



MEMO

To: Peninsula Township Planning Commission

January 5, 2012

Re: Residential Zoning Districts Discussion –
(Topics & Various Land Use Options)

For the month of January, the Planning Commission's committed schedule for topics of discussion brings forth the issues related to residential district regulations as found within the existing zoning ordinance. Staff has assembled the following as a means of providing an outline for a future public workshop and/or forum where several existing regulations, new land uses, and potential new ordinance language can be discussed at length. Subjects covered within the text below address concerns formulated from many different aspects. Legal amendments at the State and Federal levels, changing community demographics, and the goals and objectives of the 2011 Master Plan were all utilized for rationale when drafting this list, however, additional topics are welcome to be added.

Goals of the 2011 Master Plan:

1.) Reevaluate Existing Zoning Regulations.

In its current form the Township's Zoning Ordinance is split into several sections governing the residential districts' land uses. The schedule of regulations, permitted / special uses, and 'supplementary' requirements portions of the Ordinance have not been adjusted in any serious manner since its adoption in 1972. Since then, other local constituents who also possess a means of regulating land use (i.e. County Soil Erosion, Health, Fire Departments, and Road Commission) have been under duress as in many cases the Township's rules conflict with their own. Additionally, many new land uses exist within the realm of property development and preservation, however, at this time the Ordinance seems to again be very out-dated.

2.) Plan development to preserve Peninsula Township's prime agricultural land, natural resources, and the unique character.

Zoning regulations addressing PUDs, condominiums, and other residential developments are a prime area to introduce and implement new land protection and/or preservation practices to protect the rural character of the Township. Lot coverage densities, green-space allocation, landscaping and total amount of impervious cover within a given development are all examples of new site development measures which could create language suggestions for this section. To date, the existing language is within these sections is very thorough, however, also very difficult to interpret both from the general public and staff perspective. The greatest improvement to this portion of the Ordinance would be clarification and an overall update to each development mechanism to reflect both the guidelines of the local constituents and desires of the Master Plan.

3.) Preserve the single family character of the various residential neighborhoods.

Much of the initiative behind this goal is to protect and build upon those local relationships within existing and proposed new residential neighborhoods. Language amendments introduced to the Township would likely be in the form of police power ordinances and focus on township wide social issues such as noise, appearance, management of large-scale events, etc. Several types of local regulation are in place today within the Township to again help maintain the general health, safety, and welfare of the community. Many of these ordinances purely lack the “teeth” to make a significant impact, or have yet to be developed and implemented within the Township.

4.) Provide senior housing opportunities for residents.

In 2009 the Township focused much of its efforts to accommodate this land use within the residential zoning districts. The actual creation of the ordinance appears to have been convoluted and became involved in so many facets it could not conceptually be agreed upon by staff, members of the planning commission, or the general public. With new initiative being brought forth from goals of the 2011 Master Plan, staff has begun efforts toward crafting a simple, straight-forward approach to regulate this type of land use. New language must be developed in a manner which not only provides the opportunity for senior housing within the residential districts, but also protects those existing and future neighborhoods from such a use’s associated social impacts. This subject alone is likely to require the greatest amount of research to truly allow such a use within Peninsula Township on a scale that is both necessary and physically adaptable to the community.

5. Preserve those neighborhoods which have special or unique characteristics through the creation of a historical overlay district.

Within Peninsula Township certain neighborhoods possess unique characteristics, physical similarities, and ultimately do not “fit” within the existing zoning regulations crafted for the Township as a whole. Identifying these areas within the community which exemplify said qualities should be fairly easy as members of these communities, in many cases, cannot build new or alter their existing structures without attending a monthly Township meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals. At this time nothing officially exists to allow historical areas of the community to have either their own zoning designation, or specific physical schedule of regulations pertinent to a particular unique neighborhood. To date, many meetings have transpired and immense public comment presented to Township staff in the pursuit of creating such a historical overlay district. Several challenges have presented themselves throughout discussion of this subject establishing it as one topic that could and should essentially host a public workshop meeting to bring forth past discussion and how to best recognize these specific historical characteristics founding within each designated community.

6. Reconsider the need for a ‘village center’ within the Township.

Looking into the historical efforts put forth by the Township, it would appear that this goal is not new to the community. In 2006 a plan was created, however, never officially adopted by the Township Board as a means of establishing a ‘village center’. If it is the desire of the community to revive this planning concept, then a vast amount of research needs to take place to identify the ailments of the original conceptual plan and work with local focus groups, constituents, and host several meetings throughout the community to reenergize this effort. This facet would be one where a mixed use type development may benefit a compact

village center and is a topic that should be addressed if such an initiative is pursued by the Township.

Although regulating residential zoning districts throughout the Township is a large portion of the Ordinance, there are amendments which can and should be implemented into the new language to make this document much improved and more user friendly. Further development of these ideas into ordinance language will take place over the course of the upcoming year and again be presented to the general public for discussion. Eventually, the ideas taken from these meetings will become language amendments in the new Township Zoning Ordinance in an effort to complete the visions of the 2011 Master Plan. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact staff directly.

Thank you again for the time to address the issues above. If there should there be any questions, concerns or comments regarding the issues at hand, please do not hesitate to contact staff at (231) 223-7314.

Sincerely,

Daniel Leonard; Peninsula Township Planner