

**FERGUSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2021
6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE

The Planning Commission held its first meeting of the month on Monday, October 11, 2021, as a zoom meeting. In attendance:

Commission:

Jeremie Thompson – Chair
Jerry Binney – Vice Chair
Shannon Holliday
Bill Keough
Lisa Rittenhouse
Dr. Ellen Taricani
Lewis Steinberg - Alternate
Ralph Wheland

Staff:

Jenna Wargo, Planning & Zoning Director
Kristina Bassett, Community Planner
Jeff Ressler, Zoning Administrator

Others in attendance: Lindsay Schoch, Principal Planner, College Township; Brad Groznik, Groznik PR; Mark Huncik, Ferguson Township Resident, Mark Torretti, PennTerra, Justin Mandel, Aspen Hill Partners, LLC

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Thompson called the Ferguson Township Planning Commission's regular meeting to order on Monday, October 11, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Thompson noted that the Planning Commission meeting had been advertised in accordance with the PA Sunshine Act as a virtual zoom meeting. Persons attending and wanted to participate were asked to enter their name, municipality, and topic by utilizing the Q&A bubble at the bottom of the screen.

Ms. Wargo took roll call, and the Planning Commission had a quorum.

II. CITIZEN INPUT

There were none.

III. APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

Dr. Taricani moved that the Planning Commission **approve** the minutes of September 27, 2021. Mr. Keough seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff requested to start with the Community Planning, Rediscover State College Campaign. Mr. Binney moved that the Planning Commission start with Community Planning, Rediscover State College Campaign. Mr. Keough seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Community Planning

i. Rediscover State College Campaign

Ms. Wargo reported that Brad Groznik from Groznik PR requested to attend a meeting

with the Planning Commission on a potential campaign for the Centre Region called 'Rediscover State College'. The goal of this campaign is to promote the region to people considering moving back to State College for a higher quality of life.

The Rediscover State College website can be viewed at [here](#).

Mr. Groznik introduced himself and presented a PowerPoint presentation of the campaign. Mr. Groznik noted that State College is not promoting enough for people to return or relocate. A survey was sent and some of the results included that there are not enough jobs, weather is terrible, salaries are too low, housing is expensive, it's only for students, no food scene, no diversity, high rises destroyed the downtown, etc. However, they did hear positive feedback with 20% of the respondents noting they would consider moving back within the next 5-years which represents 17,000 people plus their families. Mr. Groznik stated that there is no group talking directly to people who want to move to State College.

Mr. Groznik created a team that consist of the following:

- Brad Groznik – Project Manager
- Trevor Calabro – User experience, data, and research
- Regina Starace – Creative direction
- Maggie Anderson – Editorial direction
- Matt Fern – Photography, web design and graphic design

Mr. Groznik noted that each team member are all owners of Mom & Pop Operations. The team created an Instagram account and a website. Mr. Groznik is seeking \$180,000 in seed funding per year for three years. The funds would be spent as follows: 70% to local contractors, 20% for advertising; 5% for accounting, legal & banking, and 5% for software, supplies & travel. Mr. Groznik would like the effort to include industry, community, and gown from the local community. They plan to be primarily self-funded after three years.

The timeline consists of the following:

- 2021 – Fundraise
- 2022 – Begin building recruiting service; continue to build content engine
- 2023 – Refine and optimize
- 2024 – Amplify for healthy organic growth

Launching will be in January 2022.

Mr. Binney asked if they are seeking \$15,000 per year for three years from local government. Mr. Groznik confirmed.

Dr. Taricani asked what some differences are between Mr. Groznik's organization versus the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau. Mr. Groznik noted that the Bureau's focus is on tourism while the CBICC focuses on memberships with business. Mr. Groznik stated they will be working with both the Bureau and the CBICC.

Mr. Keough noted he likes the idea and is intrigued how it will move forward. Mr. Keough suggested focusing on a piece involving quality of life material.

Ms. Bassett suggested working with the PS Alumni Association. Ms. Bassett is an alum of PSU and moved to Florida after graduation but moved back to State College.

Ms. Holliday noted that State College has a low crime rate and noted its stressful living in a larger city. Ms. Holliday stated it's a great place to have children and to retire.

B. Land Development Plans

ii. Orchard Square Preliminary Land Development Plan

Ms. Bassett reported that Penn Terra Engineering, Inc. submitted, on behalf of their client, The Orchard Square Preliminary Land Development Plan. This plan proposes the construction of a 19,856 square foot Commercial Shopping Center, associated parking, and utilities. As proposed, there will be 3 store fronts with 100 parking spaces. The lot, T.P. 24-004-067F,0000-, is 0.115 acres. The parcel is located within the General Commercial (C) Zoning District and within the Corridor Overlay District.

Ms. Bassett reviewed the plan that was included in the agenda packet.

Mr. Wheland noted that the plan was initially to be two stories. Mr. Torretti stated that it was initially in the concept plan.

Mr. Binney requested having the engineers review the planned ingress and egress. Mr. Torretti reviewed the areas. Mr. Binney expressed concerns with a left-hand turn coming out of Sheetz onto West College Avenue and asked if there have been concerns expressed. Mr. Torretti noted that there were no concerns.

Mr. Keough expressed concerns with the back parking lot configuration because of snowplows trying to remove the snow and asked if there were other design options. Mr. Torretti noted that there is no perfect solution where to place the snow, but there are some areas where it could be placed.

Mr. Keough noted that the south side of the building doesn't have pedestrian access and it is forcing the neighboring residences to drive to the stores. Justin Mandel stated that originally there were connectors originally between commercial and residential but due to an ordinance it was prohibited.

With regards to the lighting plan and the vegetation plan, Mr. Keough stated that the canopy of the trees might engulf the lights in the future. Mr. Thompson stated that the landscaping plan is very aggressive. Mr. Torretti noted that what is shown on the plan is the minimal requirement.

Ms. Lindsay Schoch, Principal Planner, College Township, stated that she worked on the land development plan as an employee of Ferguson Township a few years ago and expressed her sadness of it not being two-stories as planned.

Dr. Taricani noted that it seems to be a lot of congestion considering only one outlet and inquired who the tenants will be. Mr. Mandel noted they do not have any signed leases for commercial tenants yet.

Mr. Thompson asked how the Ferguson Township Stormwater Fee effected this development plan. Mr. Mandel conveyed his dislike of the fee. Mr. Thompson expressed concerns with the basins being close to residential developments. Mr. Thompson thanked PennTerra for the sidewalk connections.

Ms. Schoch noted that there are a lot of basins and asked if they could be used for other purposes. Ms. Rittenhouse stated it would be good for a soccer field.

Mr. Keough stated that he would like better access from the sidewalk along College Avenue to the front of the building.

Mr. Wheland moved that the Planning Commission make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve the Orchard Square Preliminary Land Development Plan subject to the conditions described in the Community Planner's memorandum dated October 7, 2021. Dr. Taricani seconded the motion.

Mr. Keough stated that even though the plan meets the Township's regulations, he is disappointed with the issues that were discussed tonight. Mr. Keough stated he is voting not to approve and felt that a meeting with the developers and appropriate staff is needed to consider the issues.

Mr. Wheland stated that if you vote against a plan that is following all regulations, you must cite a violation of the ordinance.

The motion passed 5-2 with Mr. Keough and Ms. Holliday dissenting.

V. OFFICIAL REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCES

A. Board of Supervisors

Ms. Wargo reported that the Board met on October 4, 2021. The Board reviewed and approved the modifications/waivers for the Rogan Subdivision along with the subdivision plan. A preliminary/final land development plan for the home that is to be built will be reviewed by the Commission.

B. CRPC Report

Dr. Taricani reported that they met with Public Service and Environment and Transportation and Land Use. They discussed alternative housing and low-income housing. The meeting was held over the lunch hour and was short.

Mr. Thompson noted that at the last meeting he mis-spoke about a possible high-speed rail coming through State College.

C. Land Development Plans

Ms. Bassett reported that the Centre Animal Hospital submitted a plan to expand their building and a lot consolidation. Comments are due back to Ms. Bassett on October 13th. Other plans in review are the Homestead Lane Farm Subdivision. Nittany Dental is outstanding. The West College Avenue Student Housing Building was recorded, and they are progressing.

Mr. Keough thanked whoever followed up on his request regarding the survey marker in the middle of the alley near the Yocum property, but Mr. Keough noted that the marker states property corner. Ms. Bassett noted it could be a recycled marker and it is not the property line. Ms. Wargo spoke to the engineer, and it is not the property line.

D. Staff Updates

Ms. Wargo reported they are interviewing for the front office assistant. Summer Brown will be going full-time for the Public Works Department.

Mr. Binney asked a procedure question with regards to Mr. Wheland's statement earlier about citing the violation in an ordinance. Mr. Binney thought it only applied to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Wargo noted that it is for the Board of Supervisors because they can't disapprove a plan without citing specific instances where it is

not meeting the ordinance. Mr. Binney suggested having a conversation about procedure policy on what the Commission can and cannot do.

Mr. Keough suggested having the Commission get the opportunity to see the plan and give recommendations before final approval.

Mr. Wheland noted that maybe the motion should have been to table the plan for two-weeks so the developer could consider the suggestions. Ms. Wargo stated that if the Commission sees the plan before staff has had final reviews, staff will not be able to answer questions that the Commission might have. Ms. Wargo noted that staff has a required timeline within the Municipal Planning Code (MPC) to review plans to get them through. Mr. Keough would have no problem reviewing before staff has completed and if there were questions would wait for the answer. Ms. Wargo stated that she does not want it to become an expectation for staff to provide answers prior to their final review. Also, if the applicant is expected to attend additional meetings when it is not a final review, it will create expenses for the applicant. Ms. Rittenhouse stated that the entire process to do anything with a development is extremely lengthy for the individual to complete and noted that the process needs to be reviewed. Ms. Wargo noted that a lot of the process is from the MPC. Ms. Wargo noted that staff is working on areas to streamline to make the process easier on the applicant. Mr. Keough reiterated his suggestion to see the plan before acting on the plan and asked if it were possible. Ms. Wargo expressed concerns with having the applicant pay their engineers to attend additional meetings. Ms. Rittenhouse suggested posting them on the website prior to the meeting. Ms. Wargo stated that the plans are on the website. Mr. Thompson provided the link to the website. Mr. Keough asked if Ms. Wargo could look into a change in process for reviewing plans. Ms. Wargo suggested a vote because staff already provides the plans on the website. Ms. Wargo asked if the Commission is to meet as a group or to provide comments individually as they review the plans from the website. Mr. Keough stated he can't review plans electronically. Mr. Binney suggested that an email be sent out to let the Commission know there are new plans on the website. Ms. Wargo agreed. Mr. Keough asked if he could obtain a paper copy.

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Binney made a motion to adjourn the October 11, 2021, Planning Commission meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rob Crassweller, Secretary
For the Planning Commission