

SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Virtual Meeting

May 11, 2020

Minutes

Attendance: Dan Fest, TJ Francisco, William Jordan, Peter Brussock, Gretchen Rice, Amishi Castelli, Lesley Marino, Joanna Waldron (Township Solicitor), Curt Genner (Township Engineer), Kevin Morrissey (Supervisor Liaison) and Jean Weiss (Planning Commission Administrator).

Absent: Keith Deussing

I. Call to Order

At 7:06 p.m., the Solebury Township Planning Commission meeting was called to order.

II. Approval of Minutes – January 13, 2020

Upon a motion made by Peter Brussock, seconded by Gretchen Rice, the Solebury Township Planning Commission approved the March 9, 2020 meeting minutes.

III. Signs – Proposed Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

Joanna Waldron stated another classification of signs that she has come across that the Township does not identify, which is relevant to what has been discussed in prior meetings called a bandit or snip sign. These are temporary signs blanked around a municipality advertising services or businesses i.e. We buy houses, Pro Painters, some municipalities view such signs as a form of litter/clutter and have classified them as prohibited.

Solebury currently does not have this classification of sign, but could be added.

Gretchen Rice stated she liked the idea of adding the bandit/snip sign classification to the ordinance.

TJ Francisco also agreed adding one of the big challenges facing the Township is the litter/clutter of the temporary signs throughout the municipality.

Gretchen Rice expressed a concern with page 5 D-2 (a) freestanding signs of the proposed ordinance draft, no portion of a pole sign shall exceed 18 feet in height which is a blanket statement that would apply to all zoning districts. The prior ordinance had it as a graduated height depending on the district, the TNC District this size sign would be acceptable but in a residential area could not exceed 10 feet in height.

Gretchen recommends keeping the graduated height language in the current ordinance instead of having the blank statement of 18 feet in height.

Peter Brussock stated he would like see the graduated height remain in the ordinance. Is there a reason for the change in the proposed ordinance.

Joanna Waldon stated she did not know, it may have been a recommendation to move it to one height.

Kevin Morrissey stated that Township Manager Dennis Carney made several recommending comments, that may have been where it came from.

Joanna Waldon in reviewing Dennis's comments stated it did not come from him.

TJ Francisco commented sizes of that height should only be considered along the 202 corridor.

Gretchen Rice referencing the definition of limited duration signs in the proposed draft ordinance, would it be appropriate to add agricultural signs under this definition. These signs do require a permit but can stay up in excess of the 45-days originally discussed.

TJ Francisco asked where things are with the permitting of the temporary signs that was discussed at the last meeting.

Joanna Waldon stated she had not had a discussion with staff as the Planning Commission had not made a recommendation yet.

Dan Fest asked if permits were currently required.

Jean Weiss stated that permits were required.

Gretchen Rice asked if there were any thoughts on the extension for those types of signs. The proposed ordinance has a 45-day time limit.

Dan Fest agrees that agricultural signs will require a longer duration of time.

Dan Fest asked if no trespassing signs have been added to the draft ordinance.

Joanna Waldron responded yes under the definition of incidental signs.

Peter Brussock asked about signs in the right-of-way, is there anyway to restrict them particularly political signs.

Joanna Waldron commented that at the last meeting there was discussion as to whether there were particular intersections that the Planning Commission would like to identify as needing more restrictions.

Gretchen Rice recommended restricting signs at the intersection of Sagan & Upper York Rd's, as they are a safety issue with sight distance for small vehicles.

TJ Francisco asked if the Committee would like to circulate a map to help identify areas/intersections of concern to be discussed at the next meeting.

Peter Brussock asked Kevin Morrissey if there were any other sign issues in particular that the Board of Supervisors are looking for discussion on.

Kevin Morrissey stated that the main focus of concern is the temporary signs that litter the Township and political signs that have been a focal point throughout the years.

TJ Francisco stated with all the work anticipated moving forward within the commercial district along 202, where would the best regulations be addressed for aesthetics associated with signage along that corridor would it be in the design standards or in the proposed sign ordinance.

Peter Brussock suggested limited the one of signs in particular area, as well as set back from the road i.e. 4 feet from the roadway.

The Sign Ordinance was tabled until the next meeting.

IV. **Agricultural Security Area – Application of James & Adrienne Mageras – TMP Nos. 41-036-134, 41-036-135, and 41-036-136**

Application has been received from James & Adrienne Mageras for inclusion of 6234 Pidcock Creek Road comprising of TMP Nos. 41-036-134, 41-036-135, and 41-036-136 in the Solebury Township Agricultural Security Area.

TJ Francisco asked what the benefits are for being in the Agricultural Security Area (ASA) for the property owners. Are there any ramifications from a Township standpoint for these parcels being included i.e. tax abatements.

Joanna Waldron commented yes largely a property owner would want to be included in the ASA for favorable tax purposes while qualifying for a county and/or state agricultural conservation easement. However, being included in the ASA doesn't qualify them for a tax deduction, but it is a stepping stone for getting them qualified for the county and/or state conservation programs. I am not aware of any negative impact to the Township with adding additional parcels to an existing ASA.

Jean Weiss confirmed that there are no tax benefits with the ASA inclusion. The tax benefits for working farms, if they qualify is ACT 319 a tax benefit through the county which these parcels are currently enrolled.

Curt Genner proceed to go through the soils map and a land capability classification analysis explaining the different soil classes. The Township has received the review from the Bucks County Planning Commission endorsing their approval. The Agricultural Security Area Committee.

Upon a Motion made by Peter Brussock, seconded by Dan Fest the Solebury Township Planning Commission unanimously agreed to recommend the application of James & Adrienne Mageras to include TMP Nos. 41-036-134, 41-036-135, and 41-036-136 in the Agricultural Security Area.

V. Sustainability Register

TJ Francisco stated that each committee member was asked to take a section of the sustainability register to review and comment on how well they thought the Township was doing relative to that section. Each committee member was asked to give a brief overview of the section they selected.

Leslie Marano – Livable Built Environment (Transportation)

Commercial District along the 202 Corridor in need of improvement for walking and biking. The plans for future development would be an ideal opportunity for enhancing this improvement. Another opportunity would be to promote green buildings.

Curt Genner stated the Township has applied for and received numerous transportation alternative grants for trail sections along River Road and Route 202. The trail system has been completed from River Road to Sugan Road at the New Hope Eagle Fire Company. The most recent section, which is still in the design phase will link the trail from Sugan Road to Aquetong Spring Park. The goal is to have a complete trail from Street Road (Peddlers Village) to River Road. As part of this effort each developer looking to do improvements along the 202 corridor will be asked to contribute by linking the front of their properties to the trail system.

TJ Francisco – Harmony with Nature (Natural Resources/Green Infrastructure)

The Township has done a great job in this area. However, the green infrastructure is lacking. This could be a good opportunity with developers coming in and wanting to develop along the 202 corridor, have them consider green roofs.

Dan Fest – Resilient Economy (Economic Development)

Overall the Township has a lot of good points promoting green business, jobs and most importantly agricultural which is a large part of the Township.

TJ Francisco – Interwoven Equity (Housing Balance)

This section provides some challenges, providing a range of housing types in a community like Solebury it is difficult to see low income housing being welcomed into the community. With the land conservation efforts in the Township there is not enough land left to accommodate this effort.

The plan for jobs/housing balance is not feasible in a rural community like Solebury Township. There aren't enough diverse fields within the community for an opportunity to achieve this balance.

Gretchen Rice – Healthy Community (Public Health/Safety)

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan there are a lot of comments on all the associated categories in this section, but none have been acted on.

The Farm Committee has been working on promoting more organic farming throughout the Township, therefore reducing the toxins and pollutants in the soils.

The proposed Urgent Care Facility and Senior Living Facility will be a great benefit to the community.

Amishi Castelli – Responsible Regionalism (Transportation/Housing/Infrastructure)

This section of the sustainability register focuses on coordinating proposed local plans with regional programs/plans.

Bill Jordan – Authentic Participation (Development)

Overall in this section there is good intent, but the outcome needs improvement. There has been a good attempt from the Township in communicating/involving the community, with open public forums. The problem seems to be the resistance from the community, as some residents are not open to nor do they what change.

Peter Brussock – Accountable Implementation (Process)

This appears to be one of the sections in most need of improvement, there are a lot of nice words in the Comprehensive Plan but doesn't point to metrics and no effort to go beyond that. We need to help formulate what

our objectives are and how does that connect to funding. One of the nice things to have are objectives, but if you don't fund it then there is no way to meet the objectives. The basis for updating the comprehensive plan is to reflect the changes that have been made since the last update. The reflection over time is very important to document, which cannot be accomplished if we are not making progress on objectives identified in the previous plan.

Peter Brussock – Consistent Content (Objectives/Goals)

This section is to ensure the plan is consistent with the visions, goals, policies, objectives, and actions. It appears that the visions, goals, and objectives are good but the actions we are weak on which is the most important part.

TJ Francisco asked each committee member to fill out the score and note section of their section of the sustainability register, pass along to Jean Weiss to compile into one form to be distributed to the committee. At the next meeting the committee can discuss ideas, recommendation and suggestions moving forward.

VI. Adjournment

Upon a Motion by Gretchen Rice, seconded by Peter Brussock, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Weiss
Planning Commission Administrator, Solebury Township