

**ROCKLAND TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES
March 30, 2021**

The monthly meeting of the Rockland Township Planning Commission was held on March 30, 2021 beginning at 7:30PM. The following members of the Planning Commission were present: Richard Mazich, William Fredericks, Nancy Ogden and William McFadden. Also in attendance were: Township Solicitor Jim Smith, Township Engineer Jessica Adams, Township Supervisor Nathan Ohlinger, Township Supervisor David Wartenluft, Township Supervisor Michele Albright, Township Zoning Officer Jackie Hollenbach and interested citizens.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30PM by Chairman Richard Mazich.

The meeting was turned over to the Township Solicitor. The Solicitor opened the nominations for Chairman. On a motion by Nancy Ogden, seconded by William McFadden, Richard Mazich was nominated to serve as Chairman of the Planning Commission. There was no public comment, and there were no other nominations. There being no further nominations, on a motion by William McFadden, seconded by Nancy Ogden, the nominations were closed. All were in favor of Richard Mazich to serve as Chairman. Motion carried.

The Township Solicitor opened the nominations for Vice Chairman. On a motion by William McFadden, seconded by Nancy Ogden, William Fredericks was nominated to serve as Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission. There was no public comment, and there were no other nominations. There being no further nominations, on a motion by Nancy Ogden, seconded by William McFadden, the nominations were closed. All were in favor of William Fredericks to serve as Vice Chairman. Motion carried.

The Township Solicitor opened the nominations for Secretary. On a motion by William Fredericks, seconded by Richard Mazich, Karen Krall was nominated to serve as Secretary of the Planning Commission. There was no public comment, and there were no other nominations. There being no further nominations, on a motion by Nancy Ogden, second by Richard Mazich, the nominations were closed. All were in favor of Karen Krall to serve as Secretary. Motion carried.

The Township Solicitor turned the meeting back over to Chairman Richard Mazich.

The minutes of the October 27, 2020 Planning Commission meeting were reviewed. On a motion by William McFadden, seconded by William Fredericks, the minutes of the October 27, 2020 Planning Commission meeting were approved as presented. There was no public comment. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Rockland Township received correspondence from Newton Engineering Group, P.C., Allentown, PA on behalf of their clients (Ehtshamul Khoyratty and Bibi Khoyratty, the owners of property at 17 Fleetwood Road) requesting to be added to tonight's meeting agenda for the purposes of conducting an informal discussion regarding the property owners' intent to:

- Acquire approximately 14 acres of property from the adjoining Cleason Horning property
- To combine this with their 14 acres via a lot line adjustment plan
- Obtain special exception approval for a cemetery
- Obtain land development approval for said cemetery

Mr. Bud Newton, Newton Engineering Group, P.C. provided an overview of the property owners' future intentions with the property at 17 Fleetwood Road (as outlined above). Mr. Newton mentioned that the property does have Bieber Creek running through it, with a significant floodplain area (and no development would be proposed in the 100-year floodplain area). Mr. Newton also informed the Planning Commission members that the existing buildings on the property would remain, and no additional buildings are being proposed at this time. The property owners will be seeking a Special Exception from the Rockland Township Zoning Hearing Board (per Section 5.04 of the Rockland Township Zoning Ordinance) and do not foresee any issues with compliance of the cemetery regulations stated in Section 9.07 of the Rockland Township Zoning Ordinance. The proposed cemetery would be a private cemetery for a religious organization with which the property owners are affiliated.

Mr. Newton informed Township officials that following approval from the Rockland Township Zoning Hearing Board for a cemetery, the property owners will then proceed with the land development approval process including, but not limited to, ground-water studies, engineering/design work, necessary approvals from the State/DEP, etc.

There were approximately fifteen Township residents in attendance who asked a number of questions about the property owners' future intentions for the 17 Fleetwood Road property. Mr. Martin Strauch, 300 Forgedale Road expressed traffic concerns and the potential for this planned use to increase traffic and adversely affect traffic along an already dangerous stretch of Forgedale Road (State road). A lengthy discussion regarding the future plans for the 17 Fleetwood Road property followed with members of the public asking many questions. Among the topics discussed were concerns with increased traffic, any proposed activity in/around floodplain areas or wetlands, environmental concerns, approval process, etc. The Township Engineer reminded meeting attendees that many of the design-related questions from the public may likely be premature to address since the property owners have not yet performed the design aspects of the project. The property owners' first task will be to apply for a Special Exception from the Zoning Hearing Board, so it can be determined whether or not zoning approval for a cemetery at this location would be granted. Then, if zoning approval is obtained, the property owners would then likely move on to address all other types of design, environmental, traffic, floodplain, etc. issues and concerns through the land development process. The land development approval process will likely also include confirmation of any state licensing requirements by the State for a cemetery (to address health and safety issues, etc.), as well as approval from the PA Department of Environmental Protection, and other agencies.

OLD BUSINESS

Zoning Ordinance Review/Amendment Project Update – Article 8 - Township Solicitor Jim Smith requested input from Township officials regarding a resident's recent request to modify Section 8.04.1 of the Zoning Ordinance in order to allow a shipping container to be placed on a property and used for storage. After a brief discussion, Township officials decided not to modify the regulations in Section 8.04.1 to allow for the use of shipping containers for storage on residential properties. Township officials mentioned that the current regulations allow a property owner the right to seek relief of these regulations via a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board.

Township officials agreed to continue to discuss proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance at the next monthly Planning Commission meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 7:30PM.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47PM on a motion by Nancy Ogden, seconded by William McFadden.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Krall
Secretary