

**PALMER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**  
PUBLIC MEETING - THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023 - 7:00 PM  
PALMER TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL MEETING ROOM, LOWER LEVEL, 3 WELLER  
PLACE, PALMER PA 18045

A special meeting of the Palmer Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, October 26, 2023 at 7:00 PM with the following in attendance:

Chairman Charles Diefenderfer, Vice Chairman Jeffrey Kicska, Thomas Grube, Robert Walker and Richard Wilkins. Also in attendance were solicitor Will Oetinger, Kent Baird, Director of Planning and Craig Beavers, Assistant Director of Planning.

Diefenderfer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Zoning Ordinance - Public Meeting

DISCUSSION

Diefenderfer asked for discussion on the zoning ordinance by the Planning Commission and Planning Staff.

Baird opened, stating this zoning ordinance has been in development for over four years, shaped largely by public comment and feedback from staff, elected officials, and consultants. In the past year, the Township appointed a new solicitor and engineer and hired several new staff members, and the Board saw fit to allow them to complete a final peer review of the ordinance prior to final adoption. The new team found room for improvement in language and content, especially areas that were missing. New language was included, such as floodplain regulations and historic preservation components, all while preserving much of the work from the past several years. He said staff is happy to discuss any questions that the Planning Commission may have and hopes a recommendation may be provided to the Board of Supervisors. He hopes to see the ordinance adopted by the end of the year. He closed by thanking the team who worked on the ordinance and provided great input.

Diefenderfer commended the planning team on the work they have done on the ordinance.

Kicska asked if the issue regarding the high school property was resolved.

Beavers said it was. A Government/Institutional Overlay District was added for schools and government properties to ensure they retain their current characteristic uses. A similar solution was done for cemeteries, as they were included in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Overlay District.

Kicska expressed his pleasure for the expanded lighting regulations.

Diefenderfer requested a minor change of the hours of operation for holiday lights to be between 7am and 11pm.

Baird said that will be addressed.

Diefenderfer requested staff review the lot sizes for the residential districts in comparison to the previous versions to maintain consistency.

Baird said that will be addressed.

Diefenderfer requested that the use of Landfill be removed as a conditional use in the Main Street Commercial District.

Beavers said that will be addressed.

Diefenderfer requested that the minimum age requirement for properties under consideration for the Historic Preservation Overlay be raised to 75 years.

Baird said that will be addressed.

Diefenderfer requested that expenses for violations of the noise ordinance be sent to the violator, rather than the person who filed the complaint.

Baird said that will be addressed.

Diefenderfer requested that provisions for snow and ice removal for trucks that are currently present in Trucking Terminal regulations be added to Warehouse/Logistics Use regulations.

Baird said that will be addressed.

Kicska requested that the properties identified for inclusion in the Historic Preservation Overlay be discussed and adopted after the implementation of the ordinance to allow further discovery of the properties.

Baird said that will be addressed.

Tim Fischer – 68 Moor Drive – He commended the Planning Commission and Planning Staff for all the work on the ordinance. This zoning ordinance advances the goals of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. The residents of the Highlands of Glenmoor are largely in favor of the ordinance, especially the addition of the Planned Office/Business District on the western side of Van Buren Road. He highly recommends that the board moves to recommend adoption of the ordinance.

Harry Graack – 1380 Van Buren Rd – He said his property has been in

his family for generations and wishes to see the land conserved for as long as possible. He added that he desires to retain his right to do with his land for what he wishes. He expressed his displeasure for industrial development around his property and wished some of those parcels were conserved for open space. He said there is not much land left for conservation and does not want to be a conservation island. He believes the Planned Office/Business District is not what is best for his land.

Diefenderfer asked Graack what zoning district he is requesting.

Graack said that he spent time comparing districts and requesting several changes. He previously requested Rural Agriculture as it was a good fit for his property. He also desired to leave it unchanged as PI/C. Graack indicated a preference toward a more conservation-oriented zoning district for his property.

Baird said Graack requested several different zoning changes for this property throughout the development of the ordinance, including Conservation/Recreation. At last request, Graack indicated that he did not want Rural Agriculture. Graack disagreed and said he never asked for the change.

Baird said in light of the various requests and surrounding development pressure, the Township wants to find a comparable zoning district that would be a transition from residential to industrial, if not the original rural agricultural or conservation.

Oetinger asked Graack if he considered enacting unilateral deed restrictions for his property, which could restrict uses of the property that did not align with his goals. Graack said he has had conversations with this attorney regarding the matter.

Oetinger advised Graack that deed restrictions would be equally effective at controlling uses on his property than municipal zoning.

Graack said that Planned Office/Business District does not satisfy his wishes.

Baird said the Planned Office/Business District was chosen as an intermediate, transitional district between intensive warehouse uses to residential uses, which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan map.

Graack said there are no conservation provisions in this ordinance. He does not foresee any development on his property.

Baird said that Planned Office/Business District was discussed and requested by the Board of Supervisors and the consultants who developed the ordinance.

Kicska asked Graack about the property between his and Northampton

Crossing. Graack said it is just for stormwater and nothing else.

Diefenderfer asked Graack if the proposed Planned Office/Business District was only on his property.

Graack said it is not. There are several other property owners who are also in the Planned Office/Business District.

Diefenderfer requested that Baird, Beavers, and possibly Oetinger discuss this parcel with Graack outside of this meeting prior to introduction to the Board of Supervisors. Baird said he will discuss with Graack this outside of the meeting.

Thomas Beauduy, Chrin Companies – 400 S. Greenwood Ave – He acknowledged that he submitted position statements regarding zoning requests.

Oetinger acknowledged receipt of letters from the Chrin Companies dated October 18, 2023, October 18, 2023, and October 25, 2023.

Beauduy asked for clarification for the boundaries of the Main Street Commercial District. The existing district follows the boundary of the Chrin Commerce Center land development, but the proposed district follows the boundary of the Township border. He said this might inhibit uses on the entire parcel.

Beavers said during the process of revising the mapping, it is possible that there was an error in editing that district.

Beauduy requested that this mapping issue be corrected. He said the entrance for the Tatamy borough side of the parcel would be on Trolley Line Drive where the Main Street Commercial appears to be drawn and would not match the zoning on the Tatamy Borough side. He said the Chrin Companies have plans to put traditional “Main Street” commercial development on the north side of Main Street and will request a zoning change in the future from North End Business District to Main Street Commercial District.

Wilkins asked Baird what issues this might cause.

Baird said correcting this mapping issue might result in a better land plan. He said this will be reviewed.

Beauduy would also like to commend Oetinger, Baird, Beavers, and the other committee members on the ordinance. He said it is significantly improved from the previous versions. He also said despite any differences in views, these complements are much deserved.

Gary Fehnel – 2120 Newlins Mill Dr – He asked about the Historic Preservation Overlay.

Baird said it celebrates and preserves historic properties within the Township. The overlay provides everyone the chance to discuss the property if it is intended to be added. If it is intended to be demolished, it provides the Township with the opportunity to discuss alternatives to preserve the historic nature of the property or structures.

Diefenderfer called for any other comments for the Commission.

Beavers thanked everyone for their work on this ordinance and is happy it is moving forward.

Grube said he has no comments on the ordinance and is happy with the document.

Walker said he has no comments, other than requesting that Baird, Beavers, and even Oetinger meet with Graack to discuss that specific property.

Diefenderfer called for a motion:

Motion: Approve w/ Conditions, Moved by Richard Wilkins, Seconded by Tom Grube. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Diefenderfer, Grube, Kicska, Walker, Wilkins

Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Ruch

#### PLANNING DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Baird said the Township was awarded several grants to study parks and open space. The Township will be looking at Mill Race Park, the Bushkill Greenway, and other areas for ADA compliance and overall master planning. He said the Township was also awarded funding for an Active Transportation Plan to improve ways people travel throughout the Township and improve access to outdoor recreation. The Township is waiting to hear back for another grant application submitted for the Schoeneck Creek restoration.

Kicska asked if the Township will be working with the Bushkill Stream Conservancy. Baird said the Bushkill Stream Conservancy will be a part of that work and that they have submitted letters of support for the Mill Race Park and 9/11 Trail Master Plan and the Bushkill Creek Greenway, Parks, and Trail Master Plan already.

Diefenderfer thanked Baird and Beavers for their work.

Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Ruch

#### ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:30PM

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Jeff Kicska, Seconded by Tom Grube. Passed. 5-0. Commission Members voting Ayes: Diefenderfer, Grube, Kicska, Walker, Wilkins  
Commission Members Absent: Aydelotte, Ruch