

**RICE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
RICE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
3000 CHUCH ROAD
MOUNTAIN TOP, PA 18707**

**MINUTES
December 9, 2015**

The regular monthly meeting of the Rice Township Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, December 9, 2015.

ROLL CALL:
Tom Romanyshyn--Here
Ann Kijek--Absent
Kevin Rogan--Absent
Ray Fedor--Here
Bob Smith--Here

Also in attendance were: Marcia Thomas, Solicitor Jack Dean, Consultant Jack Varaly, and Secretary Alicia Stier

Chairperson, Ray Fedor, calls meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (October 2015):

Motion by Bob Smith, second by Tom Romanyshyn,
All in favor.

MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Jack Varaly--Comprehensive Plan/Community Survey

Mr. Varaly discussed the Community Survey, which will be conducted via the Survey Monkey website. He explained how the survey questions were created and gave a brief overview of the proposed survey. Mr. Varaly stated that there should be a public outreach in order to yield responses from residents. He added that this method is more financially feasible than previous Community Surveys, which were conducted via USPS.

Marcia Thomas stated that advertising has already been approved and that paper surveys will be available for residents unable to utilize a computer. Secretary Stier stated that paper surveys were discussed for the gypsy moth data collection, but it is possible to utilize them for the Community Survey as well. She stated that the first step is to finalize the questions so that the survey can be built on the website.

Chairman Fedor asked Mr. Varaly if he feels the questions cover all necessary data collection topics; Mr. Varaly stated that the survey omits questions pertaining to issues uncontrollable by the Township.

Mr. Varaly stated that the results of the survey will become a public document once he has completed the analysis. It will be up to the Board of Supervisors to react to and correct issues brought up in survey answers. He stated that the results could assist the Board in creating future budgets. Marcia Thomas verified that the Board of Supervisors approved utilizing Survey Monkey for this purpose.

Bob Smith asked for clarification on the timeframe for data collection. Chairman Fedor suggested voting on the process tonight, letting the Board of Supervisors vote on it, then give the public a timeframe of 30 days in which to complete the survey.

Mr. Varaly explained that Survey Monkey has the ability to recognize IP addresses, in case someone decides to submit multiple surveys, either good or bad. Secretary Stier pointed out that providing paper surveys creates a possible issue with multiple submissions, as we would not be able to track the responses as closely. She also stated that the purpose of IP address recognition is to filter abusive responses; the Township should be aware that public/library computers may be used, as well as shared computers in homes with multiple residents.

MOTION by Ray Fedor, second by Bob Smith, to forward the Community Survey to the Board of Supervisors with a positive recommendation.

All in favor.

MOTION CARRIED.

Secretary Stier is directed to add the Community Survey to the January 4th Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting Agenda. Jack Varaly stated that it should be advertised prior to the beginning of data collection, as well as at the midpoint of the 30 day survey period. Marcia Thomas stated that the Mountaintop Eagle would probably run it week after week for the Township in their calendar section. Ray Fedor asked about running the ad in a daily circulated paper, such as the Citizens Voice or the Times Leader. Secretary Stier stated that she usually advertises in the Citizens Voice and Marcia Thomas stated that it is the cheaper option of the two.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Jack Varaly--Zoning Ordinance Amendment (Political Signs)

Mr. Varaly discussed how the Ordinance may be amended. Political signs are permitted in all zoning districts, but may not be larger than 2' by 3', more than 4' off the ground or 8' high when attached to a structure. They may not be attached to any public utility poles or rights-of-way. They may not be posted more than 45 days in advance of the election, and must be taken down within the 15 days following the election.

Solicitor Dean verified that a refundable bond is in place in the amount of \$50. Tom Romanyshyn asked what the penalty is for non-compliance. Jack Varaly stated that there is a fine of \$500 per day for every day that the violation exists; the issue is that the Zoning Officer must give a reasonable amount of time for correction. Typically, if the violation is life threatening, the Zoning Officer will allow 30 days for correction. Anything the Zoning Officer does is appealable to the Zoning Hearing Board. Tom Romanyshyn pointed out that if an illegal sign is placed 30 days before an election, the

person could get away with it. Jack Varaly stated that the sign permit cost could be increased, and if the person is found in violation, he/she would forfeit the previously refundable permit fee. Solicitor Dean advised caution when increasing sign permit fees. Mr. Varaly stated that most municipalities do not address political signs in their Zoning Ordinance because the Board does not want to get involved. He believes this is why it was never enacted in Rice Township.

MOTION by Tom Romanyshyn, second by Ray Fedor, to give a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors in favor of Ordinance #2016-1.

All in favor.

MOTION CARRIED.

2. Susquehanna-Jenkins Rebuild Project

Solicitor Dean stated that all paperwork regarding this project must be passed on to the Engineer as soon as possible. Engineer Pasonick needs to respond to the extent that he can regarding whether or not the plan complies with the Rice Township Zoning Ordinance. Solicitor Dean stated that Engineer Pasonick should sent a letter with that determination. He stated that utility companies are usually exempt from local Ordinances, however, they should not be exempt from Stormwater Ordinances. He added that the map is unclear and that they should be required to obtain a Stormwater Permit.

Secretary Stier stated that she requested a Scope of Work from the person who signed the letter, as well as clarification on whether the company intended to repair the lines and/or the towers; to date, no one had returned her email. Solicitor Dean stated that under the utility law, the Township has 30 days to issue a response, so a response will probably not be given.

Solicitor Dean agreed to contact Engineer Pasonick and coordinate a response.

Marcia Thomas explained that the company has already conducted core-testing of the site without approval. They asked the Township for permission to cross Fire Department land, but since the Township does not own the land, permission could not be given.

3. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule for 2016

Commissioners were given a list of meeting dates for 2016: January 27, February 24, March 23, April 27, May 25, June 22, July 27, August 24, September 28, October 26, November 16, December 14. They agreed to a mandatory meeting on the 3rd month after not meeting for 2 consecutive months.

ADJOURNMENT:

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is Wednesday, January 27th, at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION by Tom Romanyshyn, second by Ray Fedor, to adjourn at 7:34 pm.

All in favor.

MOTION CARRIED.