

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
VILLAGE COMMERCIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
NOVEMBER 13, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

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

- a) Supervisor DiPaolo called the public meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2) Roll Call:**

- a) The following committee members were present: Mr. Borai, Mr. Comroe, Mr. DiPaolo, Mr. Hager, Mrs. Maris, Mrs. Satterwhite and Mr. Stemple.  
b) Mr. Ozorowski arrived after the meeting began.  
c) Mrs. Bateman and Mr. Ferraro were absent.  
d) Also present were Ms. Hannah Mazzaccaro from the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), and Mr. Michael Siegel, Directory of Community Development.

**3) Public Meeting:**

- a) Mr. DiPaolo explained that the Village Commercial Committee (VCC) has been working to refine the VC ordinance for about two years. The purpose of this evening's meeting is to provide a status update to residents on the VCC's vision, walk through the existing and proposed VC district's location and zoning, and obtain feedback. This information will be taken back to the VCC to discussion and possible incorporation into the ordinance.
- i) Mr. DiPaolo noted that the VCC first dealt with the Evansburg VC District, which is smaller and has historically specific needs. A public meeting was already held for this district.
- ii) Tonight's meeting will deal with the Audubon VC District, as well as any remaining VC areas within the Township. These will be rezoned under a General VC ordinance (GVC). The VCC needs to finalize map amendments and text changes. The ordinance will then follow the normal review process of going through the Township's Planning Commission (PC) and Board of Supervisors (BOS) prior to being adopted.
- iii) Mr. DiPaolo commented that one of the biggest challenges in this process has been the different perception of what VC represents. He noted that the VCC has agreed that a VC district should provide commercial destinations for residents that can be easily accessed. This should include a walkable community, creating a unique, visitor friendly environment that is not homogenous.
- b) Mr. Ozorowski arrived at this point in the meeting.
- c) Ms. Hannah Mazzaccaro from the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) was present to discuss the proposed VC ordinance.
- i) Ms. Mazzaccaro used a map depicting the existing VC Districts to review their locations and discuss what is included within them. These districts include:
- (1) Evansburg – as previously discussed, the Evansburg VC (EVC) was addressed first and is a separate zoning district. It is similar to other VC areas in the Township, however the historic properties have extra requirements. This is proposed to be rezoned EVC.
- (2) Perkiomen Bridge – this area includes four parcels that will remain VC under the EVC ordinance.
- (3) Eagleville – there are several parcels in this area that will be affected by the new GVC.
- (4) Audubon Village – this area has unique characteristics with many arts and crafts style houses. Ms. Mazzaccaro used the existing VC map to show where changes will occur in the district, which will fall under GVC.
- (5) Pinetown & Egypt Roads – this area has been recommended for rezoning to Professional Business Office (PBO) by both the MCPC and the Township's Comprehensive Plan.

- (6) Betzwood, Audubon & Trooper Road – this area is currently zoned VC, and may be rezoned to match the zoning in the Business Park that abuts the rear of these parcels. The zoning for these parcels is still undetermined.
- ii) Ms. Mazzaccaro noted that the three goals of the ordinance were:
  - (1) To encourage new uses of old buildings – measures to encourage reuse are in the new VC ordinances.
  - (2) To protect the existing village and adjoining neighbors.
  - (3) To create a unique character and identity for the VC District.
- iii) Ms. Mazzaccaro provided details on the proposed ordinance including:
  - (1) All existing uses can legally continue, the new requirements will only need to be met if the property is redeveloped. Redevelopment will require a conditional use.
  - (2) Ms. Mazzaccaro reviewed the variety of uses that will be permitted.
  - (3) The ordinance permits mixed use and expansion of existing buildings.
  - (4) Rear parking areas and cross access easements will be used to facilitate parking behind the VC area.
  - (5) The existing village and neighbors will be protected with increased buffering requirements, and by the dimensional standards. Additionally the BOS can require specific conditions as part of the conditional use approval.
  - (6) The VC District will have a distinct character and identity.
  - (7) Nighttime lighting via streetlights, sidewalks, plantings etc. will be required.
  - (8) Ms. Mazzaccaro reviewed the legislative intent, Class 1, 2 & 3 uses, dimensional standards, and parking and access standards. She explained the rationale behind various ordinance changes.
- iv) Mr. DiPaolo noted that one of the major changes for Class 2 & 3 uses is that they were previously allowed under the title of “specialty retail.” There are now about 53 specified permitted uses that were deemed appropriate for a village area.
- d) Public Comment:
  - i) Mr. John Pell, Audubon Road – understands the concept of trying to create a certain type of environment, however as a small business owner he is trying to do the most he can with the property he has. He thinks that increased setbacks and regulations on his property take something away from its value.
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo explained that it is just more specified. There is currently a 5,000 sq. ft. limit to the footprint for these parcels under the existing VC ordinance.
    - (2) Mr. Pell understands that they are trying to control development with the ordinance, however his perception is that it will be harder.
    - (3) Mr. DiPaolo explained they are trying to give clear expectations of what is allowed under the ordinance such as shared parking with cross-access easements to limit the number of driveways, sidewalks etc. The conditional use is used to try to get the desired improvements for the area.
  - ii) Mrs. Leslie Bass likes the emphasis on sidewalks and commented on how that will help residents in the area.
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo noted that sidewalks are vital to the success of businesses. Skippack originally did not have sidewalks, however by installing them it increased business traffic in that area.
    - (2) Mr. Hager commented that the cross-access easements directs traffic to the back of the parcels and will help reduce curb cuts.
  - iii) Mrs. Nancy Hagner, 1122 Pawlings Road – likes the concept, and noted that her parcel is not included in the proposed district and she would like it to be rezoned VC. There are no sidewalks on Pawlings Road by her house and she would like to see sidewalks installed.
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo commented on the piecemeal sidewalks in that section of Audubon. The sidewalks will be required in the VC District as part of the conditional use, however the scope

- of the VCC is to review the VC areas, not address all areas in the Township that could use additional sidewalks.
- (2) Mr. Siegel noted that the Township is trying to obtain grant money via the Safe Streets to School program to install more sidewalks in the Township. They are also getting money from developers in lieu of improvements, and this money can be used to make sidewalk connections where they are needed in the future.
- iv) Mrs. Eileen Kuntz, Pawlings Road – commented on the various types of zoning that have been applied to her property, and asked what zoning she currently falls under?
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo is not sure. He believes that “grandfathered” applies to the current use and can be retained forever until you change that use, however he would have to consult an attorney to verify this.
    - (2) Mrs. Kuntz noted that the traffic improvements at that intersection have helped a lot. She also would like to see sidewalks installed in front of the two properties from the Pines leading up to that intersection.
  - v) Mrs. Bass asked what the definition was for a certified historic structure?
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo noted that properties listed in the Township’s 100-year anniversary book are the Township’s certified historic structures.
    - (2) Mr. Siegel explained that he is inserting historical data from that book into the Township’s GIS system, and also adding in more historical data as it becomes available from the County Historian.
  - vi) Mrs. Pauline Hunzberger asked how far up Egypt road the VC District extends?
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo used the map to show what parcels would be included in VC. VC is being expanded; at least 10 owners have requested it for their parcels. The Kulp Road development is not included in the expansion.
  - vii) Mr. Pell asked if the Township eventually wants sidewalks in all the VC Districts?
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo indicates that they do. There is not a lot of pedestrian traffic in these areas, and it is needed for the businesses to grow.
    - (2) Mr. Pell asked if this would apply to VC parcels with no retail and no customers coming to the property? He explained that for his parcel on Audubon Road, and for the eight houses along that area that are zoned VC, they do not want sidewalks. These are their homes, and when PennDOT widened the road the homeowners did not want sidewalks installed. Sidewalks will further reduce their properties and green space.
      - (a) Mr. DiPaolo noted that these parcels might be attached to the Business Park.
      - (b) Mr. Ozorowski commented that the requirement to install sidewalks is a Township requirement for new development and is not unique to the VC District.
  - viii) Ms. Janice Hip – asked if the expansion of VC would include the other side of Egypt Road, by WaWa and those parcels?
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo noted it would not include these parcels.
  - ix) Mrs. Maria Parisi, Egypt Road, asked what the next step would be?
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo explained that they wanted to obtain resident’s feedback. There is another meeting on November 25<sup>th</sup> to review changes, and then the ordinance will go to the PC and BOS.
  - x) Mrs. Hagner commented that there are only two houses going down Pawlings Road that are not zoned VC, she would like her house to be rezoned.
    - (1) Mr. DiPaolo instructed Mrs. Hagner to discuss this matter with Mr. Siegel. He noted that all residents would need to agree to the rezoning.
    - (2) Mrs. Hagner noted that the other property owners thought they would have higher taxes with VC.
    - (3) Mr. DiPaolo noted that VC is a higher density, and the rezoning would result in the property being reassessed and most likely a higher tax. The County does this.

- xi) Mrs. Kuntz noted that part of this area is designated as a bike trail, which should be taken into consideration when discussing foot traffic.
  - (1) Mr. DiPaolo asked Mr. Siegel if PennDOT pays to install a bike lane? Mr. Siegel will check into this.
- xii) Mrs. Bass asked what the VC area in Eagleville would be?
  - (1) Mr. DiPaolo noted it stays the same.
  - (2) Mrs. Bass asked what the zoning change would be for Pinetown Road?
  - (3) Mr. DiPaolo explained they are recommending this area follow the Comprehensive Plan and be zoned PBO.
  - (4) Mrs. Bass asked if there was a special ordinance for Evansburg, and all other VC areas would fall under the other ordinance?
  - (5) Mr. DiPaolo noted all others would fall under GVC, this is designated differently on the zoning map. All parcels are identified on the zoning map.
- xiii) Ms. Maureen Markley asked if there were plans for WaWa to conform to the VC look?
  - (1) Mr. DiPaolo indicated there were no such plans.
  - (2) Mr. Siegel explained that as new owners come into the Township, they discuss how the buildings can be improved and this has an overflow effect to adjoining businesses. This is being seen in the Ridge Pike Business District.
- xiv) Mr. Chet Houseal asked if other properties were being considered for future VC?
  - (1) Mr. DiPaolo indicated none were being considered at this time.
  - (2) Mr. Houseal commented it might be good to rezone the parcels from Pinetown Road on up to VC.
  - (3) Mr. DiPaolo noted this was too much rezoning in one area all at one time.
  - (4) Mr. Houseal asked if there were any ordinances to protect the demolition of historical buildings?
  - (5) Mr. Siegel noted he is working on such an ordinance, however they want the VC ordinance completed first.
- xv) Mrs. Joyce Cluley thanked the VCC for all the time and work they put into this ordinance.
- e) Mr. DiPaolo introduced the various VCC members in attendance.
- f) Mr. DiPaolo asked residents to call or e-mail the Township if they think of any other comments on the proposed ordinance later.

**4) Adjournment:**

- a) **MOTION** –The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.