



Borough of Pottstown

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POTTSWOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

Pottstown Borough Hall Council Chambers Room

100 E. High Street

June 25, 2009

7:30 p.m.

MINUTES

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

Also Present: David Garner, Council President
Charles D. Garner, Borough Solicitor
Doug Dilliplane, P.E., Bursich Associates
Joseph Fay, architectural consultant
Karen Lewandowski, Administrative Assistant II

Absent:

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

Approval of minutes

Mr. Hylton motions to approve the minutes of May 2009 Planning Commission Meeting, seconded by Ms. Weil.

Motion carried.

David Garner, Borough Council President – addresses the commission regarding the updating of the existing Borough Comprehensive Plan with the assistance of the county, in addition there are two other items: to develop a new Downtown Comprehensive Plan (reviews basics of the 1994 plan) being brought to council for formal endorsement and the Planning Commission must be part of that. There is an oversight group that will be responsible for working with the planners. There are options available through the DCED for funding of the plan. Mr. Hylton has been in contact with the DCED planner, Ron Bednar, who feels this would be worthwhile. The will be brought to council and the Planning Commission should be aware of this and his suggestion is that a few members of the commission should be on the oversight committee. The third item is a Strategic Visioning Process that would be beneficial to keep Pottstown moving forward to establish a vision and goals associated with it. He would expect representatives from the Planning Commission to be involved as well as members / stakeholders of the community. This will be something that Council will be considering and hopefully acting on moving forward. In the middle of all this the county has put together an Economic Development Director position. A meeting is set up on July 1st with representatives of Montgomery County; we have an

Economic Subcommittee of the Borough that includes Mr. Bobst, Ms. Weekley, the mayor, himself & Mr. Berry that will be attending that meeting.

Mr. Hylton has organized the meeting and Mr. Garner thinks it is appropriate for a representative of the Planning Commission to be there. However Mr. Hylton should go with the blessing and endorsement of the Commission. So that everyone involved is there in an official capacity and everyone understands what his or her role is. Mr. David Garner would be suggesting to the Commission that it would be appropriate if they so desire to make that designation of Mr. Hylton. He believes Mr. Hylton is certainly a competent and capable individual to represent the body. Mr. Hylton has advised that he has the time and would be available to be there. He would like to see the Planning Commission involved when they talk about the Downtown Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Weand questions if the meeting scheduled is a public meeting. Mr. Garner advises it is a working meeting, not private or public, nothing detailed in accomplishments. He believes it would be nice to have an understanding of the new Economic Development Director and of how he operates.

Mr. Toroney indicates that he spoke to a county representative and agreed that they would be able to assist the Borough with the Downtown Comprehensive Plan if grant funding would not be available. In addition Mr. Toroney questions the differences of the Strategic Vision Process from the Economic Strategic Development Plan. Mr. Garner thinks that the Economic Development Plan looks at little specific items and he is looking at a bigger thing. Mr. Toroney questions and Mr. David Garner verifies it will dovetail the current Economic Strategic Plan. Mr. Garner believes all the existing plans that are currently in place should be considered when looking at this. This would be a level higher than the plans already in place. Mr. Toroney agrees with the concept if it will dovetail the current plans. Mr. Fetterman recalls a visioning process with a firm in West Chester. That process included great discussions that were documented and that would be a good point of reference. Mr. Toroney advises that council is not aware of the meeting being held July 1, 2009 and this should be a very introductory meeting. Mr. Garner advises that he understands Mr. Toroney's concerns and is putting this on the record so that something may move forward. Mr. Toroney wants nothing cut in stone and Mr. Garner agrees that this will have to go to council. Ms. Weil advises that being a part of the 1988 plan there was a partnership with Tri County Chamber of Commerce and many great contacts came from that. Although it was a costly process it was the most successful. Mr. Garner advises that he has spoken to individuals from the ULI and they do have an interest in coming back.

717 High Street, architectural review – Hill School Guard Station to be located at the main entrance of the school located off of Beech Street. Mr. Silverson, Hill School and Mr. Elnichi, HCM Architects are both present to represent the project. Mr. Fay presents to the commission the architectural concept. Mr. Fay would recommend this to the commission. Mr. Toroney questions the building as being modular. Mr. Elnichi advises this will be a one room 10 x 10 structure, located in a landscaped island, gated area. The building will be sided with a pitched roof (potential for building off site). Mr. Dilliplane questions the set back of the building from the curb. Mr. Elnichi advises that it will 28 ft back from the curb.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve as submitted, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Ms. Weil & Mr. Fetterman each reclude themselves from the motion. Mr. Fetterman questions deliveries to the location. It is confirmed that any large vehicles should not be problem.

Motion carried.

606 Walnut Street, architectural review – grass strip in sidewalk area. Mr. Fay advises the commission this is a request to eliminate the grassy strip between the sidewalk and curb. Mr. Fay states that this house is approximately one year old. He would recommend providing the grass time to grow.

Mr. Hylton motions to deny the request, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Motion carried.

261 E High Street, architectural review – front façade 2-story building. Harold Litchman, architect, present to represent the project. He distributes new plans to the commission of the façade. Mr. Litchman reminds the commission of the previous presentation to the commission with details to be worked out a later date. The commission approved the height and bulk of the building. Mr. Litchman refers to the HARB review and the sketch provided by Dick Frantz that was similar to their drawings. The plans have been revised to incorporate those renderings with their plans. Mr. Litchman advised that he received a plan today. Mr. Hylton interjects and states that his recollection of the approval from the commission was input to the height of the building. Mr. Hylton describes Mary DaNadia's experience and involvement with Pottstown and the Planning Commission. He indicates that he forwarded a drawing to Ms. DaNadia and she made suggestions. Mr. Fay referenced these suggestions in developing the rendering referred to as being received today. Mr. Hylton reviews the suggestions made by Ms. DaNadia regarding 2nd floor brick vs. stucco, windows should be to the lenthil without a transom, panel for sign is fine, pilasters between windows and the spandrels beneath the windows should not be brick they should be wood or aluminum clad, the door that goes to the second floor should be centered with sidelights all around it. This would make the building compatible with the buildings in the downtown. Mr. Litchman expresses his displeasure with the timeliness with the receipt of the plan, their lengthy dealings with HARB, the client is not in favor of adding the brick to the second floor, building permits have been obtained but they cannot move forward with the façade without the proper approvals. Mr. Toroney does not recall the approval to any of the exterior of the building. Mr. Litchman explains his recollection as stated previously and Mr. Garner confirms. Mr. Toroney comments that he likes the double hung windows, he likes the brick on the first floor, and the tree canopy will hide the 2nd floor and he would rather see the stucco. Mr. Litchman advises if there were stucco there would be frame underneath. Mr. Fetterman and Ms. Weil express that they are in favor of drawing based on Ms. DaNadia's suggestions.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve the drawing as Joe Fay has done based on Mary DaNadia's comments with the understanding that there will be brick on the second floor, either double hung or casement on the upper floor, no transom on the second floor, Ms. Weil seconds.

Mr. Litchman questions the processes of the two bodies. Mr. Hylton and Mr. Fay describe the processes and the inner workings of HARB and the Planning Commission.

Mr. Toroney questions the cost factoring of the brick vs. the stucco on the second floor. Mr. Litchman describes the other facets to expenses related to the brick vs. the stucco on the second floor to be 3 times the cost that the owners were originally faced with.

Vote: 3 in favor and 2 against.

Motion carried.

Mr. Garner advises that the HARB recommendation will go council for final approval.

22 W Eighth Street, architectural review – carport into garage. Mike Christman, owner is present to represent the property. Mr. Fay informs the commission that the owner will utilize the existing footprint of the carport to build a one car garage, man door facing the house, vinyl siding to match.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve as submitted, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Motion carried.

674 Woodland Avenue, architectural review – deck to be added to rear of the home. Mr. Gupta, owner is present to represent the project. Mr. Fay describes this will be a deck on the rear of the house, one step off the ground, colonial style handrail and recommends painting.

Mr. Hylton motions to approve as submitted, seconded by Mr. Fetterman.

Motion carried.

434 West Street, subdivision.

No one present to represent the project. Mr. Garner explains this plan expires on 7/26/09 and council will have to act on this if they do not receive a request for an extension.

Mr. Toroney recommends denial of the plan based on the Bursich letter dated March 18, 2009, seconded by Mr. Hylton.

Motion carried.

Plum Street: 56 & 58 S Charlotte St and 51 S Evans St – acknowledge receipt. Mr. McLaughlin, owner, advises the commission that he is waiting for response from Bursich & Associates. Mr. Garner advises the commission this is another final submission plan from the original plan that was approved previously and the council had to deny. All the commission has to do this evening is to acknowledge receipt of the new final plan to start the 90-day clock.

Mr. Hylton motions to acknowledge receipt of the plan, seconded by Ms. Weil.

Motion carried.

Memorial Park, Miniature Golf Course – request for waiver of land development

Tim Casey, architect, and John Reber, Director of Parks & Recreation, present to represent the project. Mr. Reber informs the commission of the project and they are requesting this project be waived of the land development process. Mr. Garner advises the commission that this only places the project review on a more administrative level to expedite the process and requests that Mr. Reber provide a copy of the plan to Mr. Dilliplane.

Mr. Hylton motions to recommend Borough Council waiving the land development process of the Memorial Park Miniature Golf Course subject to review with Bursich and compliance with the conditions acceptable to Code Enforcement, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

Motion carried.

Mr. Ennis questions Mr. Reber regarding any grants or declaration of the ball fields. Mr. Reber has had several conversations with the county about this project and they are fully aware of the scope of the project.

Public Comment

Mr. Ennis introduces Anna Gruber, county planner, who will be in attendance to assist him.

Old Business

Feroe Building – Discussions regarding the presentation to council and email information. Mr. Garner advises the commission of the previous months discussions as per the minutes and his recollections. Discussions ensued regarding the issue: talking to the developer of Hanover Square, extension with escalating escrow, condition in place. Mr. Garner advises the Commission that Council is seeking their recommendation.

Mr. Toroney motions to recommend extending the condition with the exchange that there will additional financial securities that will escalate over time during the length of the extension and also by what the engineer determines to remove and restore the façade, seconded by Mr. Hylton.

Mr. Fetterman comments and agrees with the motion. Ms. Weil understands the tenant issue for the owner. Mr. Garner adds this is an escrow that will be set to guarantee the removal of the exterior and if there were a sale these conditions would go with the property. This escalating amount can be set at any amount that borough council decides.

Motion carried.

Blighted Property Committee – Mr. Weand advises at the meeting the following properties were certified as blighted: 549 Chestnut St, 346 Beech St, 348 Beech St, 350 Beech St, 464 ½ N Evans St, 327 Grant St & 329 Grant St, not acted on previously: 357 Chestnut St, 541 Chestnut St and 346 Beech St. Mr. Weand indicates that if the Commission members have been out to see these properties that they provide a resolution tonight to declare the properties as blighted. Mr. Weand advises that the properties must be vacant and in violation of codes to be considered blighted. Discussions regarding the guidelines utilized in determining the status and the various properties mentioned this month.

Mr. Hylton motions to declare the properties as blighted and authorize the appropriate borough officials to proceed to cause the removal of those conditions as provided for in the borough ordinance, seconded by Mr. Toroney.

One motion for all the properties mentioned.

Motion carried.

Mr. Weand advises that the committee is in receipt of a lengthy list of additional properties that he will be sharing with them.

Mr. Toroney questions Ms. Lewandowski of the Frederick Bros. Property at N Hanover and East Streets and the cause of demolition that may affect the archway. Ms. Lewandowski advises the proper permits have been obtained and the inspector is in constant contact with the owner.

Pottstown Regional Planning – Mr. Toroney advises there was a short meeting. Mr. Ennis informs the commission of the study presented by Health & Wellness Foundation and what age groups the community parks are adequately serving, discussions continued. Other discussions included updates to the Comprehensive Plan for the development of Upper Pottsgrove and West Pottsgrove.

Keim Street Bridge comments – Mr. Dilliplane advises the commission of the traffic study design and proposal process, waiting for statements of interest.

Comprehensive Plan update – Mr. Ennis indicates this is a well-established plan and is looking for what direction they want the county to take. Mr. Weand asks if the county will take the lead. Mr. Ennis indicates that it is well within the contract to utilize the county for this undertaking. Mr. Hylton feels the report provided was well done and would like to follow the template provided and possibly revamp and change the numbers. Mr. Ennis advises the county will continue to move forward with the process. Mr. Toroney questions how to address new goals. Mr. Ennis will determine what changes have occurred in the last 20 years and the commission would then make suggestions. A monthly report will be provided and they would expect feedback from the Commission. Mr. Ennis will continue with the county endeavors and forward the reports to the Commission and Council so that they are aware of the progress.

New Business

Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, July 1, 2009 with the county, Mr. Hylton advises that he would like to attend. Mr. Weand questions the initiation of the meeting. Mr. David Garner requested that Mr. Hylton contact the county about obtaining information regarding the funding available and what the counties vision is on our spending of the funding. Mr. Toroney advises this is not stimulus money / federal funding. This is county money that is available to the Borough.

Mr. Toroney motions to send Mr. Hylton and Mr. Weand to the Wednesday, July 1, 2009 to meet at the County Commissioners office, seconded by Mr. Hylton.

Motion carried.

Mr. Toroney questions the Downtown Comprehensive Plan and the direction of the same. Mr. Hylton advises that this could include a multi-municipal plan by partnering with North Coventry. It is a state program that would be funded through the state and local matching funds. Mr. Hylton describes possibilities of local matches and even obtaining the state funds. There would be a local committee that would work with a consultant who could be the county. Mr. Toroney states that this plan should be dovetailed to the current Economic Strategic Development Plan.

Adjournment