

**TOWN OF CHESTER
PLANNING COMMISSION**

May 6, 2019 Minutes

Commission Members Present: Naomi Johnson, Barre Pinske, Tim Roper, Peter Hudkins and Cheryl Joy Lipton.

Staff Present: Michael Normyle, Zoning Administrator, Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary.

Citizens Present: Brandy Saxton.

Call to Order

Chair Naomi Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Agenda Item 1 Review draft minutes from the April 10 and 18 meetings.

Tim Roper moved to accept the April 10 and 18 meeting minutes. Barre Pinske seconded the motion. Addressing the April 18th minutes, Tim Roper suggested that the word “potentially” be added to describe the objectionable conditions mentioned in the last sentence of the first paragraph under Agenda Item 3. On page 3, Tim Roper asked to have the word “plumbing” added to the list of businesses in the first sentence of the first paragraph describing what was observed when the van was travelling on Route 10. Also, on page 3, in the second sentence of the last paragraph, Tim Roper noted that the location of the fitness home business was on the right side of the road, not the left side. Finally, Tim Roper questioned the words “economic survival” attributed to him in the last paragraph on page 4. He suggested that he was unlikely to have said, “economic survival” and more likely to have said, “economic opportunity”.

Naomi Johnson asked for a change to the April 10th minutes. On page 2, in the fourth paragraph, she asked that the words “were going for” be replaced by “could be”, referring to the price of lots in the Gold River industrial park. There being no other changes suggested, a vote was taken and the minutes were accepted as amended.

Agenda Item 2 Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

Agenda Item 3 Proposed Bylaw revisions: Finalize proposed district boundaries

Naomi Johnson began the meeting by discussing the schedule for the grant that funded the Bylaw project. She said the grant money must be paid out according to a schedule. A deliverable, in this case a report, must be completed. The Commission may continue to work on the project after the grant is closed. Brandy Saxton explained that the Municipal Planning grant expires at the end of May. She said the current draft is complete, which meets the obligation of the grant. Some monies for conducting the public meetings can be carried forward and she urged the Commission to schedule the public hearings as close to the expiration of the grant as

possible. She hoped the district boundaries could be settled that evening and the public meetings scheduled. She felt that public interest would wane if the project continued into the summer.

Tim Roper asked if the Commission should establish the dates of the meetings that evening. Naomi Johnson said the date and number of meetings would be addressed at the end of the meeting.

Tim Roper asked about the “gray area” on the zoning district map, which signified some sort of business district. Brandy Saxton explained that she noted design standard issues that required different treatment of a business district on a main road versus a business on a side road. She wanted to emphasize commercial uses on main roads and industrial uses on areas that have access to the rail line. She decided to split the business district into two districts, instead of repeating the language that differentiated the two districts over and over in the bylaw. She said there would be a new name for the second district. Peter Hudkins said he thought the differentiation of business districts would help in the Gassetts area and Tim Roper agreed. Tim Roper brought up the request for a new abbreviation for the Residential 2 dwelling units per acre district. He said that R2 abbreviation was too easily confused with the R3, R6 and R18 districts which are all rural. Brandy Saxton proposed calling the R2 district Res2.

The Commission took up areas along main roads and, in the villages, not addressed so far.

103 South of the village to the town line with Rockingham

Current zoning: R-20 (one-half acre) near town, Residential-Commercial just after Flamstead Acres, R-40 (one acre) starting near Remington Road on the west side of Route 103, R-120 (three acre) on the east side of Route 103 to the town line with Rockingham.

Proposed zoning: General Business from Flamstead Acres south to Remington Road. R3 for lots fronting Route 103 or Remington Road to the south of, and R6 along Route 103 south for the second tier or lots further back from the to the town line with Rockingham.

Changes made: A parcel that abutted the southern end of the proposed General Business District on the east side of the road was added to the General Business district. The parcel is currently owned by the same person who owns the first parcel of General Business district. It made sense to include that last parcel in the district.

Issues raised:

A large portion of the General Business district was in the flood plain, making some of the land impractical to develop. The Commission is concerned about the lack of space for commercial and industrial enterprises. Cheryl Joy Lipton particularly would like to see districts that allow both residences and commercial or industrial businesses.

The corner of Sylvan Road and Route 103 has been the site of a gravel pit, a landscape supply business and a store in the last couple of decades. Barre Pinske asked if the area be zoned General Business instead of R3 in hopes of one or more of those businesses being re-opened? Naomi Johnson said the General Business district had many commercial uses, but would not allow a golf course, an equestrian facility or a campground, all of which would be appropriate for

that area. She noted there were several commercial uses allowed in the R3 district. Peter Hudkins said making the area General Business would violate the statutory requirement of developed village centers separated by undeveloped areas. He also thought the area was so small it was insignificant. Cheryl Joy Lipton said recent (failed) development between village centers should not be revived. The Commission decided not to change the R3 designation.

Route 11 east of Route 103 to the town line with Springfield

Currently zoned R-40 (1 acre) on the north side of the road and along the edge of the road on the south side. Zoned R-120 (3 acre) on the south side away from the edge, up to intersection with Cummings Road. East of Cummings Road R-120 on both sides.

Original proposed zoning R3 on both sides of the road for all lots that front the road, R6 or R18 beyond those lots. One exception is R6 on south side of road after entrance to Fletcher Hill.

Change requested: make all of the lots fronting on the road R6.

Issues discussed:

Cheryl Joy Lipton preferred increasing the density in the area along Route 11 from the Green Mountain Turnpike east to Cummings Road and decreasing the density east of Cummings Road, to support the village centers separated by open space standard.

The zoning for the triangle of land between Cummings Road, Green Mountain Turnpike and Route 11 was debated. It is currently zoned R-40 (one acre). Cheryl Joy Lipton wanted to allow 2 dwelling units per acre and allow more commercial uses. There is no municipal water or sewer in that area. It was left as R3, 3-acre minimum lot size.

Cheryl Joy Lipton said the goal of the zoning map should be to encourage development in the village center area and discourage development in rural areas between village centers according to Title 24, Chapter 117, Municipal and Regional Planning and Development. She felt the Commission was not doing enough to further either of those goals. She didn't feel that the lot sizes allowed in the R3, R6 and R18 districts were large enough to create a rural landscape and the uses for residential areas are not diverse enough. They do not include enough commercial uses.

Village Districts: High and Grafton Streets

Currently zoned R-20 (one-half acre) and R-40 (one acre)

Original proposed zoning: RES2 (one-half acre) and R3 (3 acres)

Changes proposed:

On Grafton Street (Route 35) between the river and the intersection with High Street the five lots become V4. The currently proposed V3 lots fronting on Grafton Street also become V4.

On High Street west of the intersection with Grafton Street (Route 35), the lots that front on High Street on both sides become RES4, up to the fifth lot past the cemetery on the north side of High Street and the lots opposite on the south side of High Street.

Issues discussed:

Cheryl Joy Lipton proposed making the lots that border the path from the foot bridge to High Street V4 to encourage pedestrian traffic and commercial activity. Barre Pinske noted that High Street is a dead-end street and not conducive to business, Naomi Johnson noted that vehicle access would be required for businesses and High Street would have difficulty handling an increase in commercial traffic. It was generally thought there are too many vacant businesses along Main Street to warrant creating more commercial space.

The Planning Commission wanted to support the possibility of creating a Neighborhood Development Area. The Neighborhood Development Area program provides special permit and tax incentives for communities and developers who commit to building mixed-income housing within and adjacent to designated village centers. In order to participate in the program, the zoning district where the Neighborhood Development project would be located must allow four dwelling units per acre. The area eligible for this program is the designated village center plus one-quarter of a mile beyond that boundary. The Planning Commission has resolved to be sure that all zoning districts in the designated village center and for one-quarter mile surrounding it allow four dwelling units per acre.

Agenda Item 4 Set date for next meeting

Naomi Johnson verified with Brandy Saxton as to the format, number and timing of the meetings. Brandy Saxton explained that she usually has a meeting that covers the Village districts, a meeting that covers the Rural districts and an open house meeting where citizens are encouraged to discuss their specific questions. She said she is the primary speaker at the Village and Rural district meetings as she explains the districts and what the Planning Commission hopes to accomplish. The Planning Commission members will be in attendance. Barre Pinske asked if the separate village and rural meetings could be combined given the low citizen attendance at the Planning Commission meetings. Brandy Saxton explained it generally takes a couple of hours to complete each presentation.

The Commission decided to have meetings with the public on Monday, June 3rd and Monday, June 17th, the normal Commission meeting nights. The Village districts will be discussed at the June 3rd meeting and the Rural districts on June 17th. Brandy Saxton suggested the Monday meetings run from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. The two Monday meetings are warned like any other Planning Commission meeting. The Commission decided to have the open house on Saturday June 22nd. The Commissioners may also attend to hear the discussion, but this is not a regular Planning Commission meeting. The time on Saturday June 22nd will be partly determined by the schedule for the room at the town hall.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be May 20, 2019 at 6:00 PM. Tim Roper moved to adjourn the meeting. Barre Pinske seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.