

February 3, 2016
7:00 PM

The regular meeting of the Monroe Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Nelson. The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

ATTENDANCE

Sharon Nelson, Chairperson	Mike Pykosh, Solicitor
Sheldon Brymesser, Vice-Chairman	Mark Bruening, Engineer
Gary Page, Secretary	Karen Lowery, Secretary
Dave DeNicholas	Greg Rogalski, Zoning Officer
Carl Kuhl	Kirk Stoner, Cumberland County Planning

MINUTES

Mr. Pykosh asked that the word exemption be changed to exception on page 2, second paragraph from the bottom.

Mr. Rogalski asked the conditions agreed to between Speranza, the Catalanos and the Weilers be included in the minutes as an exhibit.

On the motion of Mr. DeNicholas, and seconded by Mr. Brymesser, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2016 regular meeting with the Conditions Agreed to between Speranza, the Catalanos, and the Weilers attached as an exhibit.

CORRESPONDENCE

On the motion of Mr. Kuhl, and seconded by Mr. DeNicholas, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to table the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Changes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ms. Nelson mentioned that the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance was discussed at the December meeting. Is there anything else this Board needs to do with this.

Mr. Pykosh stated that a marked up version was provided to the Planning Commission and it was discussed. At the December meeting the Board made some suggestions and changes and then recommended to pass the document along to the Board of Supervisors. He added that if any of the Planning Commission members had any issues with the document to let him know, otherwise the revisions will be before the Supervisors in March.

On the motion of Mr. DeNicholas, and seconded by Ms. Nelson, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the revised Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, as prepared, to the Board of Supervisors.

NEW BUSINESS

Snelbaker/Gibson Agriculture Security Request

Mr. Pykosh explained that an application for two parcels to be placed in the Agriculture Security program has been received. The first parcel is 54 acres and the second parcel is 5.84 acres and are located on Ryegate Road.

Mr. Gibson asked that the requests be looked at as two separate issues. He likes the rural nature of the area. This is a family farm that they want to remain as farmland.

Mr. Bruening shared his review dated December 30, 2015 in regards to the 54 acre parcel that shows this parcel meets the requirements to be placed in the program.

Mr. Bruening shared his review dated December 30, 2015 in regards to the 5.84 acre parcel. The parcel doesn't meet to 10 acre lot size, but it is contiguous. The question is if the parcel can generate \$2,000 of income yearly.

Mr. Stoner stated that the 5.84 acre parcel doesn't meet the size requirement and it's questionable if \$2,000 per year can be generated. Ms. Nelson asked if these are rules or just guidelines. Mr. Stoner said this program is just to protect farming areas, there aren't tax breaks at this level.

Mr. Kuhl said that there is no tax benefit this helps protect the land. Ms. Nelson asked if there was eminent domain protection. Mr. Pykosh said that there is another Board to review the eminent domain process for certain utilities. Mr. Stoner added that this is a gateway to the easement program.

Mr. Brymesser said it makes sense to combine these properties. There is a potential of \$2,000 of yearly earnings. If we don't approve both, we could have to go through the process again if the parcels are combined.

Steve Paulus, 1381 Shuman Drive, has farmed this land for the past 4 years and his family farmed it in the past. This was originally one farm, but when Route 174 came through it separated the farm and a piece was subdivided off for Mr. Gibson. Some of the 5 acre parcel is

farmed with hay and corn. Mr. Paulus has worked to clean up the tree lines. The Snelbakers/Gibsons just want this land to remain in agriculture

Mr. DeNicholas asked if this will give protection from the electric company easement. Mr. Stoner said that they have asked the Department of Agriculture if the PP&L would have to go before the condemnation board and they don't believe PP&L would have to.

Mr. Pykosh stated that the parcels are in the agriculture zone, meet the soil requirements, the land is being farmed and complies with the Comprehensive Plan.

On the motion of Mr. Kuhl, and seconded by Mr. Brymesser, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors that the 54 acre parcel of land be added to the Agriculture Security Area program.

On the motion of Mr. Brymesser, and seconded by Ms. Nelson, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors that the 5.84 acre parcel of land be added to the Agriculture Security Area program.

Comprehensive Plan Review

Ms. Nelson asked Mr. Stoner to give an overview of the process.

Mr. Stoner said the Comprehensive Plan was done in 2007 and the county did help fund that. He provided a handout with recommendations. He stated that the comprehensive plan is a policy document and he likes to look at it as an action plan also, but keep in mind that it not a law. The document states what is important to Monroe Township and can be revisited as it ages. The current plan has a lot of good data in it that hasn't aged at all, it may just need freshened up. He said our best efforts should be focused on issue identification for what is important to the township and how to address issues. Involving residents is very important. A survey was done for the current Comprehensive Plan and there was a great response. The County is currently updating their Comprehensive Plan and he believes it is very important to consider the end user, what does the end user really want and what will be important to them. Consultants can be hired to do the project, it can be done in-house and Cumberland County is willing to assist the township. Mr. Stoner added that you can do these on the cheap and if you keep a focus on what is really important it doesn't have to take a lot of time either. The important part is involving the right people like the residents and Supervisors.

Ms. Nelson asked if Mr. Stoner could provide the township with data that is updateable to us. Obviously the history is the history and the geology is the geology. Mr. Stoner said he can provide us with the updated information he has that pertains to Monroe Township.

Ms. Nelson said it has been 9 years since the Comprehensive Plan was done and there is a general recommendation to revisit the plan every 10 years. Not a whole lot has changed with the plan, so is this a good time to be looking at putting money into redoing the plan.

Mr. Stoner said that with the approval of the Supervisors the Planning Commission could dig into the process. He referred to the handout he provided regarding the following steps: what has changed in Monroe Township in 9 years, which chapters need updating, are the objectives identified in the plan still valid, what is the status of the action plan, and has the public sentiment changed? He suggested maybe starting with the survey and seeing what the residents are looking for before determining what needs to be changed.

Mr. Pykosh asked if there is a requirement to update the Act 537 Plan if the Comprehensive Plan is updated. Mr. Stoner there is to be a general consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance, but he also suggests the Act 537 be looked at because there is a direct link to that also.

Mr. Bruening brought along **Andy P???**, a planner from his office. Mr. Bruening's office completed the 2007 Comprehensive Plan and most of that data has not changed. The survey was done with a lot of good information and a big part of it is, what is the sediment of the community and has it changed.

Mr. DeNicholas stated a lot of things haven't changed and a lot of things have changed. On page 35 he looked at the municipal expenditures and municipal debt, these have changed since the plan was done. On a monetary stand point these could influence the plan. Mr. Bruening added that the County has a lot of social economic and debt information that might not have been available when the plan was done. We could use that now and it would be beneficial.

Ms. Nelson asked if the population in Cumberland County is growing or just moving around. Mr. Stoner there has been about 1% growth per year since 1980 and are people moving around as well. Mr. Kuhl said some municipalities that have outpaced that growth rate vs. some that have remained basically flat, like Monroe so there are more pressures. Ms. Nelson added that other townships have retirement communities and condos, so is the pressure for every township to re-zone to allow that.

Mr. Kuhl said there are pressures like utilities and transportation, such as congestion on Trindle Road and Route 74, people using Monroe as a short cut to get other places. Basically we are bedrooms and barns because we don't have a lot of industry. We should discuss what we want, where we are headed as the townships around us fill up we are being circled. Ms. Nelson said that makes what we have a little more precious. Mr. Kuhl said that things around us are changing, so do we need to increase ways to protect our farms. That is a discussion that this group should be having, do we want to keep things as they are, which is an option, but we don't want to put our heads in the sand because things around us are changing. We have three sewer areas but no treatment plants. We have capacity in the Mechanicsburg area, but not much room for growth. The South Middleton Plant in our agreement has no significant growth capacity. And the Dillsburg facility has one proposed development for 700 homes, but only reserved spots

for 100. There is a problem with the huge amount of sewer debt we have. Plus the township may need a new HVAC system and a new roof, which could cost a quarter of a million dollars and a new dump truck that could cost around \$150,000. We are okay, but to absorb that and if there would be something else should we have a little more financial stability.

Ms. Nelson mentioned that 10-20 years ago when we were looking at these issues there were studies that the average cost was for every tax dollar paid into a municipality, from different kinds of development, what was the average return. More of those studies have been done since then and uniformly every study has discovered that every dollar paid in from residential uses that the amount of services that have to be given to them exceeds the dollar, its closer to \$1.20. For commercial and industrial its more like for every dollar paid in \$0.29 to \$0.33 is used. The theory of we need more money so let's have more development could not be beneficial depending on what type of development it is.

Mr. Stoner sometimes it is sometimes dangerous to look at it financially and figure out how you want your township to be. You have to balance your needs, base residential and zoning planning on what the needs are, and provide for a reasonable amount of commercial development.

Mr. Bruening said that you have to decide what your priorities are. The most economical development next to farming is warehouses. No one wants to say warehouses, but there are no demands on the townships infrastructure.

Ms. Nelson looked at the future land use maps from the Comprehensive Plan and it looks like we allow for residential development, what seems to be lacking is areas for industrial and commercial opportunities. The maps also show that our surrounding townships have much smaller agriculture areas. The other townships seemed to push that on us and they concentrated the higher density, higher impact development around the transportation corridors. She mentioned that our zoning map doesn't show that we have cluster and village overlay areas.

Mr. Bruening added that police protection and fire protection would also need to be considered with more growth. It needs to be determined what the vision for the township is and what resources we have and what we want to do. Then you follow up with the Act 537 Plan and Zoning.

Andy said that not much has changed in the past 5 years. If you look at the increase in cost and debt that needs to be weighed in maybe we should increase density in certain areas. Updating the plan doesn't have to cost that much and having citizen involvement is very important.

Mr. Kuhl provided a handout that provided data from the 2006 survey that was done. What brought residents to the township and what would make them leave, bottom line is most people like Monroe for what it is – wide, open and agriculture. The township is basically at no growth and the little we have is near Mechanicsburg. A question is, if inflation is 2% and we don't grow, how do we make up the difference. Most people he has talked to do not want us to

become like Hampden Township. The census population for Monroe shows we have a mismatch in population, very young children until they graduate high school and then ages 45 to 70, is this because we don't have housing, such as apartments, for the 18 to 40 age group. Two thirds of the sewer expenses are debt. Mr. Kuhl will make a proposal to the Supervisors at the next meeting to allow the Planning Commission and Municipal Authority Boards to help review the debt process to get an additional opinion on what is going on. The Southern sewer area has over \$12 million of debt. For those on the public sewer system, their number one complaint is how much they pay. There are 715 houses plus some commercial in the southern district that are paying some of the highest rates in the state. In the Northern district there are 300 homes. He is still waiting on the number of homes in the Dillsburg area which covers Monroe Acres. Almost 50% of the residents have sewer, is this a problem the Supervisors should be looking at rather than letting it go.

Mr. Pykosh said that the Supervisors have asked the Municipal Authority to look at options. One would be to combine the areas, which we need to discuss with bond counsel to see if it can be done and then if it would be good to do. The second option to look into would be if there is a way to spread out the cost throughout the township. This would be something we need to look into. Mr. Kuhl added that the negative is that we don't have a sewer facility. There have been other townships that have sold their facilities to water utilities.

Mr. Kuhl said that our tax rates are comparable to other municipalities. If we look at employees per business, we have many business with 1 to 4 people. We are not the most welcoming of businesses with what we require and our sign regulations. Maybe we should talk to business and find out what would make life better for them, in addition to our farmers, to find out what they need to stay economically sound and allow them to grow.

Mr. Rogalski stated that the Comprehensive Plan is looked at as a planning document for land use, but in some areas such as the financial or business side, it may be money well spent to invest in a consultant. No matter what we do here, the market drives everything. It would be best for us to plan for uses that are actually occurring.

Mr. Stoner said this is a good point. This could give a reality test of what residents would like to see vs. what the area is best suited for.

Mr. Rogalski added that on the handout Mr. Kuhl provided that asked people why they would leave, high sewer rates is not on the list. We do not have a vacant issue in the sewer area, people are willing to in those areas. Ms. Nelson added that she is on the Southern sewer system. She is not happy with paying \$117 per month, but is appreciative of Mr. Kehoe's statement at a meeting that what residents pay for taxes and utilities are basically the same in Hampden and in Monroe, but in Hampden you are paying for what is there and in Monroe you are paying for what is there. She does feel that a survey is done the question needs to be asked intelligently, would people be willing to add a certain number of homes in the area to lower their sewer bills. She mentioned that Mr. Rogalski had provided some numbers like this a few months back, but would like him to look at this and be able to provide more concrete numbers. Mr. Rogalski said that you have to be prepared for the answer to that.

Mr. Kuhl stated there is a state program that measures road density. We are surrounded by larger roads. As Route 641 and Route 11 get filled in, where are they going to move next. We don't have a large corridor to support us, but we do have a rail line and if anyone has thoughts on how to make something happen with the rail line that would be great. Ms. Nelson said there is a small industrial zone near the rail line. Mr. Rogalski said if you overlay the floodplain along the rail line, that would be the number one issue.

Mr. Kuhl said in a nutshell we have heard that we can do bits and pieces without a lot of money. Ten years is a suggested time to review this, but it is not mandatory. Ms. Nelson feels that doing some of the research and answering questions that were posed tonight would be a good first step and then get the community involved with a survey. She feels a lot of this can be done in-house for not a lot of money. Mr. Stoner said the county is willing to help out and provide information.

Mr. DeNicholas agrees that this would be a good place to start. It obvious there has not been a lot of growth and we need to take advantage of what is there. He doesn't believe it makes sense to spend \$80,000 on the plan.

Mr. Page mentioned that he had done a Comprehensive Plan for where he used to live for a smaller community.

Mr. Brymesser feels that we should look at a survey for some guidance, look to the county for some information and then have meetings for the public.

Mr. Rogalski suggested looking at a steering committee that would have a representative from each Board and eventually the township manager that could meet independently to form a vision for the process and keep the tasks moving along. This could be used for the Comprehensive Plan update, but the larger picture would be to have this steering committee help with a plan for the township above and beyond these issues.

Ms. Nelson asked if we can start the review process or do we need direction from the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Kuhl suggests will inform the Supervisors of the plans, at this time it is just a preliminary review.

Mr. Brymesser feels that we need approval from the Supervisors to review the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Rogalski suggested making a recommendation to look at this and not spend a lot of money. How things are pursued is where the steering committee could come in to create a good road map so that we don't start spinning wheels and be productive in the review.

Mr. Stoner suggested a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to keep communication open. He also likes Mr. Rogalski's suggestion of a steering committee.

Mr. Kuhl will take anything suggested to the Supervisors.

Mr. Bruening suggested updating a map with developments that are in process and the status of the projects.

Mr. Pykosh stated that it would be a good idea to present to the Supervisors what the general ideas area, areas that may need changed and an idea of the cost. Mr. Bruening said he and Andy can look at the plan and provide an estimate of what it would be to update the info. Mr. Kuhl feels that would be down the road. Ms. Nelson asked if we can predict costs at this point without having the questions figured out. Mr. Rogalski said to be fair to all involved that a number needs to be defined.

Mr. Kuhl suggested that we narrow the scope and discuss at next month's meeting. Mr. DeNicholas feels that would be a wise decision to determine what the scope is.

Mr. Kuhl said that the county's website has a lot of information available.

Ms. Nelson suggested everyone review the plan to review the scope at the next meeting so we can narrow down what needs to be updated.

On the motion of Mr. DeNicholas, and seconded by Mr. Kuhl, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors that the Planning Commission will be continuing to review the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. DeNicholas said that Mr. Kuhl brings up a good point that communication of the various Board hasn't been as good as it should be. Ms. Nelson likes that the Boards will be working together.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION None

STAFF COMMENTS None

ADJOURN

On the motion of Mr. DeNicholas, and seconded by Mr. Kuhl, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen M. Lowery
Administrative Assistant