

FERGUSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2015
6:00 pm

I. ATTENDANCE

The Planning Commission held its first regular meeting of the month on Monday, April 13, 2015 at the Ferguson Township Municipal Building. In attendance were:

Commission: Marc McMaster, Chairman
Rob Crassweller, Vice Chair
Ralph Wheland
Scott Harkcom
Kurt Homan
Lisa Strickland

Staff: Maria Tranguch, Director of Planning & Zoning
Jeff Ressler, Zoning Administrator

Others in attendance included: Heather Bird, Recording Secretary; Laura Dininni, resident

II. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Crassweller called the Monday, April 13, 2015 Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

III. CENTRE REGION BIKE PLAN

Ms. Trish Meek, Centre Regional Planning Agency Transportation Planner, presented the Centre Region Bike Plan to the Commission. In 2012 the Centre Region applied for designation as a bicycle friendly community from the League of American Bicyclists and was awarded as a bronze level community. The League provided feedback to the region and included a recommendation to have a comprehensive bike plan. This will create a regional approach including three key principles: route connectivity, view bicycles as a form of transportation and best practices. The existing bike facilities map will be created as an interactive map on the web in the future. The map includes shared use paths, bike lanes, bike paths and a state designated bike touring route. The comprehensive bike plan is anticipated to be complete by December 2015. In March 2016 the region will reapply to the League for a designation update. Currently nationally 60% of the population is classified as interested but concerned bicyclists, with the concern being safety. This group of cyclists feels safer travelling on individual bike lanes and shared use paths. When building a bike facility a standard "build it for Isabella" can be used. Isabella is a 12 year old girl. If you build a bike facility safe for Isabella then it would be safe for anyone. Ferguson Township currently has 14.45 miles of shared use paths, .99 miles of bike lanes, zero bike routes and 8.58 miles of statewide bicycle pa route 8.58. Ms. Meek encouraged individuals to complete the bike survey on the Centre Region Council of Governments website. They would like to have feedback from all types of cyclists from casual to serious.

Mr. Crassweller asked about bike lanes on the western end of Whitehall Road. Ms. Meek stated the lanes are wide but there is not official bike lane.

Mr. Wheland asked what the benefit is to receiving a different designation. Ms. Meek stated it does not provide more money but on a marketing standpoint some individuals want to live in an area that includes these types of amenities in their community.

Mr. Homan stated he supports bicycle friendly communities as he lived in one in Texas.

Ms. Strickland asked if speed limits are taken into consideration for the state designated bike touring route along route 45. Ms. Meek stated speed is taken into consideration but was accepted because of the shoulder on the roadway.

Ms. Laura Dininni, resident, stated that she does not think rumble strips installed in the yellow line encourage giving the bicyclists the proper room for cycling.

IV. AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGACY PROGRAM

Ms. D. J. Liggett, Centre Regional Planning Agency, presented workforce housing information to the Commission. The community is in need of workforce housing because incomes are not rising as quickly as the cost of housing. This affordability gap particularly affects young families, those students just starting out after graduating college and essential service workers in the community. Local municipalities have looked into what can be done to encourage the construction of more affordable housing in the community. The reason for this is to respond to the affordability gap, to increase opportunities for homeownership and to encourage workforce housing close to shopping, transit and employment. The Ferguson Township Ordinance includes requirements in the Traditional Town Development for 10% of housing built to be affordable housing and the Terraced Streetscape District includes incentives to build affordable housing.

In Ferguson Township the workforce housing income ranges is 80 – 120% of the Centre County median household income of \$40,269 – \$60,403. In the Centre Region the median home price is approximately \$235,000. The workforce range is \$128,000 – \$203,000 assuming 30% of gross income goes toward housing cost with a 3.5% down payment, 4.5% interest rate, 30 year fixed rate mortgage including private mortgage insurance (PMI) and Homeowners' Association payments. Mr. McMaster questioned why the 30% is used when lenders do not use that figure. Ms. Liggett stated that is the rule of thumb for Housing and Urban Development.

Currently the ordinance does not have any regulations for preserving the affordability of the home beyond the first buyer. At this time the home would rely on market to set resale price for homes. The housing market in Centre County is robust so it is likely that the affordability would be lost after the first sale. Ms. Liggett stated the Board of Supervisors was interested in preserving the affordability for future homeowners.

The Board directed staff to identify the information needed in the ordinance to preserve the affordability for these homes. Ms. Liggett stated the first item would be to create a housing development plan. This document would include description of project, income levels to be served, schedule for construction, agreement on re-sale price restrictions and period of affordability and be submitted with the land development plan. Some other things to be included in the ordinance would be where is the developer going to build the affordable housing; some workforce housing is built off site, including affordable units across the income range, housing units must be used as the principle residence and should priority be given to residents of the township and/or county.

Mr. Homan asked if the program would include both purchased real estate and rented apartments. Ms. Liggett stated it could include both. Mr. Homan stated the cost to develop is high as well as the taxes. He stated that affordable rentals may be more helpful. Ms. Liggett stated that the student housing in the community is pushing the rental costs up for regular individuals. Mr. Homan said more comes with homeownership than just a mortgage, such as maintenance of the home. Ms. Liggett stated the program would help prepare individuals for buying their first home and all of the costs that are incorporated with homeownership.

Ms. Strickland stated research should be done on how many individuals are looking for this type of assistance in the community.

Mr. Crassweller discussed the salary range and the affordability of homes in the community. Ms. Liggett stated the salary range is what is currently in the ordinance.

Mr. McMaster stated the numbers used are not accurate. In today's market with an income of \$40,000 a buyer would be qualified for a home up to \$225,000. Ms. Liggett asked what the housing burden would be on that individual, the goal of this program is to assist people get in a home and not be over their head with their other bills. Mr. McMaster does not agree that currently there is no housing available in the community to fit the needs of these incomes.

Ms. Laura Dininni, resident, questioned the offsite affordable housing. Ms. Liggett stated that for some developers it may make sense to build the affordable units offsite but she would not want all of the offsite affordable housing to end up in one location.

Ms. Strickland questioned the homes to be built in Turnberry. Ms. Liggett stated the Turnberry plan was required to include 10% of the units as affordable housing units. This program would retain the affordability for future buyers on these homes being constructed. Mr. Homan stated these units would be lower priced but resembles the other units constructed. Ms. Liggett agreed with that. Mr. Wheland stated they may look the same but they would not include the same amenities.

Mr. Homan and Mr. Wheland are concerned with this program affecting the pride of ownership. Mr. McMaster stated many of the current homes in the land trust are in need of repair.

Mr. Harkcom asked if the sale price range with change with inflation.

Mr. Wheland questioned the administration of this program. Ms. Liggett stated the Centre County Land Trust is working up an estimated cost for handling this program for the municipality. The cost for this service may be included in the mortgage for the buyer.

V. SIGN ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

Mr. Ressler stated this is for an amendment to the sign ordinance for business signs. The amendment would cap the size limits to 4 or more businesses. Currently the ordinance includes sizes for up to 14 businesses. The 14th business would only get a sign of 5 square feet while the previous businesses were permitted larger signs. The Township received a request for a larger sign at 2790 West College Avenue where according to the ordinance an 8 square foot sign would have been allowed. The Commission discussed the ordinance amendment.

Mr. Homan made a motion to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors for this ordinance. Mr. Crassweller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. APRIL 6, 2015 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING UPDATE

Ms. Tranguch stated the Chestnut Ridge subdivision was the only land development plan on the agenda. This plan has been on the active plan list for quite some time. The applicant indicated they were not planning to develop this land so the Board disapproved the plan.

VII. RECENT PLAN SUBMISSIONS

Ms. Tranguch stated the latest plan submission was for Thistlewood Lot 12. Every home in Thistlewood needs a separate land development plan due to the topography of the land. Ms. Tranguch also reviewed the active plan list.

VIII. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 9, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Crassweller made a motion to APPROVE the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes from March 9, 2015 including removing Mr. Harkcom from the attendance listing. Mr. Homan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. CRPC MEETING

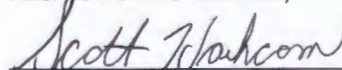
Mr. Wheland attended this meeting. They set draft project priorities. The choices included stormwater management initiatives; determine locations for expanding beneficial reuse, Centre Region nutrient management policy, update sewage capacity at build out in the regional growth boundary and Penn State sustainable community collaborative. The beneficial reuse and sewage capacities scored the highest. They also received a presentation on redevelopment capacity analysis.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wheland made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

With no further business, the March 9, 2015 regular Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



Scott Harkcom, Secretary
For the Planning Commission