

**Planning Commission
Minutes
July 12, 2021
7:00 PM**

Present:

Brett MacKay
Joseph Vavra
Dennis McGeehan
Patricia Younce
Douglas Leach
Matt Chartrand

Absent: Nancy Becker
Edward Buonocore

Staff:

Carolyn Shisler, Asst. Zoning & Planning Officer
Jennifer Guckin, Director of Community Planning and Code Enforcement
Mary Stover, Township Engineer CKS

Supervisor Rich Marino was not present.

Approval of the June 7, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Vavra made a motion for approval of minutes for June 7, 2021 with a few small changes. Ms. Younce seconded. All were in favor.
Mr. Leach abstained.

New Business

Allowing Backyard Chicken
Presentation by Supervisor Laura Smith

Supervisor Ms. Smith stated she met with Montgomery Township who created a power point to be presented tonight. Ms. Smith explained how COVID shut down created limitations which caused people to want to use their land for gardens and raising chickens.

Ms. Smith presented a power point and explained each slide. She explained the cities that allow backyard chickens and the ones who are allowing chickens for residents who own less than 5 acres. Towamencin Township's current ordinance requires a minimum of 5 acres for backyard chickens.

Ms. Smith explained the benefits of having backyard chickens. She stated the eggs are better, there is a reduction of carbon footprint, compost piles for garden fertilizers are created, and it is a learning tool for families. Ms. Smith also explained that chickens eat certain bugs as well as snakes, rats and mice. She also stated in the presentation that the coupes do not require a lot of space.

Ms. Smith explained the current ordinance for chickens of North Wales Borough, which was passed in 2017, and stated they have not had any problems with the requirement of 5,000 square feet. North

Wales has “no hen cap” in their ordinance and she agrees with this along with a “no structure permit”.

As for Montgomery Township, they are working on an ordinance to require 20,000 square feet and Ms. Smith believes such a large space is not needed for our ordinance. She stated Towamencin allows dog pens, rabbit hutches, and things like these without a restriction. Ms. Smith feels chicken coupes would go right along with those items.

Ms. Smith showed a slide about informational books and references. She asked if the Planning Commission members had any questions.

Mr. Chartrand stated he does not have any issues with what was presented. His concern was to not allow roosters. Ms. Smith explained no roosters are needed to have hens lay eggs. Ms. Smith stated there are plenty of residents who currently own chickens.

Mr. Chartrand asked how can this be enforced and Ms. Smith suggested free registration so that we are aware of where they are. She explained it is much like owning dogs and cats and hoping people will take care of them.

Ms. Guckin explained the process for enforcement and for notice of violations regarding any complaints.

Ms. Younce stated she is concerned about the neighbor’s property values and what would a realtor say regarding this. She asked if the Township could get a sampling of realtors. Ms. Smith said she could reach out to Southeastern Realtors Association and get their feedback. Ms. Younce expressed concern for allowing this and then it being offensive to the neighbors or it affects the property values. Ms. Smith said that one thing that is mentioned for the ordinance is requiring a partially obscured view and not allowing coupes in the front yard or to be seen from the front.

Mr. Vavra stated that 50 x 100 is only 5,000 square feet and he felt this is too small. Mr. Vavra is concerned this would not fit. Ms. Smith explained that in the Inglewood Development the lots are 10 to 12,000 square feet and they could easily be on those lots. Mr. Vavra agrees that the current requirement of 5 acres is not the right number for this, but also thinks 5,000 sf is not the number either.

Ms. Younce stated that Ms. Smith makes a nice sales pitch.

Mr. McGeehan asked about the cost of a pen and Ms. Smith looked it up and said the approximate cost for a pen is \$500.00. Mr. Leach said what would stop someone for putting up some posts and chicken wire.

There was a discussion regarding chickens, the pens or coupes and the benefits. Ms. Guckin stated this is a call we get regularly asking to be allowed to have chickens with less than 5 acres.

Mr. MacKay asked the Planning Commission if the Township should get a draft together. Ms. Younce stated yes, as well as some information on some other municipalities and what they require. The Planning Commission requested information regarding the effect on property values as well as lot sizes where chickens are permitted in other municipalities. Ms. Guckin discussed that a draft ordinance should be prepared for consideration along with the requested information for further consideration by the Planning Commission.

New Business:

Delp Drive Industrial Building – LD 822

Presented by: Elkins Wetherill, Verus Partners and Greg Davis, attorney

The applicant presented and explained what they do and stated they are here to present an overall concept plan to the Planning Commission.

A slide presentation was shown of the architecture of a building that will be similar to what they want to present for this project. Mr. Witherell explained the site and showed Delp Drive and the layout of the project. There is an issue regarding a deed with the Township, where they deeded Delp Drive to a certain point but there is a small area of Delp Drive that they are not sure about regarding the ownership. He explained the whole proposed culd-e-sac will be entirely on their land. The presentation showed where the car and trucks will be separately parked and the planning of four entrances. Mr. Witherell showed the loading zone areas for tractor trailers on the presentation.

Storm water management was discussed in regards to suggestions from CKS Engineers. Mr. Witherell also showed the additional buffering they plan to put in place.

Mr. Chartrand asked if these plans could be flipped for a better impact for the neighboring properties and Mr. Davis stated they did look at that and showed it that way previously. He said they would have to check with their engineer regarding the reason they flipped it the way they are presenting now and get back with the answer.

Mr. MacKay also asked about truck traffic and times of operations. Mr. Witherell stated the applicant does not want to limit the hours as it could possibly hinder them from getting a tenant. Mr. MacKay explained he understood this, but feels the impact to the residential area is the issue here.

Mr. Chartrand mentioned drainage and feels this flipping would be an advantage for this project with the proposed parking on the other side.

There was a discussion regarding this issue.

Mr. MacKay asked if there were any other questions. The applicant stated they will look into the design and location.

Mr. MacKay said thank you to the applicant and they stated they will return in one to two months.

New Business:

Liberty Paving - Detwiler Road

Presented by: Mr. Cliff Stout and owner Mr. Will Harris

Mr. Stout explained the project and how this is a small narrow lot and has been on the market for some time now.

Mr. Harris, the owner of Liberty Paving, has purchased this lot and explained their business. He stated they are not a huge company and they do what the big guys no longer do. Mr. Harris intends to put a front office for 3 employees and then storage for his equipment. It will be a low key operation.

Mr. Stout presented the sketch plan. The existing lot does not currently meet the Zoning Ordinance requirements for size or width. Mr. Stout indicated that the proposed site layout could meet the

remaining Zoning Ordinance requirements. However, a number of waivers would be needed to be able to develop the site including driveway widths, curb, and landscape islands.

Mr. Stout stated some of the waivers they will need to request will be for the driveway to be 12 feet wide vs the 16 feet width that is required, to lessen the 5 feet radius to 2 feet with curved islands which could be paved and striped. He also mentioned waiver regarding parking spaces. Mr. Stout explained they are here tonight to get a feeling regarding these waivers before they get in too deep.

Ms. Guckin stated this property was for sale for many years and this applicant is the first committed to trying to get it developed.

Mr. MacKay asked if the Planning Commission members had any questions or concerns.

Mr. Chartrand stated he appreciates the plan that works with a zoning ordinance for this uniquely shaped lot. He asked about the parking requirement and if the public would come in and Mr. Harris stated on occasion possibly someone would come by to drop off a check, but not on a regular basis. Mr. Chartrand's concern was the curb radius although for this project he is not as concerned other than that the people can make the turns.

Ms. Stover stated there is a section in the ordinance regarding reserve parking and requirements.

Mr. Chartrand does not have an issue with this project.

Ms. Younce asked if there is an employee in the office at all times. Mr. Harris said most of the business is a phone business for quotes.

Mr. Vavra has no issues with the waivers they will be seeking, his concern is regarding only having 3 employees and asked the applicant to explain. Mr. Harris explained the 3 employees would be in the office space. Mr. Vavra questioned the equipment that is in the garage and if the employees have to drive to work and get the trucks, then where do those employees park. Mr. Harris stated that only he works for his company along with his two sons.

Mr. Guckin added that they are meeting the number of parking spaces. It is just that it impacts the radius and buffering area without curbing and they would need to reduce this and seek waivers.

Mr. MacKay stated he does not have a problem with the waivers they plan to request.

Mr. Stout thanked the Planning Commission for their time.

Mr. MacKay asked if there was any additional business.

Hearing none, Mr. Vavra made a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Younce seconded.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Shisler

Towamencin Township

Planning Commission Secretary/ Asst. Zoning & Planning Officer