

Minutes of the Meeting of June 7, 2012

The meeting of the Radnor Township Planning Commission was held at 7 PM in the Municipal Building, 301 Iven Ave., Wayne, Pa 19087.

Present

Edward DiMarcantonio, Chair
Skip Kunda
Doug McCone

Kathy Bogosian
Regina Majercak
Susan Stern

Absent

Julia Hurle, Vice-Chair
Kenneth Kearns

Stephen Cooper

Also present: David Leh, PE, Township Engineer, Peter Nelson, Esq., Solicitor; Kevin Kochanski, Zoning Officer; Members of the Press, and Suzan Jones, Administrative Assistant.

Mr. DiMarcantonio called the meeting to order.

Presentation on Possible Amendments to the Planned Institutional Zoning District

Kevin Kochanski introduced Charlie Schmehl, Urban Research and Development Corporation, Bethlehem, Pa., who proceeded to give a brief history of his company and their work research. Their company does not make policy decisions. They follow the lead of the township and his company gives the best options on how to achieve what the township is looking for with an end result. He also detailed some requirements from neighboring municipalities with respect to institutional zoning.

The major institutions were listed which include universities, colleges and private schools. A balance is needed between institutions and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Villanova University's proposal was briefly displayed. Several comments from public meetings regarding this development were also mentioned. Eastern University's student union center and Cabrini College's parking garage were also mentioned.

Institutional building heights currently stand at 38 feet / 3 stories throughout the institutional districts. Heights vs. widths of construction help eliminate additional impervious surfaces. Institutional zoning issues regarding notification of neighbors and buffer and control uses were discussed. Walls would curtail noises better than fences. The subject of special exception was briefly touched upon for institutions and regulations.

Landscaping higher and wider buffers and setbacks promote designs of plantings and earth berms as well as tree preservation. Monotonous evergreens should be avoided.

Noise levels should be restricted with housing regulations and police actions for enforcement. Parking can be curtailed by subsidizing public transit for staff and by providing incentives. Signs and lighting should be updated to address institutional uses with stricter controls on outdoor lighting.

Kathy Bogosian feels institutions don't have parking regulations with respect to number of spaces required for students, teachers, staff, etc. Full time students, part time evening students, and graduate students as well as staff and teachers need to be reported to the township. Peak use is helpful but exact numbers should be supplied to the township upon request. Villanova rents out their facilities which is a commercial use and generates additional traffic. Issues like this should also be included in parking calculations. Other parking lots in the area that have arrangements for overflow parking should be reported and is that parking calculated in the school's total? Universities are buying up residential properties on their perimeters when they come up for sale to expand their non-taxing land area. Something in lieu of taxes could be considered. Parking for events should be addressed when considering additional.

Ed DiMarcantonio inquired if other municipalities have this study performed where a third party is hired for independent traffic studies for their proposed plans.

Skip Kunda is concerned with significant summer plans and temporary programs that affect parking including township parking restrictions. Township parking restrictions should be compared to neighboring municipalities. Kathy Bogosian is concerned with students parking on residential streets because underclassmen are prohibited from bring vehicles onto campus so they park on neighboring streets. She wants to know how the township can monitor the institutions. If the current ordinances are not strict enough to increase the setbacks, how does the township enforce them? It was suggested that Charlie should view both the current and proposed shade tree ordinance.

It was suggested to have the setbacks be from the residential lots.

Peter Nelson stated that earned income taxes and amusement taxes can be imposed.

Regina Majercak doesn't want to see the parking over visualized when it won't be needed constantly. She has issues with the capping of student enrollment.

Susan Stern is concerned with high number of students in the midst of residents and how do other municipalities handle the ratio and situation if the numbers are similar. Neighborhoods should be protected. The consequence of traffic is huge. Night schools and graduate classes are growing rapidly increasing the traffic. Radnor is vulnerable in this area with regards to traffic.

Public Participation

Colleen Price – 352 Chamounix Rd – Concerned with the timing of this zoning amendment. The summer months are approaching and this should be postponed until after vacations. Starting in the summer is a bad choice. Demographics don't support what the institutions are planning. Special exceptions give the township great control. Parking garages should be restricted. Afraid enrollment will soon begin to drop and then the enlargements will be futile. She inquired on how to schedule a meeting with her neighbors.

Charlie announced that there will be a public hearing with the board of commissioners at meetings when most public is available. Students on campus are the campus' problem. Students off campus then become the township's problems. At present Villanova is in fact loaded with overcrowded dormitories.

Kevin Geary – 4 Black Friar Rd – The number of students are large within Radnor Township compared to other local municipalities. Universities are going to for profit companies to do their constructions, etc. He is concerned if universities in Radnor follow this course or plan to. Can private companies making money off the land of an institution be governed within Radnor with regard to taxing? How can the township regulate any capping of the number of students? When should traffic studies be performed with respect to institutions? What is the norm for a zoning overlay within Pennsylvania with respect to institutions? He was informed this is governed by the state planning code. He wanted to know when the meeting summary of this meeting would be forwarded onto the board of commissioners and requests that public comment be permitted at those meetings as well. How many institutions are not in compliant of updating their 10 year plans?

Jim Yannopoulos - 15 Braxton Rd. – Can other studies be required, such as impact on infrastructure not just traffic, economic impact on township, ways to control student numbers, buying residential properties instead of maintaining existing and demolishing homes for land increases taxes on residents. Is concerned with zoning overlays affecting institutions.

Brian Price – 352 Chamounix Rd. – Noise is a burden to the twp. police. He is very concerned that the report given tonight pokes holes in all township ordinances. Villanova should build all dorms in the new proposed area and eliminate the stores, etc. to bring all students onto campus.

Philip Ahr – 181 Meredith Ave. – Wants clarity of shifting students out of neighborhoods onto campus. The students aren't coming out of the neighborhoods, but other neighborhoods. How many universities in southeast Pa. have a major us highway running through their campus and if so, how is that treated?

Anna Marie Hessman – 8 Barley Cone Lane - Concerned with the parking numbers for Villanova. Looking for a usage study such as parking at graduation ceremonies where the vehicles spill onto neighboring streets.

Tony Bailey – 132 Barcladen Rd. – Is interested on a study of the impact of the environment.

Kevin Kochanski announced that Villanova's proposal will be discussed at the BoC meeting on June 18, 2012. Planning commission will see Mr. Schmehl return at a later date including a summary of tonight's meeting.

Kathy Bogosian is looking for a time line schedule with respect to the upcoming proposed ordinance. She requests that the meetings and schedule be posted on the website. Another special meeting will be scheduled for the planning commission. Kevin will discuss with staff to see opening meeting nights.

Colleen Price is hopefully looking for counts if building a 5-story dorm how does that convert to how many more students. She would like to see the required parking spaces information to coincide with the increase of dorms, etc.

Ed DiMarcantonio asked for a report, if possible, to show how much growth the institutions can do today according to current zoning to compare with possible proposed zoning. He was informed without a detailed topographical plan on each, this would be almost impossible.

Regina would like to see the current ordinance compared to the proposed ordinance to see the comparison. If some relief is granted, can the institution take some land and then dedicate it to open space.

Doug McCone – Concerned if the township can modify the zoning in a non-planned institutional use especially with the use of for profit companies that design the residence halls.

Marty Caulfield – 4 Hawthorne La. - There is a pedestrian overpass on Matsonford Rd. for Radnor Elementary. If a new lighting policy is instituted, can it be retroactive to the institutions? How does the township enforce ordinances?

Paul McNabb – 28 S. Roberts Rd. – Lower Merion Twp. – Inquired if there are any fraternities or sorority houses within the township.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzan Jones

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