

October 5, 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	David DeNicholas
Sheldon Brymesser, Vice-Chairman	Gary Page, Secretary
Carl Kuhl	Kirk Stoner
Mark Bruening, Engineer	Michael Pykosh, Solicitor
Holly Wood, Recording Secretary	

MINUTES

On the motion of Mr. Kuhl, and seconded by Mr. Brymesser, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the September 7, 2016 regular meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Nelson noted the various correspondences that were included in the meeting packet and the additional information waiting for them at tonight's meeting.

Ms. Nelson addressed the invitation to attend the South Mountain Partnership Fall meeting on October 14, 2016. Ms. Nelson offered to attend, if there was no objection. The South Mountain Partnership was a prior presenter at a Planning Commission meeting, and Ms. Nelson is interested in seeing what they do. There were no objections. Ms. Nelson said she would RSVP and attend the meeting.

Ms. Nelson also noted the County's email with regard to the Future Land Use map and the October 11, 2016 deadline for response. Ms. Nelson asked if Monroe Twp. could get a time extension for making comments in light of the fact that the township is also working on updating the Township Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Stoner said that would be ok.

Ms. Nelson noted that the Township received one (1) response to the home-based/farm-based business article that was included in the July edition of the township newsletter. She noted that the response was interesting in that it had to do with handing down a family-owned business and the difficulty involved due to current regulations. Mr. Kuhl noted that the article is running again in the October edition of the newsletter, and he hope we may see a few more responses.

Ms. Nelson asked if it would be agreeable to address any other correspondence related to topics on tonight's agenda at the point these items were discussed. There were no objections to this request.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ethel C. Wenger Final Subdivision Plan

Joe Burget of Burget & Associates was present to discuss the Ethel Wenger Final Subdivision Plan that is a 4 lot subdivision along the east side of Clouser Road. Ms. Wenger owns property on both sides of the road, but at this time there is no plan for the west side of the road. The current plan is to create 3 new 3.75-4.0 acre building lots with 3 new driveways. Mr. Burget stated that the necessary trees have been removed to achieve proper sight distances and that there is still some clean up and bank cutting back needed for lot 4's driveway. Mr. Burget said Ms. Wenger does not want to widen the road, but is willing to work with the Township to clean up and cut back the banks to improve the overall sight distances. Mr. Kuhl questioned whether the sight distances have been verified since the trees were removed. Mr. Bruening said he will verify the work as soon as possible, but it has been so recently done that time has not allowed verification. Mr. Bruening went on to review the Engineer's comments as stated in his review letter dated September 1, 2016. Mr. Burget has no issues satisfying these conditions as noted in the Engineer's comments dated September 1, 2016, he feels these are all minor issues.

Mr. Burget is also looking for approval of 5 waiver requests as listed: wetland study is required (402.5.7), locate existing features on subject property and within 200 feet of subject property (402.3.4), show the location of existing healthy trees on the subject property (402.3.6), stormwater basins without restricted access shall have impoundment areas with side slopes no greater than 5 foot horizontal to 1 foot vertical (SWMO 402.6.D), plan must be prepared at prescribed scale per Section 402.1.1 (403.1). The last waiver request regarding street trees shall be provided along road frontages (618.3) was withdrawn at the September Planning Commission meeting. Reasons for requesting these waivers include that there are no wetland areas on any of the new lots; the land is currently open farm land and all features will be contained within the 200 foot limit; the stormwater basins will be approximately 2 feet deep and sloped at a 4-1 ratio; and page 1 of the plan is not to scale as a way to give an overall snap shot of the total plan.

Mr. Kuhl asked how we can prove to the concerned residents that the lot 4 driveway is ok. Mr. Pykosh stated that if the driveway meets the condition, it meets the conditions; these conditions are established to be safe. Mr. Bruening added that the calculation are based on PA DOT standards based on posted speed limits, Mr. Bruening also stated that the criteria is in the SALDO. Mr. Burget assured that the sight distance calculation will be on the plan. Mr. Bob

Jenkins of 146 Clouser Road stated that his only real concern is with the driveway on Lot 4; will oncoming traffic be able to see the driveway, he fears not. He is fearful of a horrible accident at that location. Ms. Ellen Miller of 273 Clouser Road asked whether the criteria for sight distance included a sidewalk factor. She stated there are many walkers and bicyclists that use this road, and she feels adding another entry point to the most dangerous part of the road is just asking for trouble. Ms. Nelson stated that it sounds like through traffic is the issue and that hopefully adding a driveway in that area will prompt caution. Ms. Nelson also asked if advisory signs can be added to the road. Mr. Bruening said yes they could, and he would look into having that done. Ms. Miller also questioned the placement of the first speed limit sign off Locust Point Road, she thinks it is too far up the road to be effective. Mr. Bruening and Mr. Kuhl said they would look into this sign posting placement and see if it needs moved. Further discussion came to the consensus that the narrow cartway is a big safety issue, especially if Clouser Road is used as a detour route for Locust Point Road, widening the road at some point is the best option to improve safety.

On the motion of Mr. Kuhl, and seconded by Mr. DeNicholas, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the waivers as written, minus waiver request #6 with regard to the street trees.

On the motion of Ms. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. Page, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend approval of the plan contingent on the satisfaction of the Engineer's comments dated September 1, 2016.

On the motion of Mr. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. DeNicholas, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to recommend placement of advisory signs and review of speed limit sign posting in the area of this new planned development of Clouser Road.

Intensive Agriculture Uses

Todd Johnson of Willard Agri-Services said he appreciated the opportunity to speak on agriculture in Monroe Township. Mr. Johnson explained that he is an agronomist with a company which specializes in plant nutrition and consulting services for farming families. Mr. Johnson stated and demonstrated that a very small amount of land in the world grows all the food for the world's population. He explained that in agriculture today it is important to balance nutrient management and productivity with environmental safety, and that is what consultants like him do. Ms. Nelson asked if science has made farming more productive and efficient; to which Mr. Johnson stated yes, in an environmental safe way. Mr. Johnson suggested that the township seriously consider agriculture when looking at a new Comp Plan. Monroe Township has some of the best growing soils in the country, and he believes with the current state and federal regulations, farmers are doing their best to be good stewards of the land and natural resources. They want to maximize profits, but most will not do that at the expense of the environment.

Mr. Kuhl asked if we should ask to see nutrient management or manure management plans when new plans are presented. How do we make sure farmers are doing what they are supposed to be doing? Mr. Johnson stated that he doesn't think farmers do things to avoid regulations. Yes, there will always be a bad apple here or there, but most are doing the right things. Mr. Johnson said the township should not try to supersede Act 38, but asking to see their manure management and erosion & sedimentation plans is a good idea if they come looking for approval of a new plan. Mr. Johnson said the County Conservation Districts are in charge of making sure farmers are in compliance, rely on them to do their jobs. If a grower is working with a certified advisor, they will be advised to do the right things. These advisors have a high standard of ethics and good business practices that they stand by. If farmers are in compliance with the law as they should be, then they are doing the right thing. The majority are doing the right thing.

Ms. Nelson asked Mr. Johnson to explain the difference between a nutrient management plan and a manure management plan. Mr. Johnson explained that nutrient management plan are only required for concentrated animal operation, manure management is required for all other operations. Mr. Johnson encourages voluntary compliance with Act 38, but if they do not want to voluntarily comply with Act 38, they must have a manure management program. Mr. Brymesser explained that there are watchdogs out there and any reported, suspected offense is followed-up on by the proper agencies. If a neighbor thinks a farmer is doing something wrong, they can report it, and it will be investigated.

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 of the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments with regard to intensive agriculture as presented in Mr. Rogalski's memo dated September 7, 2016.

Ms. Nelson referenced a handout regarding Clean & Green rules with regard to non-agriculture activities on Clean & Green properties. She is questioning how these rules would affect the home-based and farm-based, added value business ideas the planning commission has been discussing. Mr. Stoner said he would forward a brochure explaining the Clean & Green program to the Township for the Planning Commission to review. Mr. Stoner also said the County's Chief Assessor would be the person to clarify what activities would be allowed and how the idea would work.

SALDO updates

Ms. Nelson briefly talked about the proposed SALDO update and explained that the discussion surrounding the Wenger Subdivision plan prompted some further suggested amendments with regard to right-of-ways and road improvements. Mr. Bruening spoke on the recommended changes he would propose as listed in an email dated August 23, 2016. Ms. Nelson asked if the Planning Commission was ready to recommend these changes to the Board of Supervisors. The consensus was no. The proposed revisions referred to in the email are broad, and could be very expensive for the smaller development plans. Mr. DeNicholas noted that many small subdivisions in this area are created to allow land to be given to the children of

owners. However, Mr. DeNicholas agrees that a lot has changed over the years and getting roads up to safe standards is very important. It was asked if there could be a sliding scale of some sort to address a “fee in lieu of road improvements”. Mr. Bruening stated that this type of scale would be hard to create, that there are too many variables and scenarios. Mr. Bruening said that most municipalities he works with take an all or nothing approach. Mr. Kuhl requested time to run some numbers and scenarios before recommending these amendments to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

On the motion of Mr. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. DeNicholas, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to table the SALDO updates.

Comprehensive Plan

On the motion of Mr. Nelson, and seconded by Mr. DeNicholas, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to table the Comprehensive Plan review discussion.

NEW BUSINESS - None

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - None

STAFF COMMENTS - None

ADJOURN

On the motion of Mr. Page, and seconded by Mr. Brymesser, and by unanimous vote of the members it was duly RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly S. Wood
Administrative Assistant