

SWATARA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
February 6, 2024

The Swatara Township Planning Commission regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Chad Martin at 7:02 pm at the Swatara Township Municipal building, 599 Eisenhower Boulevard, Harrisburg, PA. The call to order was followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members of the Commission present:

Chad Martin, Chairman	Karen Bear
Chuck Bowser, Vice Chairman	Mark Caruso
Katie Ibberson	

Also Present: Robert Ihlein, Township Director of Planning and Zoning and Corresponding Secretary for the Commission, and Danielle Derolf, P.E., Dawood Engineering. Alexa Korber, AICP, Planner with Dauphin County Planning Commission, introduced Karen Dixon. Ms. Dixon has been assigned as the county representative who will be attending the meetings from now on.

REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD

Mr. Martin recognized new member Katie Ibberson. This was her first in-person meeting, having been present by telephone at the January meeting.

Mr. Martin called for nominations for the position of Chairman. Mrs. Ibberson made a motion to nominate Chad Martin for the position of Chairman of the Commission. Mr. Caruso seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5 – 0 vote to approve Mr. Martin as the Chairman. Mr. Caruso then made a motion to nominate Chuck Bowser as the Vice-Chairman. Mrs. Bear seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote to approve Mr. Bowser as the Vice-Chairman. Mr. Martin made a motion to appoint Robert Ihlein as the Corresponding Secretary and liaison to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Bowser seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Bowser made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024, meeting. Mr. Caruso seconded the motion. Mr. Martin asked for a correction regarding his recusal from one of the listed land development projects. The note currently appears under Plan No. 2023.10C, the JB Hunt trailer drop lot project. This note should appear under Plan No.2023-11C, the Faulkner

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Mazda project. The motion to accept the minutes with the correction passed unanimously. Mr. Ihlein stated that he would make the corrections as directed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS, INCLUDING STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Mr. Tom Connolly of N. Harrisburg Street introduced himself. He is one of the Township Commissioners that took office on January 2nd and has been appointed the Chair of the Codes Committee, which has oversight of the Codes Department and land planning activities. He had served as Commissioner from 2014 through 2021. Issues that he has heard about from constituents are warehouses, the proposed Wawa development, and keeping of chickens. Meghan O’Neill of Bell Road commented that she also has concerns about the proposed Wawa development, especially flooding of the site by the Swatara Creek. The Hoss’s restaurant has been flooded two times in recent years.

OLD BUSINESS - SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS:

a. Plan No. 2023-10C: “Preliminary / Final Land Development Plan for Proposed Trailer Drop Lot”, dated 09/26/2023

Project: Re-develop an 11.32-acre former quarry site for use as a “drop lot” for the storage of shipping containers and hauling chasses

Applicant: JB Hunt Transport, Inc.

Location: 2224 Paxton Street

PLAN STATUS: Accepted for review on 10/03/2023; BOC ACTION BY (90 days)

EXTENSION GRANTED BY APPLICANT TO 04/30/2024

WAIVER REQUEST:

>1. Section 253.10A - 11 requiring the submission of a Preliminary Plan

ACTION: tabled at request of applicant

Mr. Ihlein noted that the engineer for the applicant has informed him that they are almost finished revising the plans and will be present for the March meeting.

b. Plan No. 2023-11C: “Preliminary / Final Land Development Plan for Faulkner Mazda Sales and Service Building”, dated 09/22/2023, revised 11/29/2023

Project: proposing to redevelop the former Faulkner Honda dealership site to a Faulkner Mazda dealership with some changes to the site and a building addition on 1.13 acres

Applicant: The Faulkner Organization

Location: 2020 Paxton Street

PLAN STATUS: Accepted for review on 10/03/2023 ; BOC ACTION BY (90 days) EXTENSION

GRANTED BY APPLICANT TO 02/29/2024

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WAIVER REQUESTS:

- >1. Section 253.10A - 11 requiring the submission of a Preliminary Plan
- >2. Section 253.13N requiring the developer to obtain a state Highway Occupancy Permit for the existing driveway off Paxton Street
- >3. Section 253-32.A (DEFERRAL) of the requirement to construct concrete sidewalks and curb ramps along the Eastern side of Wister Street

ACTION: discuss any final comments before approval by the Board of Commissioners

Mr. Ihlein noted that the Commission had voted to recommend approval of this plan last month and will be considered for action by the Board of Commissioners on February 14th. Ms. Derolf commented that the staff at Dawood has been working with the applicant to review additional traffic data and that the traffic volume concerns have responded to their satisfaction.

c. Plan No. 2023-12C: “Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan for Swatara Paxton Developers LLC – Proposed Wawa Food Market and Fueling Station”, dated 11/21/2023

Project: proposing to redevelop the current Hoss’s Restaurant site on the corner of Route 322 and Bridge Road to a Wawa store and fueling station

Location: 9009 Bridge Road

PLAN STATUS: Accepted for review on ; BOC ACTION BY (90 days), EXTENSION GRANTED BY APPLICANT TO MARCH 31, 2024

Applicant: Swatara Paxton Developers, LLC

WAIVER REQUESTS:

ACTION: Discuss comments from plan reviewers

The applicant was not present. Ms. Korber reiterated the concerns of the Dauphin County Planning Commission about a portion of the property being in the mapped flood zone. Their staff is going to prepare another comment letter expressing these concerns. There is a potential for the fueling station and fuel tanks to be under water during a flood event. The plans have also been shared with Hummelstown Borough since Bridge Road connects directly to Main Street and the downtown square. A response letter was prepared and sent by Borough Manager Theresa Eberly and was discussed. A major concern is additional large truck traffic into and through the Borough. Mr. Ihlein noted that the applicant is in the process of revising plans based on previous comments and some of the concerns expressed by the Borough may be addressed. He also noted that a planning staff held a virtually meeting to evaluate the possibility of a pedestrian crosswalk on Bridge Road. Throughout the year there are many visitors to Schiavoni Park, which is almost directly across from the site. Many visitors may want to walk across the street to visit the store, and this could be dangerous for pedestrians without some type of traffic controls. Mr. Ihlein noted that this may be addressed in the revised plans. However, in the meantime, property owners directly across from the project site may be involved in this and will be notified by letter. Mr. Martin directed Mr. Ihlein to have the Fire Chief review the plans. Mr. Ihlein will send the applicant the letters from the County and the Borough.

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NEW BUSINESS - SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

None.

OLD BUSINESS – PLANNING INFORMATION, ISSUES AND ORDINANCES

Discussion regarding land use and zoning issues selected by the Commission that may be addressed and recommended to the Board of Commissioners:

This list submitted in January 2024 for suggested clarifications and corrections to the zoning ordinance:

- a. Improved definitions of lots and yards with new graphics
- b. Minimum lot sizes for dwelling units in the Commercial zoning districts (see “Attachment 2” from ordinance)
- c. “Home Occupation” – the wording used in the definition section is different than that used in additional regulations 2095-96.D(9) – “minor” vs “light”, etc.
- d. “Night Club” – no definition, plus the Use Table H indicates there are additional requirements in 295-39, but there are none
- e. Commercial Fences – no distinction in the zoning ordinance made between residential and commercial uses. The current maximum height for all fences is 6 feet.

Mr. Ihlein asked to have this discussion tabled for this meeting. Many of these changes are important, but not urgent. However, the minimum lot sizes for dwelling units in the Commercial zoning districts is more urgent right now. He will prepare a report for next month.

OTHER BUSINESS – PLANNING INFORMATION, ISSUES AND ORDINANCES

- a. Review draft of the “Planning Commission Annual Report for 2023”

The draft report was just distributed. Any changes or corrections should be sent to Mr. Ihlein by the next meeting.

- b. See article “7 Need-to-Know Trends for 2024” from APA Magazine

This article was presented as general information. One of the trends that may have a positive effect on Swatara is a rise in industrial manufacturing. The re-development of the Harrisburg Mall will have flex spaces available for light industrial uses.

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COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Members were given the announcement of the TCRPC annual luncheon to be May 9, 2024, at the Marriott Hotel on Lindle Road

Mr. Ihlein reported that Fran Peck had been assisting him by preparing the monthly meeting minutes from notes that he emailed to her. In January, she informed him that her health conditions are preventing her from continuing to do this. All of Commissioners expressed their thanks for her years of service to the Board.

Next meeting – Tuesday, March 5, 2024

COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bowser made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Ibberson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Ihlein