

SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
COUNTY OF MONROE, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF MAY 26, 2022 AT 5:00 P.M.
MEETING MINUTES

1./2. Call to Order and Members Present:

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Township Planning Commissioner Chair Attorney Scott Amori. Along with Commissioner Amori, Commissioners R. Moses, D. Schryver, M. Albert, C. Bowers and M. Bowyer were all physically present in the meeting room at the Township Municipal Building. Commissioner D. Strunk was absent.

The meeting was also attended by Supervisor Chair J. Pride and Supervisor R. Lovenheim.

In addition to the above Supervisors and Commissioners, the other Township officials who attended the meeting were Township Engineer Jon A. Tresslar, PE, Township Solicitor Ronold J. Karasek, Esquire and Township Office Manager J. Heilakka all of whom were also physically present in the meeting room.

The meeting was also live-streamed remotely.

3. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: was recited.

4. Minutes: Not Applicable

5. Public Comments on the Agenda: None.

6. New Business

The Proposed Signage Ordinance

A joint meeting of the Township Board of Supervisors and the Township Planning Commission was called to discuss the proposed Signage Ordinance. While the Township does have sign regulations under the Township Zoning Ordinance (see Township Code of Ordinances, Chapter 27, Section 504-Sign Regulations), Supervisor Lovenheim drafted a new ordinance that is purportedly easier to understand and/or to enforce as the existing ordinance has many sign regulations for each zoning district and specific regulations for the type of sign and the type of use.

Supervisor Lovenheim initiated the discussion reminding all that zoning was adopted in the 1970s to correct abuses in land use. He discussed the "playpen theory" where control is used for matters "inside the playpen" and outside. Supervisor Lovenheim feels that regulations and rules for signs in the public right-of-way and street should be different than sign regulations on a person's property which should be unregulated. He feels that the Township should be more lenient to businesspersons who can operate his/her business without undue interference. Commissioner Bowyer asks why should the Township be more lenient?

Commissioners Schryver and Bowyer suggested that all signs in violation of the ordinance be removed i.e. see Section 504B-Registration of Signs. Commissioner Schryver asks what is the Township to do with pre-existing signs that are in violation of the ordinance?

Commissioner Albert stated that this section is unwieldy and difficult to enforce. He likes the idea of “grandfathering” existing signs in the residential zoning districts. Commissioner Bowyer stated that the Township should start with “one violation at a time”, perhaps publicize the matters in the newspapers to “get the word out” so forth. Commissioner Albert was concerned about “selective enforcement” issues.

Supervisor Lovenheim suggested a difference between the words “registered” and “permitted”; and, he proposes that sign permits should not be required except for electrical signs. Some concern was expressed that without a permitting process, the Township’s application, administrative costs and fees could not be recovered even if a permit would not be required as some Township involvement would still be needed.

Commissioner Chair Amori stated that he is bothered by the feathered-flag or flopping signs and the utilization of motor vehicles as billboards. He suggested that Zoning Permits have a check-off box inserted on the permit to reflect that a sign was secured along with the permit. This would be a starting point moving forward in establishing what signs are located where.

Commissioner Schryver suggested that a “team of people” be hired...such a college students...make notes, take photos and confirm addresses as to all signs in the Township.

Commissioner Bowyer asked what are the important considerations; and, the following were noted:

- The size of the sign
- The height of the sign
- The illumination of the sign
- Where is the sign to be located i.e. on the building, building entrance so forth?
- The type of sign
- The type of business use
- Is it an advertising sign vs. a directional sign?
- Is it an illuminated sign, an artsy sign so forth?
- Does the zoning district matter?
- Billboards and off-premises advertising

There was some discussion by Commissioner Schryver on creating an impression that the Township appears “cheap” by allowing crummy, dirty and cheap-looking signs to exist. He stated that, in looking to New Jersey, the type of signage there makes the areas more appealing.

Commissioner Bowyer asks how does the Township signage fit within the Township’s Comprehensive Plan?

Supervisor Lovenheim suggested special signage for the Township's scenic corridors. Commissioner Schryver stated this should be from East Stroudsburg to Middle Smithfield Township.

Commissioner Chair Amori stated that he had earlier distributed signed ordinances from Williamsburg, Virginia and Freeport, Maine. These ordinances contained various regulations and prohibitions that could be part of the Smithfield Township ordinance.

The Solicitor suggested that the Supervisors and the Commissioners should establish a progression of what needs to be addressed with the proposed township signage ordinance.

Commissioner Chair Amori directed that the Township read the proposed draft and make recommendations as to what should be added, deleted or revised in the proposed ordinance.

7. Old and Unfinished Business: None

8. Public Comment: None

9. Adjournment:

There being no other business coming before the Commission and on motion by Commissioner Albert, seconded by Commissioner Amori and on a unanimous vote of 6-0, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Karasek Law Offices, LLC

By: 

Ronald J. Karasek, Esquire

PA I.D. No. 23233

Solicitor to Smithfield Township