



TOWNSHIP OF HALFMOON

100 MUNICIPAL LANE · PORT MATILDA, PA 16870

TELEPHONE : (814) 692-9800

www.halfmoontwp.us

Halfmoon Township Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2024

1. **CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Stine called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **ROLL CALL**

In attendance at this meeting were George Stine, Rick Bates, Rose Ann Hoover, Mark Hartle, Chip Jones, Cory Rilk, Amy Smith, and Meagan Beck.

There were also two unnamed attendees from Centre Documenters.

3. **OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS**

NONE

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

NONE

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- *Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2024 Planning commission meeting. Mr. Bates seconded the motion. All are in favor; motion carries.*

6. **REVIEW OF RURAL PRESERVATION DEVELOPMENT (RPD) AMENDMENTS**

Mr. Hartle wanted to add the statement, "to determine the potential maximum number of dwelling units" into the yield plan definition in A i.

Mr. Stine wanted to add "environmentally sensitive and conservation areas" into A ii.

Responding to Mr. Stine's question, Ms. Smith explained that the document will be formatted correctly once all the amendments are complete.

Mr. Stine suggested changing the language in A ii. to, "yield plan must show and exclude wetlands, flood plains, and areas of steep slopes from the maximum lot calculation.



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Ms. Hoover asked if the RPD excludes steep slopes in the initial calculations.

Mr. Stine explained that they will be excluded for the yield plan.

Mr. Rilk clarified that the yield plan is meant to show what the potential build out would be for a proposed subdivision while eliminating environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Rilk stated he is proposing using a minimum lot area of 43,560 square feet (1 acre) for the yield plan standards.

Mr. Stine commented that 60,000 square feet comes out to 1.4 acres and asked if the commission members wanted to keep this number as the minimum lot area.

Mr. Stine stated in previous discussions with Mr. Boeckel, he proposed 60,000 square feet in an example and was under the understanding that this number is what was being proposed for the minimum lot area.

Mr. Rilk explained that he and Ms. Smith spoke to Mr. Boeckel and that this was not a firm number that was proposed and was just being used as an example.

Mr. Rilk and Ms. Smith will confirm with Mr. Boeckel.

In regard to the 50% open land table requirements, Mr. Rilk explained that in Pennsylvania the law states that logging is allowed on open land. He said there is nothing the township can do to stop that. After speaking with Mr. Boeckel, he had suggested eliminating the table and come up with a sentence using a specific percentage of types of areas such as storm water basins, etc., so as to conserve the open land. And then there won't need to be calculations for the percentage of specific resources on a property.

Mr. Stine commented that the commission previously agreed to keep forested land at 45% of the open land. He questioned how you can limit forest that is no longer forest.

Mr. Rilk agreed there isn't a way to do that. And even if there were, and someone else buys the property, the new owner could log the land.

Mr. Hartle asked if the township could put an easement on forest land.

Mr. Rilk said there could be a private easement from Clearwater Conservancy, etc., but the township has no say on that.



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Mr. Stine decided to table this discussion for now.

Ms. Smith said Mr. Boeckel suggested adding language specifying the maximum number of dwelling units permitted in the RPD.

The commission agreed to change the "informal" plan to "yield" plan in paragraph E to keep the language consistent.

Mr. Hartle stated that using the word perennial instead of continuous is better in paragraph E (3). He then asked to change the wording in paragraph E (4) from slopes to steep slopes.

Mr. Rilk agreed that eliminating "of 25% or greater" in E4 cleans the sentence up.

Mr. Rilk stated that under the RPD lot standards, staff changed minimum lot size to minimum lot area for consistency purposes and made this requirement 21,780 square feet (1/2 acre).

Mr. Jones wanted confirmation that the township cannot tell a landowner what kind of forest management they can do.

Mr. Rilk confirms that they could put a statement about forest management in the document, but state law says it is allowed, so if it were ever challenged, it wouldn't hold up.

There was a conversation about how to include restrictions about invasive plant species and noxious weeds. Mr. Bates said he would do research on that and report back.

Mr. Stine wanted to add the sentence, "the minimum width of open land shall be 300 feet wide. Open land shall be contiguous to open land of another RPD tract and shall have a shared border of 150 feet. This addition was added to the allowable uses/standards for open land.

Mr. Hartle suggested adding language in paragraph 4 regarding land banks that may also be used to satisfy open land requirements." Mr. Hartle will confirm with Ms. Smith after the meeting on this specific language addition.

Ms. Hoover stated she was thinking about the definition of farm and how the board previously lowered the minimum acreage for agricultural uses to 2 acres. She used an example of buffalo and blueberries saying 2 acres would be plenty for blueberries, but not nearly enough for buffalo.



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There was then a discussion on what acceptable uses for agriculture are allowed in open space.

Mr. Hartle stated he will do some homework on how to reference farming and look for a good definition.

7. REVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

Ms. Smith stated that Mr. Boeckel and Ms. Harter went through the Agricultural District. She said that a lot of the document was moved into the chart within the document. She also said they recommended limited commercial uses and limited industrial uses to be removed from allowable uses for Agricultural District. Ms. Smith then noted that paragraph 12 should be moved to SALDO or Streets & Driveways.

It was recommended that Ag operations be allowed on land 10 acres or more.

Mr. Rilk questioned if the standard for 10 acres in the Ag district supersedes the 2 acres in the RPD.

Mr. Stine thought they were different enough to not cause issues.

Mr. Rilk wanted to clarify in permitted uses that Agricultural operations that are not included in the RPD are permitted.

Mr. Rilk then noted that there are allowable exceptions added under single family dwellings.

Mr. Hartle asked if you are allowed to have cell towers within the township.

Ms. Smith stated that there are separate rules for telecommunications.

Mr. Hartle noted that he likes the cross references within the Ag district document.

Mr. Jones asked if dog kennels are considered an agricultural business.

Ms. Smith clarified that it is listed as a permitted use of ag land.

Mr. Stine asked if the board should move dog kennels up to 10 acres.

Ms. Smith stated that staff felt like 3 acres was an appropriate number of acres but added that it can be changed if the commission decides it should be larger.



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Mr. Jones stated that the need for 10 acres is because of the noise dog kennels produce, and that most townships require 10 acres.

Mr. Stine asked if the commission should change it to a minimum of 10 acres.

Mr. Rilk clarified that dog training facilities aren't specifically listed in our township code and that might be the reason why 3 acres is allowed. He then asked if the commission would like to change the definition of agricultural operations or use dog training facilities as an allowable use separate from agricultural operations.

Mr. Stine suggested they meet in the middle and have a minimum of 10 acres for dog kennels and 3 acres for training facilities. He noted that for the most part, dogs don't stay overnight at training facilities.

Mr. Rilk noted that in some instances dogs may be boarded at training facilities.

Mr. Hartle suggested we come back to this discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Rilk then stated that he and Ms. Smith would like to get done with all the zoning revisions by the end of this year. He would like to work on a new section at each meeting, if that is possible.

Mr. Stine asked the commission what else needs to be finalized on the RPD.

Ms. Hoover responded with the definition of a farm, how to manage noxious weeds/invasive species. She also wondered if we should change the RPD allowable uses acreage to a minimum 3 acres lot to match the minimum 3 acres for dog training facilities in the ag district.

Ms. Hoover's statement opened another discussion on the allowable uses of open land and proper property management.

Mr. Hartle asked what the process will be to get these revisions sent to the BOS.

Ms. Smith stated that as the board completes each section, the board can send them to the BOS.

Mr. Rilk clarified that each section can be adopted as it is finished and once it's complete it can be codified.

8. STAFF REPORTS NONE



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9. AUTHORITY, BOARD, AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Open Space Preservation Board: Mr. Stine reported that the OSPB is looking at properties to put into Permanent easement within the Open Space program, either with the county or with Clearwater Conservation. He stated the board has a list of properties they are reviewing for unofficial score, acreage, and assets.
- b. CRPC: Mr. Jones stated that the CRPC had a joint meeting this month to start their 10-year plan. He said they didn't get super far into the planning but went over how they are going to start. He stated there were several issues discussed that didn't have good reception with members of the board. He said that plans for Rt. 322 have gone from 3 options to 2.
- c. Board of Supervisors: Ms. Smith reported that the Port Matilda Fire company came to the last meeting. They requested the BOS consider passing an ordinance that allows the fire company to invoice for accidents that insurance does not cover. The Board wanted to make some changes to the sample document. Ms. Smith also said that the BOS awarded the road bids for this year.
- d. Professional Development: Mr. Hartle stated that he spent time at the PSATS conference that happened this week. He thought it was very interesting and commented on all the good resources available there.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Stine adjourned the meeting at 7:21pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "meaganbeck".

Meagan Beck