from the ordinance.

Mr. Servello stated that he has heard that too and that there should be a specification for the quality of the water in the tank or check with the fire company to see what they want.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 215, SALDO RPD Standards. These are the ordinances that regulate residential development in the Agricultural district. The current regulations allow for residential lots on agricultural land with a 50% open space requirement and it does not state

that the Twp wishes to stay rural. Staff needs a discussion and direction from the Twp on how they envision the future.

Mr. Servello stated that the general idea in the Twp is that the Twp does not want a lot of residential development on agricultural land but how can you prevent the residential development.

Mr. Boeckel stated that it is possible with zoning regulations and that it can be made as restrictive as you wish. You need to have a plan with how you envision the Twp and then implement it through zoning regulations.

Mr. Meehan stated that the intent is to preserve farmland and that the current regulations do not specify where the open space is to be located.

Mr. Servello stated that as the older farmers are retiring, how restrictive does the Twp wish to be on their land, but the intent should be to preserve farmland.

Mr. Boeckel stated that other Twps have much larger residential lot sizes for agricultural land and there may be some disagreement in the Twp about what the farmers are expecting from the sale of their land in the future if restricted in size.

Mr. Bates stated that there are Conservation programs where the landowners enroll and the development rights are sold and the landowner is paid upfront to preserve the farm. The landowner shouldn't be told that they can't sell their land for resident development without there being a program in place.

Mr. Boeckel asked if the Twp is interested in protecting farm land or just open space and are the RPD standards achieving that goal. Also, is the current density satisfactory or does that need to be adjusted.

Mr. Meehan stated that the current density is good or could go to a higher density with more open space.

Mr. Boeckel stated that other Twps. have a sliding scale for the size of the lots and the open space required.

Ms. Hoover stated that the current RPD standards haven't met the intent of the ordinances and a sliding scale would allow the landowner to have choices on the development of the property.

Mr. Hartle stated that Staff could present options on this sliding scale for further discussion. The open space should not be on the unusable land and all the lots are on the useable farmland.

Mr. Bates stated that there needs to be a regulation to protect the prime agricultural land for the future generations to not end up in houses and the unproductive, unusable land remain.

Mr. Boeckel stated that could easily be done by indicating the prime agricultural land on the plans from county soil maps and then protecting that land in the open space requirement.

Mr. Boeckel stated that he will prepare options for achieving those goals discussed at a future meeting.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the next item is Chapter 255, Zoning. Staff has just begun to review it and is identifying some items that are problematic. The Twp does not currently have use regulations for conditional use permits. The permitted uses in each zoning district needs to be reviewed. Language needs to be added to state that if the proposed use is not listed as permitted in the district then it is prohibited.

Mr. Meehan stated that the permitted use list could be quite detailed and lengthy.

Mr. Boeckel stated that it would not be that difficult and it is just a listing of what the Twp wants and then providing the language that is open ended enough to protect the Twp and to prevent an applicant from taking advantage of it.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the zoning ordinances need to have minimum lot sizes in all districts. There is a need to create requirements for accessory dwelling units in the Agricultural district. There is a need to have a minimum lot size requirement to have farm animals in the Residential district. There is a need to define home occupation. There is a need to develop regulations for accessory solar. This is just a start in the review of the Zoning ordinances and there will be more to follow.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

None

STAFF REPORTS

None

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD LIAISON REPORT

None

CRPC BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Meehan stated that they did meet and discussed the 537 plan in State College and there was nothing that would impact Halfmoon Twp.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS LIAISON REPORT


None

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hartle made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stine and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 pm.

The next meeting of the Halfmoon Township Planning Commission will be held on March 21, 2023. This meeting will be both virtual and in-person at the Community Center located at 100 Municipal Lane in Port Matilda, PA. For information on how to register, please visit www.halfmoontwp.us or contact the township office at 814-692-9800.

Respectfully submitted,



George Stine
Halfmoon Township Planning Commission Secy