TOWNSHIP OF INDIANA
PLANNING COMMISSION

MARCH 27, 2024

The regular meeting of the Indiana Township Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Michael Rouggie with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was recorded on audio cassette.

Mr. Rouggie welcomed new Planning Commission Member Kevin McKeegan from District #5 (Fairview).

The roll was called and Planning Commission Members present were Peter Blume, Kevin McKeegan, Michael Rouggie, and Daniel Taylor. Preston Moore did not attend. Also in attendance were Code Enforcement Officer Jeffrey S. Curti, Recording Secretary Jacquelyn Rouggie, Township Engineer Daniel Slagle from Nichols & Slagle Engineering, and Solicitor Gavin Robb, Esq. from Tucker Arensberg Attorneys.

APPROVED

REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Mr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blume, to approve the February 28, 2024, Reorganization Meeting Minutes as presented. Mr. McKeegan abstained from voting. Motion carried, with Mr. McKeegan abstaining.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

RICHMONT ESTATES 2nd AMENDMENT - MINOR SUBDIVISION

Commission Members were once again presented with a plan to re-subdivide Lots #130 & #131 by adjusting the rear property lines, and adding it to the open space (722-L-337) for the purpose of separating the stormwater pond area from the residential lots. The Richmont Estates Subdivision is located off of Rich Hill Road, approximately 0.4 miles north of the intersection with Jacoby Road. It is located in an "MDR" Medium Density Residential Zoning District. Mark Schmidt from Hampton Technical Associates was present to represent the Applicant - Richmont Estates Homeowners Association (Frank Zokaites).

Mr. Schmidt said a drafting error was made on the previously submitted plans. It was corrected and new plans were submitted. He said he spoke with the owners of both Lots #130 & #131 and they are satisfied with the new, revised plans.

Mr. Slagle confirmed there was a discrepancy found on the previous plans, and the property was re-surveyed. Mr. Slagle said he then produced a new comment letter, dated March 21, 2024.

Mr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blume, recommending APPROVAL of the "RICHMONT ESTATES 2ND AMENDMENT - MINOR SUBDIVISION" conditioned upon any outstanding items in the Engineer's Letter dated March, 21, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

REVISIONS TO THE PRD SECTION OF THE TOWNSHIP'S ZONING ORDINANCE #368

Mr. Slagle said comments have been received and reviewed from almost every Member of the Planning Commission. He thanked Mr. McKeegan for his recent input. He said Mr. McKeegan "re-structured" the Township's current version of the PRD section of the Zoning Ordinance, but the intent of most of the items remained unchanged. Mr. Slagle suggested they use Mr. McKeegan's clean version of the updates and incorporate it into the current document they are reviewing. He asked Planning Commission Members to review Mr. McKeegan's submittal and review it for changes and/or suggestions prior to the next Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Taylor said the Planning Commission has reviewed concerns voiced by the audience at past meetings, and have incorporated a lot of them into the revised Ordinance. The other Members agreed. Mr. Taylor said they are currently trying to tighten up anything that is ambiguous, and are trying to be harmonious to the surrounding areas. Mr. Blume said they are not prohibiting PRD's in the Township, but just tightening up this section of the existing Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Taylor said the Township's Comprehensive Plan, as well as various comments, were considered, including Open Space areas, etc. Mr. Slagle agreed. He said they do not plan to eliminate "Voting District #5" from the Ordinance; he said the Ordinance is divided by Zoning Districts, not Voting Districts. He said the intent of allowing PRD's is to permit them in areas where issues regarding density restrictions, difficult topography of the land, as well as other items, need to be considered.

Mr. McKeegan thanked the other Commission Members, the Engineer, Solicitor, and Code Enforcement Officer for taking into consideration the version of the Ordinance he put together. He said he moved the standards for PRD's to the front of the PRD Section of the Ordinance, and moved the requirements to the end. He said after reviewing the current Ordinance, and working with it over the past years, he found it hard to understand and follow the way it stood. He also noted that he understood the Township Board of Supervisor's have the ability to grant waivers and modifications to the Ordinance, on an as-needed basis. Mr. McKeegan said he feels the Township needs to be able to provide all types of housing options at various price levels, while preserving the locations of habitats, wetlands, etc. of the existing community. Mr. Rouggie said he feels the main goal of modifying the PRD section of the Ordinance is to reduce and/or eliminate the number of waivers that are requested by Developers.

Mr. Robb said he feels they are getting close to having a document ready for review. The Commission Members agreed. Mr. Taylor said he feels that PRD's should not allow density that is greater than what is permitted in a standard Multi-Subdivision. He also feels that town homes, smaller structures, "tiny houses", etc. need to be considered as well. He said consideration should be given to the square footage size of homes, and the types of homes should be similar to those already existing around new developments. Everyone agreed this is important. A discussion was held about preserving natural parts of parcels, buffers, open space, and other constraints. The topography in the area also needs to be considered. Mr. McKeegan said he feels nearby Marshall Township has a good Ordinance in place, and it seems to address a lot of Indiana Township's concerns into consideration.

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Everyone agreed that the Ordinances of surrounding municipalities should be looked at and considered. Mr. Slagle said Public Hearings asking for residents' comments are also helpful in providing input. Everyone also agreed that various types of homes need to be considered, while giving Developers an incentive to build within the Township. Environmental concerns and fees need to be considered, such as fees imposed for the removal and/or replacement of trees. It was agreed that there will be balances, as well as tradeoffs, involved when considering new development proposals. Mr. Slagle said the revisions to the Township's SALDO has proven to help keep the costs of homes to be affordable within the Township. Mr. Robb thanked resident Chris Capone for the valuable input he provided by comparing what surrounding municipalities have in their Ordinances, compared with what Indiana Township has in its Ordinance. Mr. Slagle handed out a document he put together entitled "Comparison with O'Hara Township" and discussed areas that he would like the Members to consider. Mr. Taylor asked that when documents are put together for the Members to review, it would be helpful if they could be given a week or two prior to the Meeting to look them over. Mr. Curti said he would do his best to ensure this happens, but said sometimes it is difficult to do. Mr. Slagle asked Mr. McKeegan if he could convert the document to a "Word" document version and share it with the other Planning Commission Members, the Solicitor, the Code Enforcement Officer, and himself so they could easily submit their comments and/or changes.

Chairman Rouggie opened the meeting for Public Comment.

Chris Capone of 3606 Windsor Court, asked when the public could see the "working" document of the revised PRD section of the Ordinance. Mr. Slagle said he believes around May or June. Mr. Capone said he feels it would be good to get it out for the public's review as soon as possible, to allow residents to consider flexibility and compatibility with surrounding municipalities. He said he feels a lot of consideration should be given to parking issues, such as easements for streets, sidewalks, etc. He said in a lot of developments, there does not seem to be enough room for parking. Mr. Curti agreed, and said a lot of people use their garages for storage, instead of parking. Mr. Capone asked that consideration be given for more parking areas and off-street overflow parking within developments.

Brandice Miller of 2022 Olivetre Drive, said she agreed with a lot of Mr. Capone's concerns, especially regarding parking. She explained the problems they have in the development where she resides: Richmont Estates. She also had concerns regarding fencing around Detention Basins, and what is considered to be allowed in Open Space areas by making it more "useable" space and not just steep slopes.

Donna Ludwig of 32 Oak Knoll Drive, said she feels Developers should be charged a fee for the trees that they cut down. She said she also feels the Board of Supervisors' should listen to the residents.

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Linda Massarelli of 5 Pine Creek Drive, asked why the public was not told that Ms. Lachina was leaving her position as a Planning Commission Member. Mr. Curti said it is not up to the Planning Commission to inform the public when someone decides to leave their position. Mr. Curti said when he found out, he did mention it to Supervisor Hertweck when they had a meeting shortly after he received notice of Ms. Lachina's departure. Mr. Capone said Mr. Curti notified him that there was a vacancy on the Planning Commission. Mr. Curti said Mr. McKeegan had also expressed interest in serving on the Commission. Both gentlemen submitted "Letters of Interest" to the Township Manager to fill the vacancy in the Fairview District #5.

Chris Marzec of 325 Guys Run Road, said he feels the biggest issue with developments is the amount of density that is permitted. Mr. Robb said the acreage of the property is a big determination in calculating what a permitted density could be. Mr. Slagle said a lot of information is also available in the Township's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Slagle said the Township's Subdivision Ordinance also puts limitations on permissible densities. A discussion was held between Commission Members and Mr. Marzec regarding density issues, and how various things are taken into consideration. Mr. Marzec said his main concern includes how densities affect the impact on schools, traffic, etc.

Mr. McKeegan asked if items that are being viewed by the Planning Commission at the Meetings could be displayed on the TV screens so the residents in attendance could also view what was being considered. Mr. Robb said the idea is to discuss things that are presented, and to not unintentionally mislead the public. Ms. Massarelli asked why a "draft" of the document is not available for the public to view. Mr. Robb said it is still a "working document" at this point. He said it is made public once a Public Hearing is scheduled, and after it is sent back to the Board of Supervisors for their review and consideration. Mr. Slagle said a proposed "revised copy" of the PRD Section was previously sent to the Board; however, the Board sent it back to the Planning Commission and asked that it be reviewed further.

A conversation was held between Commission Members and the audience regarding concerns about "off-street parking", entrances/exits into Developments, the size of roadways and cul-de-sacs, etc.

Mr. Robb said under the PA State "Sunshine Act", Boards and Commissions are limited to taking action only on items that are listed on the Agenda. Mr. McKeegan said he recently attended a "10 Million Tree" presentation at nearby Beechwood Farms, which he found very informative, and he wanted the public to be aware that such presentations exist for them to consider attending. Mr. Taylor feels items such as the preservation of trees, would be good topic for the public to discuss with the Park and Recreation/Shade Tree Commission at their meetings.

No formal action was taken regarding the proposed PRD Revisions. Commission Members agreed they would like to have more time to review the information that was given to them, and to also take into account the public's suggestions and comments.

APPROVED

CORRESPONDENCE

2023 PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

Each Commission Member received a copy of the Planning Commission's Annual Report for 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blume, to adjourn the March 27, 2024, Planning Commission Regular Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Jacquelyn A. Rouggie
Recording Secretary

APPROVED