

**PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES: JANUARY 24, 2017**

ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Christopher Finn, Chairman; Howard Balzer, Hulda Moffitt, Cathy Schmelzer*

Members Absent: Bruce Whyte, Vice-chairman

Alternate Member Absent: Melvin Jones

Staff Present: Connie Swisher, Zoning Inspector; Dana Scott, Zoning Specialist II; Alicia Boyes, Zoning Specialist I

Guests Present: Bruce Steele, BZA; Bill Galaer, BZA; Joe Meyer, Resident

CALL TO ORDER

Christopher Finn, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Prairie Township Zoning Commission to order at 3pm on Tuesday, January 24, 2017, at the Township Hall, 23 Maple Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43228.

MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Finn asked for a motion to approve or correct the December 27, 2016, Prairie Township Zoning Commission meeting minutes.

Mr. Balzer made a motion to approve the December 27, 2016, meeting minutes as written; motion seconded by Ms. Schmelzer.

Roll call as follows:

1. Howard Balzer Aye
2. Hulda Moffitt Aye
3. Cathy Schmelzer Aye
4. Christopher Finn Aye

Motion to approve the minutes as written was approved unanimously.

*Cathy Schmelzer, newly appointed member of Zoning Commission.

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OLD BUSINESS

Revised Zoning Amendments Schedule

Ms. Swisher said that at the last meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals, members reviewed the same material that was discussed at the December meeting of the Zoning Commission. They asked for copies of the draft of Article 18 with the notes made by Connie Swisher.

With respect to the miscellaneous zoning code changes, BZA had several questions about purpose and intent, definitions, consistency of definitions, signage, and driveway requirements in R6. However, most of the time at the meeting was spent on discussing proposed **Article 18**.

Members expressed their considerable concern about the timeline stated in the schedule for the Zoning Commission to hold public hearings and vote on miscellaneous changes to the zoning code, zoning of the former new Rome, and the new **Article 18**—the West Broad Street Overlay District. Scheduling the public hearings and joint meetings of the Zoning Commission and the BZA in February and March does not provide sufficient time for the boards to review, fully understand, and potentially revise the text of the three proposed amendments. In addition, residents should have more time to be made aware of, comprehend, and ask questions about these substantial changes to the Zoning Resolution.

The BZA, especially, had misgivings about action on the Overlay District in such a short time frame. The text of Article 18 is newly written, lengthy, and complex. The Overlay District is of utmost importance to the future of Prairie Township. This amendment should be critically studied and not rushed to a vote.

Because of the timeline concerns expressed by all three boards, including the Trustees, Ms. Swisher said that the zoning amendments schedule has been revised by Tracy Hatmaker, Township Administrator:

- **February 15, Wednesday:** Open House conducted for the public to learn about upcoming amendments—those related to miscellaneous changes to the zoning code; zoning of the former New Rome to GB; and the Overlay District.
- **April 26, Wednesday:** Optional second open house.
- **July 25, Tuesday:** Zoning Commission will conduct a public hearing to vote on two sets of amendments: (1) miscellaneous changes to the zoning code and (2) zoning the former

New Rome to GB—and to send these amendments to the Franklin County Planning Commission.

- **August 22, Tuesday:** Zoning Commission will conduct a public hearing to vote on the West Broad Street Overlay District amendment—and to send this amendment to the Franklin County Planning Commission.

Article 2, Section 210: Definitions

Don Brosius and Peter Griggs, Township attorneys, are still working on updating the definitions. As soon as this revised section is available, it will be distributed.

Rezoning of New Rome

The former New Rome will be rezoned to General Business (GB). Residential use within the area will be a conditional use.

Prairie Township Zoning Resolution

Article 18: West Broad Street Corridor Overlay District (WBCOD)

Overview & discussion of West Broad Street Overlay District led by Connie Swisher

Section 1800: Purpose & Intent

District Boundary & Sub-Districts:

The Western Gateway Sub-District is the new name for the area previously known as New Rome.

The Medical Campus Sub-District: During the last meeting with the Board of Zoning Appeals, members questioned the wording of the geographic boundaries of this area (highlighted in blue) when compared to the map. Following a careful reading of the boundaries as written and a discussion, Zoning Commission members concluded that the text was accurate but the map should be corrected related to the red/blue border overlap of the Western Gateway Sub-District and the eastern edge of the Medical Campus Sub-District. The area should be one sub-district or the other, most likely the Medical.

Section 1801: Applicability, Extent and Compliance

Item #5: Modifications to Existing Structure

There are three levels of existing building modifications:

- (1) *Minor Building Modifications* involve an enlargement or alteration of an existing building footprint by less than or equal to 10% of the existing gross floor area. These modifications are not required to meet the additional standards of the WBCOD.
- (2) *Intermediate Building Modifications* involve an enlargement or alteration of an existing building footprint by more than 10% but less than 60% of the existing gross floor area.

These modifications require the selection of at least three (“pick 3”) building design upgrades from a list of nine designated options.

- (3) *Major Building Modifications* involve an enlargement or alternation of an existing building footprint by 60% or more of the existing gross floor area. These alterations require full compliance with the WBCOD—unless otherwise permitted through the application or conditional use procedures of the Prairie Township Zoning Resolution.

Item #6: Modifications to Existing Site

Site modifications involve changes to the exterior location but no changes to the footprint of the building. There are three levels of existing site modifications:

- (1) *Minor Site Modifications* involve upgrades or alteration of existing parking areas, landscape areas, service areas, freestanding signs or other appurtenances to the site affecting less than or equal to 10% of the gross site area. These site modifications are not required to meet the additional standards of the WBCOD.
- (2) *Intermediate Site Modifications* involve upgrades or alteration of existing parking areas, landscape areas, service areas, freestanding signs or other appurtenances to the site affecting more than 10% but less than 60% of the gross site area. These site modifications require the selection of at least three (“pick 3”) of the site design upgrades from a list of eight designated options.
- (3) *Major Site Modifications* involve upgrades or alteration of existing parking areas, landscape areas, service areas, freestanding signs or other appurtenances to the site affecting 60% or more of the gross site area. These site modifications require full compliance with the entire Article 18—unless otherwise permitted through the application or conditional use procedures of the Prairie Township Zoning Resolution.

The intent of Section 1801 is to push the redevelopment of existing sites and structures as far as possible toward West Broad Street—rather than, for example, having the entire frontage of buildings devoted to hard-surface parking.

Item #6-d: Site Modifications (page 9)

This section pertains to four design upgrades required for existing sites that meet the Intermediate Site Modifications criteria if they are located along a public street lacking a curb or sidewalk.

d-i: *Continuous curb cuts and uninterrupted parking lot edges...* Zoning staff, the BZA, and Tracy Hatmaker have concluded that this has been completed by what ODOT has already done related to the recently completed West Broad Street improvement project.

d-ii: *Vehicular access shall not be located directly on Board Street...* Alleys in the Township are not ready to meet this requirement yet. We need some additional answers on this one.

Regarding items 6 di-iv, there are several questions that need to be asked which may require a conversation with MKSK and the text to be changed.

Item #7: Site Modifications (page 9)

Regarding sites which are proposed for complete demolition of existing structures and redevelopment with multiple structures will be subject to four requirements:

7-a: Development sites greater than five acres in size shall be designed to create an internal system of public or private streets and alleys. Private streets shall be designed to public street standards. This is already a Franklin County requirement in platting.

A discussion occurred about the meaning and impact of items 7 b-d, which related to the design of new internal public or private street systems. Much of the focus is on interconnection of streets that do not require access from West Broad Street.

Section 1802: Definitions

The BZA had several concerns about the definitions, one of them being signs: #7, Monument Signs, and #13, Projecting Signs. Free-standing signs will no longer be permitted in the corridor (see Section 1809, #5), but the verbiage appears within the definition of permitted signs. There are also some additional requirements for permitted signs that should be added, such as the maximum square footage for a monument signs. If a free-standing sign is removed, zoning staff must have a clear understanding of exactly what is allowed.

Another concern was about the exact meaning of “transparency” (#20, page 11), that is exactly how “transparency” is to be judged. Tracy Hatmaker thinks it means 10% of windows, or 20% of windows, or 60% of windows on the structure. However, as the definition is now stated, it could mean the amount of uncovered space on the windows—or the amount of light the window allows through it. The definitions need to be clarified so they can be understood to mean the same thing over time.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Officers

Chairman Finn stated that the next order of business was to elect chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary of the Zoning Commission for 2017.

Chairman: Mr. Finn requested a nomination for chairman of the Zoning Commission.

Ms. Moffitt made a motion to nominate Christopher Finn chairman. Mr. Finn accepted the nomination. Mr. Balzer seconded the nomination motion. Mr. Finn called for a vote to elect the nominated chairman. Christopher Finn was unanimously elected as chairman of the Zoning Commission.

Vice Chairman: Mr. Finn requested a nomination for vice-chairman of the Zoning Commission. Mr. Finn made a motion to nominate Howard Balzer for vice-chairman. Mr. Balzer accepted the nomination. Ms. Schmelzer seconded the nomination motion. Mr. Finn called for a vote to elect Mr. Balzer vice-chairman. Howard Balzer was unanimously elected as vice-chairman of the Zoning Commission.

Secretary: Mr. Finn requested a nomination for secretary of the Zoning Commission. Mr. Balzer made a motion to nominate Hulda Moffitt secretary. Ms. Moffitt accepted the nomination. Mr. Finn seconded the nomination motion and called for a vote to elect Ms. Moffitt secretary. Hulda Moffitt was unanimously elected as secretary of the Zoning Commission.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Member of Zoning Commission

Ms. Swisher said that the Board of Trustees appointed Cathy Schmelzer, former alternate member, to a five-year term as a member on the Zoning Commission. All of us extend a heartfelt welcome to her.

Open House

Ms. Swisher said that the Board of Trustee will host an Open House on Wednesday, February 15, 2017, from 5:30 to 6:30pm at the Township Hall. This is a date change from the previously chosen date of February 1. All Zoning Commission members and alternates are encouraged to attend. The Open House comes before the regular meeting of the Trustees.

Next Meeting

Mr. Finn stated that the Prairie Township Zoning Commission will hold a special meeting on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 7pm, in the Township Hall. Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals have been invited to this evening meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Prairie Township Zoning Commission, Mr. Finn adjourned the meeting at 4:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Hulda Moffitt, Secretary