

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING – JANUARY 13, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
PALMER LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

The reorganizational meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, January 13, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. with the following in attendance: Robert Blanchfield, Tom Grube, Ron Grandinetti and Rich Wilkins. Also in attendance were Planning Director Cyndie Carman; Solicitor Charles Bruno, Engineer Ralph Russek and Supervisor Liaison Jeff Young. Chairman Blanchfield opened the meeting by leading those present in the Pledge to the Flag.

1. Minutes of Public Meeting of November 2014

On motion by Grandinetti, seconded by Wilkins, and agreed by all, the minutes of the November 2014 meeting were approved as written.

2. Reorganization – Election of Officers

Chairman Blanchfield turned the meeting over to Temporary Chairman Charles Bruno who called for nominations for Chairman. On motion by Wilkins, seconded by Grandinetti, Robert Blanchfield was nominated for Chairman. Nominations were closed on motion by Wilkins, seconded by Grandinetti, and agreed by all and Robert Blanchfield was declared Chairman for 2015. Bruno then turned the meeting back over to Chairman Blanchfield who called for nominations for Vice Chairman.

On motion by Grube, seconded by Grandinetti, Robert Lammi was nominated for Vice Chairman. Nominations were closed on motion by Grube, seconded by Grandinetti and agreed by all and Robert Lammi was declared Vice Chairman for 2015.

On motion by Wilkins, seconded by Grandinetti, Diane Grube was nominated for Secretary. Nominations were closed on motion by Wilkins, seconded by Grandinetti, and agreed by all and Diane Grube was declared Secretary for 2015.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Freemansburg Avenue Zoning Plan
Discussion of Upcoming Public Meeting

The Commission discussed the upcoming community meeting that is going to be held on Monday, January 26 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Andrew's Church on Freemansburg Avenue. Everyone felt this community meeting is a very good idea for the public to attend and a great opportunity for everyone to discuss what is happening along Freemansburg Avenue. Flyers have been sent out to property owners that front Freemansburg Avenue as well as adjoining property owners. It was noted that there will be no decisions made

or action taken at this meeting, but rather it is a chance to interact with the property owners and hear their opinions.

Blanchfield noted that we are looking at the Freemansburg Avenue from Bethlehem Township to Hobson Street. The proposals currently at hand are to create a new Neighborhood Commercial district from Mine Lane Road to Greenwood Avenue and to create a new overlay district for the rest of the corridor. He asked that everyone please review the ordinance for the Route 248 Overlay District to make yourself familiar with what we did for that area. We also did the William Penn Highway Overlay District.

Blanchfield stated the purpose of the community meeting is to have everyone give their comments and opinions, which the Commission can then review and discuss. He will open the meeting and introduce everyone, then turn the meeting over to Cyndie Carman who will review what already exists and what is allowed along this roadway and what could be proposed as far as types of commercial establishments and/or different zoning districts. Carman felt it was good to have the property owners give their opinion as to what they would like to see.

The Commission asked Carman to obtain information from PennDOT of any future plans they would have for Freemansburg Avenue and if she could obtain Bethlehem Township's overlay district ordinance as well as any traffic studies they may have. Carman pointed out that it is likely PennDOT itself doesn't have any plans for improvements but that they would require improvements as new development is proposed.

The Commission discussed some of the requirements of our ordinance. Our overlay districts allow office uses within existing residential structures. Some of the existing structures are older homes/buildings that would need excessive renovations or additions to meet building codes for a business. The districts also require buffering and fencing between a commercial or office use and a residential property. We should allow flexibility on the fencing if there are existing trees that already provide shielding from lights.

Carman pointed out that for most of the Freemansburg Avenue corridor the existing zoning is MDR, except that west of Stones Crossing the south side of the road is zoned LDR. Bruno discussed what is being done in Bethlehem Township to the west. When this area is built out, Palmer Township may get a lot of that traffic. If the corridor is becoming commercial in Bethlehem Township, why not the same in Palmer, so we could bring in more tax money that would benefit our own community. Maybe a property owner would be interested in having a business purchase their home. Whatever is done needs to be based on good planning reasons.

Young read aloud the purpose of the 248 overlay district and then discussed some of the objectives. Bruno noted the main corridors for businesses in Palmer Township are Route 248, William Penn Highway and Freemansburg Avenue. With the township almost built out this is the opportunity to make the most of the commercial areas on

Freemansburg Avenue. Young stated he totally disagrees and feels there are pocket areas available in Palmer but we will never have what Bethlehem Township has to the west.

Carman noted LANTA has a plan to implement new rapid transit bus routes and that one of the future routes would travel Freemansburg Avenue between Bethlehem and Easton. They will be very interested in what happens along this corridor.

Blanchfield strongly urges all Commission members to attend the community meeting and to review their notes from previous discussions.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Palmer Township Zoning Map

Carman presented the Township's existing zoning map and noted that it has not been updated since 2003. She has corrected and added all zoning amendments that had been approved by the Board of Supervisors since then. This would need to go to the Board of Supervisors for their adoption. She would like to see this be updated yearly, if necessary. On motion by Grube, seconded by Wilkins, and agreed by all, the Commission recommended approval by the Board of Supervisors of the Official Zoning Map as presented to replace and supersede the existing Official Zoning Map.

PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

5. Annual Report

Carman distributed the 2014 Annual Report to everyone. She stated they are required to submit a report annually to the Board of Supervisors on their activity for the previous year. The report as prepared covers planning, zoning and permits. On motion by Wilkins, seconded by Grandinetti, and agreed by all, the Commission approved the submitted annual report.

6. One Lehigh Valley Report

Everyone received a copy of the report from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to review. Carman encouraged everyone to go through it as there are topics very relevant to what we review.

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m. on motion by Grube, seconded by Wilkins, and agreed by all.

Diane Grube, Secretary

