

TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
DECEMBER 2, 2021

The December 2021 Regular Business Meeting of the Tobyhanna Township Planning Commission (“Commission”) was held on December 2, 2021, via the platform GoToMeeting as well as in person at the Government Center Building due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Present are Marlin “Sam” Keiper, Rachel Schickling, Edwin Miller, Al Kerrick, Michelle Bisbing. Also present Interim Zoning Officer, Leroy Baumgardner, Township Engineer, Bob McHale and Township Solicitor Harry Coleman, Esquire.

1. Sam Keiper calls the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. A quorum is present.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.
3. Public comment on agenda items: None
4. Minutes
 - a. Consider the Minutes of the November 4, 2021, Planning Commission Regular Business Meeting: Ms. Schickling motions to approve the minutes. Mr. Kerrick seconds. Michelle Bisbing abstains as she was not at this meeting. Vote carries 4-0.
5. Old Business
 - a. Active Applications
 - i. Dunne Manning – no one present.
 - b. Adam Kerrick’s Zoning Ordinance Request

Mr. Kerrick is present to give an update on his Open Space definition. He advised that after their discussion at the November 4, 2021, meeting he made an addition to this definition by adding restaurant in addition to a hotel and spa.

Mr. Keiper advised that he did research on parcels in the western half of the Township and found that there are 13 open space parcels, 8 rural residential parcels in the Blakeslee area. There are 7 open space parcels that are over 100 acres, 6 under 100 acres and 8 of those open space parcels are tax exempt and 4 are Act 319-Green & Clean which would make it more difficult for development. He stills need to research the remaining parcels in the Township.

Mr. McHale asked Mr. Coleman if there is only one parcel in the Township that qualifies for this definition would we be able to move forward with this or does there have to be several parcels. Mr. Coleman

responded that he thinks you can move forward but he will need to further study this and will advise back with his determination.

Mr. McHale asked Adam Kerrick if he knew approximately percentage of square feet is he looking at. There was discussion on the percentage of coverage needed by Mr. Kerrick for this definition. Mr. Kerrick advised that he could go from 10% coverage to 7% coverage will cover all his issues and stay within the definition as he wants to keep the density as low as possible but still allow operations to carry on and for the visitor to have a good experience.

Mr. McHale asked Adam Kerrick if there was anywhere in the country that there is a similar use that we could look at to get an idea of this facility would look like from the air. Mr. Kerrick stated that there are 2 models: Twin Farms in Vermont and Blackberry Farm in Tennessee. These are the closest to what is looking to do. Blackberry Farm is approximately 5000 acres. Mr. McHale asked Ms. Canfield to locate Blackberry Farm on the internet. Mr. Kerrick showed this as a model he is using for his concept. Mr. Kerrick stated that this concept is good for the Township as it has nothing like this. He wants to preserve the land and do it in away that people can enjoy it.

Mr. McHale asked Mr. Kerrick what timeframe he is looking at. Mr. Kerrick advised that he is still working on the concept. Mr. Keiper asked if he is under contract with Blue Ridge to purchase the property and he stated that he was not.

Mr. McHale asked Mr. Keiper how many Act 319 parcels were there in the Township and Mr. Keiper advised that there are 3. There was then a discussion regarding Act 319 parcels and preserves. Mr. Keiper advised that he still needs to do research on this.

Mr. Keiper stated that we would first have to come up with a definition that will have all the permitted uses for a country inn to be allowed in open space. We would basically have to add to the definition and the Zoning Ordinance, and it would have to delineate the lot yard requirements that the setback is a perimeter setback around the entire property. Mr. Baumgardner also discussed the setbacks. These are issues to be addressed to move forward with this definition.

Ms. Canfield suggested that we should look at Rural Residential properties that are 100 acres or more as they allow farms, hunting clubs, etc. Mr. McHale suggested that the Rural Residential district could accommodate this type of use. He further stated that there are several properties within this district that can be researched as potential for this use.

Ms. Canfield asked Mr. Coleman if he could confirm the process from here, so if there is a recommendation from the Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Coleman state that there would have to be a public hearing of the process before the Board could amend the Ordinance and once that process is complete, it would be appropriate for Mr. Kerrick to make an application to run through the processes that exist.

Mr. Coleman stated that he found an Ordinance in Howard County, Maryland for the definition of a county inn. Mr. Kerrick state that he obtained a lot of the information from Howard County for his definition. This Ordinance was printed and handed out to use as a guidance.

Ms. Canfield asked Mr. Keiper if the definition and table are amended with setbacks, lot information, etc. to add the permitted use under the open space section, is there a separate section that needs to be written. Mr. Keiper advise that they add a definition to define the use and put the use in the chart with any setbacks and that would be all part of the process of adding a definition or use. Mr. Keiper stated that we must have the definition forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their review and the Board would have to authorize a draft of the amendment. It would then come back to the Planning Commission for their review. The Board has already sent this to the Planning Commission but not to Monroe County Planning Commission. It would have to go to Monroe County Planning for their review and it cannot be acted on until after their review.

Mr. Coleman state that the technical staff report from Howard County is a good first step and a good read that will spawn a lot of ideas and discussions in terms of how to fine tune this definition as it relates to the Tobyhanna Township Ordinance.

Mr. Coleman is going to work with Adam Kerrick to put together a skeleton of the Ordinance before the Planning Commission Meeting in January. The Planning Commission can fine tune it and when we have a finished product, we can make the recommendation back to the Board for their review.

Ms. Schickling made a motion to authorize the draft of the Ordinance. Ms. Bisbing seconds. Mr. Al Kerrick abstained from the vote. Vote carries 4-0.

c. Review of Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

Ms. Canfield stated that the staff has put together some thoughts and have recent thoughts today after conversations with our solicitor and amongst

ourselves which have not been put together. It was decided to table this until the next meeting.

6. New Business:

a. Tobyhanna Township Planning Commission 2022 Meeting Schedule

Discussions were held regarding the time conflict with the submission, cut-off dates and getting projects to the Board of Supervisors. It was discussed whether to hold a special meeting to work on sub-division for the next four months.

Ms. Canfield suggested that we approve the January date to have re-org and at re-org we can consider additional meetings and circulate new dates.

Mr. Kerrick asked if we could have the meetings start a 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Keiper motioned that we approve the January meeting for reorganization at which time a schedule for meetings moving forward will be adopted. Mr. Miller motioned to approve the January meeting, Ms. Bisbing seconds. Vote carries 5-0.

7. Open Discussion: None

8. Public Comment: None

Ms. Schickling motions to adjourn, Mr. Kerrick seconds. Vote carries 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Minutes recorded by Bethanne Eisler