

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
ZONING WORKSHOP MEETING  
JUNE 2, 2016

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Zoning Workshop meeting on Thursday, June 2, 2016 in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m., followed by a pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Philips, Greg Waks, Bill Jenaway, and Carole Kenney. Also present were: Dave Kraynik, Township Manager; Sally Slook, Assistant Township Manager, Joe McGrory, Township Solicitor; Rob Loeper, Township Planner; Kyle Brown, Associate Planner. Supervisor Spott was absent.

DISCUSSIONS:

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

Mr. Rob Loeper, Township Planner, stated a great deal of discussion has been devoted to the recurring theme of substance abuse. Previously these uses were permitted in all of the business and industrial districts and now they are limited to the industrial district thereby providing a far smaller area where these uses can occur. Mr. Loeper reviewed the revised map showing all of the industrial districts which are located primarily in the eastern end of the township. The two largest tracts are the Glasgow quarry tract and the Philadelphia Suburban reservoir. The color-coded map indicated those areas that would allow a substance abuse facility.

Based on comments at previous meetings, the map reflects restrictions on parcels by size excluding five acres for this particular use and the same thing was done for ten acres thereby limiting the use further. It was noted there are two sites that are viable for the use.

When the times comes for rezoning the Business and Industrial Districts, Mr. Waks suggested that an explanation appear on the agenda indicating that it is required by state law to have zoning for substance abuse. He said it should be noted this is being done to provide minimal impact.

Mr. Loeper asked if everyone is satisfied with the ten acre restriction. It was noted there are at least two options at ten acres.

Mr. Loeper stated based on the Board's comments the option for multi-family was taken out with one exception in these districts – the TOD provision in the current SM-1 which is limited to the one area of Renaissance.

Mr. Loeper discussed some of the anomalies with some of the properties on Valley Forge Road.

Mr. Loeper reviewed the railroad along the river which is all industrial. There was a previous discussion about moving that into a new open space district and allowing the railroad use as a continuing use in that district.

The Manor Care property which is currently zoned AR will remain the same. He then reviewed additional areas around the golf course part of the Lockheed property currently in Limited Industrial.

Moving to the eastern half of the township, Mr. Loeper pointed out the fill site which was previously discussed for rezoning to residential. Another area for potential zoning cleanup is the boat house which is zoned Heavy Industrial.

Mr. Loeper pointed out the Trinsey parcel is zoned High Rise and it is questionable if it should continue as such. It was noted Jack Trinsey received approval in June of 1990 to build a bridge over the railroad similar to what was done in West Conshohocken to get into the site. Mr. Loeper said this could be placed in the Recreation and Open Space.

Mr. Philips commented he would like to see the zoning cleaned up. Mr. Loeper responded there are some parcels that require guidance from the Board on the way to go.

Mr. McGrory stated part of the problem is the history in which rezoning in former years was "handed out like candy."

Mr. Loeper mentioned some of the Ross Road properties that should be residential.

Mr. Loeper indicated there was a meeting scheduled next week with PennDOT to deal with some access issues. The school district wants to use Crooked Lane as the primary access as opposed to Henderson Road which complicates an already difficult intersection.

Mr. Loeper said more detailed maps could be prepared to provide property listings. He said the goal is taking the current six districts down to four districts and cleaning up the boundaries.

Mr. Brown noted there are also residential parcels that are currently split zoned with two different zonings.

Mrs. Kenney referred back to the three Victorian houses on Old Valley Forge Road and asked how they are zoned. Mr. Loeper responded SM-1.

Mr. Loeper reviewed the Residential Office District that has been previously discussed and provided a new draft which took a different approach. He said Mr. Caraodemiere and Mr. Tallman have been working on their own plans, have hired architects and have come up with some preliminary designs as to what they view might be viable.

Mr. Caraodemiere stated at the last meeting he was asked as a landowner interested in multi-use to come up with a plan so that office, business, apartments, show rooms or shops can be separated so they will not interfere with each other. After some thought, Mr. Caraodemeire came up with a solution that provides separate entrances and separate parking areas.

Mr. Tallman indicated his approach would be more of a true mixed use and ultimately depending on what people wanted to use in the units there would potentially be office or some type of incidental retail on first or second floor and apartments on the third floor. Parking would be all the same behind the building and potentially there would be some shared use. Originally his units were connected; however, he felt a break every once in a while made it look much better.

Mr. Philips suggested having a business on the first floor and apartments on the upper two stores.

Mr. McGrory asked if this would be a live/work type of unit. Mr. Tallman responded that is not what he envisioned, but he would be all for it if someone wanted to have their office on the first floor and the next two floors for their apartments and they are willing to pay rent.

Mr. Jenaway said his only question is how the parking requirements change if there is a commercial occupancy versus a residential occupancy. He pointed out a bagel shop would have constant traffic rotating through in early mornings and questioned if there would be sufficient parking to handle that as opposed to an office.

Mr. Loeper said staff looked at parking schemes in terms of shared parking and they are a lot easier to put down on paper than they are in practice in that certain assumptions have to be made. Some of the newer codes that are being promoted use different kinds of ratios. Mr. Loeper pointed out anything with food makes it more difficult to figure out because those tend to peak at one time. Staff will figure out what happens with the first floor as all commercial with residential upper floors.

Mr. McGrory stated shared parking is difficult to classify commercial or residential. Certain office use versus certain retail use is going to have different parking demands and timing. Office can share space with a residential and other than that everything else is "gray."

Mr. McGrory said he is still looking at this as a live/work unit where ordinarily people would live in the apartment upstairs and have a little shop downstairs.

Mr. Philips asked if these could be condos. Mr. McGrory responded you could condo them and still rent them. He reiterated it seems to fit the concept of a live/work regardless of the form of ownership because the types of usage are going to be limited and the driving force is who is living upstairs. For example a lawyer or tailor living upstairs with an office or shop downstairs.

Mr. McGrory commented with that kind of concept there could be shared parking and there are standards.

Mr. Waks asked if Mr. Caraodemiere and Mr. Tallman know how the residents of Weadley feel about their plans. Mr. Tallman responded Mr. Caraodemiere's property is much more protected from neighbors and there is very little effect. Mr. Tallman said his property will have more effect on neighbors.

Mr. Caraodemiere said in 2007 or 2008 he went to the entire neighborhood and explained to them his intentions and there were no objections. At the time many of the neighbors wanted the zoning changed so they would benefit too. Mr. Tallman commented he received a similar response. He said he recently met with his neighbor behind him and he supported the plan to convert the property to an office. The neighbor acknowledged at some point he is also going to have to do something there as well.

Mr. Jenaway stated more discussion is needed regarding parking and occupancy.

Mr. Loeper stated it will be necessary to get together and work out some different scenarios to see what might work and what definitely will not work.

Mr. Loeper said this is something that has been talked about for years and was before the planning commission back in the 90's. Everyone has said something needs to be done but could never get past their frustration.

Mr. Philips commented great strides have been made recently. He appreciated Mr. Tallman's design in breaking up the facades. He said it is necessary to figure out the parking issue.

ADJOURNMENT:

Without further comment from the Board and public, it was moved by Mr. Waks, seconded by Mrs. Kenney, all voting "Aye" to adjourn the meeting. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0. Adjournment occurred at 6:57 p.m.

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DAVID G. KRAYNIK  
SECRETARY-TREASURER/  
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:  
Minutes Entered: