

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the second March meeting

March 16, 2021

This was a virtual meeting; all participants attended on-line via Zoom.

Members Virtually Present

Mark Gordon, Chair
Joe Altimari
Dan Cote
Brian Dunn
Jeff Glisson
MaryFrances McGarrity
Ray McKeeman

Township Personnel Virtually Present

John Weller, Planning Director
Justin Smiley, Township Planner
Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Pam Gural-Bear, Asst. Township Manager

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mark Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom, and Mr. Gordon asked that everyone observe video etiquette.

A moment of silence was observed for the members of the military that protect our nation and first responders who protect us locally on a daily basis here at home.

II. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes for the meeting of March 3, 2021
(Altimari/McGarrity)

ACTION: Passed, 7-0

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment on items not on the agenda.

IV. PLANS

There were no plans for review by the Commission.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Revisions to Plan Submission Requirements: Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (S/LDO) and Zoning Ordinance

Mr. Weller reviewed his March 12, 2021 memorandum and noted that it was unusual to include plan submission requirements in the Zoning Ordinance. He suggested that this had been done to keep these requirements from being easily waived, but it also makes it harder for Applicants to find them. Mr. Weller recommended relocating all of the plan submission requirements to the S/LDO.

Commission members reviewed and discussed proposed revisions to Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance, which mostly concerns impact studies to be provided for larger projects:

- §325-42.A(2) - For life care facilities, the threshold at which the studies are required was changed to be based upon number of residents rather number of bedrooms or units.
- Impact studies are currently required with the land development submission. Mr. Weller recommends requiring them as part of the conditional use application (in all cases the threshold is such that any project requiring impact studies will also require conditional use review), since impacts may suggest appropriate conditions of approval.
- §325-42.A - Mr. Weller suggested deleting the impact study requirement for the development of wooded lands due to it being vague and difficult to enforce; he noted that the underlying concerns of the requirement are addressed in the S/LDO.
- §325-42.B - Mr. Weller advised retaining the fiscal impact study requirement. He noted that the Finance Director reviews these studies and finds them useful for projecting revenue and budget forecasts. He is recommended a revision to this text to clarify when the study is required. Township Manager Mimi Gleason suggested requiring the study for significant Zoning Ordinance amendments, such as those that add permitted uses or change development density.
- §325-42.C - Mr. Weller recommended changing the existing requirement that impact statements be “one written document” to encourage electronic documents.
- §325-42.C(1) - Mr. Weller stated that he made some non-substantive editorial revisions to the section concerning traffic impact studies. He will ask Public Works Director Ted Otteni and our traffic engineering consultant to review the language and advise if any more substantial changes are warranted. Mr. Altamari asked if PennDOT approval should be required before the Township reviews projects. Ms. Gleason responded that we prefer that applicants come to the Township first, as municipal support is important when seeking PennDOT approval. The Township can recommend applicants schedule a scoping meeting with PennDOT if appropriate.
- §325-42.C(2) - Mr. Weller suggested deleting the requirement for a utilities impact study, noting that it was a more pertinent concern when the Township was less developed. The concerns it addresses are no longer relevant, and questions of access to utilities are now addressed during the land development review process.
- §325-42.C(4) - Mr. Weller recommended retaining the requirement for a recreation impact study, noting that it provides a good basis for discussing the use of required open space with applicants.
- §325-42.C(5) - As already noted, the fiscal impact analysis is useful, but Mr. Weller advised that the preferred analysis methodology be determined upon consultation with the Finance Director as the method now required is not the most appropriate in all cases. He also suggested that including the Township administration in the study was unnecessary and recommended a revision that would specifically include ambulance service providers in the category of “emergency services.”
- §325-42.C(6) - Mr. Weller suggested that many of the issues now required in the environmental impact study are either covered by other regulations or are simply no longer needed. However, we could amend the description to add language about promoting sustainability and supporting the Township’s transition to clean energy. Ms. Gleason explained that while the Township cannot mandate sustainable energy choices, the study requirement can encourage Applicants to begin thinking about sustainable energy and give the opportunity for dialogue on the subject.

Mr. Altamari questioned the issue of rooftop solar panels being an impediment to firefighters. Mr. Weller responded that the Township's current solar panel regulations considered this, and they were reviewed by the Fire Marshal before adoption. Ms. Gleason added that the West Chester Area Council of Governments is developing consistent solar regulations.

Zoning Ordinance Article XVI - Historic Preservation. Mr. Weller recommended eliminating the references to Class I, II, and III historic structures as the Township Historical Commission is currently revising the Historic Sites map to be consistent with the PHMC's current policy regarding such designation. He also recommended specifying that documentation photographs be dated. The Historical Commission has yet to review and comment on the proposed revisions to Article XVI.

Commission members were in agreement with all of the proposed revisions to Articles IX and XVI. Mr. Weller will develop sustainable energy language for §325-42.C(6) before returning to the Commission for final review.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Smiley announced that the Transportation Improvement Inventory will be on the April 6th PC agenda for review along with the first presentation of the land development plan for Ship Run. A link to the electronic version of the Ship Run plan will be sent to members earlier than usual; hard copies are available to those who prefer them. Mr. Gordon asked for a status on the Ship Road Couplet. Ms. Gleason replied that the Township is moving forward with its portion, noting that funding has been secured, and acquisition of the right-of-way from Energy Transfer is close to being finalized.

Mr. Weller said the Township will be updating the Act 209 Study to reassess the current traffic impact fee. Lastly, Ms. Gleason discussed the Township forming a ULI Brainstorming Committee to assist in the implementation of ULI's recently completed study of the Exton Crossroads area.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:10 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



John Weller, AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning