

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
VILLAGE COMMERCIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
APRIL 1, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

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

- a) Supervisor DiPaolo called the public meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

**2) Roll Call:**

- a) The following committee members were present: Mr. DiPaolo, Mr. Hager, Mrs. Maris, and Mr. Ozorowski.
- b) Mrs. Bateman, Mr. Borai, Mr. Comroe, Mr. Ferraro, Mrs. Satterwhite and Mr. Stemple were absent.
- c) Also present were Mr. Watson Olszewski from the Montgomery County Planning Commission, Mr. Joseph Dunbar, Township Manager, and Mr. Michael Siegel, Director of Community Development.
- d) It was noted that Mr. Siegel is actually a voting member of the committee, although he has not voted in previous meetings.

**3) Discussion of text changes to the Village Commercial Ordinance for the Audubon area:**

- a) Mr. DiPaolo explained that the Village Commercial Committee (VCC) needs to begin reviewing text changes to the proposed Evansburg Village Commercial Ordinance (EVC) to draft an ordinance that will apply to VC areas outside of the EVC district. At this point, the only areas the second VC ordinance will apply to are Audubon and the VC area along Ridge Pike by Parklane Drive.
  - i) Mr. Hager questioned the area currently zoned VC along Audubon Road and Trooper Road? Mr. DiPaolo noted that the VCC has recommended that those parcels be rezoned to become part of the Business Park.
  - ii) Mr. DiPaolo noted that since the Audubon area is larger, they need to determine how it differs from Evansburg and what it should look like moving forward.
- b) Mr. Olszewski commented that the primary differences between the areas include:
  - i) Audubon does not have the historic houses that Evansburg has; while some buildings could be considered historic it is not a historic district.
  - ii) The lots in Audubon are not as deep so there is not a lot of area to expand on. It may not make sense to allow additional buildings on the site as are permitted in Evansburg.
  - iii) The uses permitted within converted structures in Evansburg could also apply to Audubon.
- c) Mr. Hager noted that some of the buildings in Audubon are old such as Bud's Bar and the Audubon Inn.
  - i) It was noted that there is not the same historic comparison in the Audubon buildings as exists in Evansburg.
  - ii) Mr. Olszewski remarked that most of the older homes in Audubon are a bungalow style, one-story with an attic, and different in character from Evansburg. Buildings over 40 years old can be considered historic.
  - iii) Mr. Ozorowski asked if they wanted to preserve the bungalows or apply design standards to the area? He asked what would happen if someone purchased several lots to tear down the older buildings? Mr. Olszewski indicated that the VCC would have to consider how this should be addressed. Most of the existing homes were built in the 1940's or 1950's.
  - iv) Mr. Hager is concerned with the impact of teardowns on surrounding neighbors, especially near Culp Road. But, it would be nice to remove something like Cumberland Farms to construct a building with more character.
- d) Mrs. Leslie Bass, Lee Road, commented that there were some historical homes just beyond the existing VC district in Audubon, and it would be nice if they were preserved and part of this area.
- e) There was a discussion of which parcels were zoned VC on Pawling's Road.
  - i) Mr. Hager asked why 1114 Pawlings Road was not zoned VC?

- ii) Mr. Dunbar noted that 1110 and 1114 Pawlings Road had requested to be zoned VC, and thought 1114 had been rezoned.
- iii) **ACTION ITEM** – Mr. Siegel will verify the zoning for 1114 Pawlings Road.
- iv) Mr. Dunbar noted that there were other parcels in that area where residents did not want to be rezoned to VC, and they wanted a buffer to be separate from the shopping area.
- v) Mr. Ozorowski commented that if 1114 wanted to be VC, the committee should consider it.
- f) Mrs. Maris asked if they could make the footprint smaller for Audubon? Mr. DiPaolo stated that they could. The EVC draft is just a starting point for the Audubon version.
  - i) Mr. Ozorowski asked if they want multiple buildings on one lot, noting the lots are not that big. He concurs that they could make the footprint smaller.
  - ii) Mr. Olszewski explained that the by right and conditional uses from EVC will give the current Audubon owners new uses to fit into the existing houses, or allow them to expand their houses.
  - iii) Mr. Siegel suggested limiting the types of uses to retain the bungalow atmosphere, particularly those that would create additional traffic problems. He noted that they can legally mandate sidewalk installation with any VC use change, and could then encourage village type lampposts to be installed as well.
  - iv) Mr. Dunbar commented that Audubon is right for a walk able area. They could put in design standards and create walk able paths to create a Main Street feel. Also, sidewalks should be mandated as properties turn over. The cost for sidewalk installation continues to rise.
  - v) Mrs. Bass commented that residents did want sidewalks so they could walk to the shopping center. There was discussion of residents along Park Avenue who previously indicated they did not want sidewalks, however now that the improvements have gone in on the corner, this may have changed.
- g) There was discussion regarding what date would be appropriate to use regarding preservation and re-use. Mr. Siegel identified houses on the GIS from 1925 to 1940, however some members felt pre-1950's houses should be preserved.
  - i) Mr. Hager would not like to see the houses torn down for additional Cumberland Farm type buildings. They should work to save the character of the area and protect neighborhoods.
  - ii) Mrs. Maris commented they should remove the Bud's Bar building because of its' proximity to the road and the fact it gets hit by trucks. Mr. Dunbar explained that just part of that building is original, and could potentially make another nice office such as the law offices across the street.
  - iii) The committee may decide upon 1945 as the appropriate date for this area.
- h) Review of permitted uses:
  - i) The class one uses were acceptable as written.
  - ii) For class two & three uses:
    - (1) Mr. Olszewski thinks that place of worship should be removed.
    - (2) Mr. Ozorowski asked if Post Office should be removed since they already have one nearby? After some discussion it was decided that could stay.
    - (3) Mr. Olszewski noted that with class two uses no expansion of the existing building is permitted.
    - (4) Mr. Olszewski asked if they wanted to remove pharmacy?
      - (a) Mr. Siegel noted that the CVS would be a grandfathered non-conforming use.
      - (b) Mr. DiPaolo noted that today's pharmacies are really convenience stores.
      - (c) Mr. Dunbar clarified that the problem with CVS was the size and not the use.
      - (d) Mr. Hager commented that they have a shopping center across the street where a pharmacy could go in.
      - (e) It was noted that this ordinance applies to both Audubon and Ridge Pike, so if pharmacy is removed it affects more than just Audubon.
      - (f) Mr. Ozorowski sees nothing wrong with the pharmacy use if the building size is limited to no more than 3,000 sq. ft.

- (5) Mr. DiPaolo remarked that multi-family conversion should have been removed from class two. Mr. Olszewski stated that it has been removed.
- (6) Mr. Hager and Mr. Ozorowski would like to see indoor fitness center removed as a use.
- (7) Place of worship and funeral home will also be removed as uses.
- (8) Discussion of restaurant uses:
  - (a) Businesses such as a tea or coffee shop, serving sandwiches etc. would be nice in a village environment.
  - (b) Mr. Hager asked why establishments serving alcoholic beverages were included under conditional use? Mr. DiPaolo noted that they would be able to better address neighbors concerns that way.
  - (c) Mrs. Bass asked what would happen to CVS with the drive-thru should they vacate the building? Mr. Siegel explained that any new use would have to go to the Zoning Hearing Board for approval.
- (9) Mr. Siegel commented that the use applies to the land and asked if the committee wanted to put additional performance standards under the uses? He tried to explain how this would work for things such as limiting business hours, requiring trash receptacles for outdoor eating areas etc. The committee had difficulty in determining the extent of how this would work, and requested examples.
  - (a) **ACTION ITEM** – Mr. Siegel will provide an example document with performance standards to the committee to consider.
- i) Mr. Ozorowski commented that the dimensional and coverage standards should be modified to fit the Audubon area, using the building footprint to control the uses.
- j) Mr. Dunbar remarked that the committee was heading in the right direction, and need to meet with Mr. Chambers and Mr. Onorato at some point. If curbs and sidewalks are added, TIF money could be used to install them in some places. The ordinance needs to be economically feasible to encourage growth without giving away the store.
- k) Discussion of building footprint:
  - i) Mr. Siegel provided examples of how a 5,000 sq. ft. building would fit onto a typical Audubon lot. The overall consensus was that this was too big.
  - ii) Mr. Ozorowski commented that 4,000 sq. ft. might be a good size.
  - iii) The building on Mr. Sheehan's property is about 3,000 sq. ft.
  - iv) Somehow they need to limit building size to the lot size because parking must also be taken into consideration. For class one and two, there would be no expansion of the existing buildings, but parking must be addressed.
  - v) Mr. Olszewski remarked that 3,000 sq. ft. seems like a good size for class three, because the developer might build a second floor creating a 6,000 sq. ft. building.
  - vi) Mr. Dunbar remarked that neither the Township nor PennDOT would probably ever widen Egypt Road.
  - vii) Mr. Ozorowski asked how far off the road the current houses were, and if the TIF money could be in an account for improvements in this area? Mr. Siegel measured distances from the existing buildings to the road, most of which were about 25'. Mr. Dunbar stated that the money could be used for Audubon area improvements.
  - viii) Mrs. Bass suggested the possibility of a municipal parking area for businesses in Audubon. This would work well if good pedestrian walkways are installed.
  - ix) There was a general discussion of sidewalk connections from Mill Grove up to the Audubon intersection, and competition for grant money.
  - x) Mr. Hager asked if the committee agreed that 3,000 sq. ft. was good for the footprint? The committee concurred that it was. Mr. Hager is concerned with creating the road connections behind existing homes.
  - xi) **ACTION ITEM** – Mr. DiPaolo will send out the March 5, 2008 version of the EVC Ordinance to the committee for review.

- xii) **ACTION ITEM** – Mr. Olszewski will create a mock-up of how a 3,000 sq. ft. footprint would fit on various parcels in Audubon.
  - l) There was a discussion of additional houses on Egypt Road being zoned VC.
    - i) These houses in question are by WaWa, running to the Capinski property. Some of these residents expressed interest in the past with having their parcels rezoned to VC.
    - ii) Mr. Siegel measured the frontage from the house to roadway on these houses, which averages 70'. However, these lots drop off a lot in the front and have less space in the back.
    - iii) Traffic is backing up into Lower Providence from Upper Providence along Egypt Road. The Upper Providence traffic lights need to be included in the close loop system.
  - m) Mrs. Bass asked what decision the committee made regarding Pinetown Road? Mr. DiPaolo told her that the committee has chosen to follow recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan and the parcels in that area should be PBO. It was noted that the Neilson property on that corner does have a plan submitted under the old “CVS” version of VC that would allow three uses on the site. Neilson has given the Township and indefinite extension on the plan.
- 4) Upcoming Meeting:**
- a) The next meeting will be April 15, 2008 at 7 p.m.
  - b) Mr. Siegel will be on vacation and unable to attend the next meeting.
  - c) Mrs. Bass invited VCC members to attend an educational meeting on historic preservation being hosted by the Friends of Lower Providence, at the Library on April 28, 2008.
- 5) Adjournment:**
- a) The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.