



# *Borough of Pottstown*

*Borough Hall, 100 East High Street  
Pottstown, Pennsylvania 19464-9525  
610-970-6520*

POTTSTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION  
Pottstown Borough Hall Council Chambers Room  
100 E High Street  
October 30, 2008  
7:30 PM

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** Dan Weand, Chairperson, Stephen Toroney, Vice Chairperson,  
Terry Fetterman, Thomas Hylton & Karen Weil

**Also Present:** Charles D. Garner, Borough Solicitor  
Doug Dilliplane, P.E., Bursich Associates  
Jim Ennis, Montgomery County Planning Commission,  
& Michelle Borzick, Zoning Work Leader

**Absent:**

Meeting called to order by Mr. Weand at 7:30 PM

### **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Weil motions to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2008 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Motion carried.

### **761 N Washington St, side and rear deck**

Mr. Yoder, owner, is present. Mr. Fay shares pictures with the commission and recommends with a colonial handrail in keeping with the character of the home. Owner is in agreement with the suggestion. Owner advises that the decking will be in grey or maroon. Owner briefly discusses future plans of the site. The owner agrees he will come back to the commission when he is prepared for the next stage. Mr. Fay recommends color tinting the woodwork except for the floorboards, 6 x 6 corner columns with interstitial 4 x 4's to hold the colonial handrail. Owner is in agreement.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve as recommended by Mr. Fay, Mr. Fetterman seconded.

Mr. Toroney offers information that where a lot of decks are failing is where it is being attached to the house.

Motion carried.

### **548 Manatawny St, demolition**

Art Roland, partner of the property, present. Mr. Roland advises that they would like to take the building down. This is two fold: 1) it is ready to fall down and 2) we originally were going to build 13 homes there and then considered building an assisted living facility. Mr. Hylton requests advisement from the solicitor as to the role that the commission serves in the decision of demolition. Mr. Garner states the demolition of a building is not automatic. The planning commission has a right to review the application for a demolition permit and make a recommendation to council. Mr. Garner quotes the zoning ordinance,

Art 3, Sec 306.1 thru and including 306.2. Mr. Garner is not familiar with what information the applicant has provided to the commission in respect to either of those standards.

Mr. Hylton questions if demolition was part of the original application and does not recall any information provided at that time regarding demolition. Mr. Garner's recollection was that this phase was approved with this building remaining. Mr. Dilliplane agrees with this recollection. Mr. Roland indicates that their intention was always for this building to come down. Mr. Hylton states that the demolition plans were never presented to the planning commission. Mr. Roland continues that they would like to take the building down to put the facility up that would be more beneficial to the borough.

This would be an 82 bed assisted living facility a plan is forthcoming. Would like permission to tear it down. If this is not approved then they will build the original 13 homes.

Mr. Garner shares with the commission the sketch plan that was presented to borough council. There were discussions among the members regarding the sketch. Mr. Toroney advises the commission that council did not take any action based on the presentation. Discussions continued regarding delineation of the building in question and it is noted that it is located in Phase I of the development. Various commission members agree that they recall the building would be utilized as a meeting center. Mr. Roland is not familiar with that and advises the commission of the development sales. Discussions continue including removal of building components, possible vandalism, walk by inspections, security and transfer of the property to the developers.

Mr. Weand questions if they move forward with the 13 units could they maintain the building? Mr. Roland indicates that they could but he does not know what they would do with the building, it is ready to come down. He indicates it would cost approximately \$300,000.00 to improve the property. Mr. Hylton expresses his concerns that the demolition of this home was never mentioned throughout the extensive process of approving this project; the historic value of the house is mentioned.

Mr. Hylton makes a suggestion that the owner would pay to have our historic preservation architect go through the building. The architect would provide an evaluation in just what is involved in trying to save this building or whether it is too late. Concern is expressed regarding demolition by neglect. Mr. Roland indicated that this is part of the new idea of the assisted living facility. Mr. Weand mentions that the new plans would have to be approved. Mr. Fetterman states that there were minimum discussions regarding this building at the time of the original application. Mr. Garner informs the commission that this plan came in under the old zoning, certain conditions were spelled out, seemingly it was silent to the existing building, the original plan must be reviewed, the building is not located where the original buildings were supposed to be placed.

Mr. Roland indicated that they did not address the building at that time. Mr. Dilliplane states that he would like to review the original plan. He does not believe the building was addressed because it is on a separate lot and not part of the development. Mr. Roland asks for direction from the commission. Mr. Weand would like the commission to allow Mr. Hylton to contact the architectural consultant. Mr. Roland will consider the suggestion based on the fee. Mr. Hylton will be the contact person regarding this transaction. Mr. Garner questions if we are in receipt of a permit application. Ms. Borzick indicates that we are not in receipt of a demolition permit application.

Bill Sharon, resident 131 King St, comments and refers to his letter that was addressed to the commission. He has concern over the historic value of the building, how grant money may be obtained to preserve the property and the owner's excuses and failure to maintain the building.

Mr. Garner advises the commission that the time limitation is generous without an application. It's their burden of proof for demolition regarding this building. Discussions regarding obvious code violations at the property.

**Manatawny Gateway**, land development review, expires 12/24/08.

No one present to represent the project. There are two letters regarding the land development.

Mr. Dilliplane informs the commission that the agent of the project, John Reber, stated his biggest concern was the lot consolidation. There are four parcels plus an un-ordained alleyway. It would be cleaner to tie it into one parcel. Mr. Reber expressed that he thought it would be of some benefit to keeping them separate.

We have to make sure that by zoning each parcel is able to meet setbacks, coverage's, etc... would have to be itemized for each parcel that is intended to remain separate. The commission will wait until someone is present to represent the project. Mr. Dilliplane & Mr. Ennis discuss other issues with the redevelopment of the property including trees, sidewalks, lighting, storm water, etc... Mr. Garner advises they have time and should wait to speak to John Reber next month.

### **Public Comments**

Robert Ihlein, 1031 Belleview Ave, addresses the solar energy ordinance that is proposed. He speaks to energy independence and his opinion on how the ordinance may limit the investment of solar energy equipment for property owners. Mr. Ihlein reviews the ordinance with the commission and expresses his concerns. Discussions ensued regarding architectural design, accessory kits, N. Evans St property with solar energy panels, solar water heating systems, current solar equipment, and a consideration to insure rights to solar access.

### **Economic Development Strategic Plan – update**

Presentation provided by Terri Lampe, Economic Developer of the Borough of Pottstown. The presentation evolves around a vision statement to enhance the businesses and the community of the Borough of Pottstown. Ms. Lampe provides a basic review of opportunities and challenges, imbalance in housing, income base, amenities, public safety, signage, welcome areas, zoning, borough / county owned properties, business retention & expansion program, school district & communications with council, market sector and industry cluster analysis being shared with the surrounding communities, marketing / promotions, LERTA program, recruiting art & cultural organizations, code enforcement, district attorney's office involvement, reconnections plan to North Coventry, regional co-operation, homeowner initiatives & safety issues. Mr. Toroney and Ms. Lampe acknowledge Route 100 corridor study completed and suggested presentations be made to each municipality. The changes to Route 100 are significant to Pottstown. Discussions continued regarding the proposed changes and the future of Pottstown and regional planning. Ms. Lampe indicates that the county is targeting investing in Norristown and Pottstown. We need to be proactive in how to and who to direct our marketing towards. Ms. Lampe indicates that the strategic plan suggests that PAID take the lead on business retention and expansion and work with entities such as PDIDA, the Chamber of Commerce.

### **Old Business**

**Blighted Property Committee** – Mr. Garner advises that the committee took official action on:

- 355 Walnut St
- 351 Walnut St
- 424 Walnut St

Previously certified as blighted and in need of remediation. We are at the point that if the planning commission would like to take action that is the next step.

Mr. Hylton motions to declare the following properties as blighted and certified and turn the properties over to the County Redevelopment Authority including 355 Walnut St, 351 Walnut St & 424 Walnut St., seconded by Ms. Weil.

Motion carried.

Mr. Garner adds that the committee also discussed an update of the status of other properties that are in the works of being notified of violations, including:

- 794 Lincoln Ave
- 423 Lincoln Ave
- 464 ½ N Evans St
- 255 Chestnut St
- 553 Grant St

Discussed at the September Blighted Property Review Committee meeting to ask the Codes Office to send out notice and to correct the blighted conditions. Did not see that the Planning Commission took action on the properties in last month's minutes.

Mr. Toroney motions to recognize the properties: 553 Grant, 464 ½ N Evans, 423 Lincoln & 794 Lincoln as blighted and authorize the appropriate borough officials to proceed to cause the removal of those conditions as provided for in the borough ordinance, excluding 255 Chestnut St, seconded by Ms. Weil.

Motion carried.

Mr. Garner advises that three properties have gone through the complete process and the county is already talking to two of the property owners for Genesis to acquire. This is the start of the process. As long as the properties continue to be recognized by the borough and the county has the funding to support groups like Genesis and other non-profits. The borough will have the opportunity to make quite a difference. Mr. Fetterman inquires if 548 Manatawny Street can be considered.

Mr. Garner advises of other addresses the committee will be looking at for the next meeting:

- 323 King St
- 549 Chestnut St
- Chestnut St – Levengood Dairies (must clarify the specific address)

Mr. Weand asks if there are any other suggestions. Mr. Toroney inquires if the Frederick Brothers property can be considered. Mr. Garner indicated that the property can go through the process but they may not have someone to take over the property at the end of the process. Discussions regarding the property, violations, etc...

**Pottstown Regional Planning** – Mr. Ennis advises that Lower Pottsgrove will be changing zoning that will effect regional planning. Mr. Toroney states that property was cleared in Lower Pottsgrove prior to land development.

**Electronic Signs & Solar Energy Equipment, Zoning Ordinance** – Mr. Garner acknowledges that the Planning Commission is the driving force behind this change. A public hearing is advertised to be held on November 10, 2008. Mr. Ennis references comments provided by Mr. Ihlein and his letter dated October 30, 2008, discussions ensue including signage. Ms. Weil motions to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance change and for Mr. Hylton to write a letter to council on behalf of the planning commission, with review by Mr. Garner, Mr. Fetterman seconded.

Motion carried.

**Fecera's Beech Street Lofts** – Ms. Borzick advises the commission that she spoke with Mr. Fenton and he was entertaining some individuals during the Schuylkill River Arts Festival. Mr. Fenton was discussing his artist rental spaces to an artist and resident of the Borough of Pottstown. Discussions regarding "For Sale" sign on the property.

## **New Business**

**November 2008 meeting** – Agreement amongst the commission that the November meeting be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> if it is not already advertised as such.

## **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.