

**SOUTH STRABANE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

April 6, 2023

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission of South Strabane Township held its Regular Meeting on Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Building, 550 Washington Road, Washington, PA 15301.

Present: Thomas Steele, Chair; Jay Gordon, Vice Chair; Brad Boni; Joe Kopko; Fred Pozzuto; Dan Reitz; and Donald Snoke (Alternate)

Not Present: Paula Phyllis

Also Present: Scott Groom, Township Engineer; and Brandon Stanick, Township Manager

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Steele led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The Planning Commission allocates a period of time during this item for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the Planning Commission on any matter. Each person addressing the Planning Commission is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

Ms. Panasik, resident on Green Crescent Drive, expressed concern for the reasons taxes are going up noting new development happening in the Township. She stated that Mr. Bull, who is not present this evening, had recommended the Township put a moratorium on all new development. Ms. Panasik commented on standards for streets and sidewalks noting she's not against sidewalks, but they can create hardship and stated that having wider streets could eliminate the need for sidewalks. She expressed concern with the creation of homeowner associations as a result of new development.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR MARCH 2, 2023

Township Manager Stanick reported the March 2, 2023 minutes will be presented to the Commission in May for consideration and expressed his appreciation for their patience at this time.

4. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF ZONING CODE BULK STANDARDS, PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND STANDARDS OF THE SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Mr. Stanick reported at its meeting on February 29, 2023, the Board of Supervisors requested the Planning Commission review the Township's existing Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance ("SALDO") and Zoning Code requirements for sidewalks, trees, streetlights, recreation facilities and mailboxes, as well as cul-de-sacs size, cartway widths and bulk regulations for Planned Residential Developments ("PRD").

Mr. Stanick presented information concerning the Township's Zoning Code and SALDO. The Zoning Code establishes zoning districts that are exclusive, establishes uses of land and buildings, establishes the amount of density (units per acre) or sometimes referred to as "intensity", and sets requirements for bulk or the size of buildings. He noted typically bulk includes minimum setback distances, minimum lot frontage and lot size requirements and height limitations, as well as permissible density. These elements help share the appearance and overall character of our neighborhoods.

Mr. Stanick then proceeded to review the purpose of the Township's SALDO. The Township regulates how land is divided or consolidated. Anytime a lot is moved it triggers a subdivision requirement. The SALDO creates an official record of lots and determines the location, design and installation of infrastructure. It also provides for effective site plan oversight. He noted the SALDO also defers to the Zoning Code. The Zoning Code establishes minimum lot area requirements and lot frontage and width requirements, to which the subdivision of land must adhere.

Mr. Stanick reviewed the two types of methods used for zoning by noting Conventional Zoning and PRD. Conventional Zoning is the strict adherence to the rules and requirements of the districts. This is also referred to as permitted "as of right" without having to be approved by the Township if the proposal complies with the district regulations. He noted the Township's existing residential districts include: A-1 Agricultural, R-1 Neighborhood Residential, R-2 Suburban Residential, R-3 Med-Low Density Residential, R-4 Medium Density Residential and R-5 High-Density Residential / Mixed Use.

He stated that the PRD method is a choice that property owners or developers have to development land and the purpose of PRDs is to relax standards to allow for creative development and promote greater economic and efficient use of land. The PRD also provides the ability to develop land that provides compatible housing types, amenities and community facilities on-site for the neighborhood being established. PRDs promote the preservation of natural scenic qualities of land and open space. Mr. Stanick emphasized the trade-off when developers pursue a PRD and stated the zoning requirements are relaxed in exchange for public amenities, diverse housing stock and maintenance and preservation of open space.

Mr. Stanick briefly reviewed the concept of density, which is defined as the number of dwellings per acre. The A-1, R-1 and R-2 Districts establish a density ratio of 1:1 to 1:0.5 under Conventional Zoning, or as of right. However, PRDs are not permitted in the A-1 or the R-1 Districts. Using PRD in the R-2 provides a greater density of 4:1. In the R-3 District the Code allows as of right 3:1 and PRD allows 6:1. The R-4 District is even more intense with a 4:1 ratio as of right and 12:1 ratio under the PRD regulations. He noted other standards that affect development and the experience we have in our neighborhoods as: minimum lot area, minimum lot width, maximum lot coverage, required front yard distances, minimum setback distances and the maximum height of buildings.

Mr. Reitz asked for the names of the developments in the Township. Following a discussion, the following were identified: Strabane Manor (along Fischer Rd.), Bradford Run (along Country Club Rd.), Burkett Manor (along Burkett Lane), Meadows Landing (along U.S. Rt. 19), the Floral Hill Dr. neighborhood and the Colonial Heights neighborhood (near the hospital).

Ms. Panasik expressed concern if the Township were to generate more density than what is currently permitted. She suggested the Planning Commission implement regulations that promote development similar to the Washington Woods neighborhood. Ms. Panasik stated Supervisor Murphy had wanted the Planning Commission to consider increasing roadway widths, cul-de-sac widths, sidewalk requirement, etc. and expressed her concern Mr. Stanick is not addressing these items in his presentation.

A discussion followed. Chair Steele stated that PRDs are acceptable tools for development, but may only be appropriate in certain locations. With the number of units built as a result of a PRD, PRDs should be adjacent or near roads that are able to facilitate the increase in traffic. He noted as an example Davis School Rd. and its connection to U.S. Rt. 19.

Mr. Kopko expressed interest in reviewing the Township's current and ongoing PRDs to evaluate what worked or what is preferred and what doesn't work for the neighborhood. Mr. Gordon agreed and gave an example of evaluating what worked or what standards were used in the Colonial Heights neighborhood.

Mr. Kopko expressed his concern with how slow Burkett Manor is moving forward. A discussion followed and Mr. Stanick stated he will get an update from the Project Manager.

A discussion ensued regarding the dynamic between development and the real estate market. In regards to stormwater ponds, Mr. Pozzuto expressed a desire for the Township to take over the ponds that are required in PRDs. Mr. Kopko shared his personal experience with a drainage issue in the Eastpoint neighborhood where stormwater from other properties was discharging onto his own land. He noted land development should not be approved if there is a chance of this occurring.

5. STAFF UPDATE

Mr. Stanick reported the Transit Authority's proposed Text Amendment will go before the Board of Supervisors in May. The Board has also requested the Planning Commission work with Staff to review standards for commercial electric vehicle charging stations due to the number of stations being installed and the continued concern with public safety. Mr. Stanick noted the Planning Commission will be moving forward with its miscellaneous text amendments in the near future.

6. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Kopko moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Mr. Gordon seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully,

Brandon J. Stanick
Township Manager