

SWATARA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

DAUPHIN COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021

This is the 2021 Swatara Township Planning Commission Annual Report. This report is being prepared to comply with Article II (Planning Agencies) of the PA Municipalities Planning Code, which states:

Section 207 – Conduct of Business: *The commission shall keep a full record of its business and shall annually make a written report by March 1 of each year of its activities to the governing body. Interim reports may be made as often as may be necessary, or as requested by the governing body.*

MEMBERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The 2021 members of the Planning Commission were: (meetings attended)

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| 1. Charles W. Bowser, 70 Bertha Drive, Oberlin, PA 17113 | 10 |
| 2. Karen Bear, 379 Harford Avenue, Swatara, PA 17111 | 10 |
| 3. Patrick Horner, Sr., 970 Keckler Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 | 7 |
| 4. Chad Martin, 6120 Parson Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17111 | 10 |
| 5. Lee Pisano, 1273 3 rd Street, Steelton, PA 17113 | 10 |

During their biennial reorganization meeting in January 2020 the Township Board of Commissioners decided to reduce the number of members of the Township Planning Commission from 9 to 5. Mr. Bowser, Mrs. Bear, Mr. Horner, and Mr. Martin were all appointed in 2018 and remained on the Commission. The 5 other members that were on the Commission at the end of 2019 were not reappointed. Mr. Pisano was appointed in January 2020 to a term of 4 years. It is the policy of the Township Board of Commissioners to compensate the members of the Planning Commission \$75.00 for each meeting they attend.

The first scheduled meeting of the Commission in January was cancelled due to technical conditions related to holding virtual meetings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Commission held a few of the meetings online during 2019 rather than in person. During 2020 the meetings held in February, March, April and May were held on the Zoom online platform. In person meetings were held for the remainder of the year.

The Commission held their first meeting on February 2nd and commenced with their annual reorganization meeting. Mr. Bowser was elected to be the Chairman and Mr. Martin was elected as Vice Chairman.

The Planning Commission also retained N. Frances Peck as the Recording Secretary. Robert E. Ihlein, the Township Director of Planning and Zoning, served as the liaison and Corresponding Secretary. Mr. Stephen Cordaro, P.E. of Dawood Engineering served as the Township Engineer. The Dauphin County Planning Commission sent Lauren Weaver as the planner representative. Mr. William Gralski, P.E. is the consulting engineer responsible for reviewing all land development plans with stormwater facilities and with all township MS4 permit activities.

MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

During 2021 the Commission held eleven (11) regular meetings. The meeting in January was cancelled due to technical issues related to holding meetings online. Many other meetings, including Board of Commissioners and the annual meeting of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission were held online due to the pandemic.

LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

The Township received eight (8) new applications for review of a subdivision and/or land development plan during the year. Four plans were carried over into 2022 and four were recommended to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Following are the plans that were submitted to the Commission for their consideration:

Plan 2021-01C: Progressive Dental Concepts, LLC purchased a lot in the Tecport Business Park and submitted a land development plan for a new 10,800 square foot medical office building on Port View Drive.

Plan 2021-02C: Patricia Macut submitted a minor subdivision and lot add on plan for her property on Lester Road.

Plan 2021-03C: Commercial real estate developer KPA RE, LLC submitted a development plan for 900 Eisenhower Boulevard. The site will contain a new structure that will house a Dunkin restaurant with a drive thru and another lease space. There was an older 2-story office/retail structure on the site that was demolished earlier in the year.

Plan 2021-04C: A hotel developer purchased the lot at 435 Port View Drive in Tecport and will build a new 70-room hotel for StayAPT Suites.

Plan 2021-05C: Another commercial property developer, PTV 1220, LLC, acquired a lot at 7967 Derry Street to construct a new Dollar General retail store.

Plan 2021-06R: Hennick Construction submitted a land development plan to construct 18 new townhouses on a lot located at 3833 Derry Street.

Plan 2021-07C: Paxton Street Terminals Corporation submitted a 2-lot subdivision plan of their property located at 5140 Paxton Street.

Plan 2021-08R: A 4-lot residential subdivision was submitted on behalf of Brandton Estates. The plan will create 3 new building lots facing Chambers Street.

ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS

In December of this year the Board of Commissioners referred a draft ordinance amendment submitted by Charter Homes and Neighborhoods. Charter is a regional builder that constructs a unique blend of residential structures served by some small-scale commercial uses. The ordinance would create a special section of code called the “Neighborhood Development Overlay District”. The Commission will begin its review in 2022.

See SPECIAL PROJECTS below for some of the other zoning code discussions held by the Commission during the year.

CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS

In 2019 Mushroom Hill, LLC applied for conditional use approval for the development of approximately 1.2 million square feet of warehouse space in four buildings situated on 165 acres of land in the Chambers Hill area. Four hearings were held by the Board of Commissioners and were well attended by the public. The Board held a special meeting on February 10, 2020 and announced their decision to deny the request for approval. That decision was subsequently appealed by the applicant. The County Court reviewed the case and found in favor of the applicant. The Township Board of Commissioners then voted to appeal the case to the Commonwealth Court. A decision from the Court was still pending at the end of 2021.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

During 2018 the Township Board of Commissioners approved the drafting of an “implementable” comprehensive plan as a modified update to the 1996 Township Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission worked on drafting the plan during 2018 and 2019 and was then adopted by the Board of Commissioners on February 12, 2020. The Board of Commissioners chose to focus on an “Implementable Comprehensive Plan”, which is style of plan that will focus on addressing current conditions and implementing projects that will hopefully raise the quality of life for business and residents through 2025.

This year the Planning Commission worked on addressing some of the zoning code amendments that would help implement certain aspects of the Plan. See SPECIAL PROJECTS below for a description.

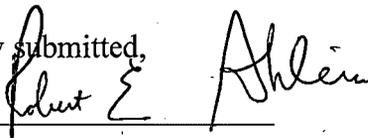
SPECIAL STUDIES AND FUTURE PROJECTS

The Planning Commission began to consider incorporating “development compatibility standards” into the zoning ordinance. This was one of the projects listed under “Protect Existing Neighborhoods” in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Ihlein was asked to research other municipalities, especially townships of the first class, that have these types of regulations. In the Harrisburg area he found that Lower Allen and Susquehanna Townships have similar provisions for new land developments. The Commission also noted that the township ordinance currently contains design standards for other land uses such as mobile home parks. The Commission reviewed a couple iterations of the draft ordinance amendment, and during their last meeting in December voted to refer the document to the Board of Commissioners for their consideration and adoption.

During the year the Commission was given various magazine articles related to land use planning in Pennsylvania and around the country. Some of the topics included “Zoning in the Age of Covid”, “Practice Post-Covid Zoning”, “How COVID-19 Will Change Land Use”, “Housing Diversity”, “Home-Based Low-Impact Occupations”, warehousing and “high cube and automated warehousing, and “Zoning Solutions to Boost Food Security”. While the decline of local and regional retail stores and the rise of warehouses has been happening for several years, much of this literature reflected changes in land uses brought about in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission reflected on these larger trends and observed that many of the land uses in the township have stayed the same, at least for now. The court decision about the Mushroom Hill warehouses still has the potential to impact the Chambers Hill area if the developer prevails and moves forward with construction.

OTHER NOTES

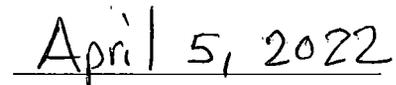
The members of the Planning Commission thanked the Board of Commissioners for their continued support and stand ready to accept any assignments that they deem necessary.

Respectfully submitted,


Robert E. Ihlein, Township Director of Planning and Zoning
Planning Commission Liaison and Corresponding Secretary

Approved,


Chairman



Date