

THE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND  
SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION JOINT WORK SESSION  
MAY 1, 2023

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A Joint Work Session of the Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors (“Board”) and Planning Commission (“Commission”) was held on May 1, 2023, at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center, at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom

Present are Supervisors Jacob Pride and Robert Lovenheim; Commissioners Scott Amori, Robert Moses, Michael Albert, David Strunk (arrives at 5:36PM), Mitch Bowyer, and Chris Bowers; Solicitor Ron Karasek, Engineer Missy Hutchison, and Township Manager Julia Heilakka. Supervisor Brian Barrett and Commissioner Doug Schryver is not present.

Also present is Guy Miller, Vice Chair of the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB).

1. Supervisor Chair Jacob Pride calls the meeting to order at 5:32PM. A quorum is present.
2. Public Comments on the Agenda – none.
3. New Business – Discuss Parking Requirements in Smithfield Township. This meeting is to discuss the current parking regulations of Smithfield Township. Discussion points for the meeting include whether or not current requirements should change, how parking will be handled for a mixed-use building, and why parking must be on the back and sides, but not the front of a building.

Robert Lovenheim states there is a trend towards eliminating the number of spaces for commercial buildings and he has also been keeping an eye on the size of parking spaces. Commissioner Amori states parking on the sides and rear of a building may be for aesthetics. Commissioner Strunk arrives at 5:36PM. Commissioner Albert discusses trends to reduce parking in urban areas, and believes one reason for large, unused parking lots lies in the regulation that mandate parking spaces numbers are cumulative for multi-purpose facilities (Chapter 27, Schedule 2, reference 2).

The boards discuss potential scenarios regarding use changes that involve increased parking requirements and designating green space overflow spots. Engineer Hutchison confirms that nearby municipalities are discussing parking but have not passed any changes. The boards discuss shifting parking out of zoning and into SALDO, having parking reductions function as a conditional use hearing, and the associated costs for a conditional use or ZHB hearing.

Ron Karasek cautions that parking requirements will need to remain in the zoning chapter for projects that don’t trigger land development. Commissioner Amori states parking regulations mean engineers don’t need to consider what a business actually needs. Ron Karasek cautions that traffic engineers may use the same information to determine parking needs that was used to establish the current parking regulations. Commissioner Amori leaves at 5:57PM and returns at 5:58PM. The boards could consider a trigger so small projects are not affected by a hearing requirement.

Commissioner Amori states that most commercial space is already developed; could the township incentivize redevelopment by allowing reduced parking spaces? The boards discuss situations where a building changes from a use with a low parking needs to a higher one, and that developers may rule out a building preemptively if it doesn't have adequate parking. Commissioner Bowyer suggests requiring a traffic study for all projects.

Guy Miller states this situation must be carefully considered: developers may try to take advantage of reduced parking requirements. A current proposed project before the ZHB (Westfield Medical on Parcel 16.92932) is seeking variances for parking, and these situations must be handled carefully to prevent parking along the street and other undesirable locations.

Commissioner Albert states there may not be an easy solution. Commissioner Amori states that parking is determined at development; a change of use will not influence parking. Guy Miller discusses inadequate parking for a medical facility on RT 447 (Parcel 16.113926), and how that could be mitigated.

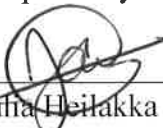
The consensus of the Board and Commission is that current parking requirements may be excessive, and more research is required to determine how to best reduce or eliminate requirements for commercial uses. Additionally, the onus of granting relief from parking requirements should be shifted to the Board, though the details of how that occurs are still under discussion. All parties will do more research.

4. Public Comment - none
5. Robert Lovenheim motions to adjourn, Bob Moses seconds: meeting adjourned at 6:16PM.

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Minutes recorded by Julia Heilakka

Respectfully submitted:

  
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Julia Heilakka  
Assistant Township Secretary