

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
VILLAGE COMMERCIAL COMMITTEE  
JUNE 19, 2007 MEETING MINUTES**

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**1) Public Meeting: Call to Order**

- a) Supervisor DiPaolo called the public meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

**2) Pledge of Allegiance**

**3) Roll Call:**

- a) The following committee members were present: Mrs. Bateman, Mr. Comroe, Mr. DiPaolo, Mr. Ferraro, and Mrs. Maris.  
b) Mr. Borai, Mr. Hager, Mr. Ozoroski, Mrs. Satterwhite and Mr. Stemple were absent.  
c) Also present were Tolson DeSa from the Montgomery County Planning Commission, Township Manager Joseph Dunbar, and Director of Community Development Michael Siegel.

**4) Review of May Meeting Minutes:**

- a) Supervisor DiPaolo noted that they would review the meeting minutes at the next meeting because they did not have a quorum.

**5) Review of Recommendations from June 5, 2007 Meeting:**

- a) Mr. DeSa reviewed the discussion and recommendations from the previous meetings:  
i) For the Evansburg District, the committee decided to keep this area intact.  
(1) Some parcels zoned R1 and R2 are proposed to become VC.  
(2) There is a 4.58-acre parcel owned by Superior Tube, zoned PBO, located near Cross Keys Road and Vincent Road that will become VC.  
(3) They are proposing that the Public Facility Overlay (PFO) parcels at St. James Church and the cemetery be rezoned VC, and that the church parcel itself become VC.  
ii) For the Audubon Village District, the Sheehan Law Office parcel, 2790 Egypt Road, should be VC.  
iii) For Ridge Pike and Parklane Drive, the committee agreed to extend the Ridge Pike Business District (RPBD) to include the other commercial uses, and to eliminate the Village Commercial (VC) district in this area.  
iv) The Perkiomen "Thumb" area should be studied in conjunction with the Township's Comprehensive Plan.  
v) For the Betzwood District, the committee would like feedback from Simone Collins to determine if this area should become part of the Valley Forge Corporate Center.

**6) Continued District Designation Discussion:**

- a) Audubon Village:  
i) Mr. DeSa noted that the Culp Road triangle area would be reviewed to determine how far VC should extend in this area. Currently only three lots, Bud's Bar, the chiropractor office, and the auto tag business are zoned VC in this triangle.  
ii) There are other pre-existing non-conforming uses such as the flag business in this area. This area could be used for home-based businesses.  
iii) Mr. Dunbar noted that at the last meeting Mr. Hager suggested tightening up the zoning from Culp Road to the intersection. Mrs. Maris remarked that this area should not be VC as it is not a VC area, and there would be an impact on the surrounding residential areas.  
iv) Mr. DeSa concurred that the traffic is dangerous. He suggested they imagine the historic aspect with VC, with a different flavor than Evansburg.  
(1) Mrs. Maris remarked that they have two historic buildings, the Audubon Inn and Bud's Bar, which she is not sure why this is historic. There are elements of the area that need to be protected such as Mill Grove. Mrs. Maris noted that in Evansburg all the houses have been

changed, none are entirely original. In Audubon there is nothing to bring people in, it is not a VC atmosphere.

- (2) Mr. Ferraro lives near this area and concurred that the traffic is too dangerous for walking. However there is a possibility it could be something if it was walk able. They should use what is there to draw in small businesses, install sidewalks, and use the VC zoning to get some control of the situation.
  - (3) Mr. Dunbar suggested the zoning could be something other than VC. He remarked that they need to spur people to want to make an investment in their property. Perhaps zoning should be somewhere between VC and a more intense use.
  - (4) Mr. Comroe asked how Mrs. Maris would zone this area? She is not sure, but it is not VC. Mr. Comroe remarked that while he was opposed to the changes in that area, it has become more of a village with the new development.
- v) Mr. Joe Dedominic, owner of Bud's Bar, commented that what is making this area look more like a village is not a result of the current VC ordinance. Based on the uses currently permitted in the VC ordinance, property owners cannot do anything with their land.
- (1) Mr. Comroe suggested that given 2-3 years, once the American Revolution Center (ARC) is constructed, Bud's Bar would feed off of that business.
  - (2) Mr. Dedominic discussed the changes in available restaurants and bars since he first opened his business and how this has impacted him. He argued that if the Township does not expand the uses in the VC district, the Audubon area should not be zoned VC, as it is too restrictive. The temporary changes in the VC ordinance are making the area what it is today, more of a village.
  - (3) Mr. Leo White, 2854 Egypt Road, hopes the committee adopts Mr. DeSa's recommendations. He would be willing to dedicate some of his land for installing sidewalks heading toward the VC district in Audubon. He is not sure he could pay to install the sidewalks, just dedicate the land.
  - (4) Mr. Ferraro remarked that the Board of Supervisors from 1990 to the present has given away sidewalks as part of the land development process. Mr. Dunbar took exception to this, noting that he cannot think of any project in that timeframe that waived away sidewalks along Egypt Road.
  - (5) Mr. Ferraro questioned how Bud's Bar was zoned when Mr. Dedominic purchased the property? Mr. Dedominic remarked that this does not matter as the business environment has changed. He asked how he was supposed to know, as a business owner, there was a three-month window where he should have jumped in with a plan under different VC zoning? Mr. Dedominic commented that all the other commercials are developed commercially and he has to play under the old VC rules.
- vi) Mr. Dunbar suggested that something other than VC might make sense, as it is not a walk able community. He suggested approaching it from a main street hometown feel. Some of the existing residences could become small shops and sidewalks could be installed.
- (1) Mr. DeSa expressed concern that people would buy up the small homes and tear them down. This is OK if done correctly, but if the zoning is expanded, he thinks the houses will go away.
  - (2) Mr. Dunbar asked what the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) recommended in 2005? After reviewing the 2005 document, it was noted that the MCPC suggested revisiting three areas – six parcels on the Bud's Bar side of the road; the area across the street that has become Commerce Bank; and across the intersection up to the Rod & Gun Club.
  - (3) Mr. Siegel suggested that there be different classes for different types of commercial zoning. Mr. Ferraro was concerned about spot zoning. Mr. Siegel stated they could follow different standards for character in an area without being spot zoning.
  - (4) Mr. Ferraro expressed concern for how to balance development of the area with solving traffic congestion, livability, and installing sidewalks.

- (5) Mr. DeSa indicated a specific master plan would be needed for the area.
- vii) Mr. DiPaolo noted that when considering expansion of the VC district up Egypt Road, he views the parcels with access off of Egypt Road differently than those taking access off of Wren Road, which would have greater impact on residences. He asked Mr. Dininny how he would make this area more walk able?
- (1) Mr. Craig Dininny noted that from a commercial perspective this area is somewhat isolated. They need to promote commerce in the area or small businesses will go out of business. People go to these businesses as a destination, such as to the bank, but there is no place to stroll such as in Skippack or New Hope. They need to look at the big picture and promote things conducive to sidewalks. They probably need to expand VC for this to work.
  - (2) Mrs. Bateman remarked that most properties are not large enough to allow something to come in and use it. Mr. DeSa indicated that this is why a master plan is needed.
  - (3) Mr. Dunbar remarked that most people would not want to buy a house fronting on Egypt Road in this area. Changing the zoning provides more flexibility to the homeowners in that area.
  - (4) Mr. Comroe asked who would pay for installing sidewalks? Mr. Dunbar noted that there is grant money out there for things like safe roads to school, or streetscape improvement that the Township could investigate.
- viii) Mrs. Maris remarked that if the area is to stay VC, it should be expanded up to the golf course and school.
- (1) Mr. Comroe asked if they would want to encourage small home-based businesses? He knows people who own homes in that area that would like the zoning to be VC.
  - (2) Mr. DiPaolo again expressed concern for commercially zoning a property that fronts on a residential street (Wren Street).
  - (3) Mrs. Bateman concurred with Mr. DiPaolo, questioning the impact on the houses on the other side of Wren. Mr. Dunbar noted that they could craft the language in the ordinance so no access could be taken from a residential street for these businesses. Mrs. Bateman indicated that if such language were present in the ordinance, she would be in favor of expanding VC as Mrs. Maris suggested.
- ix) The committee viewed the pictometry of the area, and discussed the impact on the surrounding residential areas, depending on various expansion options with VC.
- (1) Mr. Dininny noted that the elevation of the parcels fronting on Wren might prohibit commercial traffic entry. Mr. Siegel confirmed that the parcels are 12-15' higher than Egypt Road in that area.
  - (2) Mr. Dininny noted that on the Culp Road side of Egypt Road it would be a little different with low impact businesses.
  - (3) Mrs. Bateman questioned how you give access to the residences in that area if the houses along Egypt Road become VC? Mr. Dunbar explained that they would create connectivity. Mrs. Bateman questioned how this happens?
  - (4) Mr. DiPaolo explained that the committee would make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on how to change the area.
  - (5) Mr. Dedominic commented that if Bud's Bar were not in the way, there would be connectivity to the other corners. Bud's Bar is in the way of installing sidewalks in that area, and is not beneficial to the Township or himself.
  - (6) Mr. DeSa questioned if they want to do a master plan for the Culp Road triangle area? They would give protection to the neighbors in that neighborhood with buffering, while creating a land area to be developed.
- x) **ACTION ITEM** – Mr. DiPaolo asked everyone to go look around that area before the next meeting, and consider how changes to the area will affect the neighbors.
- b) Perkiomen Bridge District:

- i) Mr. DeSa identified the small area zoned VC in this triangular area. He noted that it was possible to incorporate Superior Tube lot 11 into VC. They could also include some of the properties zoned RPBD, up to Jim & Ralph's and possibly the Collegeville Inn, in VC.
- ii) Mr. DeSa reviewed the zoning of properties from Cross Keys Road up to the point of the bridge. This is a possible gateway area. He suggested a possible hybrid of zoning of RPBD and VC. They could establish a loose master plan to incorporate the whole area.
- iii) Mr. Ferraro questioned what would happen in the Cranberry Park Area? Mr. Dunbar noted that the Park Board was currently working on this. Mr. Ferraro would like to see them create a destination point in that area, perhaps with a band shell. Mr. Dunbar suggested that he talk to the Park Board about his ideas.
- iv) Mr. DiPaolo asked if the core VC properties should remain?
  - (1) The committee concurred that this area should be left as it exists.
  - (2) Mr. DiPaolo questioned if the VC district should be expanded? He thinks it could present greater problems than Audubon with the variety of zoning on surrounding parcels. Mrs. Maris, Mrs. Bateman and Mr. Comroe concurred that it would be difficult to expand.
  - (3) Mr. DeSa noted that as it is currently zoned, a Super WaWa could come into this area.
  - (4) Mr. Ferraro likes the idea of pathways connecting the area to adjacent areas. He would like a connection over the bridge to the college area.
  - (5) Mr. Dininny noted that they would have to go through zoning to make any changes to this area. This is the second busiest traffic area in the Township, and he questioned if it was the place for quaint shops? He noted that Evansburg has a lot of what the committee wants for VC.
  - (6) Mr. Dunbar noted that there is a potential small pharmaceutical company interested in the Superior Tube parcel with its current zoning. Mr. Dininny remarked that such businesses provide revenue for the Township.
  - (7) Mr. Ferraro noted that if such a business would come in, their employees could use walking paths to local businesses in a VC district for lunch and shopping.
- c) Pinetown & Egypt Roads:
  - i) This was not discussed this evening.
- d) Providence Square (Grange & Germantown Pike):
  - i) This was not discussed this evening.
- e) Any Additional Districts Identified by the Comprehensive Plan:
  - i) This was not discussed this evening.

**7) Gateway Triangle Discussion:**

- a) This was not discussed this evening.

**8) Discussion of Upcoming Agenda & Meeting Date:**

- a) Mr. DiPaolo noted that they would revisit the Audubon Village up to the Pinetown Road area at the next meeting.

**9) Public Comment:**

- a) None at this time.

**10) Adjournment:**

- a) The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

**Upcoming Meetings:**      July 10, 2007  
    July 31, 2007  
    August 7, 2007