

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
ZONING WORKSHOP MEETING
JULY 7, 2016

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Zoning Workshop meeting on Thursday, July 7, 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, Erika Spott and Carole Kenney. Also present were: Dave Kraynik, Township Manager; John Walko, Solicitor's Office; Rob Loeper, Township Planner; Kyle Brown, Associate Planner.

DISCUSSIONS:

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

Mr. Rob Loeper, Township Planner, stated based on the discussion from the last meeting about drug and alcohol rehabilitation use the minimum lot size for such use was changed to 10 acres. It was noted all the other uses are in order. Mr. Loeper went over some mapping items.

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

Mr. Loeper pointed out the Trinsey parcel which is zoned High Rise and could be placed in the Recreation, Park and Open Space district (RPO). Following the same line of thought of moving river front properties into open space, Mr. Loeper noted the Drummond property is on the land side of the railroad and it possibly could be developed as an industrial use. While a portion of the site is in the flood plain most of it is not in the flood plain.

RESIDENTIAL OFFICE DISTRICT OVERLAY

Mr. Kyle Brown, Associate Planner, stated he has been working with John Tallman, Mr. Caraodemiare and Brendan Gibbons for a couple of weeks and they have expressed their support for more flexibility for this district. Currently there are single family residential homes where a lot of variances have been sought to turn these dwellings into offices. Since people cannot use these properties as residences as in previous years, the goal is to enable the property owners to recoup the full value of their properties.

Mr. Brown reviewed the renderings provided by Mr. John Tallman. Mr. Tallman's vision for his property at the corner of Weadley and South Gulph Road is for three stories. It was noted the code would continue to permit uses of all kinds, single family detached through multi-family, but would restrict the densities to 15 dwelling units per acre.

In terms of the other uses the goal is to make this a mixed use district, for example, retail on the first floor, office on the second floor and residential on the third floor. Having retail trade permitted only on the ground floor is consistent with the limited Neighborhood Commercial Districts. There are gross floor area restrictions of 15,000 square feet so as to prevent big box type stores. The number of floors in this district is restricted to two or three. One story buildings are not permitted. Professional offices are allowed on all floors and certain uses are restricted to the first floor.

Mr. Brown discussed the dimensional standards and noted the 20 foot front yard setback from South Gulph Road, five foot side yard and an allowance for zero setbacks when the adjacent parcel shares a common wall. The idea is to create a walkable mixed use character for the districts. Off street parking setbacks are five feet in order to allow the square footage for parking.

Mr. Brown offered the following additional comments:

- Any frontage along a street shall contain a five foot planting verge and eight foot wide sidewalk
- Buildings shall have a minimum of two floors and a maximum of three floors
- Between the ground level and a height of 25 feet, a minimum of 30% of the wall area must include one or more façade articulation features to achieve more architectural interest.
- No more than one driveway access shall be permitted per parcel.
- Parking is not permitted in front yards.
- Many communities have created shared parking ratios to decrease the amount of parking spaces based on the timing of different uses.
- Each non-residential or multi-family use would be required to create a vehicular access easement for their adjacent parcels in order to facilitate a limited impact of traffic on the main roadway.

Mr. Loeper pointed out some of the uses listed on page one of the handout: automotive parts and accessories, home center and building supplies which tend to be uses on a much larger scale than may be desired in this district.

Mr. Philips asked for clarification about the 15,000 square foot gross floor limit. Mr. Brown responded this restriction would prevent big box type stores.

Mr. Waks questioned the appropriateness of an auto parts store in this neighborhood. Mr. Brown said it could be removed as a permitted use.

Mrs. Kenney agreed that an auto parts use would not be appropriate, but a small family-owned hardware store might be a convenience for those who live there.

A discussion followed about different retail that would fall under the building supplies and materials use.

Responding to Mr. Philips earlier question, Mr. Loeper stated many of these uses would not be feasible unless someone could consolidate lots.

Mr. Loeper asked if some of the uses should be deleted.

A discussion followed during which the supervisors offered their ideas for uses that would and would not work in this district.

Mrs. Spott expressed concern over a veterinary office or clinic since they tend to have boarding.

Mrs. Kenney asked for clarification about the exclusion of one story buildings. Mr. Brown responded in terms of the two and three story building versus one story the original intent was to create a more efficient use of the land and create more demand for retail. Mr. Loeper pointed out two story buildings will look better and mentioned examples of one story buildings that tend to resemble shopping centers which is a look planning staff is trying to avoid. Mr. Brown commented a one-story drug store with office and residential above has a different character than drug store with a drive-thru.

Mr. Philips mentioned Mr. Tallman's rendering is more in scale with the surrounding area.

Mrs. Spott questioned why home health care services are not permitted at a time when this is a needed service to enable seniors to stay in their homes in their community. Mr. Loeper said it would have to be defined and if it is an office it would not be an issue.

A discussion followed about the difference between a medical clinic as opposed to urgent care.

The supervisors also offered comments about medical and dental laboratories and it was decided to strike "laboratory" and replace with "support services."

A discussion followed regarding a tavern/bar drinking establishment versus snack and beverage bar (nonalcoholic).

Mr. Jenaway asked if the snack and beverage bar should have non-drive through indicated.

Mrs. Kenney noted hotels and motels are not permitted and asked about a bed and breakfast. Mr. Philips mentioned some of the older and unique houses in the area that would be appropriate for that use and asked what that would do in terms of parking. Mr. Loeper responded the big issue with some of the uses is that parking is going to be the biggest limiting factor. With regard to the B&B question Mr. Loeper said a separate ordinance has been prepared.

A discussion followed about the viability of a Bed and Breakfast in the area during which the issue of Airbnb's was discussed.

In response to Mr. Jenaway's question regarding B&B's, Mr. Walko said parking would be the big issue and a definition would be needed for B&B. Mr. Loeper indicated there is a definition in the other ordinance and there would have to be a parking standard incorporated. He noted generally for a B&B it is going to be one space per rental room plus one for the operator.

Mrs. Kenney asked why the B&B ordinance is not being discussed and pointed out it is very specific about being on the main road. She said having that requirement would prevent B&B's in certain places and provide control over where they are located.

A discussion followed with regard to places of worship and assembly and the limited parking because of the small lots.

Mrs. Kenney asked for more discussion regarding the tavern/bar. Mr. Loeper said there will be a distinction made between an establishment that sells alcohol and one that does not.

Mr. Waks did not believe a bar was economically realistic in this area because of the cost of a liquor license.

Mr. Loeper called attention to the dimensional requirements for maximum impervious coverage at 90% and expressed concern it was too high.

Mr. Philips asked about the underlying geotechnical material beneath this area and if it is an area subject to sinkholes. Mr. Loeper responded he believes some of it is.

In response to Mr. Philips' question, Mr. Brown responded in his discussion with Mr. Tallman the type of stormwater management that would be

created underground would be cisterns and with impervious paving it is going to be collecting water and storing it as opposed to infiltrating.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there is any other place in the township where the maximum impervious is as high as 90%. Mr. Loeper responded the highest allowed in an industrial district and in some of the commercial districts is 85%.

Mrs. Kenney questioned why we would want to make this higher. Mr. Loeper responded that is why he wanted to make sure everyone was aware of the 90% standard.

Mr. Jenaway stated it could be 85% with an asterisk and if there is pervious paving or a rain garden an exception would be allowed. Mr. Loeper commented there is a lot that can be done including a good landscape plan.

Mr. Jenaway said he is okay with 85% with a bonus. Mr. Brown said there are some creative things that can be done such as green roofs, etc.

Mr. Philips mentioned with the new MS4 requirements the less runoff the better.

A discussion followed about possibly going to a lower percentage such as 80% and the bonus would require BMP's for stormwater, rain barrels, impervious paving, etc.

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 5-0. Adjournment occurred at 6:57 p.m.

DAVID G. KRAYNIK
SECRETARY-TREASURER/
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: