



UPPER UWCHLAN TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 4, 2010

Approved

In Attendance:

Planning Commission members: Bob Schoenberger, Sally Winterton, Shelly Krocker, John McTear, Linda Layer, Joe Stoyack, Jim Dewees,
Historic Commission members: Mary Lou Farrow, Brett Hand, Kevin Sherman

Invited Guests from Brandywine Conservancy:

Sheila Fleming, Senior Planner
Tara Tracy, Senior Planner
John Theilacker, Associate Director

Bob Schoenberger called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Jonathan Thir Land Development Plan

A preliminary land development plan, dated March 2, 2010, was submitted for this project, which is located on Park Road at Ticonderoga Boulevard. Sally Winterton moved, seconded by Joe Stoyack, to accept the Plan for review. So moved.

Alternative Energy Systems – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Draft dated Feb. 25, 2010

Tara Tracy led the discussion regarding solar and wind sources of alternative energy and initially limiting the Zoning Ordinance amendments to the commercial and industrial zones. It was explained that the Board of Supervisors wanted the potentially larger alternative energy system installations addressed first, to be followed by the less burdensome residential installations later. John Theilacker noted that a preclusion regarding residential installations could be written into this Ordinance, if desired.

Tara and John have been working with DVRPC regarding alternative energy so their research involved a wide region. This Draft doesn't allow for free-standing wind equipment, and details specific conditions for both solar and wind within the village/commercial districts. Other sections allow for conditional uses.

Open discussion included the following points:

- residential regulations should also be included;
- no free-standing wind turbines is favored;
- why does it prohibit commercial production (anything over 125%), as that could promote independence from foreign oil and high cost electricity. Tara explained the direction given was that energy produced was for the existing business on a given property – not for commercial production;
- if everything has to go thru conditional use, why write such specificity;
- we don't have enough wind in the area – most installations will be roof-top solar panels;
- could UTI have panels on their roof – yes, but not for more than their needs;
- a group of smaller businesses could go together and co-op;
- solar panels on the nice metal roofs would wreck ambiance of village districts;
- there are products and methods to disguise the equipment;

- should exempt installations in Byers Historic Village, plus be careful of height restrictions; how close can wind power get to the village district - Tara explained this area is in “class zero” and “class one” wind, meaning we don’t have enough wind to power turbines. Small residential roof mountings may be experimented with;
- what are other Townships experiencing since adopting similar ordinances? Tara explained this draft is a little more restrictive but not unreasonable within the commercial or industrial zones;
- don’t place too many restrictions on the property/business owners so cost savings can be realized;
- all applications should be “conditional uses”;
- what is a *solar access easement* – Tara explained that part of the process would be to prove or disprove that a person may need extra area for their system to work (such as from shading);
- concerned with use of the word “minimal” regarding roof-mounted solar systems and removal of historic roofing material;
- clarify the regulation regarding if a system is inactive for a year – Tara explained the intent is if the property has been abandoned, is in disrepair, or a safety issue;
- concern expressed with over-governing;
- the section on ground-mounted placement should include “within setbacks” of the rear or side yard so that people don’t think they can install on the property line;
- what happens if glare is cast onto neighboring property? Tara responded that it would be assumed an educated prediction is made or studied prior to installation, however, if it does occur, the Township would have to work with the owner to adjust. Also, there are motorized/movable panels on the market;
- does this include small-scale solar powered lighting such as on sheds or parking areas? A diminimus will be added to provide parameters;
- the biggest drawback is the visual effect of solar panels, as wind power doesn’t seem very feasible;
- keep in mind how evident equipment will be from the streetscape level;
- keep in mind how quickly technology decreases in size – i.e., satellite dishes, computers
- include geothermal as a possibility – may be limited in residential applications what with wells, drain fields, setbacks, but don’t exclude;
- include a requirement that conditional use has to be reviewed by Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors;
- investigate wall-mounted solar panels for aesthetics;
- if we don’t have enough wind in the area, remove wind-power sections?

Next Steps: Brandywine Conservancy will revise the draft to include the tonight’s comments and distribute for review at the Village Concept Committee meeting scheduled for March 22, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Jim Dewees moved, seconded by Joe Stoyack, to approve the January 7, 2010 Planning Commission Meeting minutes as presented. The Motion carried unanimously.

Open Session

Jim Dewees provided historic trivia: it took 278 days to fill the Marsh Creek Dam/Reservoir.

Sally Winterton commented that tractor trailers should be discouraged from using "Pottstown Pike" (except for deliveries) once Graphite Mine Road is re-named "Route 100".

Joe Stoyack asked about the approval of the Fellowship Fields lighting plan and has the Township formally noted the Ordinances being waived.

Gwen Jonik advised that the black & white historic structure picture CDs that Ed Edwards supplied do correlate with the Township's Historic Resource listing, however, the pictures are not specifically labeled. Gwen also advised the Blood Drive in Elaine Benson's memory has been rescheduled for March 29, 2010 – 1:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Bob announced the following meeting dates:

Village Concept Committee – March 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission – April 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment

Linda Layer moved, seconded by Jim Dewees, to adjourn at 8:57 p.m. So moved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gwen A. Jonik
Planning Commission Secretary