

**Planning Commission
Minutes
July 10, 2023
7:00 PM**

Present:

Brett MacKay
Joseph Vavra
Patricia Younce
Nancy Becker
Ed Buonocore
Douglas Leach
Dennis McGeehan
Michael Main
Matt Chartrand

Staff:

Will Brugger, Director of Planning, Zoning and Land Development
George DiPersio, Township Engineer CKS

Supervisors Rich Marino, Supervisor Charles Wilson, Supervisor Kristin Warner and Township Manager David Kraynik were present.

Several Township residents were present.

Approval of the June 5, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Vavra made a motion to approve the June 5, 2023 meeting minutes, Ms. Younce seconded. All were in favor.

New Business:

Township Comprehensive Plan Proposal – CHPlanning
By: Ms. Chantelle Hicks and Nancy Templeton - Project Manager

Ms. Hicks explained the CHPlanning Team and explained what their company does.
Ms. Templeton explained her role and stated she would be the project manager.

Ms. Templeton went over the presentation and slide show elaborating on each part of it. She explained they prioritize the issues and concerns of the residents through providing meetings and workshops both in person and virtually.

Ms. Templeton went over the goal and an issues-based vision. She went over some potential planning themes and said they would be based on the needs of the Township, and they would all be interactive and coordinated with each other.

Ms. Hicks explained the slide for the “keys to success” and how they try and be flexible in the planning so that whatever the future brings the Township will be prepared. Ms. Hicks stated she hopes the slide show explained their goals and hopes that their proposal is considered.

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

Mr. Chartrand stated the Planning Commission and the Township is doing a sidewalk study and trying to get residents involved in surveys, etc. He explained that there was still a lot of people who have not weighed in. Mr. Chartrand was curious if there are any other ways to get more feedback from residents.

Ms. Hicks explained through surveys, the online toolbox, and making efforts to consider the residents who can't or won't show up such as the elderly, the sick, or residents who speak a different language.

Ms. Templeton stated it is also based on how many community events the Township has and going to places where people gather and setting up a table outside a library or farmers market for example.

Mr. Brugger asked Mr. MacKay if he wanted to open it up for public comment and/or supervisors and Mr. MacKay asked anyone present at the meeting if they had any comments.

Mr. Marino (Township Supervisor) asked about their timeline and important milestones.

Ms. Templeton stated it is proposed for 18 months and a few key milestones are to set up meetings with the Township, get vetted and then move right into the community and prioritizing the needs and issues. She stated she plans for the first public meeting through the second public meeting and community service to take a good 3 or 4 months.

Ms. Warner (Township Supervisor) stated that they mentioned Upper Frederick Township and asked if there were any other Townships in the suburbs they have worked with. Ms. Hicks replied that they have worked with Lower Merion and Quakertown and Ms. Templeton worked with Montgomery County, Phoenixville and West Chester.

Ms. Younce inquired about the cost for speaking with stakeholders and groups and Ms. Hicks stated it is in the proposal for community engagement and explained virtual things are minimal costs and explained they have done engagement events with a series of pop ups.

Ms. Younce stated it seems to her that they would need a number of extra meetings to reach everyone and asked if the proposal included pop ups and meetings or would this be extra? Ms. Hicks went over the proposal and what is included for meetings.

Mr. Main asked a similar question regarding the extra meetings and the cost. Ms. Templeton stated it would most likely be for community events or additional meetings for groups that aren't being reached.

Mr. Wilson (Township Supervisor) stated this proposal amount is considerably above what was budgeted and wanted to know if there is any way for them to sharpen their pencil on this and low the proposal? Ms. Hicks answered yes, and said if there is a need for a little pencil sharpening, that the Township to let them know so they can adjust things. Ms. Hicks suggested the Township finding ways or take off the printed copies, which is almost \$10,000 of the quote.

Ms. Joyce Snyder (Township Supervisor) asked if the sale of the sewer plant would come into play due to the large sum of money that the Township could potentially receive. Ms. Hicks stated a point of caution as they work with other clients who sell their energy source and the revenue that is used to come each year now comes as a lump sum for those revenues.

Mr. MacKay asked if anyone in the audience had any comments and hearing none Mr. MacKay thanked the presenters.

Mr. Brugger explained they would hear something from the Township by the August or September meeting.

Second proposal presentation - Simone Collins

Presented by:

Peter Simone

PJ Jobanputra. Project Manager

Todd Poole - President for Planning Inc.

Tim Adams - Planner

Emma Haley and Bryce Brucker will also assist.

The team introduced themselves and explained their roles and titles.

Mr. Simone stated they are excited to present and hopes the Township Planning Commission and Board chooses their proposal based on the relationship they have built with the Township.

The team explained the slide show and did an overview of the Township and an analysis of the growth that is happening.

PJ spoke about slide show and why the Township should select the Simone Collins team.

PJ shared information of the surrounding Townships and the mixed uses. He talked about areas like King of Prussia, Whitpain, and West Conshohocken Borough. He explained the branding and vision they used so that people know where they are.

Mr. Poole went over the next part of the slide show and explained the economic support and how important it is to understand where the market is. He went over what is financially feasible and explained when a Comprehensive Plan is made it should go along with financial and real estate scenarios and model those fiscally.

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

Mr. Chartrand stated he would ask the same question as he did for the previous presenter. He asked their thoughts on reaching the community and did they have anything more than web-based surveys to reach the community.

Mr. Simone stated that there has been a lot of involvement from the Township for the Sidewalk Connectivity Project. He also explained that the Comprehensive Plan should also be inspirational.

Mr. Poole stated they examined the land uses in the Township they had at that time, they did the market analysis and they will check to make sure the zoning makes sense.

Discussion regarding elderly places and people coming into the Township and aging in place type places. Discussion regarding accessory buildings that could be considered as tiny houses and could be an option or should be talked about for the needs of the residents.

Mr. Marino asked about the timeline in terms of significant milestones if Simone Collins is awarded and started in January of 2024. Mr. Simone stated approximately 18 months for the timeline.

Ms. Warner asked if they mean they will get Towamencin residents' graphics. Mr. Poole explained they will do economy and market analysis for the area, the metro area. Generally they do their social economics based on the Montgomery County and Quakertown and then compare this to Philly metro area with population trends and housing. They will identify these things for the Township and compare to the other areas.

There was a discussion regarding graphic studies and how they do it.

Mr. David Kraynik (Township Manager) stated the Township envisions they will be doing a strategic plan at the same time. He asked how can their Comprehensive Plan and their effort help with the strategic plan?

Mr. Collins explained that they would examine the 5 to 10 year capital plan for each department and look at the needs of each of those departments for the future. He explained the Department Heads would have a lot of input.

Mr. Poole stated they did this same thing with Whitehall Township. He explained they did the Comprehensive Plan and then interviewed each Department Head and the school authorities for the needs of these departments for more fire fighters, police officers, etc., Then they calculated what this would cost and if the revenues will add up to that.

Mr. Kraynik stated they will update the strategic plan every 5 to 10 years. He asked when do they plan to update the Comprehensive Plans and Mr. Simone stated they will update different parts to the Comprehensive Plan depending on the needs of the Township.

Mr. Simone gave examples of the roadway needs and goals for transportation needs and that will inform them in the strategic plan and they will have ideas where will the Township should look for extra money.

Mr. Main asked about any additional costs regarding extra meetings and Mr. Simone stated they don't anticipate any and would not add any cost if they generally stay within the scope of work proposed. Unless something radically changes, Mr. Simone stated based on their history they stay on the numbers they propose.

Ms. Becker expressed that she loved the slide with Towamencin on the bridge.

Mr. Wilson stated they are still working on the sign for the bridge and asked Mr. Kraynik to get that on an agenda. He then spoke to Simone Collins and stated that the Comprehensive Plan proposal came in more than they had budgeted and asked if there was any way to sharpen their pencil on the proposal and do any better?

Mr. Simone stated that this was a fair question. He said for a short answer, if The Township picks their team they could go over and shave some things off and pick items we can review.

Mr. McGeehan asked if the source of grants for the sidewalk study is the same for the Comprehensive Plan and Mr. Simone explained that it is not and it would be slightly different with the range of things and additional sources for grants.

Mr. MacKay asked for any public comment and hearing none, he thanked them for their presentation and their time.

Old Business – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Chickens

Mr. Brugger presented the ordinance for chickens and explained the members saw this at the last two meetings. Staff took the draft and made it into the ordinance format. He stated if the Planning Commission didn't have any additional concerns or comments that staff is asking for a recommendation from the members to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

Ms. Younce made a motion to recommend that the Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Chickens be approved after the County Planning Commission reviews it. Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor.

New Business:

Towamencin Village Overlay District Manual Update

Towamencin Village Overlay District Manual is dated in the early 2000's and it is a design manual for buffering, street lighting, etc. Three years ago the manual was amended. The Township staff is now again requesting revisions based on when developers comment on lighting and parking

lots and benches. This manual amended is in ordinance format which was looked at by the Township engineer and the solicitor.

Mr. MacKay asked if they have the opportunity to make any other changes or in the future, they can change some things. Mr. Brugger said the Planning Commission members can review and provide comments.

Mr. Chartrand had some questions about the light fixtures. He feels there is a fair amount of light pollution already and asked if there is more of an updated fixture that would give us a better option for lighting. Mr. Chartrand would like more information on hand.

Ms. Younce asked for the clarification if this is for the brightness or the lumens. Mr. Chartrand stated it is the sight or a fixture that would give the same look but a better lighting pattern. Discussion regarding the light source and if it can be shielded or if the design can be better.

Mr. Wilson spoke about the light pollution and globe lights like the ones at the Marriott. He explained why the parking lot lights were changed. He stated the Township is addressing the concerns like at The Landing and the other newer buildings so that they don't have to negotiate each time. Mr. Wilson explained they want the lights to be down lit and they want to get this in place.

Ms. Younce expressed concern and asked if they can find out if the Police Department requires a certain amount of light for safety. Mr. Wilson stated the lighting for safety is in the fixture and then the light is shielded. Discussion regarding the design manual and the areas that they negotiated better lighting.

Mr. Wilson stated again the intent is to get this done and in the manual for now. The Planning Commission members agreed and will look to the future to make other changes.

Mr. Chartrand made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to update the lighting, parking lots and benches in the Towamencin Village Overlay manual. Nancy Becker seconded. All were in favor.

Draft Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations

Staff explained that Whitemarsh and Warrington Township's ordinances for EV Charging Stations were reviewed and a draft language of the ordinance is being presented to permit EV charging stations as an accessory use in all residential districts and as a conditional use for commercial uses. Mr. Brugger explained the proposed draft.

Mr. Brugger went over the clarification of the parking requirements, asked the members to consider these and if they should meet the same requirements or should they be held in a separate category and lot area and what amount can be used for EV chargers in commercial districts. There was a discussion regarding where the charges should they be placed regarding sidewalks, parking areas and parking on the streets.

Ms. Younce made comments regarding Section 17 number 2 for at home personal EV charging station. She explained it states for the occupants of the property and no stand to “sell” the charging stations use and she wanted to make sure the guests of your home could use these chargers.

She also mentioned Section 18 number 8 and asked why it cannot say that we can’t have stations with only one model, she wondered if this was because of Tesla.

Mr. MacKay stated he saw that Tesla is selling their rights to their charger. Discussion regarding public use for chargers and minimum parking requirements.

Mr. Chartrand stated he doesn’t have significant concern of which go where, but any commercial business could have Tesla or a proprietary. He did not feel they should specify that they need to be in a certain area of a parking lot. Mr. Chartrand explained that on commercial properties he has seen them placing ATM machines at places like Lowes and for example it might be a good idea for the EV charging stations to be placed in these areas. He expressed that he would like to see the Township be more conscious of a wider variety of commercial uses.

Ms. Younce commented on Section 18 number 14 regarding the signage and suggested that they add to it a statement that says “vehicles parked here should be actively charging”.

Mr. MacKay commented on EV stations being separated and their equipment being located in another area or integrated into the parking space. He suggested they specify the charging station vs. the equipment vs. stations for required locations.

Mr. DiPersio (Township Engineer) stated that the wording “adjacent to” or “the head of” needs to be added so that they cannot take away from the space for parking.

Mr. Vavra stated they were at Grandview Hospital and the spaces were specific and painted and sufficient spaces were available. He said he was impressed. Mr. Vavra explained there were about 4 towers and 2 plugs, green for the EV and labeled. He feels there should be a zone and agrees with the requirement to park there you must be utilizing the charging.

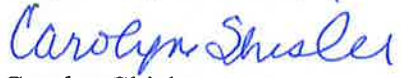
Discussion regarding electric cars and thoughts about it. It was stated that EV charging stations shouldn’t be same as handicapped parking spaces. Reality is that people won’t have to charge at each place they go. More discussion regarding putting the chargers in the right of way for homes that don’t have a driveway or garage. Mr. Brugger explained this is more for a commercial aspect.

Mr. Brugger stated there will be a few revisions and they will get comments back from Township engineer, the County and our solicitor and if there are any recommendations in the meantime, please present them to the Township.

Mr. Brugger commented on new business and explained there are no other new updates. There was a meeting with PSDC and there has been no new submissions since then.

Mr. MacKay asked if there were any other issues. Hearing none, Mr. Vavra made a motion to adjourn at 8:16 PM, and Ms. Becker seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Shisler
Towamencin Township
Zoning and Code Enforcement