

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
FEBRUARY 24, 2010 MEETING MINUTES**

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**1. Call to Order:**

A. Chairman Schlack called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Roll Call:**

A. The following planning commission members were present: Mr. Brooke, Mr. Comroe, Mr. Kuberski, Mrs. LaPenta, Mr. Rutledge, Mrs. Satterwhite, Mr. Schlack, and Ms. Zimmerman.

B. Mr. Endlich was absent.

C. Additional attendees included: Mr. Chris DiPaolo and Mrs. Colleen Eckman, Board of Supervisors Liaisons, Mr. John Chambers, Township Engineer, Mrs. Marie Altieri, Board Supervisor, Mr. Thomas Comitta, Landscape and Planning Consultant, Mr. Joseph Dunbar, Township Manager.

**4. Approval of Planning Commission Meeting Minutes:**

A. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes for August 26, 2009, November 18, 2009, and January 27, 2010:

1. **MOTION** – Mr. Kuberski made a motion to move the August 26, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting minutes into the record. Mrs. Satterwhite seconded the motion.
  - a) Mr. Brooke had several corrections for these minutes. On page 6, items 23-32 the vote is listed as 6-0-1 and should be 6-1. On page 7, there is a vote listed 5-0-2. This should be 5-2, but it does not list who opposed it.
  - b) **MOTION VOTE** – The motion to move the amended minutes into the record *passed* 8-0.
2. **MOTION** – Ms. Zimmerman made a motion to move the November 18, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting minutes into the record. Mr. Kuberski seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 8-0.
3. Mr. Comroe noted that for the January 27, 2010 minutes, the roll call should be amended to reflect that he was present and Mr. Bodek was not.
  - a) **MOTION** – Mr. Comroe made a motion to move the January 27, 2010 Planning Commission Meeting minutes into the record as amended. Mr. Kuberski seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 8-0.

**5. Joint Planning Discussion with Board of Supervisors:**

A. Mr. Dunbar relayed the news of Mr. Dysard's resignation this past Monday from Lower Providence Township to take the position of Borough Manager for North Wales Borough. Mr. Dunbar will defer filling Mr. Dysard's position on an interim basis while the workload is slow. He has asked Mr. Chambers to assist with managing project time clocks etc. for now. Mr. Dunbar will address any Planning Commission related issues for the time being.

B. Mr. Dunbar explained that the Board of Supervisors has been discussing planning issues for the Township. Mr. Tom Comitta of TCA has been appointed to address landscape architectural reviews and provide planning services for 2010. Also budgeted for 2010 was a 3-year contract with the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) for a planning services contract. The Board has been questioning if they engage TCA, what will TCA do as compared to the County? The Board is seeking input from the Planning Commission (PC) as to the direction the Township should take in this matter. Land development applications are slow right now, so they could work on longer-range issues such as a clean-up ordinance and master planning updates. Mr. Dunbar turned the meeting over to Board Liaisons Mr. DiPaolo and Mrs. Eckman.

- C. Supervisor Eckman stated she was sorry she was unable to attend the first PC meeting this year. She is looking forward to working with this diverse and knowledgeable Board, and asked for direction on where the PC would like to take planning services? Mrs. Eckman stated they could use the MCPC or TCA exclusively or do a combination of both.
1. Mr. Comroe noted that a while ago the Township did a study and inventory of properties available to be developed. He asked what could change with these properties over the next five years?
  2. Supervisor DiPaolo noted that this report is the LUAR or Land Use Analysis Report, and is available on the Township web site.
  3. Mr. Dunbar noted they should also consider what properties could be re-developed, as this is becoming more common.
  4. Mr. Comroe asked about a property on River Road? Mr. Dunbar noted that 262 River Road is a four-acre rear lot with an approved subdivision for 4 or 5 apartments. He noted there is a flaw with multiple deminimus approvals that needs to be fixed in the clean-up ordinance. Currently deminimus approval is not part of the MPC, however the Township PC should be aware of these approvals. Mr. Dunbar indicated that there should be a policy change made at the staff level to address this.
- D. Ms. Zimmerman asked if they needed to decide if the Township would use the MCPC, TCA or a mixture of the two agencies right now?
1. Mrs. Eckman asked what goals and objectives the PC has as a group? They need to ask what a planner would be working on?
  2. Chairman Schlack indicated that they needed to change their way of thinking in this economy. He thinks there will be more rezoning requests such as what was presented for the K-Mart property.
  3. Mrs. Eckman noted this was true; they need to reevaluate their direction while not compromising on standards, and also look to other initiatives such as green development.
  4. Mr. Chambers commented that they really needed to work on green initiatives. He stated that all development and zoning would change this year when the State changes how they handle stormwater. Within one year the Township ordinance dealing with stormwater will need to be changed. He explained that a consortium of Townships has been working with the DEP on stormwater management, and the results will be published within the next 30 days. This is supposed to be a user-friendlier document. Mr. Chambers is not sure what will be in the document, however it could be significant with regard to water quality. They need to encourage people to go green not because of the new DEP requirements but because it is good for the environment. He stated that some type of incentive should be put into the ordinance along the lines of the RPBD ordinance to reward good development. The new DEP requirements will require that you not only address peak water runoff, but also volume and water quality, things that were not previously dealt with.
  5. Ms. Zimmerman asked if the requirements were so stringent that they might deter new development? Mr. Chambers believes this to be so.
  6. Mrs. LaPenta asked if this would apply to redevelopment? Mr. Chambers indicated that it would be affected. Previously you were allowed 20% impervious coverage, but now this is considered meadow and you must control volume, peak runoff and water quality.
  7. Mr. Comroe asked if anyone would be grandfathered? Mr. Chambers indicated no one would be grandfathered; even installing a new patio will be effected.
- E. Mr. Dunbar asked what issues the PC members would like to focus on?
1. Mr. Brooke would like to know where projects stand after approvals are given. He thinks they should know when developers intend to construct approved plans.

2. Mr. Kuberski would like to be kept apprised of the long-term goals or vision that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) has for development in the Township. Mr. Dunbar noted that some of the reason this has declined is the economy. He noted that part of the reason this changed was when Mr. Siegel left and Mr. Dysard took over because Mr. Dysard was less experienced with planning than Mr. Siegel.
  3. Mr. Comroe concurred with Mr. Kuberski. He would also like to be proactive in working on the matter presented by Mr. Chambers. Mr. Comroe asked if there were any classes on this new ordinance that the PC members could attend? He stated that all of the planners should be able to attend such classes and the Township should pay for any class fees.
    - a) Mr. Dunbar remarked that there would be notification from PSATS if the class becomes available. There are now a lot of webinars for new ordinances as there is less funding available from Harrisburg.
  4. Ms. Zimmerman also concurred with Mr. Kuberski, she would like more contact with the BOS. She would also like to work on beautification in the Township with street trees and green space. This is encouraged in the RPBD and she would like that to continue to happen with new ordinances.
  5. Mrs. LaPenta stated that with the anticipation of redevelopment on properties, they needed to be prepared to see how the new law will effect redevelopment. Maybe part of this would be additional green space within parking lots, which would also address beautification. She was not aware of the regulations Mr. Chambers discussed. She noted that PennDOT just bases their evaluations on peak flow and not on volume or water quality.
  6. Mr. Rutledge remarked that the new water regulations are important to know about and now the PC can discuss them. He would like to see more joint sessions like this evening's between the BOS and PC. This will generate ideas and input on what the PC should be working on.
  7. Mrs. Satterwhite would also like to work more closely with the BOS. She likes the idea of pursuing beautification projects. Mrs. Satterwhite would also like to see more high-end restaurants within the Township, possibly Olive Garden type restaurants. Mr. Dunbar explained that areas that are not along the main corridors are less likely to contain such restaurants. He stated that mixed use zoning within the corporate park may encourage such uses, however in the current economy they would struggle for a while.
  8. Mr. Schlack would like to see the corporate center turn into a Manayunk type area with pubs, a town center, recreation etc.
- F. Mr. Dunbar stated they needed to look at long-range planning. The concept of a Main Street on Ridge Pike or redevelopment of the Superior Tube property could be considered. Mr. Dunbar noted that various Township personnel recently met with representatives in Washington D.C. to seek funding for turning the Township administration building into a LEEDs certified building. This would put the Township's money where their mouth is and provide a model for others to follow. Mr. Dunbar noted that all ordinance amendments and subdivisions are required to go to the MCPC for review. He is asking the PC to consider those items above and beyond the normal workings of development. Are there specific projects that the planners would like the MCPC to work on? When the Township wanted to develop a master plan for the corporate center they used Simone Collins and CMX so they would have the focused approach of a consultant for the plan. How does the PC want to proceed, and on what project?
1. Mr. DiPaolo commented that they needed to ask what is the right tool for the job?
  2. Various possibilities for the Germantown Pike corridor were discussed.
  3. Mr. Dunbar remarked that they needed to plan out what they would like to do with this area of the Township so that when an opportunity comes along they are ready for it.

4. Mr. Comroe stated that the redevelopment of Main Street in Phoenixville is nice. Mr. Dunbar noted that was the result of a focused elected body and PC developing a master plan and sticking to it.
- G. Mr. Tom Comitta was present to discuss the type of services his company, TCA, could provide. Mr. Comitta offered to leave the meeting at any point where the PC would want to discuss details of using TCA or the MCPC. Mr. Comitta provided a detailed overview of his education and qualifications, as well as TCA's accomplishments and the types of services they provide.
1. Mr. Comitta indicated that they would just work on specific projects if that were what the PC would like them to do. When they are working for a Township they represent them day and night, and customize services as needed. Mr. Comitta noted that they could also put together workshops for the planners. They have committed to doing two pro bono efforts for the Township, which could include a workshop on planning.
  2. Mr. Comitta provided two handouts, one entitled Common Open Space Areas, Types, & Character: A Declention Based on the Transect, and a second entitled TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development) / Traffic Calming Transect. Mr. Comitta sees the Valley Forge Corporate Center as a T4 or General Urban Zone. He noted that you can go green in T1, and go green a different way in T2. There is a menu of options for green and open space that can be developed based on the open space area and type. This menu can be incorporated into an ordinance.
  3. The TND handout shows different road widths depending on the zone they are in. Mr. Comitta noted you should ask how a place could grow gracefully depending on where you are? Successful efforts he has worked on include Manayunk and West Chester. There are creative ways to interpret any problem, which differ in undeveloped areas of the Township as compared to places that are congested.
  4. Mr. Comitta stated that they have 37 years of extensive experience working with Townships, and can provide as much or as little services as the Township requires. He noted that the changes in Phoenixville happened because of the collective efforts of forward thinking people. While the Township's Comprehensive Plan will not need to be amended prior to 2012, it should be amended every 10 years. The Township will be responsible for interpreting the results of this year's census, and could do a mini-addendum to update the socio-economic features of the Comprehensive Plan this year. Mr. Comitta noted that zoning ordinances could have 2-3 updates per year. After the new DEP regulations are out, they could come back to discuss them with the PC. Mr. Chambers noted they would be out in March.
- H. Mr. Schlack stated that they needed to look at long term planning. They need to develop incentives for development of Germantown Pike and the lower end of Ridge Pike at Collegeville. The PC should come up with ideas of what they want people to see when they come into the Township. He asked what developers are looking for and indicated they should structure their plans around that to better position the Township for growth. Mr. Schlack stated he likes the menu idea for an ordinance, and suggested that perhaps TCA has more to offer the Township than the MCPC. Mrs. Zimmerman concurred.
- I. Supervisor Altieri stated that she felt this meeting was driven by the need to renew the MCPC contract and asked what this was based on?
1. Mr. Dunbar explained that the MCPC contract is for three years, and they are currently holding their 2009 pricing for the Township. If Lower Providence does not want to renew the contract the MCPC has another municipality waiting to obtain the contract, so the PC needs to make a decision on this matter. Mr. Dunbar noted that the MCPC employs their staff based on these contracts, so this is an all or nothing contract. The PC would not be able to pick and choose using the MCPC just for a few items.

2. Mrs. Altieri noted they wanted the PC to identify where they felt the MCPC fits in. They needed to have a strategic planning meeting to identify the Township's top three priorities, and they need to respond to the MCPC with a decision.
  3. Mrs. Altieri noted that if the PC wants more interaction with the BOS and additional training that is good, but she noted that if the planners attend the BOS meetings they would get a good idea of what is happening in the Township. She urged planners to use Township staff as resources to understanding any items in their packets. She noted that Mike Siegel used to run little workshops on new matters that would impact the Township similar to Mr. Chambers DEP topic. Mrs. Altieri stated that workshops are a good idea and should be consolidated with regular meetings to make it easier for the planners to attend.
  4. Mr. Dunbar noted that Staff / Solicitor meetings are held with developers to discuss matters of importance. These used to be open to the PC so they could bring back any pertinent information to their meetings. These meetings are held during the normal workday.
  5. Mr. Comroe indicated he liked Mrs. Altieri's comments and would like to meet with the BOS at least twice a year to get feedback. Mr. Schlack suggested quarterly meetings.
- J. Mrs. Altieri asked if the planners had feedback on the MCPC?
1. Mr. Schlack stated that their comments are sometimes repetitive of the Township Engineer's comments and often deter the developer.
  2. Ms. Zimmerman noted that she does not have a bad opinion of the MCPC, but she is impressed with what TCA would offer.
  3. Mr. Dunbar asked what they would want the MCPC to work on as compared to TCA?
  4. Mr. DiPaolo commented that New Town Urbanism was the boilerplate for the Village Commercial ordinance. They are looking for a regional development process and also by ordinance. The MCPC only looks at plans based on existing ordinances. If TCA uses a visioning approach, green design standards are key to that and can distinguish this community from others.
    - a) Mr. DiPaolo discussed the use of timber vs. metal guide rails, and how that one feature distinguishes certain communities from others. We need to ask what this community should look and feel like?
    - b) Mr. DiPaolo noted they want to bring new jobs to the community because if the tax base continues to erode the Township will be in trouble. He noted how Philadelphia is 6-9 months behind in any economic recovery because of their taxes.
    - c) If the Township works on the Comprehensive Plan or wants to establish districts it is beyond the scope of normal development and requires up-front visioning for success. What types of things do you see in the community on vacation that you like and would want to incorporate into our community? Different things will work from a residential and commercial standpoint, and they also need to consider the economic impact of any planning decisions.
  5. Mr. Dunbar noted that Mr. DiPaolo, Mrs. Satterwhite and Mr. Comroe all worked extensively with the MCPC on the VC ordinance and asked if they would fit the bill for what the Township needs to do?
    - a) Mr. DiPaolo said this was a yes and no answer. For the VC ordinance there were no sacred cows that could not be removed. Mr. DeSa was key in the visioning process for that project. Mr. DiPaolo noted that there are certain things the MCPC does well but the Township managed the process with the VC ordinance. TCA brings a different level of experience that is beyond what the County can offer. Mr. DiPaolo suggested that for matters that are mission critical to the Township they should use TCA, and for those typical development related items they could use the MCPC.

- b) Mr. Comroe noted that he has seen good planners from the MCPC, but he would prefer using TCA for the Township at this time.
- c) Mrs. Eckman commented that this discussion was interesting and exciting. They need to develop a program for the big picture of the Township, being creative and innovative in this economy. They need someone to mold the Township's concepts and thoughts into a doable plan, and Mrs. Eckman thinks that TCA would be good for this job.
- d) Ms. Zimmerman stated they need someone who is oriented to the Township's goals.
- e) The planners concurred they should use TCA over the MCPC for planning services.

**6. Other Business:**

A. Old Business –

- 1. None

B. New Business –

- 1. Mr. Dunbar noted that 9-10 months ago the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association began a pedestrian and bicycle study for the Township. They received a preliminary report on this in early January, and Mr. Shaffer and Chief Carroll have reviewed the report and provided their feedback. The final report should be ready for presentation at the April PC meeting. The PC will need to provide their input and it will then be forwarded to the BOS for consideration. The idea behind the study was to provide connectivity throughout the Township.
- 2. Mr. Rutledge asked what happened with the plans for the Valley Forge Corporate Center (VFCC) and if there was anything the PC needed to do on that matter? Mr. Dunbar stated the plans were approved by the BOS in December and it should be coming back to the PC at some time. Mr. Dunbar noted that the BOS has received feedback from businesses within the VFCC. They have met with brokers with regard to the VFCC and are trying to develop prospects for that area. Mr. Rutledge asked Mr. Dunbar to keep the PC informed of what is going on with that project, as updates are available.
- 3. Mr. Comitta thanked the PC for inviting him to this evening's meeting.

C. Comments:

- 1. There was no public comment during this meeting.

**7. Adjourn**

- A. **MOTION** – Ms. Zimmerman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Comroe seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 8-0. The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** March 24, 2010