

**SOUTH STRABANE TOWNSHIP  
ZONING HEARING BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**March 9, 2021**

**APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

**1. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER**

On Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., after due advertisement according to law, a public meeting of the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) was held over Zoom and the following were present:

Art Sullivan, Chairperson – via Zoom

James Stewart, Vice-Chair – via Zoom

Andy Rembert, Member – via Zoom (arrived at 6:18 p.m.)

Patrick Smider, Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor – via Zoom

Brandon Stanick, Township Manager/Zoning Officer – via Zoom

Patrick Conners, Assistant to the Township Manager – via Zoom

Shawn Smith, Site Enhancement Services (Applicant) – via Zoom

Tianna Headen, Pankratos Incorporated (Applicant) – Via Zoom

Ryan Lemke, Attorney representing the Applicant – Via Zoom

A total of 7 additional visitors were present over Zoom.

**2. ZHB MEETING MINUTES**

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the February 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. The motion passed 2-0 as Mr. Rembert was not yet in attendance.

**3. PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of an Application from Thomaston Land Co., LLC requesting two variances from Section 245-191 of the South Strabane Zoning Code concerning the number of electronic changeable copy signs and the maximum height of canopy sign letters for the property located at 100 Murtland Avenue in the C-2 General Commercial Zoning District (continued from February 8, 2021 meeting)**

Mr. Shawn Smith outlined the changes to the Application including a re-adjusted canopy sign in effort to better comply with the Township's Zoning Code. He also cited that the Amoco logo "torch" would not go above the gas station's canopy line. He noted that the current pole sign which includes the pricing for gasoline has two electronic changeable copy signs. Citing the Club Coen Program, he highlighted that Pennsylvania state law requires that "club pricing" be advertised in addition to the regular price of gasoline. Noting the previous comments, he stated the Applicant is seeking a total of three electronic changeable copy signs (the Township's Code only permits one). He continued by reporting the overall pole sign would not be expanding its footprint.

Chair Sullivan stated that he did not see a valid hardship. He continued by noting the surrounding properties appear to be outside of the Township Code's standards. He asked the Applicant to make the overall site more palatable to the Township. Mr. Rembert highlighted the difficulties associated with bringing the existing Route 19 corridor into

compliance with the current signage standards. He cited it is not the job of the Zoning Hearing Board to correct past enforcement mistakes.

Mr. Robert Grimes of Site Enhancement Services provided a brief summary of the beautification plan for the 100 Murtland Avenue site. He acknowledged the lack of landscaping on the property. He reported the rebranding of the site (BP to Amoco) would include the repair of existing fencing and the planting of hardy shrubs and perennials. He noted the goal of maintaining greenery during the winter months. Chair Sullivan requested more definitive detail concerning the landscape plans of both properties (100 Murtland Avenue and 481 Washington Road). He noted the Zoning Hearing Board could re-convene at a later date and time to review the updated materials and potentially render a decision.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Stewart moved to table the consideration of both Applications submitted by Thomaston Land Co., LLC until Friday, March 12, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Rembert seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

**PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of an Application of Thomaston Land Co., LLC requesting two variances from Section 245-191 of the South Strabane Zoning Code concerning the number of electronic changeable copy signs and the maximum height of canopy sign letters for the property located at 481 Washington Road in the C-2 General Commercial Zoning District (continued from February 8, 2021 meeting)**

As noted in the previous motion, the matter was tabled.

**4. Public Hearing: Consideration of an application of Pankratos, Inc., requesting two variances from Section 245-133 of the South Strabane Township Zoning Code concerning the minimum lot size for a Juvenile Personal Care Home and maximum number of residents permitted to live within the proposed facility for the property located at 1961 N. Main Street in the I-1 Light Industrial Zoning District**

For the Public Record Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Smider reported that he once represented the property owner of 1961 N. Main Street (KMG Properties) regarding a matter that was before South Strabane Township. He cited that all existing files regarding the case (approximately 20 years prior) have been purged from his office and stated that he had no further recollection of the matter. He proceeded to enter the following exhibits into the Public Record: Exhibit A. Zoning Hearing Application submitted by Pankrato Incorporated; and Exhibit B. Notice of Public Hearing and Notification sent to neighboring property owners.

Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Smider asked Mr. Ryan Lemke, legal counsel representing the Applicant, if the property at 1961 N. Main Street had been in use as a Juvenile Personal Care Home within the last 12 months. Mr. Lemke reported that it had not been. He then provided a brief summary of the request for dimensional variances from Sections 245-133 & 245-80 regarding the minimum size for a Juvenile Personal Care Home within the I-1 Light Industrial Zoning District. He noted the need to receive zoning relief in the form of a variance prior to applying for a Conditional Use for the property. He cited the applicant did not create the hardship regarding the size of the lot noting that Section 245-80 A(1) of

the Township's Code restricts the lot from being developed in any manner should it not meet the minimum size requirements of the I-1 District.

Mr. Rembert inquired regarding the Agreement between the Applicant (Pankratos, Inc.) and the Property Owner (KMG Properties). Ms. Tiana Headen reported that a lease agreement with the property owner is being finalized. After some discussion Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Smider noted for the record that an agreement between the property owner and applicant has not been executed. He highlighted that any variance approval could be conditional on the Agreement being filed with the Township.

Ms. Headen proceeded to provide background on the proposed business use reporting that Pankratos, Inc. is seeking to establish a foster care agency which would house juveniles on site for a period of 3-7 days while the agency seeks to find more permanent accommodations for the child. Mr. Sullivan inquired which certifications Pankratos will acquire. Ms. Headen reported that all staff will acquire necessary licensing through the State. Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Smider inquired regarding the placement of adjudicated delinquent youth determined by the Court System. Ms. Headen reported the facility will not work with adjudicated delinquent youth. She emphasized the business model serves as a respite facility and would place children into foster homes. She noted that state law requires children be assigned a foster family within 7 days of arriving on site. She also cited the time spent with the children in the facility allows their staff to evaluate the right fit between the child and the available foster families. She proceeded to outline the required background checks, trainings, and certifications that would be required for the Pankratos staff.

Ms. Michelle Engell, resident of N. Main Street, inquired regarding security protocols which will be implemented by Pankratos. Ms. Headen reported that the building will be staffed 24/7. She continued by noting that the business model can serve up to 8 children on site at any given time. After a question from Mr. Lemke regarding the Conditional Use process, Ms. Headen affirmed that all conditions outlined in Section 245-133 for a Juvenile Personal Care Home would be met.

Chair Sullivan inquired where the children would come from. Ms. Headen reported that children from Allegheny, Washington, and Beaver Counties would be served by this facility. She highlighted that boys and girls would be separated within the respite facility. Chair Sullivan then inquired regarding the education accommodations for children within the facility. Ms. Headen reported that the child's original host school district would be responsible to provide transportation to and from the facility. She noted that if need be, Pankratos could also provide transportation accommodations. She highlighted that the goal in the end is to reunite families so continuity within school is essential. Chair Sullivan inquired who could visit the children while they are at Pankratos. Ms. Headen stated that visits can only take place if outlined within a court order.

Mr. Rembert noted the poor condition of the site illustrated within the photos provided in the application. He then inquired regarding the existing fencing. Ms. Headen stated that the property is not entirely fenced. She noted that according to Pennsylvania law the facility

would be residential. A discussion ensued regarding the floor plan of the facility. After a question from Chair Sullivan, Ms. Headen discussed the staffing structure including the availability of off-site therapists and other medical professionals. She reported that employees would be shift based and would not reside on site. She continued by outlining the phases associated with the property's renovation.

Mr. Rembert noted the Zoning Hearing Board's scope regarding this issue is limited to the dimensional variance request. He proceeded to express his concerns with the overall state of the property and noted his doubts whether it could serve as an appropriate residence for children. Ms. Headen stated that without securing the necessary variances the project cannot move forward. She expressed her concerns with investing more resources into the development of site rehabilitation plans without reassurance that the variance is granted.

A discussion ensued regarding the hiring process and the property's management. Chair Sullivan stated that prior to a decision being made, the Zoning Hearing Board would need a copy of the final lease agreement between Pankratos, Inc. and KMG Properties. Mr. Nate Morely, Board member for Pankratos, Inc. came before the Board outlining the unique mission of the organization citing that it seeks to serve as a short-term respite for children. He noted that Pankratos' goal is to avoid disruption between families, but when necessary, seeks to place children within successful foster situations. He concluded by reporting that the organization's state requirements would be sent to the Township for its information.

Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Smider outlined available procedures for the Zoning Hearing Board. Township Manager Stanick noted that any future meeting would be advertised per the Code's requirements. Chair Sullivan stated the Board would convene within an Executive Session after the March 12<sup>th</sup> Hearings for Amoco to organize the continuance of the Public Hearing at hand. Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Smider stated that he would relay a formal correspondence from the Zoning Hearing Board to Mr. Lemke in the coming days.

It was the consensus of the Zoning Hearing Board to table this matter to a future meeting.

**5. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No were no public comments.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

As there was no further business to come before the Zoning Hearing Board, Mr. Rembert moved to adjourn. Chair Sullivan seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick  
Township Manager / Zoning Officer