

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Minutes of the first May meeting

May 5, 2020

Members Virtually Present

Chairman Anita Nardone
Joe Altimari
Dan Cote
Jeff Glisson
Mark Gordon
MaryFrances McGarrity
Ray McKeeman

Township Personnel Virtually Present

John Weller, Planning Director
Justin Smiley, Township Planner
Mimi Gleason, Township Manager

Rajesh Kumbhardare, Board of Supervisors Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Anita Nardone called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held online via Zoom. Ms. Nardone explained the “raise hand” feature of Zoom and asked that any public wishing to make comments use this feature.

II. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes for the meeting of April 14, 2020. (Altimari/Glisson)

ACTION: A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 7-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. ULI TAP Application Status Report and Discussion

John Weller reviewed his May 1, 2020 memorandum about recent efforts to establish a vision for the Exton Crossroads area, the most recent being the on-line work session on March 31, 2020. Following discussion with the Commission in April, Staff has started an application to the Philadelphia chapter of the Urban Land Institute for its Technical Assistance Panel program. The application must include questions for the Panel to address. Based upon the discussion at our previous meetings, Staff drafted six multi-part questions for Commission review.

Before going over the questions, the Commission reviewed a summary of the existing land use composition in the Town Center zoning district prepared by Justin Smiley: the existing land use is 64.6% commercial, 17% residential, and 9.9% open space. Ms. Nardone stated that she thought these ratios were appropriate for the district and pointed out that more residential development will result in more permanent open space and recreational facilities.

The Commission reviewed and discussed the questions from Mr. Weller’s memo (in italics below).

- *The Crossroads is already a growing, thriving area with multiple assets. How do we leverage these assets to make a coherent, defined community with a sense-of-place that is more than the sum of its parts? And how do we manage growth in a way that promotes and maintains this character without overwhelming or destroying it?*

Members pointed out that “*this character*” has not yet been defined and suggested revising to “*a character*”. Mark Gordon added that the amount of density in this area has not been determined, and the public has expressed that it is already too high.

- *How do we define and communicate the vision for the Crossroads? Should the vision be articulated as a “master plan” for the Crossroads or is it better to create an “inspiration board” and suggest a kit of parts that developers could combine in different ways as may be suited to their needs?*

It was suggested that “*define and communicate the vision*” be changed to “*develop and communicate a vision*”. Also, change “*a kit of parts*” to “*tool box*” and “*their needs*” be revised to “*community vision/needs*.” The need to market the Township’s vision to developers was discussed. Members preferred the “inspiration board” approach rather than a “master plan,” pointing out that a master plan can quickly become outdated. The Commission decided that this should be the first question on the application.

- *How will evolving trends in lifestyle, work habits, retail, and transportation affect the Town Center and our retail areas in particular? How do we prepare for these changes?*

MaryFrances McGarrity suggested including here the features and characteristics that are important to the Township and that we ask how to preserve these during evolving trends as well as how to maintain these characteristics and still prepare for change and new trends. Mimi Gleason suggested using the four major elements in the Development by Design presentation (transportation infrastructure, open space, economic vitality, and historic preservation) and ask how to these can be promoted while maintaining a suburban scale.

- *Do we want the major sites (Exton Square, Whiteland Towne Center, Fairfield Place, Exton Plaza) to be redeveloped with major structures/uses (like a conference center) or more finely detailed “new urbanist” type things? How much do we care? [This may be more of a question for us than for ULI.]*

Commission members decided to strike this question to avoid leading the Panel, but they agreed that the major sites should be included in the Scope as information for the Panel.

- *What are specific things that the Township can execute to promote the sense-of-place/vision? How best do we get the owners/developers of the properties we don’t control to buy into the vision and promote/implement it?*

Members stressed the importance of specific actions - rather than “things” - that the Township can do in the short term to demonstrate the importance of this area. Ms. McGarrity suggested using the word “engage” in lieu of “buy into.”

- *How do we attract/encourage high-quality, creative developers and development?*

After further discussion, it was decided to merge this question into the one before it.

Mr. Weller will revise the questions based upon the Commission’s comments and distribute to them to the Commission members for confirmation.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Kumbhardare reported that the Public Services Commission saw a presentation of the Cadmus report prepared for the West Chester Area Council of Governments regarding sustainable energy recommendations and implementation; he encouraged the Planning Commission members to see it as well. A link to the recorded presentation will be provided.

Mr. Weller gave more detail on the process and timeline for the ULI project. A letter of support and approval by the Board of Supervisors will be among the next steps.

The May 19 Planning Commission agenda will include review of the conditional use application for a self-storage facility at 4 Tabas La. The conditional use applications have been submitted for a Wawa and other commercial uses at Ship Rd. and Lincoln Hwy. and for residential development of the southern part of the Laborer's Training Facility property; both applications are scheduled for the first June meeting. We have also received a conditional use application for another apartment building on the Exton Square property.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:50 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



John Weller, AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning