

MINUTES
WORCESTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY HALL
1031 VALLEY FORGE ROAD, WORCESTER, PA 19490
THURSDAY, October 24, 2024 - 7:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM

2. ATTENDANCE

All the members were present.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from the August 22, 2024 Planning Commission meeting were approved unanimously with no amendments.

4. WORCESTER TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE UTILIZATION AND ACQUISITION ANALYSIS

Chair Sherr provided background on a recent court case from Upper Pottsgrove. The case involved the municipality building a municipal building on open space. He expressed concern that the case might affect what could be done with Worcester's open space.

Member Bob Andorn questioned whether there were any restrictions that the new case would add to properties and what specific uses would be allowed. He would like to see if something like parking would be limited or if it would be specifically the building.

Township Manager, Dan DeMeno explained that the land in the Upper Pottsgrove case was bought with dedicated open space tax revenue. This would not be an issue in Worcester as the Township does not have a dedicated open space tax. However, Mr. DeMeno stated that he would follow up with the Township Solicitor on this matter.

Mr. Andorn indicated that he would rather not invest in a project until the Planning Commission gets an opinion on the case and new restrictions. He also provided an overview of the sites that were visited by some of the Planning Commission members.

Mr. Sherr stated that a bandshell might not be allowed.

Township Engineer, John Evarts pointed out that there are existing structures at Heebner Park that might make it easier to argue the building of additional structures.

Mr. DeMeno explained that there were large scale exhibits of open space parcels with contour lines that were being created by Mr. Evarts.

Mr. Andorn explained that there were properties that were along the trail that he felt not much could be done with. These three properties were expected to be sold to attempt to buy more space. He went on to list the properties that were seen on the site visit including Heiser Field, Griffith, Mt. Kirk and adjacent properties. He stated that these properties have significant potential.

Vice Chair Michelle Greenawalt indicated that a few residents came out and her questions about the open space involve the current usage. For example: How much the fields are being rented out. She also likes a little history of the property, so traditions are upheld.

5. LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Wangia Minor Subdivision - 1205 Hollow Road.

Mr. Sherr introduced the topic and asked if the applicant's Engineers had received the review letters.

All County Engineers stated that they had received review letters from both the Township Engineer and the Township Traffic Engineer and would need to seek zoning relief. The stormwater positioning also needed to be addressed, and since there is plenty of acreage on the properties, the applicant's Engineers felt confident in their ability to address these issues.

Mr. Sherr said there is not a lot of evidence brought up about subdividing and his questions concern the development of the lots after they are subdivided. He asked if this was only a subdivision, and All County Engineers confirmed that it was only for a subdivision.

Mr. Evarts further clarified that septic testing sites and backups are on the plans and his main concerns were some of the locations of stormwater and driveways. He also clarified that the property owner could subdivide and then apply for building permits, which is not uncommon in smaller subdivisions.

All County Engineers agreed that the current plan was to get the subdivision and then to apply for development once there are owners for the lots so that the new owners could choose specific housing layouts. These individual choices would impact things like stormwater.

Mr. Evarts stated that the lots fall into the allowable options for development in their zoning district.

Mr. Sherr asked for clarification on driveway access.

Mr. Evarts clarified that there is a dual access driveway, and the township would have to decide if the driveway should be shared. He also identified a slope issue and asked about the easement for the barn.

All County Engineers stated that the easement agreement for the barn was signed but never recorded and the owner is now in the process of revising and recording the agreement.

Mr. Evarts also clarified that there are two flag lots.

Mr. Andorn clarified that this is in fact a minor subdivision as the county listed it as a major subdivision.

Mr. Evarts stated that it was reviewed as a major subdivision.

Mr. Andorn said that he was not sure if this was an issue. He asked if this subdivision would change into a possible subdivision from a lot line change in 2015. Mr. Andorn also wanted clarification for the Growing Greener program which requires 10 acres.

Mr. Evarts clarified that there were not any deed restrictions on record.

Mr. Andorn stated that if a property has more than 10 acres then something might have conservation subdivisions.

Mr. Evarts stated that there would not be an issue with this as there are different development options.

Mr. Andorn explained that his concern was any possible restriction with the 2015 subdivision. He also stated that he would like to see all issues raised in the review letters addressed before providing a recommendation.

Mr. Evarts asked if there were waivers being requested. He listed waivers for road widening, curbing, and sidewalks that would likely be asked for. Mr. Evarts continued to say that with only the waiver issues outstanding, he did not feel comfortable making a recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Andorn wanted to give the applicant an acknowledgement that there are no significant issues or questions that the Planning Commission has. Although, he also pointed out that perking right now would not yield good results.

All County Engineers stated they did the perk tests a couple of months ago and found spots on all lots. Clarification about the dates of the deed were given. The property was deeded in 2017.

Mr. Sherr suggested that the Planning Commission send All County to continue to work as the Planning Commission was not ready to vote with the waiver issue being outstanding.

All County Engineers agreed to come back once the waivers were done.

Mr. DeMeno said that there was a waiver of timelines. However, All County Engineers suggested that they hope to be back in front of the Planning Commission for the next meeting.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. DeMeno introduced a zoning ordinance amendment for fences and cell tower facilities. The existing cell tower ordinance would be moved under zoning rather than where it is currently located.

Mr. Andorn asked for clarification on the redlined version of the ordinance as he was concerned that rules around accessory structures might be removed.

Mr. DeMeno stated that the accessory structures section is not part of the ordinance today and will be brought to the commission at a later date, and the current rules would stay in place.

Mr. DeMeno provided a summary of the changes to the ordinance. The first change would be a change in the height of fences from 5 feet to 6 feet. He also discussed the language for front yard fencing, currently allowed to be 4 feet tall of split rail or picket. The new language would allow for other designs like wrought iron. This ordinance would also prohibit barbed wire and junk fences. Another section includes engineered retaining walls and definitions for walls.

Mr. Sherr opened the discussion for comment.

Motion to recommend approval of fence & wireless facilities amendment by the Board of Supervisors – Mr. Andorn made the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Mr. Sherr gave a brief overview of the bandshell discussion as well as the fact that the Planning Commission had discussed it earlier.

Mr. DeMeno informed the Planning Commission that the current draft of the 2025 budget did not have money to build the bandshell. He explained that, for good budgeting practice, he feels that there is no rush, and they can take their time to collect good community feedback before a project like this.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill McGrane spoke about the bandshell placement. He also expressed concern that the Township might not need a bandshell. Mr. McGrane indicated that there might be restrictions on the Heiser Field property so building a bandshell would be ill-advised.

Dana Common expressed concern about a bandshell being built on Heiser Field.

Another resident 1704 Brooks wanted to thank the Township for involving people in the process of planning.

Elizabeth Moran also expressed concern about a bandshell being built on Heiser Field.

Mr. Andorn spoke about the understanding of the usage of open space and how that might influence future usage, goals, and weaknesses in the current infrastructure.

Mr. Koch spoke about separate facilities for horses to have safety.

Mr. Andorn spoke about the bandshell some more and stated he would like to have more public input.

Brad Smith asked about the next meeting as he is not available to discuss his subdivision land development plan.

Ms. Greenawalt made a motion to move the next meeting to November 21st and the motion passed unanimously.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 PM.

active applications (review period expiration)

- LD 2017-02 Palmer Village, LLC (*review period waived*)
- LD 2022-01 City View (*review period waived*)
- LD 2024-01 Wangia Subdivision (*review period waived*)