

Lower Heidelberg Township Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2017

The regular monthly meeting of the Lower Heidelberg Township Planning Commission was held at the Township Building, 720 Brownsville Road, Sinking Spring, on the above date. Present were: Chairman Michael Levan, Vice-Chair Neal Nevitt, Members William Moser, Edward Emery and Dean Hartman, and Alternate Heath Kearney. Also attending were Township Solicitor Michael Crotty and Township Engineers Glenn Neuhs (SSM), Ryan Rhode (GVC) and Engineer Pamela Stevens (SDE).

The meeting was opened by Solicitor Crotty, who noted that as this was the first meeting of the year, the commission will need to elect officers. Mr. Crotty requested nominations for the position of Chairman. **On Motion** by Mr. Nevitt, seconded by Mr. Emery, to nominate Mr. Levan for the position of Chairman. Mr. Crotty called for further nominations; there were none. Motion passed unanimously. **On Motion** by Mr. Moser, seconded by Mr. Hartman, to nominate Mr. Nevitt as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Levan called for further nominations; there were none. Motion passed unanimously. **On Motion** by Mr. Levan, seconded by Mr. Nevitt, to nominate Theresa Conners as Secretary. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Levan called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The minutes from the December 12, 2016 meeting were reviewed. **On Motion** by Mr. Levan, seconded by Mr. Nevitt, to approve the minutes of December 12, 2016 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Western Berks Water Authority – Request for Waiver of Land Development

Mr. Levan reported that the Township received a letter from Western Berks Water Authority requesting a waiver of the land development process for the construction of an accessory structure. John Spitko, of SSM Engineering, was present for the applicant and explained that Western Berks Water Authority (WBWA) is currently in the process of obtaining regulatory approval for the construction of a new pipeline to bring water from Blue Marsh to the WBWA water treatment facility. Various scenarios were vetted, with the final design showing the construction of a single utility building, which will house raw water screens and room to inject treatment chemicals in to the water coming in from Blue Marsh. These chemicals are already in use at the site. The building will be 36' wide by 80' long and will not be attached to the existing structure. Mr. Spitko said there will be no need for an increase in employees as the process is automated.

On Motion by Mr. Levan, seconded by Mr. Nevitt, to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the request for a waiver of the land development process for Western Berks Water Authority, for the construction of a water processing building, subject to the approval of the Zoning Officer and providing that the applicant fulfills all Township requirements of the zoning and building permit application process. Motion passed unanimously.

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Western Berks Telecom – Request for Waiver of Land Development

Mr. Levan reported that the Township received a letter from Western Berks Telecom requesting a waiver of the land development process for the construction of a three sided pole barn to be used for a covered parking area. Craig Englehart, contractor, was present for the applicant. Mr. Englehart explained that the pole barn will have three sides and will sit on a gravel bed. The intention is to keep the company trucks out of the adverse weather and the most cost effective method is to do a free-standing structure. Mr. Englehart has discussed the impervious surface calculations with Codes Officer Andrew Kraft, and Mr. Kraft indicated they were acceptable.

On Motion by Mr. Levan, seconded by Mr. Nevitt, to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the request for a waiver of the land development process for Western Berks Telecom, 723 Brownsville Road, subject to the approval of the Zoning Officer and providing that the applicant fulfills all Township requirements of the zoning and building permit application process. Motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Mr. Crotty addressed the commission regarding a proposed draft zoning ordinance amendment for rear yard/reverse lot line issues. Residents who own houses that are either corner lots or lots with public streets at both the front and rear of their property are prohibited from installing sheds or other accessory structures as these lots essentially have two “front” yards. The Commission discussed whether to allow a 20’ setback for the accessory building if the lot is buffered, or a 25’ setback if the lot is not buffered. Mr. Neuhs commented that the original intent of the ordinance was to provide enough of a buffer for the public view of lots like the ones that back up to Green Valley Road. The Commission discussed a 25’ setback for unbuffered lots, and a 10’ setback for buffered lots, allowing the property owner more use of their property. **On Motion** by Mr. Levan, seconded by Mr. Moser, to recommend the ordinance be sent to the Southwestern Berks Joint Planning Commission for review with a 10’ setback for buffered lots, and a 25’ setback for unbuffered lots. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Crotty noted that both Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg Townships have been approached by property owners regarding medical marijuana dispensary facilities. Both dispensaries and growing operations are to be permitted throughout Pennsylvania once licenses are issued by the State. Mr. Crotty has spoken with the solicitors of both South Heidelberg and Wernersville, and both favor scheduling a meeting of Southwestern Berks Joint Planning Commission to consider whether local regulations should be put in place.

Ms. Stevens explained that FEMA is instituting some minor changes which will impact just a few of the Township’s panels on the map; for this reason the Township must re-open and re-adopt the floodplain ordinance. Mr. Rhode noted he previously worked with Leslie Rhoads, independent contractor for the FEMA floodplain update project, and she indicated her approval of the draft ordinance as presented.

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Mr. Rhode will follow up with Ms. Rhoads this week. Mr. Crotty will have the final version of the ordinance available for review by the Planning Commission at their March meeting.

Time Extensions

There were no requests for time extensions received this month.

Mr. Levan noted that the Planning Commission will not hold a workshop meeting in February. There will be a meeting scheduled for the Southwestern Berks Regional Planning Commission sometime in March, and that will be open to the public.

Public Comment

Mr. Levan asked if there was any public comment; there was none.

Adjournment

On Motion by Mr. Levan, seconded by Mr. Nevitt, to adjourn at 8:08 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Theresa Conners".

Theresa Conners, Recording Secretary

Approved on: June 12, 2017