

PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
PUBLIC MEETING – NOVEMBER 12, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.  
PALMER LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

The regular monthly meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, November 12, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. with the following in attendance: Chairman Rich Wilkins, Vice Chairman Bob Blanchfield, members Virginia Rickert, Ron Grandinetti, and Chris Briglia; Planning Director Cyndie Carman; Solicitors Charles Bruno and Ryan Fields, Engineer Ralph Russek and Supervisor Robert Lammi. Wilkins opened the meeting by leading those present in the Pledge to the Flag.

MINUTES OF AUGUST 2013 MEETING – On motion by Rickert, seconded by Grandinetti, and agreed by all, the minutes of the August meeting were approved as written.

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 2013 MEETING – On motion by Grandinetti, seconded by Rickert, and agreed by all, the minutes of the October meeting were approved as written.

OLD BUSINESS –

1. Verus Partners/Chrin Commerce Center  
Main Street & Van Buren Road  
Discussion of Traffic Study

Representatives from Langan Engineering were Ann Marie Vigilante and Alan Lothian; Paul Szewczak of Liberty Engineering and Elky Wetherill of Verus Partners. Vigilante explained the overall interchange project. The traffic study looked at 10 intersections based on development scenarios over three phases. As development comes on line, they need to supplement their traffic study based on the traffic.

Wetherill noted that the medium volume driveway with signalized intersection is required for Phase I. Penn DOT wanted them to look beyond Phase 1. They will be constructing a high volume driveway with dedicated turn lanes into and out of

development. They will realign Van Buren Road leg of intersection and provide improved radii for truck turn-out.

Wilkins stated he thought the first intersection from the interchange was to be the main entrance to that quadrant. Wetherill stated Van Buren Road will be the main truck access and this would require widening and sidewalks.

Vigilante stated there will be two thru-lanes all the way to the west past Van Buren for a few hundred feet. Blanchfield asked what triggers this and she noted it depends on the trip traffic. Wilkins asked if Van Buren Road is the only road going back and there is an accident at the intersection, would all traffic be blocked. Vigilante stated they will talk about emergency access until the second access is fully built.

Wilkins confirmed that Van Buren Road would be main access for big box buildings. Szewczak then reviewed how their plan shows connection with what Vigilante presented. He stated plans will be revised to show adequate right-of-way for Main Street improvements.

Bruno asked if the application has been amended to have Chrin for the applicant for the subdivision and Verus for the development. Wetherill stated they made it one application so they didn't have to duplicate escrow fees. They will amend this.

Szewczak noted they will make intermediate submission to Pidcock before they come back to Planning. They will need an extension of time from both applications along with the revised applications.

Wetherill asked if the township will accept the right-of-way dedication before the road is constructed. Bruno stated the township won't want to take anything until the road is complete. Wetherill stated they will need to work something out because they don't have direct access to Main Street.

Szewczak discussed the waivers -

The length of the cul-de-sac - they will make an oversized cul-de-sac to accommodate fire trucks, etc. Wilkins stated they would have to review this before any action is taken.

Storm Water Management – The slope of the basin bottom was discussed and it was also noted that Palmer Township ordinance is now opposite of what NPDES requires.

Sidewalk – Szewczak noted a deferral will be requested. Plans will show them now.

Commission thanked the representatives for attending and updating their project and look forward to working with them in the future.

2. Freemansburg Avenue Corridor  
Discussion of Proposal to Create Neighborhood Commercial District and  
Freemansburg Avenue Overlay District

Planning Director Carman reviewed the paperwork and proposal that the township would like to incorporate into their zoning. After her review there were some comments by the Commission.

Briglia stated he likes the idea but questioned the effect on taxes and/or property value.

Grandinetti felt there wasn't much difference; there wouldn't be heavy commercial in the area.

Rickert commented that most of the proposed uses are already there.

Carman noted they need to consider Neighborhood Commercial anywhere, not just here. She would like to hear from the public on this.

Wilkins stated the ordinance in general protects against negative uses.

Bruno noted this is a policy/planning objective. This overlay matches with what has been done in Bethlehem Township. The hospital will lead and the need for more office space will be increased. This provides an option to make residences more marketable. The non-conforming uses are good for current uses but not for someone who wanted to buy.

Robert Richline – 3403 Freemansburg Avenue – asked what the purpose of the overlay district is. Is this all going to become commercial?

Briglia felt this was expanding their right on what they can do with their property, makes properties more sellable. Now you can only sell the property not the use.

Mark Schultz – 2660 Farmhouse Court – stated Bethlehem Township has increased traffic. More commercial would make it worse.

Mark Mearhoff – 3101 Freemansburg Avenue – He has an insurance office at Oakwood Street. Could they put in Neighborhood Commercial? With more traffic are we going to lose the frontage if the road is expanded? Carman stated it is a State road and PennDOT would be responsible.

Jeff Young – 3538 Glen Avenue – asked if neighboring property owners were notified. Township needs to safeguard regarding light, buffering in the Neighborhood Commercial, not just in the Overlay.

Cheryl Nielsen – 35823 Freemansburg Avenue – asked if a neighbor could sell property and put in a doctor's office without any other approvals. Wilkins replied they would need to go through the proper approval process.

Jonnie Dalrymple – 3829 Freemansburg Avenue – asked who do we need more, there are enough businesses already?

Richline – traffic from residential and commercial developments is unsafe now.

Phil Calantoni – 3241 Freemansburg Avenue – felt it was good that process is being streamlined; will one more business make a difference.

Grandinetti stated change is coming from the west in Bethlehem Township. If you get tired of all the traffic this will give you an easier way out.

Blanchfield gave an example of Dr. Valla's medical office. How we worked with him to make it fit with the neighborhood.

Sue Kerbaugh, 520 S. Greenwood Avenue for Fat Jacks, Freemansburg Avenue – asked if there has been an increase in requests for commercial uses. Why now? Do we want this all commercial?

Carman – our experience from other overlay districts did not show this being the case for an increase in the requests for more commercial uses.

Wilkins stated he was happy to see so many people showing an interest in this.

Curtis Taylor – 3601 Freemansburg Avenue – asked when were the other overlay district put in. Carman responded in 2000. She also stated that there were not as many residences on William Penn Highway or Rt. 248. This would not be quite an even comparison.

Dr. Vogt – 3501 Freemansburg Avenue – stated when he bought in 1997 his property was on the market for over a year. No one would purchase it due to the traffic.

Harry Claus – 3109 Freemansburg Avenue – has lived in his home for 56 years and has heard that a business is allowed to take over a residential property if it generates more tax revenue.

Bruno stated he never heard of that. Only the government can take eminent domain for public purposes and they must pay fair market value.

Nancy Dougherty – 3504 Freemansburg Avenue – stated her husband runs a small home based business and had a lot of hoops to jump through to get the approval. Would be interested to see how this works out. This could be good. They have improved their property a lot.

Wilkins – stated it was very nice to hear everyone’s input, this will help mold what happens here. Rickert stated it was a very nice crowd.

Bruno then explained the ordinance procedure.

Nielsen asked if they will be notified of other meetings and Carman stated yes they will all be notified for every meeting.

Planning Director Comments – Nothing.

Ralph Russek wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

There being no further business to come before the Commission on motion by Rickert, seconded by Briglia, and agreed by all, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Cynthia Carman, Planning Director