

MINUTES
EXETER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

The Regular Meeting of the Exeter Township Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, September 5, 2012 at the Township Hall, 4975 DeMoss Road, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Donald R. Wilson, Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge to the Flag.

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Donald R. Wilson, Chairman
John W. Bittig, Vice Chairman
Gary L. Shane
Christy Staudt
Glen Powell

ABSENT: William R. A. Rush, Secretary
Greg T. Unger

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Joe Rogosky, GVC Consulting Engineer
Linda Cusimano, Recording Secretary
Cheryl Franckowiak, Zoning Officer

1. MINUTES

MOTION BY Mr. Bittig, seconded by Ms. Staudt, to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

2. AGENDA

MOTION BY Mr. Shane, seconded by Ms. Staudt, to approve the agenda of the September 5, 2012 Planning Commission meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

3. SALDO REVISIONS

Ms. Franckowiak stated that Clarence Hamm was unable to attend the meeting and requested that this topic be tabled until the next Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission agreed.

4. ZONING ORDINANCE REVISIONS

Public Comment

Lisa VanderLaan, 5560 Boyertown Pike, stated that she wanted to speak to the Planning Commission about Zoning and presented her thoughts/ideas (see attached). After much discussion it was agreed that the Planning Commission would schedule workshops to work on zoning revisions. The first zoning workshop was scheduled for Thursday, September 13th at 6:30pm.

5. STORMWATER ORDINANCE REVISIONS

Ms. Cusimano stated that she received information that Amity Township's stormwater exemption criteria were much less stringent than ours and felt that we should change ours to match Amity's to help our residents.

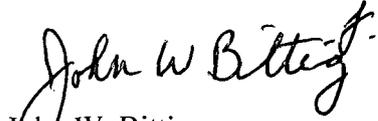
Ms. Cusimano further stated that when a resident has to do stormwater plans to place additional impervious area to their property they also had to put money in an escrow account to cover the 1st, 3rd, 7th, & 10th year inspections.

Mr. Rogosky stated that he agreed the costs of doing the plans, review fees, installation and inspections were a burden on the residents. The Planning Commission asked that DEP review the exemption criteria for approval before we send it along to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY Ms. Staudt, seconded by Mr. Shane, to adjourn the September 5, 2012 meeting of the Exeter Township Planning Commission at 9:30 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John W. Bittig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John W. Bittig,
Vice Chairman

lrc

TRICKLE UP

Below are some statistics on small business in the United States. I have taken these directly from the Federal Governments Office of Advocacy for small business. I won't take the time to read every bullet point but I encourage you all to review them at your earliest convenience and research or verify for yourselves with the sources I have quoted below each heading.

1. How important are small businesses to the U.S. economy?

- Represent 99.7 percent of all employer firms.
- Employ half of all private sector employees.
- Pay 44 percent of total U.S. private payroll.
- Generated 65 percent of net new jobs over the past 17 years.
- Create more than half of the nonfarm private GDP.
- Hire 43 percent of high tech workers (scientists, engineers, computer programmers, and others).
- Are 52 percent home-based and 2 percent franchises.
- Made up 97.5 percent of all identified exporters and produced 31 percent of export value in FY 2008.
- Produce 13 times more patents per employee than large patenting firms.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau and Intl. Trade Admin.; Advocacy-funded research by Kathryn Kobe, 2007 (www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs299.pdf) and CHI Research, 2003 (www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs225.pdf); U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

2. How many small businesses are there?

In 2009, there were 27.5 million businesses in the United States, according to Office of Advocacy estimates.

The latest available Census data show that there were **6.0 million firms with employees** in 2007 and **21.4 million without employees** in 2008. Small firms with fewer than 500 employees represent 99.9 percent of the total (employers and non-employers), as the most recent data show **there were about 18,311 large businesses** in 2007.

Source: Office of Advocacy estimates based on data from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, and trends from the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Business Employment Dynamics.

3. What is small firms' share of employment?

Small businesses employ about half of U.S. workers. Of 120.6 million nonfarm private sector workers in 2007, small firms employed 59.9 million and large firms employed 60.7 million. About half of small firm employment is in second-stage companies (10-99 employees), and half is in firms that are 15 years or older. **Small firms' share of employment in rural areas is slightly higher than in urban areas;** their share of part-time workers (22 percent) is similar to large firms' share (19 percent).

Small firms' employment share remains steady since some small firms grow into large firms over time.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau: Statistics of U.S. Businesses, Current Population Survey and Business Dynamics Statistics; and the Edward Lowe Foundation (<http://youreconomy.org>).

4. What share of net new jobs do small businesses create?

Small firms accounted for 65 percent (or 9.8 million) of the 15 million net new jobs created between 1993 and 2009.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Business Employment Dynamics; Advocacy-funded research by Zoltan Acs, William Parsons and Spencer Tracy, 2008 (www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs328.pdf)

5. How many businesses open and close each year?

An estimated 552,600 new employer firms opened for business in 2009, and 660,900 firms closed.

This amounts to an annual turnover of about 10 percent. Non-employer firms have turnover rates three times as high, mostly because it is much easier for them to go into business and cease operations.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau; Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts; U.S. Dept. of Labor, Business Employment Dynamics (BED). Estimates based on Census data and BED trends.

6. What is the survival rate for new firms?

Seven out of 10 new employer firms survive at least 2 years, half at least 5 years, a third at least 10 years, and a quarter stay in business 15 years or more.

Census data report that 69 percent of new employer establishments born to new firms in 2000 survived at least 2 years, and 51 percent survived 5 or more years. Survival rates were similar across states and major industries. Bureau of Labor Statistics data on establishment age show that 49 percent of establishments survive 5 years or more; 34 percent survive 10 years or more; and 26 percent survive 15 years or more.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics; U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, BED.

I would like to reiterate the largest and most relevant numbers to this discussion under #1 That **52 percent are home-based and 2 percent are franchises** and #2. Of **27.5 million businesses 21.4 million were business without employees.**

I would like to add to the above statistics by pointing out that all phases of a business (creating/starting, operation, closing/bankruptcy) **create a revenue stream of some sort.**

Exeter Township has approximately 8500 residences and 295 businesses. This statistic alone indicates that these numbers should be at the top of the list of resources in this township. If we looked at the residences as businesses this statistic actually follows the national trend of small business versus big businesses. (see #2 above).

What would it mean for the Township to have 8795 businesses? What if instead of bemoaning the lack of a town center we could turn the entire township into one village?

Is there a way to make that possible?

While not all of our residences lend themselves to a retail type use, all 8500 residences could lend themselves to an owner / single or double employee situation.

Pennsylvania is a property right state. It has been suggested the township is currently 85% built-out under our present zoning conditions. What this means is that it is not a possibility, but an eventuality that changes to both our ordinances and zoning will be forced in the future. Careful forethought and planning now can avoid possible negative impacts on the residents in the future.

An additional bonus to paving the way for a small business is the lack of blight situations if they fail. It is far more likely that a single owner or small employer can operate a business from a home or small property than a Giant grocery store. The loss of one or more businesses in a primary residential or village district will not affect that property or the neighboring properties.

The largest single issue with small business startups and operation is Government Regulation and taxes.

How can the township not only get out of the way but help to alleviate this?

Based on the above statistics I would like to start our discussion with the zoned districts in Exeter that have the least amount of development thus lending themselves to easy adaptation for future use in a responsible manner. These zones are also the most vulnerable to future development in a manner that might be considered undesirable.

These zones would be:

AP - Agricultural Preservation
RC - Rural Conservation
R - Rural
RVO – Rural Village Overlay

Let us start this evening in discussing the first of these zones.

1. AP ISSUES

- A. Portions of this zone are already under both external and internal pressures. The external pressures are a result of the emerging demographics for the Berks County region and the development occurring in Amity Township. The internal pressure is a result of the present conditions of the township. I.E. the 85% built out factor.

- B. This is the zone most vulnerable to future forced development as it contains the largest undeveloped tracks of land. Traditionally large tracks of lands in regions such as ours have been broken up for housing developments. If we believe that the housing market is not going to recover in the near future we have to ask ourselves what will be the next trend. Because there will be one. Will we be facing, intensive agriculture, manufacturing, industrial, light industrial, commercial parks?

How are we going to stand up to this? Do any of us actually believe that with our present zoning ordinances, a challenge based on hardship forced by the township is not forthcoming? If you believe you can beat the challenge, how many of them are you willing to defend?
Remember if challenged 10 times you could win 9, lose one and lose the zone.

- C. With the type of soil conditions we have in large portions of the AP district versus the readily available desirable farmland in PA it is unlikely that future generations will continue to utilize the limited farms we have. It is also unlikely that this will be the next booming farmland area for outside consideration.

- D. The present ordinance language for this zone is restrictive to an extreme.

If we accept these statements as truth and we run with this understanding, what it is we are trying to preserve? Farms or open spaces? In either case the present ordinances governing this zone are restrictive and possibly counter productive. Not only will restructuring the ordinances in this zone help to keep it viable, it is a good possible point of a destination attraction for the township. A resource as a whole to be used.

In addition the stated intent of this zone is suspect as it clearly limits the rights of property ownership as the result of issues beyond a property owners control. To state that a governing body is going to restrict use, should not be used as a control mechanism over a landowner without making every allowance possible to maintain the zone.

IDEAS based on preserving farmland.

- A. **Additional Residences on same deed lots** - if the intent is to preserve farmland for use as farms in this zone a logical conclusion would be to encourage farms to stay in the family. Since few farms in this area survive the death or sale of a single owner operator, paving the way for family members to live in separate dwellings on a single deed lot as other family members would help to facilitate the goal of the zone. Lancaster County is a great example of the occupation of several generations of a family on one farm creating a compound effect that is both charming and efficient while preserving the open spaces.
- B. **Farm Related Businesses** – nationally few small farms are able to survive solely on the basis of agriculture. Restricting the zone to farm related businesses to only proprietors of the farm or it's employees is counterproductive to the intent of the zone. Allowing a farmer to utilize a portion of his land to create a revenue stream to help support his agricultural pursuits could help him to preserve the farm and the zone.
- C. **Road Stands** –restricting a road stand to selling at least 50% of produce or a product produced on the property is again counterproductive to the zone and more importantly does not take advantage of an important resource of the township. It unnecessarily restricts a possible revenue stream to help support a farm and forces dollars out of the township. In all actuality in our case it means leaving the township to purchase at stands that do not have these restrictions. It certainly cannot hurt the intent of the zone to allow a road stand to sell a multitude of produce and farm or food related products by either the owner or a non-owner other than an employee.
- D. **Accessory Building height and setback restrictions** - the current 35-foot height restriction is a paradox to preserving open spaces. In addition this height restriction on all non-farm buildings or structures makes no allowances for farm type buildings (i.e. barn like structures) to be built for secondary businesses. Height restrictions are intended to stop interference with surrounding views and structures. Allowing accessory buildings on large tracts of land above the current 35-foot restriction interferes with neither. (Example I cannot technically buy a large barn and have it dissembled and rebuilt on my farm if it is not to be used for agriculture.

- E. **The use of Accessory Buildings** – should allow by right the use for any business allowed in adjoining or like zones and not be limited to farm related activities.
- F. **No /Low Impact Home Business** – I would like us to consider what exactly is the impact of a more than No or Low impact business? Who is the impact on in zones with larger tracts of land? For example a farm on Tulpehocken road is limited on the impact of a business on a road that already has heavy truck traffic?
- G. **Intensive Agricultural** – What is the intent of this ordinance definition as it relates to the restriction of farm use? For example does this ordinance restrict an organic chicken free range operation of a 100 chickens on a ten acre tract? Lets make it attractive for potential land buyers to buy farms here by allowing more alternative uses of the land.

The above discussion points are oriented towards preserving the AP as farmland because that is the stated intent of the zone as it currently stands in our ordinances. An in depth discussion on how to preserve this zone for open spaces is probably more relevant to the actual condition of the zone.

While discussing this I hope to visit areas of other zones that maybe affected by how we regulate farms and their uses. I.E. the designation of farm animals, passive agriculture and so forth.

I would like to ask the planning commission to schedule workshops so that this process can be expedited faster than one meeting per month. It would be helpful to have one workshop for each zone under discussion.