

**PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2008 MEETING**

Members Present: Howard Balzer, Christopher Finn, Glen Hymer, Hulda Moffitt, and Judy Stalter

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Connie Swisher, Zoning Inspector and Dana Scott, Zoning Clerk; Pam Williams, Township Resident

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Howard Balzer, Chairman, at 3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Balzer asked for a motion to approve or correct the May 27, 2008 Prairie Township Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes.

Ms. Stalter and Mr. Finn asked that the following correction be made on page 2:

Correct Spelling: **Supper** Wash & Tan to **Super** Wash & Tan.

Ms. Stalter moved to approve the May 27, 2008 Zoning Commission Minutes as corrected. Mr. Finn seconded the motion.

Roll call as follows:

1. Christopher Finn Aye
2. Glen Hymer Aye
3. Hulda Moffitt Aye
4. Judy Stalter Aye
5. Howard Balzer Aye

The motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business:

Amendments to the Zoning Resolution

Ms. Swisher said that she is meeting in July with Donald Brosius, attorney, to go over the proposed changes to the Township zoning code that Commission members and she discussed several months ago. Franklin County is also still working to get approval of changes to its zoning code with respect to establishing and controlling riparian setbacks. The Township has recently received additional input from the County which will be helpful in the meeting with Mr. Brosius.

Commercial Building Department Opens for Business Today

Ms. Moffitt remarked that the operation of the Township commercial building department started today. Ms. Swisher acknowledged the zoning department's additional function and said that the first customer is Walgreens.

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New Business:

Conservation Zoning District

Remarks by Ms. Swisher:

The group working with Franklin County to define a uniform conservation zoning district is now meeting every other week, and Tracy Hatmaker, Prairie Township Administrator, has joined the group. It is extremely challenging to come up with a set conservation district that Franklin County, Prairie Township, and Brown Township can agree upon.

Defining densities, in particular, is a source of considerable disagreement. Some jurisdictions have strongly held viewpoints when it comes to the number of dwellings per acre. For example, Brown Township always has been very firm in its agricultural position. Brown does not have its own zoning code, but Township trustees and other representatives are active on various County boards and planning commissions. They are accustomed to speaking out and being heard. However, the Big Darby Accord policy includes actual numbers as to what densities should be in the Town Center and what they should be outside of it.

In Prairie Township, we have created several types of zoning districts in which densities and set-backs, if applicable, are specifically stated. Unlike this type of narrowly defined district, it appears that the County and the two townships are looking at a conservation zoning district in which the performance standards will be very broad. This will put an increased burden on the Prairie Township Zoning Commission when plats come in for approval. What that means is that there will not be set guidelines to go by; therefore, zoning staff will not be able to say the plat meets or does not meet specifications.

It will be up to the Zoning Commission to place approved, written development text along with the zoning approval for the conservation district. This will be a new experience for the board, as it has not had to consider such complex approvals in the past.

The County/Townships group plans to take field trips to several communities in which, in order to meet the requirement of 50% of the area in open space, houses are built close to the road, and roads are narrow—only 18 feet wide—with brick on the edges to enhance ground filtration and reduce impervious surfaces. The County engineers are reluctant to accept these narrow roads, but they are required by the Darby Accord. The BMPs¹ are included in section 4, *Land Use and Development Policies*.”

It is a certainty that processing zoning applications within the conservation zoning district is going to be very different than processing traditional applications.

In order to move forward with development, the density issue must be settled. This issue is driven in large part by a commendable and widespread desire for quality development. However, “quality,” from a practical standpoint, cannot always mean large lots with expensive homes on them. Realistically, in some cases, density bonuses must be granted to developers in exchange for providing land for open space, paying for wastewater treatment, and building

¹ BMPs = Best Management Practices

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affordable housing. In order to make a venture profitable, it is often necessary for a developer to benefit from the economies of scale.

Although the Darby Accord encourages a single conservation zoning district, if Franklin County and the two townships cannot come to an agreement, Prairie could write its own. However, in the interest of seamless growth and conservation development within the Big Darby watershed, this is not a desired outcome.

Next Meeting:

Mr. Balzer announced that the next meeting of the Prairie Township Zoning Commission would be Tuesday, July 22, 2008, at 3:00 p.m. at the Township Hall, 23 Maple Drive.

There being no further business, Mr. Balzer adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hulda Moffitt, Secretary
Prairie Township Zoning Commission

