

SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

March 11, 2024

Minutes

Attendance: Keith Deussing – via zoom, Peter Brussock, Lesley Marino, Gretchen Rice, John Deandrea, Dan Fest, Adrian Max (Alternate Member), Maureen Carlton, (Township Solicitor), John Francis (Supervisor Liaison) – via zoom, Jean Weiss (Planning Commission Administrator)

Absent: Eric Cohen (Alternate Member), Amishi Castelli,

I. **Call to Order**

At 7:00 p.m., the Solebury Township Planning Commission meeting was called to order.

II. **Approval of Minutes – January 8, 2024 & February 12, 2024**

Upon a Motion made by Gretchen Rice, seconded by Lesley Marino the Solebury Township Planning Commission approved the January 8, 2024 meeting minutes.

Upon a Motion made by Gretchen Rice, seconded by John Deandrea the Solebury Township Planning Commission approved the February 12, 2024 meeting minutes.

III. **Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Farm Accessory Dwelling**

Peter Brussock gave a brief overview of the additional information provided by the Township Solicitors office.

Gretchen Rice expressed concern that the requirement of a conditional use is too onerous of a process for the farmers to go through. There does not appear to be a benefit to the farmers, currently if they comply with the ordinance and can cluster within the 20% they can just move forward but with this new ordinance they would still have to go through the conditional use process. In addition, what is the definition of a dwelling for agricultural workers, is it a 3-bedroom dwelling for a family, or a 12-bedroom boarding house. There is no clear definition of what the actual structures for “Accessory Dwellings for Agricultural Works” entail.

If you read the December 12, 2023 Board of Supervisors meeting minutes, the Farm Committee recommended expansion allowances for multi-generational housing, accessory dwellings for workers and the retrofitting of existing farm structures for dormitory style housing, this ordinance does not do any of that but it also doesn't define what it does do.

Lesley Marino reiterated, the ordinance needs to have defined verbiage of an agricultural worker dwelling.

Lesley Marino asked the question, if a farm that wanted to built an accessory dwelling for agricultural workers right now outside the 20% clustering would they we allowed to do so by obtaining a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board.

Maureen Carlton stated yes, they could apply for a variance for the clustering.

Lesley Marino asked, then if there is already a mechanism in place for relief then why are we re-writing an ordinance.

Maureen Carlton stated it is an easier process for the farmers to go through the conditional use process then to go to the Zoning Hearing Board for a variance.

Keith Deussing reiterated that there is no history of any applications coming to the Township to warrant this change, that it seems this change was initiated by one property owner.

John Francis stated that it was not initiated by one property owner, it was initiated by the Board of Supervisors and discussed with the Farm Committee to try to help them and they agreed. It was not the result of any specific project.

Maureen Carlton stated this is a first step with this ordinance that later will be added to as additional items need to be added/changed or clarified.

Gretchen Rice expressed a concern with making a recommendation of approval for adoption of an ordinance that is incomplete and has questions outstanding and ultimately still addressing this in the big picture, it seems like a waste and to me it doesn't make sense certainly not without the proper definition of what they going to be able to do.

Lesley Marino asked for clarification on the conditional use process.

Peter Brussock asked if the Board of Supervisors could reduce the application fee and waive the escrow.

Upon a Motion made by Peter Brussock, seconded by Dan Fest the Solebury Township Planning Commission recommends approval of the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Farm Accessory Dwellings conditioned upon inclusion of key definitions for accessory dwellings for agricultural workers, consideration of reduction of fees and escrows that future follow along ordinances consistent with this initiative should include consideration of the shortcomings, gaps and the understanding of implementation of such ordinances and the actual benefits to farmers.

Motion passed 4-2

IV. Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Short-Term Rentals/Air B&B

Peter Brussock gave a brief overview of the proposed ordinance amendment.

Maureen Carlton reiterated that this is a minor amendment to clarify that all zoning districts are covered within the ordinance.

Keith Deussing asked for clarification on primary residence, if a property owner states their main residence is in Florida once this ordinance is in effect they will no longer be able to obtain a conditional use for an Air B&B.

Maureen Carlton replied yes if that is not their primary residence than they would not be able to have the Air B&B unless they applied for a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board and if approved, they would then go for the conditional use approval.

John Frances reiterated the main issues tonight is to add the primary residence to the current ordinance.

Lesley Marino asked if the 6-month term could be changed to a shorter term.

Maureen Carlton commented that by reducing the term of short-term could have a negative impact and not a positive impact.

Upon a Motion made by Gretchen Rice, seconded by Lesley Marino the Solebury Township Planning Commission recommends approval of the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Short-Term Rentals/Air B&B.

Motion passed 6-0

v. Upcoming PC Training

Peter Brussock commented Mark Freed has been working on a power point presentation for PC training.

vi. Comprehensive Plan

Peter Brussock gave a brief overview of the February 28, 2024 Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting.

vii. EAC Liaison

Peter Brussock asked for a committee volunteer to attend/follow what is going on with the EAC/Sustainability Committee. The committee is working on a lot of things parallel to what we have been doing and have experience with from working on the sustainability matrix.

viii. Adjournment

Upon a Motion made by Gretchen Rice the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Weiss
Planning Commission Administrator, Solebury Township