

**JOINT MEETING
HILLTOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
PLANNING COMMISSION, AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF
REVIEW OF SCOPE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Monday, January 10, 2000
7:30PM**

The Joint Worksession meeting of the Hilltown Township Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and Professional Staff to discuss the scope of the Comprehensive Plan, was called to order by Chairman Kenneth B. Bennington at 7:32PM and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Also present: John S. Bender, Vice-Chairman, Supervisors
E. Diane Parks, Supervisor
Gregory J. Lippincott, Assistant Manager/Zoning Officer
C. Robert Wynn, Township Engineer
Francis X. Grabowski, Township Solicitor
Charles Guttenplan, Professional Planner
Andy Heinrich, Professional Traffic Engineer
John Kachline, Chairman, Planning Commission
Jack C. Fox, Planning Commission
Betty Snyder, Planning Commission
Jim Coyne, Planning Commission
Ken Beer, Planning Commission
Mike Beatrice, Planning Commission

Chairman Bennington announced that the worksession meeting of the Hilltown Township Board of Supervisors originally scheduled for this evening, January 10, 2000, was cancelled. Further, Chairman Bennington announced the Board of Supervisors met in Executive Session on Sunday, January 9, 2000 to discuss personnel matters.

Chairman Bennington advised the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the approach to revision of the 1990 Comprehensive Plan for Hilltown Township. A Scope of Work will be presented by Mr. Guttenplan and by the Planning Commission. Supervisor Parks will act as the facilitator this evening.

A. SUPERVISOR'S PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR 2000: Chairman Bennington explained that the Board of Supervisors has three priorities for the year 2000 –

1. Review and Update of Comprehensive Plan
2. Review and Update Zoning Ordinance
3. Review of Subdivision/Land Development Plans by all Boards and Authorities, preferably in sketch plan form
4. Skills refreshment – seminar and meeting attendance

Discussion took place concerning the legality of requiring initial sketch plan submission, prior to preliminary plan submission. Mr. Guttenplan encourages sketch plan submissions, because they tend to open up dialogue between Township boards/commissions and the applicant, with valuable input from the professional and administrative staff prior to preliminary submission. To make it mandatory to require sketch plans, Solicitor Grabowski noted changes would have to be made to the Ordinance, however the clock would then start. As Solicitor Grabowski sees it, the initial review of any plan, especially a sketch plan, is for concepts, ideas, and dialogue. Mr. Wynn does not represent any municipality that requires a sketch plan submission, prior to preliminary submission, and therefore, is not be familiar with any problems with the time frame that it might create. Mr. Wynn feels the preliminary plan submission is the most important phase of the entire planning process. Mr. Guttenplan also noted that the Municipalities Planning Code does not recognize sketch plans, and therefore it would be difficult to make sketch plan submission mandatory. Supervisor Bennington stated that the Township could encourage and recommend that developers provide a voluntary sketch plan submission in order to ease the planning process, since there would be Township input at the beginning of the process, rather than waiting for the preliminary submission. Mr. Guttenplan agreed, however the Planning Commission should not be required to spend a great deal of time at each of their meetings reviewing sketch plans when there are other plans that are time sensitive. Therefore, Mr. Guttenplan suggested that an informal administrative review committee be established for consideration of sketch plans. Supervisor Bennington feels the Township must be more proactive and less reactive. A lengthy discussion took place.

With regard to seminars and courses, Mr. Guttenplan mentioned a course that he teaches called "Basic Skills for Planning Commissions." This course is aimed primarily towards Planning Commission members, however he feels it is of value for other Township officials as well. The next meetings will be held on February 22nd and 29th, and March 7th in the evening at the Doylestown Borough Hall. Flyers will be provided to the Township within the next week.

B. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

1. Project Responsibility – Earlier in 1999, the Planning Commission spent a great deal of time preparing a first evolution plan which consists of roles, responsibilities, participants, etc.. It was agreed that the Planning Commission will have the overall responsibility for the Hilltown Township Comprehensive Plan.

Discussion took place as to who should be appointed to the role of project manager/coordinator in this process. It was agreed that Mr. Guttenplan should be appointed as project manager for preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.

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Supervisor Parks noted there are several groups or individuals specified in the Planning Commission's scope of work on Comprehensive Plan review, many who will have more than one task or more than one area of skill. Those groups include: Planning Commission, Friends of Hilltown, Civic Association, Board of Supervisors, Professional Planner, Park and Recreation Board, Open Space Committee, Township Engineer, Water and Sewer Authority, Traffic Engineer, and Township Solicitor. Supervisor Bender stated that Township residents and other "subject experts", such as the Chief of Police, the Director of Public Works, and local fire companies be included, on an as-needed basis. It was suggested that the School Board, the Pennridge Area Coordinating Committee, and the Historical Society be included as well.

It was agreed that the Core Group would consist of a member from each of the following groups - the Planning Commission, appointed residents, the Park and Recreation Board, the Board of Supervisors, the Open Space Committee, Friends of Hilltown, and the Civic Association. It was suggested that representation from the business community and the agricultural areas also be considered in the group of appointed residents. Discussion took place as to how often the Core Group should meet. As a management facilitation team, the Professional Planner, the Township Manager, and Township Staff will participate as required. The subject matter experts would include the Historical Society, School Board, Township Engineer, the Authority, Traffic Engineer, Township Solicitor, Fire Departments, Police Chief, and Director of Public Works.

It was determined that the first meeting of the Core Group of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force would be held on Wednesday, February 2, 2000 at 7:30PM. This meeting will include the assignment of basic roles and responsibilities, task review, establishment of a rough time line, and project coordination.

Mr. Guttenplan requested that a list of names and addresses of those appointed to the Core Group be forwarded to his office as soon as possible, so that copies of the agenda can be sent to those individuals.

A display advertisement seeking volunteers to serve on the Comprehensive Plan Task Force will be placed in two local newspapers. Discussion took place as to who will choose the Township residents to be appointed to the Core Group.

C. ZONING ORDINANCE: At a recent Zoning Hearing Board meeting where Mr. Guttenplan testified, Mr. Lippincott advised it became apparent that the Zoning Ordinance must be revised with regard to certain issues. Mr. Lippincott, Mr. Guttenplan, Mr. Horrocks, and Solicitor Wuerstle will determine those issues to be considered for revision, in conjunction with review of the Comprehensive Plan. For instance, high density uses in the PC-2 District, such as fast food restaurants; and the issue of two front yards, should be scrutinized. A list of possible revisions could be forwarded to the

Planning Commission for their recommendation, and then on to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

D. FAIR SHARE: Supervisor Bennington asked how to determine that the Township presently has its Fair Share of high density housing. Mr. Guttenplan commented a review of the demographics, projections, and past court decisions must take place, and then a determination is made based on those and other factors. Solicitor Grabowski advised the Supreme Court and Commonwealth Court created formulas as to how arrive at the decision of whether or not a municipality is in the path of growth, and if so, what criteria to look at. Discussion took place.

E. AGRICULTURAL SECURITY ZONE: Mr. Kachline reported on the status of the proposed Agricultural Security Zone. The Planning Commission reviewed the Bedminster Township Agricultural District plan and the permitted uses involved. A map of the proposed zone has been created by the Planning Commission and was presented. Such issues as minimum lot size and usage have been considered. Mr. Fox noted Bedminster Township has approximately 92% in their Agricultural District, and they have taken uses that are not permitted anywhere else in the Township and placed them in the Agricultural District. Hilltown Township already has those various uses permitted in other areas of the Township. The Planning Commission hopes to have documentation to the Board of Supervisors by the end of February.

F. FRONT YARD DEFINITION: Mr. Wynn explained that there has been some controversy involved with double frontage lots, lots that are subdivided in a development that have access to an internal roadway as well as some other arterial roadway. Mr. Wynn presented the proposed revision, adding a sentence to the definition of “Front Yard” which states “In the case of a double frontage lot, the front yard shall be required along the street which provides access to the lot. The remaining street frontage shall be considered a rear yard.” For example, if a property takes access from a new internal street abutting an arterial roadway such as Rt. 113, the rear of the dwelling (between the dwelling and Rt. 113) would be considered the rear yard, and not a front yard, for the purposes of zoning.

G. ROUND-TABLE FINAL REVIEW:

1. Mr. Wynn advised the Stormwater Management Ordinance for the Tohickon Creek Watershed is required to be adopted no later than April 28, 2000 in order to be in compliance with Act 167. At the same time, release rates are being established for the Perkiomen Creek Watershed. In 1991, the Township adopted what is now known as the Neshaminy Creek Stormwater Management Ordinance, which Mr. Wynn noted is woefully out of date. Bucks County forwarded a model Ordinance, including developed release rate districts for the entire watershed, arrived at through very complicated

measures and studies, however, that model Ordinance is not progressive with regard to Best Management Practices, which Mr. Wynn believes can be improved. Hilltown Township contains multiple watersheds. There are presently release rate districts for the Neshaminy Creek and a very small portion of the Township located in the Tohickon Creek, as well as the Perkiomen Creek. Stormwater issues are currently addressed in the Zoning Ordinance, the Subdivision Ordinance, and the Neshaminy Creek Stormwater Ordinance. Mr. Wynn had suggested to the County that all these Ordinances be replaced with one comprehensive Stormwater Management Ordinance for the Township, incorporating all the different watersheds. The County agreed that was a good idea. Hilltown Township can address this issue temporarily for the Perkiomen Creek by adopting the release rate district as the 100% release rate district. This means that post-development rates must equal pre-development rates for all the storms. Then, when the Perkiomen Creek Watershed Ordinance is done in a year or so, it could be amended to address those changes for that portion of the Township. Adopting a comprehensive stormwater management plan will also require adoption of changes to the Subdivision Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Wynn will prepare a draft of a comprehensive stormwater management plan for Planning Commission and Supervisor's review in February.

2. Mr. Lippincott stated much of the data from the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Fair Share will come from the 2000 Census, which is fast approaching. The more accurate the 2000 Census, the better the Comprehensive Plan and the Fair Share case will be.

3. Supervisor Bender is very encouraged by the progress made at tonight's meeting and feels the Township is off to a good start.

4. Mr. Coyne enjoyed this meeting and feels a great deal of ground has been covered. He believes the next step for the Comprehensive Plan is to prioritize the priorities.

5. Mrs. Snyder is seeking tentative dates for Mr. Tom Cahill, representing the Delaware River Keeper Network, to appear for discussion concerning stormwater management. Supervisor Bennington will be on medical leave for several weeks, and requested that a meeting not be arranged until late February.

6. Mr. Fox stated that the Planning Commission recommends that the Township Solicitor attend and represent the Township at the Heritage Building Group Zoning Hearing to be held in the near future. Heritage is seeking a variance to increase density and commercialism of the proposed farmer's market on the former C.D. Moyer property. Discussion took place. Once a submission for the Zoning Hearing Board is

made, Chairman Bennington commented the Board of Supervisors would determine if the Township Solicitor should be present at that Zoning Hearing.

7. Mr. Coyne requested that copies of written Zoning Hearing decisions be forwarded to each Planning Commission member prior to an applicant coming before them with a proposal. Discussion took place.

8. Mr. Guttenplan is happy to be a part of the process of revising the Comprehensive Plan and looks forward to working with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors on this project.

9. Supervisor Parks commented it is nice to get the perspective of each Planning Commission member and suggested that more joint meetings be scheduled, possibly a joint worksession meeting on a quarterly basis to update priorities, to review status, and to share information in the decision-making process.

10. On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, Chairman Bennington stated that when a Supervisor abstains from a vote, he or she is abstaining due to conflict of interest. The Supervisors do not expect Planning Commission members, unless there is a conflict of interest on their part, to abstain on votes for recommendations to the Supervisors. Chairman Bennington reminded the Planning Commission that they are a recommending body, and that the final decision is made by the Board of Supervisors. Further, Supervisor Bender believes that in the case of an abstention from a vote, it is important to note why the individual is abstaining from the vote.

Also, Chairman Bennington noted members of the Board of Supervisors, at public meetings, do not make political statements. Therefore, the Supervisors do not expect Planning Commission members to make political statements at public meetings either. It is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to review plans and to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Discussion took place.

H. ADJOURNMENT: The joint worksession to review the Comprehensive Plan was adjourned at 9:42PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Seimes *Lynda Seimes*
Township Secretary

(*These minutes were transcribed from notes and tape recordings taken by Mr. Gregory J. Lippincott, Assistant Township Manager/Zoning Officer).