

THE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND
SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION JOINT WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 27, 2025, AT 6:00PM

A Joint Work Session of the Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission (“Group”) was held on February 27, 2025, at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center, at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom.

Present are Supervisors Jacob Pride (via Zoom), Robert Lovenheim, and Michael Albert; Commissioners Scott Amori, Chris Bowers, Dr. Nicole Carney, James Munet (arrives at 6:47PM), Doug Schryver, and Jean Turn; Solicitor Ron Karasek, Engineer Jon Tresslar, Conservation & Recreation Director Dr. Alex Jackson, Zoning Officer Matthew Helbers, and Township Manager Julia Heilakka. Commissioner David Strunk is not present.

Also present are Tara Vecchio-Freeman, Brett Cartwright, and Martha Carbone.

1. Chair Scott Amori calls the meeting to order at 6:00PM. A quorum is present.

2. Old Business:

a. Discuss: Draft Signage Ordinance.

Alex Jackson states the Group got to page 16, off-premises signage, at the last meeting. The new Zoning Officer has comments on the draft ordinance. Robert Lovenheim suggests using industry-standard billboard sizes instead of basing size on the speed limit, and suggests permitting only digital billboards and limiting them to only certain commercial corridors. Michael Albert expresses concern for only allowing digital signs.

Scott Amori expresses distaste for the Pocono Beer digital sign. Michael Albert discusses billboards located on Parcel 16.3.2.21, and considers incentives to improve current billboards. Robert Lovenheim states David Strunk is amenable to the proposed change to industry-standard billboard signs. Doug Schryver states he would prefer not to permit billboards in the Township at all.

Michael Albert states illegal, blighted, and snipe signs are a nuisance in the Township. Matt Helbers states the current ordinance allows the Zoning Officer to enforce against illegal signs, but the proposed language will permit him to remove them.

Doug Schryver discusses the old Milford Manor sign (Parcel 16.7.1.27), which advertises a business that doesn’t exist anymore. The former Zoning Officer cited the sign, but it was never taken down.

Michael Albert considers how much of the ordinance is being rewritten because the former Zoning Officer did not enforce current provisions versus what actually needs updating. Robert Lovenheim states some of the changes are designed to bring the ordinance into compliance with Reed v. Town of Gilbert.

Ron Karasek states that zoning deals with the use of a property; if the sign ordinance is not in Chapter 27 (Zoning) and someone disagrees with that choice, that person will need to prove in court that signage regulations should be in zoning. The Group discusses where sign regulations should be part of zoning or a standalone chapter.

Brett Cartwright confirms this is all discussion and hopes to see a lot of Township progress on removing illegal signs. Michael Albert confirms the Zoning Officer has the right to remove all temporary signs in the proposed ordinance.

Matt Helbers discusses that Tobyhanna Township procedure for its staff to remove snipe signs that has not been challenged. Nicole Carney and Jean Turn discuss advertising and allowable uses. Robert Lovenheim discusses off-premises billboards. Digital signs cost \$30,000 - \$60,000, and cost will help restrict the number of billboards in the Township.

Brett Cartwright suggests a goodwill conversation with the owners of Parcel 16.3.2.21 to try and remove signs. Tara Vecchio-Freeman suggests the billboards are not viable because they are so far back from the road; the owner may be able to charge more if the billboards are closer.

Michael Albert considers an incentive for non-conforming signs to come into conformity or closer to conformity. Sometimes, owners won't demolish a non-conforming structure because doing so forfeits the right of the structure to exist; perhaps the Township could confirm the right to rebuild in exchange for a blighted structure being demolished.

Doug Schryver discusses the difficulty of removing blight. James Munet arrives at 6:47PM. Julia Heilakka states the Township is pursuing a pilot program against two blighted parcels. The Group discusses removing snipe signs. Brett Cartwright asks about movement restrictions on signs. The Group discusses the Pocono Beer sign. Jacob Pride leaves at 7:00PM.

Robert Lovenheim suggests pursuing standard billboard sizes that restrict off-premise signs. He received feedback that business owners would prefer that billboards be shut off 1AM or 2AM instead of ½ hour after closing.

Michael Albert confirms that signs on utility poles are illegal. Ron Karasek confirms that so long as the Township has permission from the utility company, they may remove the signs. The Township will prepare a resolution empowering Township employees and contracted staff to remove illegal snipe signs from utility poles and public infrastructure. The Group requests the Zoning Officer to add prioritizing signage and signage enforcement to the list of priority tasks.

Doug Schryver asks if there is an agreement to make the sign ordinance a standalone chapter, with references to the standalone chapter in Chapter 27. Michael Albert confirms that it makes sense for temporary signs and limited duration to be outside of zoning. Ron Karasek states that signs require permits. James Munet states the younger generation is more visual. Michael Albert replies that every definition has a picture.

- b. Discuss: Next Steps for Draft Ordinance.

The Group will discuss at a later time when to meet next on this ordinance.

3. **Public Comment:** none.

4. **Adjournment:** James Munet motions to adjourn, Scott Amori seconds: meeting adjourned at 7:14PM.

Minutes recorded by Julia Heilakka

Respectfully submitted:



Julia Heilakka
Township Secretary