

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Minutes of the first March meeting

March 2, 2021

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

**Members Virtually Present**

Mark Gordon, Chairman  
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  
Ted Otteni, Public Works Director

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors Liaison  
Theresa Santalucia, Supervisor

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Mark Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom; 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 February 16, 2021  
(Gordon/Glisson)

ACTION: Passed, 6-0-1 (with Mr. Altimari abstaining)

**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. ULI study implementation and next steps discussion**

Mr. Smiley reviewed the findings of the Urban Land Institute study of the Exton Crossroads and asked Commission members to discuss prioritization of the recommendations for placemaking, identity and wayfinding, and governance as well as how best to begin implementation. He added that there are two students from West Chester University who are working with the ArcGIS Urban software to help us visualize recommendations. Dr. Dottie Ives-Dewey of the University's Planning & Geography Department was in virtual attendance.

Governance was discussed first. Mr. Smiley pointed out that our recent Zoning Ordinance amendment to require master plans for the development of tracts in the Town Center district that are larger than ten acres was consistent with the ULI recommendations and a good start. Our current conversations about amending the S/LDO also address this suggestion. Topics still to be considered include accessibility and transportation safety; organizing and convening groups within the Crossroads; identifying what the public wants to see in the area; how to make the area a destination; and how to secure funding, both public and private.

Members' suggestions for making the Crossroads a destination included having food trucks on the weekends, possibly in the underutilized parking areas and pocket green spaces; music events on a more frequent and regular basis; and movie nights in the park. Ms. Gural-Bear suggested partnering with the Chester County Library as they currently sponsor a food truck event. Ms. Gleason pointed out that currently the Township does not have the staff to organize such events and asked members to consider ways to make that happen, such as by assessing the businesses and using the funds to hire staff, perhaps implementing a Business Improvement District (BID). Ms. McGarrity suggested talking to communities that have already done this to find out what worked for them.

Mr. Smiley noted the need for public buy-in. Staff will begin this task by convening informational meetings with groups such as business associations and HOA's to discuss the development process and policy (explaining why the mall area cannot be a park, etc.). We will then proceed to visioning sessions to get feedback about the future of the Crossroads and their possible role in achieving that vision.

Ms. Gleason said the Township is currently working on a Streetscape & Intersection plan to make the areas more bike-friendly and more attractive. This could be implemented at least partially by adopting design standards.

Mr. Smiley and Mr. Weller both pointed out that the Town Center District has not only little pockets of green space, but also beautiful surrounding vistas of green hills. Mr. Gordon said the ArcGIS Urban software will be a great tool to show the public various plans for the area.

Ms. McGarrity offered to promote the ULI Study to the public through various upcoming webinars scheduled through the Chester County Economic Development Council.

## 2. Revisions to Plan Submission Requirements Subdivision/Land Development Ordinance

Mr. Weller provided an overview of the revisions made to Articles II and III following the discussion at the February 16 meeting. The most significant change is to eliminate the distinction between preliminary and final *plans* while preserving the options for preliminary and final *approval* required by the MPC.

Mr. Altimari asked about requirements to address unsightly properties. Mr. Weller said landscaping and screening requirements are already in place. Property maintenance is a separate issue currently being considered by the Codes Department.

Mr. Weller continued reviewing revisions to Article III which included:

- A new introductory paragraph explaining the preliminary/final plan and approvals; Ms. McGarrity suggested boldface for the term "preliminary/final" for consistency.
- A new provision implementing Mr. Glisson's suggestion from the previous meeting to require that plans include a location map using satellite imagery highlighting the subject tract and showing the area within five hundred feet of the tract to show the context of the project more clearly. Mr. Gordon suggested that this provision specify that roads and other prominent features are to be labelled for ease of identification.

- Addition of the words “net and gross” to the existing conditions of the subject tract.
- Since most of our development plans now involve sites that are already developed, we will require that existing buildings to be wholly or partially removed must be identified as such.
- The number of stories and total floor area of proposed buildings shall be shown.
- For buildings that will accommodate both residential and non-residential uses, the total number of dwelling units and the total floor area of the non-residential portion shall be shown.

Mr. Weller asked members what other items they would find useful in reviewing plans. Mr. Gordon suggested a table of contents or sheet index on the cover sheet, and Mr. Glisson suggested that the use of color be encouraged, which would be especially useful in showing proposed open space. Mr. Weller noted that the use of color should be optional rather than required until it is clear whether the Office of the Recorder of Deeds accepts color plans for recording.

Mr. Glisson suggested incorporation of a modern PDF standard for electronic submissions. Due to rapidly changing technology, Mr. Weller suggested putting the standard on the application form rather than in the Ordinance since amending the Ordinance is more difficult than revising a form.

There was no public comment on Articles II & III.

Regarding Article IV, Design Standards, Mr. Weller noted that much of the Article includes or refers to engineering standards and technical requirements that he will ask Mr. Otteni and our consultants to review and advise upon. He also noted that the landscaping and open space requirements were recently revised so no substantive changes to these sections are needed at this time.

Mr. Weller recommended deleting language in paragraph C of §281-23 that encourages curvilinear street layout in all cases.

Mr. McKeeman suggested adding the County to the approval process for street names to ensure no conflict with the 911 system and urged clarity of street numbers. Staff will coordinate with Emergency Services and the County on these issues.

Language was added to paragraph B of §281-32 to allow for curbs to be eliminated where necessary for the proper functioning of a stormwater management system when the Township Engineer advises this is necessary. Currently, developers are required to seek a waiver for such designs.

Mr. Weller will have Stan Stubbe, the Township’s lighting consultant, review the lighting sections.

There was no public comment on proposed revisions to Article IV.

## **VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mr. Smiley announced that the next meeting will be a continued discussion of proposed amendments to the S/LDO and Zoning Ordinances. A first review of the land development application for Ship Run is planned for the April 6 agenda.

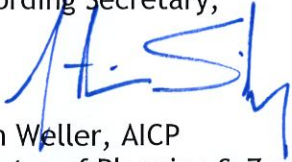
Mr. Altamari advised that he recently read that West Chester obtained funding to open its rail line and that the value of mall properties has dropped 40%.

Ms. McGarrity announced a CHIRP (Covid Hospitality Industry Recovery Program) webinar scheduled for March 12, and asked Township Staff to help advise all restaurants and hospitality businesses within the Township of the webinar.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m.

Recording Secretary,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Weller', written over the text 'Recording Secretary,'.

John Weller, AICP  
Director of Planning & Zoning

(FOR)