

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
Planning Commission Meeting
April 6, 2010 7:00 pm

Present: Lorin Nauman, Danelle Del Corso, Bob Eberhart, Larry Fennessey, John Stevens
Absent: Joe Tylka, Jordan Finkelstein, Sebastian DeGregorio
Others present: Susan Steele, Township Manager; Dave Piper, Zoning Officer; John Heim, property owner; Michael Pratt, Keller Engineers; Mark Maloney, Halfmoon Acres; Melissa Gartner, recording secretary

1. Call To Order

Chair Lorin Nauman called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Approval of March 16, 2010 Minutes

Motion. Mr. Fennessey moved to approve the minutes of March 16, 2010. Mr. Stevens seconded. Vote: 5-0.

4. Reports

a. BOS Update

Ms. Steele reported that there will be a joint BOS/PC work session for the Halfmoon Acres project on Thursday, April 8, to discuss the regional impact of the Halfmoon Acres wastewater treatment facility, etc.

She did not attend the Board of Supervisors' meeting on March 25. On the 25th, the Board approved the Wildlife Corridor after a public hearing. They also approved the five properties that the PC had recommended for the Open Space program.

At the time, Ms. Steele was attending her regional ICMA meeting in Baltimore (NY, PA, VA, MD). There was discussion on the recession's impact on government and opportunities to create more transparency and increased involvement in government at the local level. There was also discussion on how to incorporate a more engaging/less oppositional feeling in regular meetings. She is going to suggest that at the April 8 meeting, the BOS and PC members sit interspersed to increase discussion and decrease formality. Since this is a work session and not a formal meeting, this might encourage more discussion.

b. Centre Region Update

Mr. DeGregorio is recovering from his auto accident and could not attend this evening's meeting. He's currently undergoing testing and treatment; he appreciates all of the good wishes for a speedy recovery.

Ms. Steele updated the PC on Centre Region information. The next Halfmoon-Patton Township Steering Committee meeting will be held on April 13 at the Halfmoon Township building.

c. Zoning Officer's Report

Mr. Piper was present. He reported that they issued very few permits this year compared to previous years, but is hoping that the economy will pick up and encourage owners to start new projects.

5. Planning Module and Nonbuilding Waiver for John Heim property

Mr. John Heim presented a revision to an existing proposal for a 2-lot subdivision and a sewage planning module. This would be separate from the sewage system at the Brown farm farmhouse. He would like to separate the agricultural portion of that site with the nonbuilding waiver agricultural exception and move forward with the subdivision. This plan has decreased from a 24-lot to an 8-lot to a 2-lot subdivision and all soil analyses have been completed.

Mr. Piper stated that the new sewage officer recommended approval of the nonbuilding waiver. Mr. Heim and Mr. Piper will run a hydraulic loading test to check the existing system around the farmhouse for any malfunctions as soon as the weather is more cooperative. Mr. Piper explained to PC members several examples of what DEP considers to be malfunctions: sewage effluent backs up into home, visible sewage on property, etc. Mr. Eberhart questioned whether the subdivision depends on the existing sewage system, and Mr. Piper clarified that this would be for an agricultural separation.

The nonbuilding waiver is a request to use the land for agricultural purposes with no new building/construction planned.

Motion. Mr. Fennessey moved to approve the planning module. Mr. Stevens seconded. Vote: 5-0.

Mr. Nauman and Mr. Fennessey signed the plan to be recorded.

6. BARRCO LLC, Phase I Sketch Plan Review

Mr. Michael Pratt, Keller Engineers, presented a plan for Dr. Bob Barr of BARRCO, LLC for property at the corner of Houtz and Route 550. He would like to create 4-5 single-family lots along Houtz Lane, but since Houtz Lane is a single-access road, the next step would be to create the Darrich Court extension and a looping street to move the single-access point farther back on Houtz Lane. There are 23 proposed 2-acre lots on the almost 50 acre plot. This parcel is zoned both Village and R-1.

Mr. Piper could not locate the Village ordinance on the number of lots that could be added along a single-access road.

PC members had a lively discussion on access to Route 550, traffic through the development, and possibly offsetting the new development's looping street so it does not line up with Darrich Court (reduce speeding and prevent motorists from driving through the intersection). They also discussed the Houtz/550 intersection and its one-way section, and the possibility of widening the intersection for two-way traffic.

Currently, Dr. Barr does not own the piece of land to the east that would connect the development with Route 550. It is owned by Mr. Graham.

Mr. Piper said this plan does meet the ordinance requirements. Perc tests will also have an impact on how the lots are laid out.

Mr. Pratt presented this plan tonight for feedback on the initial plan. He will take back the comments from the PC and discuss them with Dr. Barr.

The recording secretary made a public comment requesting that the development road not line up with Darrich Court. Cars on Shanelly Drive are already running the stop sign at the other end of Darrich Court. Offsetting the road would slow traffic through a primarily residential area where many children live.

7. Manager's Update on Act 153 Property Applications and the Wildlife Corridor purchase

As stated in the BOS update, the Board approved the Wildlife Corridor and the five properties that the PC had recommended for the Open Space program.

8. Halfmoon Township 2010 Comprehensive Plan Meeting 3/17/10

On Thursday, March 17, representatives of the CRPA staff and citizens convened to discuss the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. There was a good turnout for the evening. Citizen comments focused on increasing bike routes through the township, preserving the large-lot pattern, increasing commercial opportunities, and maintaining the agricultural "feel" of the township.

9. Joint Supervisors and Planning Commission Meeting, Thursday 4/8/10

Ms. Steele stated the BOS business meeting should run from 7-8 p.m. and then everyone move into the joint work session. CNET will be recording, beginning at 7 p.m. and continuing through the work session.

The work session would start with staff recommendation (an RVD-I module with an RVD-III overlay contingent upon providing 150 EDUs). Not all members of the BOS are ready for that, which is why the work session is important.

Mr. Piper explained the chicken-and-egg situation: the township cannot tell a developer what kind of sewage system must be used, but they can put an overlay on requiring a sewage treatment plant. RVD-I (lower density) would not need the treatment plant, but if the developer wants the higher density RVD-III, then the township can approve after the treatment plant module is approved by DEP.

Mr. Eberhart clarified that the township wants to see that Mr. Maloney's plan would handle the minimum 150 EDUs before they will approve RVD-III.

Ms. Del Corso asked about the negative for this overlay plan. Mr. Piper explained there isn't really a negative. In his opinion, this would be a protection for the township: if Mr. Maloney's MBR plant can't handle the sewage for a high density area, the township doesn't have to upgrade the RVD-I to RVD-III.

Mr. Piper also clarified that the ordinance language would state approximately a certain percentage of the development must be serviced by the single treatment plant. Mr. Stevens asked how many gallons per day would equal 150 EDUs. Mr. Piper and Ms. Steele stated 50,000. Mr. Stevens then asked if Mr. Maloney saw that the plant couldn't handle more than 50,000 gallons of water, what would it mean

for further expansion of Halfmoon Acres? Mr. Maloney stated that he could not continue to develop until he found a different way to process that water. According to Mr. Maloney, the carrying capacity of the land is the limiting factor, not the zoning.

Mr. Stevens reviewed concerns from the past, if there were problems with a major sewage system (i.e., it failed), the township would have to take it over and all township residents would have to pay. Ms. Steele agreed that the township would still be responsible to take over the facility.

Mr. Nauman asked if Mr. Maloney could afford to build the MBR treatment plant if the development does not go to RVD-III. Mr. Maloney stated that 600 EDUs is large enough to build a cost-effective MBR plant. Mr. Nauman asked, if Mr. Maloney didn't get the overlay, would it make financial sense to get the RVD-I? Mr. Maloney clarified that the RVD-I would allow for different types of housing (including townhomes).

Discussion will continue on Thursday.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Gartner
Recording Secretary