

Ligonier Township Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2022

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Barb Nalle called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Sheila Grimm. Present were Barb Nalle, Mike McCalpin, Sheilla Grimm, Susan McBroom, Chris Heffner, Dan Weimer, and David Copeland. Also present were Township Manager, Michael Strellic; Zoning and Code Enforcement Officer Rick Krouse, and; Solicitor Dan Hudock.

Review of Meeting Minutes

Chris Hefner made a motion to accept the meeting minutes, seconded by Mike McCalpin. Motion carried

Public Comment

none

Old Business

Zoning Code updates.

Michael Strellic: We have a new Zoning Officer, who will be looking at the zoning code with a critical eye, to incorporate into the general update.

Chairwoman Nalle: Next step is a workshop, going line by line, updating the zoning code, and then taking it to the solicitor as a finished package for his review. The entire review should be done at once, so as not to waste time and money. There are fees involved with this review.

Workshop likely to take place at the next regularly scheduled fourth Thursday of the month.

Chris Heffner with a process question, about whether workshops are open to the public, if there will be voting. There will be discussion only during the workshop, no voting.

New Business

Retreat Center definition.

Solicitor Hudock provided an overview on how zoning code can be changed. From the Supervisors, from the Commission, as the Commission is doing now with the general review, or from a private citizen. We have guests here tonight who brought textual changes to our attention, for the purposes of a property they are interested in purchasing. What they want to do with this property is not clearly allowed in our current zoning code.

Frank Coaster, attorney representing the law firm representing the owners. "The Pittsburgh Retreat" has an agreement to purchase, contingent upon zoning changes being made. To operate a retreat center. Requesting a definition of "retreat center." Text of the requested textual amendment was presented to the Commission. They are not proposing a treatment center, they will not be dispensing medication. They are modeling the Pittsburgh Retreat on a center that currently exists in Minnesota. Wayzata.

Questions about financials and business model. According to Karen Plaven, there will be fundraising for the initial purchase and startup costs, and there will be a fee for staying at the retreat. They have already raised about a million dollars, and continue to meet with large donors. Minnesota charges \$5,000 a month, and are self-sufficient. 10-20 residents at one time, for up to

90 days, with minimal visitors. Plus full time residential staff. Residents would not be driving there, so there would not be a need for additional parking.

Previous proposed use of the property was a retreat for clergy and pastors. Vance McDonald left before being able to implement. Mellon Foundation did donate at that time for that purpose.

We have nothing at this time from other municipalities to compare this to. Per Frank, no other municipalities have these definitions, as other places pigeonhole them into things like "bed and breakfast." Wayzata is allowed as a bed & breakfast.

Vance McDonald would like to see his vision continue, and is working with these potential buyers. The sales agreement needs to be finalized by July. Would take 4-6 months from closing until operations could start.

Discussion about how the retreat center would operate, where residents would stay, how they would be referred, what the day-to-day treatment would be, how the site would be used, who would be providing food services.

Ligonier Township's definitions of "Bed & Breakfast" would not allow them to operate as they would like.

Attorneys will look for other municipalities in Pennsylvania with similar "retreat center" definitions. Supervisors should be informed of this discussion.

No action taken at this time.

Correspondence - None

General Concerns/Comments

Sheila Grimm asked Rick Krouse to introduce himself. Local, from Jennerstown, served in the military, coal mined, and previously worked in Johnstown.

David Copeland has concerns about what was proposed this evening.

Adjourn

Sheila Grimm made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Susan McBroom. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.