MEETING MINUTES
CENTRE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
October 16, 2007

Members Present: Bob Corman, Chairman; Freddie Persic, Vice Chairman; Kevin Abbey, Secretary; Cecil Irvin; Tom Hoover and Jack Shannon

Members Absent: Tom Poorman

Staff Present: Chris Price; Anson Burwell; Chris Schnure and Mary Wheeler

Others Present: Lauren Borse, Penn State Geography Student; Ann Danahy, Centre Daily Times

1. Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Corman called the meeting of the Centre County Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Citizen Comment Period

None

3. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Persic to approve the minutes of September 18, 2007, seconded by Mr. Shannon. Motion carried.

4. Planning Commission Member Updates

None

5. Old Business

Mr. Price reminded the Planning Commission that at last month’s meeting he briefly discussed Rush Township’s Draft Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Price noted that Mr. Abbey had questioned the role of the Planning staff versus the policy makers (i.e. the Planning Commission and the Commissioners) in reviewing such Plans. Mr. Price responded that the staff provided technical review as per the MPC, and that policy issues such as consistency determination, etc. were made by the policy makers. Mr. Price also noted his intent to share staff’s comments with the Planning Commission, and those comments were distributed and discussed (Attachment #1). The comments were made regarding elements that have changed since the Township originally adopted their Plan in 2006 and principally concerning the Township’s request to examine an inter-connection between I-80 and Route 504 which goes through Black Moshannon, consistency of the draft Plan with the Township's recently adopted Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and some general recommendations...
regarding language in the draft Plan related to the Township’s merger with South Philipsburg. Rush Township has scheduled a public hearing for Thursday, October 18th.

6. **New Business**

Mr. Price discussed the development review roles and responsibilities of the County Planning Commission in relation to the municipal Planning Commission and governing body review processes. In general, by the time a plan reaches our office, it meets local ordinances and there is not a tremendous amount of opportunity for “big-picture” planning policy level input. At that point, we are simply administering the County’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and providing our best available guidance. Staff recognizes the need to better engage the County Planning Commission in the development of municipal and regional Comprehensive Plans and zoning ordinances so that they can have meaningful comments during the policy-making stage that will ultimately translate into sound planning practices in the development review stage. In general, there probably needs to be a better policy level forum regarding agricultural preservation, infrastructure development, etc. By providing the policy level input, we can hopefully avoid some of the frustrations that have been occurring at the development review stage and we can build relationships with our municipalities and planning regions.

Chairman Corman stated that in Potter Township, they are very interested in protecting the prime agricultural soils. It is important to try and keep the prime agricultural farms in perpetuity.

Mr. Irvin questioned if the planning office is consulted when a township doesn’t have a zoning ordinance?

Mr. Price stated that it depends on the situation. If you are adopting or amending a zoning ordinance you are required to send it to us for review and comment. For municipalities that don’t have zoning, we have different levels of participation in the planning process. For most of them the only participation is when a land development plan comes in for review. However, if there is a large-scale infrastructure improvement involved, the state or federal government may require review and comment by the County Planning Commission.

Mr. Irvin questioned if a lot of the municipalities have an agriculture zone in their ordinance?

Mr. Price stated that Ferguson Township has the best in the county and perhaps in central Pennsylvania. Some municipalities are getting better. The draft Nittany Valley Zoning Ordinance that the staff wrote for the region here is very good in that it contains a true preservation zone for prime agricultural soils. Not every farm is in the true preservation zone. The protection zone really targets prime agricultural soils. We are also trying to advance regional transfer of development rights programs. It is getting better as people are becoming more aware of it and are starting to come to the realization that it is time to do something. Most often when the municipality decides to do something, they do contact us. We will then help them rewrite their zoning ordinance or put them in touch with someone who can. Everyone who is either drafting or has adopted them within the past year has put in an agricultural protection zone.

Mr. Irvin stated that Ferguson Township put one in their ordinance 32 years ago and Ferguson Township doesn’t have any of the shotgun development out there like the Meadows or Fairbrook that we have had sewer problems with. Ferguson Township is encouraging the development within the reach of the sewer line.
Mr. Price stated that he is encouraging municipalities that don’t have water and sewer and don’t want it, to still utilize the agricultural preservation tools available to them including transfer of development rights (TDR’S) and land use planning practices that encourage sewage planning first and lot lay-out second. By doing your sewage planning up-front, you can often maximize densities, reduce infrastructure costs and impervious coverage, and preserve larger contiguous tracts of land.

Ms. Persic questioned how proactive we are in getting information like this out to the municipalities before they write their ordinances, so they are aware of these things. Many of the municipal officials are elected and have no background in this and they are actually learning on the job.

Mr. Price stated that staff has done a couple of regional forums on TDR’s and in the Nittany Valley we are writing these elements into local and regional plans and ordinances. There is a lot of awareness about this issue now and frankly the first charge that municipalities often give us is agricultural preservation. In the Nittany Valley, we built our planning policies around two goals, density building in and around Bellefonte and agricultural preservation everywhere else. So when we have people approach us, it has been a bit easier because they are willing and eager participants. For people that have more of a hands off approach and aren’t considering zoning or planning and aren’t receptive to a regional approach, that is the tougher nut to crack. However, it is getting better all the time. For example, in the Penns Valley, I would have never 5 years ago have guessed that they would be where they are right now in terms of inter-municipal cooperation, regional land use planning, etc. In the Upper Bald Eagle Valley Region, a Council of Government (COG) was recently formed. We are in the “golden age” of regional planning in Centre County which allows us to do more planning with fewer resources because we can go out and make a presentation to six municipalities much easier than we can make six individual presentations. It is paying dividends.

Ms. Persic felt that it would be beneficial to municipal elected officials if we could develop a newsletter format to identify a current problem or challenge and discuss it.

Chairman Corman stated that Gregg Township adopted zoning after they realized what was happening within their municipality and the need to make a tight zoning ordinance to protect prime soils. They have done a great job.

Mr. Price stated that he wants to provide the planning commission members with ample opportunities to participate in these discussions so you are not as frustrated when land development plans come in and it feels like there is nothing that can be done.

Chairman Corman called for the removal of Fox Ridge Subdivision from the table for discussion.

Mr. Abbey stated that it is critically important that we be as neighborly as possible, because we don’t have a vested interest in being detached, removed or withdrawn in these discussions. Generally, when these things come up, the County Planning Office has been seen as positive and helpful and I would like to see that we continue and build upon that because there is nothing to be gained by being adversarial. Mr. Price’s point is very well taken; that if a municipality gets so far down the road with its review and decision making and then we come in, it is often hard to put it in reverse. People have done engineering and they have vested interest, they have considered certain things and I understand that, but we want to be in the process.

Mr. Burwell concurred. We need to be up front looking at the policy and not try to change that, because looking at Kerstetter Estates, Brookshire and Deerhaven, these are all prime agricultural soils and they are zoned for that land use and that is how it was sold and that is being developed and now we react instead of proact and this issue with the Fox Ridge Subdivision is that we react to the
plan but the vision of some of the planning commission members versus some of the local governing body officials versus the planning staff versus the general public on the street, it is a little bit different, so where does that need to be addressed. It needs to be addressed at the policy picture.

Chairman Corman questioned again if the Fox Ridge Subdivision Plan could be brought off the table for discussion.

A motion was made by Ms. Persic to bring the Fox Ridge Subdivision Plan off of the table for discussion, seconded by Mr. Abbey. Motion carried.

Mr. Burwell passed out the information that he received this afternoon from Benner Township (Attachment #3).

Mr. Abbey suggested that we continue to follow through with the meetings with State College Borough Water Authority, the neighboring property owner and the Village of Nittany Glen so that we have the necessary feedback to make an informed decision.

Discussion ensued.

Review / Approval of Subdivision and Land Development Plans – Anson Burwell & Chris Schnure

Subdivisions:

1. Fox Ridge Subdivision
   Preliminary Plan
   11-Lots (Residential)
   Benner Township

Discussion ensued.

After a lengthy discussion:

Ms. Persic made a motion to table this plan with the intent to revisit and take action at November 20, 2007 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Mr. Abbey. Motion carried.

Land Developments:

None provided for this planning cycle.

2. Hunter Ridge Subdivision
   Final Plan
   13-Lots (Seasonal Residential)
   Burnside & Snow Shoe Townships

A motion was made by Mr. Abbey and seconded by Mr. Irvin to approve staff’s recommendation of Conditional Final Approval of the above-mentioned Plan. Motion carried.

Time Extension Requests:
• Grove Park Subdivision, Phase 2 (CFA)  File No. 289-06
  Benner Township.................................................................3rd Request (No Fee Required)

• The Restek Corp. L. D. -- Manufacturing Building Addition (CFA)  File No. 286-06
  Benner Township.................................................................3rd Request (No Fee Required)

• Piper Path Subdivision Plan (CFA)  File No. 164-05
  Snow Shoe Township..............................................................9th Request ($300.00 Fee Required)

Note:  CPA = Conditional Preliminary Plan Approval
       CFA = Conditional Final Plan Approval

A motion was made by Mr. Shannon and seconded by Ms. Persic to approve the
above-mentioned Time Extensions.  Motion carried.

October’s Subcommittee meeting:

Mr. Burwell questioned the members to see who would be willing to attend the monthly Sub-
Committee meeting on October 25th @ 4:00 p.m. in the Planning office.  Ms. Persic and Mr. Corman
both said they could attend.

8. Assistant Director’s Report and Other Matters to Come Before the Commission

Mr. Price stated that Act 44 – Tolling of I-80 was the topic of discussion at the CBICC luncheon today
between McCormick Taylor who is a consultant for the State and the Turnpike Commission and
Congressman Peterson gave his perspective.  There was also a representative from the Turnpike
Commission.  It was very informative.  The previous policy action of the MPO was that if you are
going to toll anything, why not toll everything, why is it just I-80.  Representative Peterson agrees with
that perspective.  The crux of the discussion was that more time needs to be taken to study additional
alternatives before this takes place.  No one debates that there is more money necessary to take care
of the highways and bridges, but the general consensus was more time needs to be taken to study
the alternatives.

With no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman Corman adjourned the meeting
at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher M. Price
Assistant Director

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THESE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AT THE NOVEMBER 20, 2007
CENTRE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING.