

**PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 28, 2003 MEETING
TUESDAY AT 3:00 P.M.**

Members Present: Howard Balzer, Neil Distelhorst, Glen Hymer, and Hulda Moffitt.

Members Absent: Joyce Benedetto

Others Present: Tracy Hatmaker, Township Administrator
Connie Swisher, Township Zoning Inspector

Call to Order: Chairman Howard Balzer called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes: Moved by Glen Hymer, seconded by Neil Distelhorst, and unanimously approved that the Minutes of the September 23, 2003 Meeting be accepted as submitted.

Old Business: None

New Business: Residential Conservation Districts

Zoning Resolution Update: Strategic Direction

In the impending update of the Township Zoning Resolution, Ms. Swisher recommended adding three residential conservation districts, with the objective of bringing the current Zoning Code into compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and, thereby, achieving a balance between development and conservation goals.

Planned Unit Development Overlays

The conservation design concept would be implemented through three new residential planned unit development overlay districts. The Zoning Resolution currently allows PUD districts.

Overlays placed on top of existing zoning districts should materially assist in achieving a balance between development and conservation within developing areas of the Township as identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Proposed Conservation Districts	Color Code*	Location in Township	Open Space
1. Rural PUD Overlay	White	Far Western Rural Area	60%
2. Low Density Suburban PUD Overlay	Blue	Western Transitional Area	50%
3. Medium Density Suburban PUD Overlay	Yellow	Eastern Transitional Area	40%

*Colors refer to map in the *Comprehensive Plan*, page 26.

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A *planned unit development* (PUD) is a type of planning approval that provides greater design flexibility by allowing deviations from the typical development standards required by the Zoning Code. The intent is to encourage better designed projects than can sometimes be accomplished through the strict application of all development requirements, in exchange for providing greater benefits to the community.

An *overlay*, which is “floated” over an existing zoning district, provides a formalized method for implementing specialized standards intended to achieve community plans.

Conservation design encourages the preservation of open space and natural areas. It is an approach used to assure that residential development is planned in a way that promotes community objectives. A best practice is to integrate the conservation model with comprehensive plan and zoning provisions.

Objectives of preserving open space include:

- Protecting streams and water quality;
- Providing habitat for plants and animals;
- Preserving rural atmosphere;
- Promoting creativity in layout of house lots;
- Improving quality of site design;
- Enhancing home values;
- Receiving “trade-off” benefits from built-in flexibility in development standards; and
- Reducing costs of municipal services

Residential Conservation Districts: Implementation

The review authority for implementing the conservation districts would be:

- Township staff;
- Franklin County Technical Review Committee; and
- Zoning Commission or Trustees

Rezoning Applications: Requirements and Process

Once the conservation districts are in place, the process for each rezoning application should be more streamlined than in the past. Assuming that the applicant has adhered to formal submittal requirements, only one public hearing with either the Zoning Commission or the Board of Trustees will be needed.

Application submittal requirements should be based on guidelines in the Comprehensive Plan and result in high quality site design. The application process should include on-site visits with Township Board members and staff and members of the Franklin County Technical Review committee.

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Conservation Districts: Next Steps

Development Standards

- Define the area in the Township that each conservation district will cover;
- Determine general development standards for conservation districts;
- Determine additional development standards for conservation districts; and
- Determine degree and type of flexibility (e.g., density and open space) to be built in to development standards;

Application Package

- Determine application public hearing requirements;
- Determine application submittal requirements; and
- Determine contents of development plan, which should be based on the Township Zoning Resolution and Comprehensive Plan.

Conservation Districts: General Development Standards

Early in the update process, we must decide if it makes sense to retain all or some of the general development standards that are currently applicable to districts under the Zoning Resolution. For example, standards related to:

- Signage and parking requirements;
- Types of residential permitted uses;
- Density calculation formula used to determine number of permitted units;
- Open space definition, location, configuration, and flexibility; and
- Retention and detention areas permitted uses

Resource for Review and Comparison

Ms. Swisher distributed copies of the *Brown Township Comprehensive Plan 2003* to members of the Commission for their review. This document is an example of conservation development options and “floating” overlays being an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan.

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Announcement(s): *Economic and Commercial Development:* The Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan is inclusive of both residential and commercial development. Therefore, Ms. Swisher said that she would discuss two additional commercial districts in the future.

Zoning Commission Alternate: Because of health limitations, Ms. Swisher said that James Wiemer could no longer serve as an alternate on the Zoning Commission. She asked members to invite any Township resident they know of who might want to become an alternate to submit a letter of interest to her.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Zoning Commission will be Tuesday, November 25, 2003 at 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment: Howard Balzer adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Submitted by: Hulda Moffitt, Clerk

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