

Lower Salford
Township Planning
Commission Meeting
March 22, 2023

Planning Commission Chair Manus McHugh called to order the Lower Salford Township Planning Commission meeting at 7:30pm. Other Planning Commission members in attendance were John Kennedy, Brad Landis, David Bowe, and Andy Shields. Also in attendance was Mike Beuke, Director of Building and Zoning, and Claire Warner of the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Planning Commission members Joe Harwanko and David Goodman were excused from the meeting. Also excused from the meeting was Stephanie Butler, P.E. of Bowman/McMahon Associates, the Township Traffic Engineer's office, and Michele Fountain, P.E. of CKS, the Township Engineer's office,

Minutes

The minutes from the February 22, 2023, meeting were reviewed. Mr. Kennedy made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Bowe seconded the motion. Mr. Landis abstained due to being excused from the February meeting.

Motion 4 Yes; 0 No; 1 Abstain

Draft Parking Ordinance – Discussion

Mr. Beuke opened the discussion by reminding everyone of the parking issue previously discussed for 285 Maple Avenue/Sips & Berries smoothie shop. Under the current ordinance, Sips & Berries was required to provide much more parking than a small, quick service restaurant of this type would ever possibly need. This type of burden is what brought us to review the ordinance.

Mr. Beuke reviewed the recommended edits to Subsection B referencing the ITE (Institutes of Transportation Engineers' Parking Generation Manual) and providing parking in accordance with their recommendations, and Subsection C, which addresses providing parking where the ITE standards cannot be met.

Mr. McHugh agreed with the comment noted by Mr. Freimuth that the wording of Subsection C could be problematic.

Mr. Beuke noted that there is no use regulation section in our ordinance and no list of specific uses.

Mr. McHugh asked if a use is not listed in the ITE, can the Township assign a use.

Mr. Kennedy feels following the ITE manual would be a good idea as it is consistently updated.

A discussion followed regarding the elimination of Subsection C and allowing the Zoning Officer to determine the required parking for a proposed use that is not currently identified.

Mr. McHugh asked for an updated version of the ordinance at the next meeting.

Ms. Warner noted that this review has still not addressed the problem with the Sips & Berries property.

Mr. Beuke noted that the Sips & Berries issue goes hand in hand with the definitions and the recategorizing of different types of restaurants.

County Plan Reviews

Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Ms. Warner opened the discussion by addressing the section on Existing Principal Buildings.

Mr. Beuke reminded everyone that the Township will potentially be expanding the Village District along Main Street and the question was asked if these standards will apply to existing buildings that will become part of the Village District.

A discussion ensued on buildings predating 1940 and preservation requirements.

Mr. Kennedy asked if the township really had an interest in salvaging an old, unattractive building just because it was erected before 1940. A discussion followed on what makes a building worth preserving and what style of build is desirable.

Mr. McHugh asked how the Township would determine what is worth preserving.

Mr. Beuke stated that the Village District should appear village-like or historical in nature and discussed the possible elimination of the Conditional Use requirement.

Ms. Warner opened a discussion on bonuses for preserving pre-1940 buildings and other bonus calculations.

Mr. McHugh stated that he is very much in favor of streamlining and cleaning up this ordinance. It was noted that Main Street may be more difficult to address than Vernfield.

Mr. Kennedy commended the Weaver Reckner Dental Office as a successful example of constructing a building with a Village-like appearance.

Mr. McHugh noted that the Village District is about scale and feature, not style. He does not support the Township controlling and dictating what is appropriate; however, he would prefer that buildings like 488 Main Street/Three Brothers Mexican Restaurant not be taken down.

It was mentioned that in municipalities that have Historical Districts, buildings can still be taken down at the expense of tax credits, etc.

Mr. Kennedy's opinion is that choosing a hard date like 1940 is difficult to abide by and that not all buildings are worth saving. He questioned if the Township could require the preservation of any building and discussed the incentive/bonus for preservation. He suggested perhaps the ordinance have the requirement with the caveat of, "preserved where possible".

Ms. Warner mentioned that some of the items that currently allow for a bonus are preservation of buildings built before 1940, shared driveways, and inclusion of public space. A brief discussion regarding bonuses followed.

Ms. Warner recapped, stating that the new edits will include "preserve when possible" and the elimination of required Conditional Use approval.

Microbreweries in the Administrative Office District and possibly adding them to the Village District and the Commercial District were briefly mentioned by Mr. Beuke.

Mr. McHugh suggested getting the Village District edits done then the Planning Commission can look at the large track overlay and consider microbreweries.

Mr. McHugh asked for further comments; there being none, a motion was made by Mr. Bowe and seconded by Mr. Landis to adjourn the meeting. With all members in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:14pm.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for 7:30pm on Wednesday April 26, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Reimel
Administrative Assistant