

NEWTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

August 1, 2011

In attendance were members Warren Woldorf, Debbie Donofry, Paul Snyder, Paul Salvatore, Jayne Spector, Karen White, David Young and Borough Council Liaison, Mike Sellers.

Also in attendance was Lynn Bush, Bucks County Planning Commission. Audience members included John Burke, Larry Auerweck, Bob Walker, Jeanne Haeckel, and Marlowe Gordon.

Call to Order

Chairman Woldorf called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. and welcomed members of the public to the meeting

Applicant Plan Review

None.

Old Business

Continued discussion of multi-family dwelling unit revised parking requirements including May 4, 2011 BCPC review memorandum and July 1, 2011 NBPC questions and comments

Chairman Woldorf advised that the Commission would be discussing multi-family dwelling unit revised parking requirements, the BCPC May 4, 2011 review memorandum and the Commission's collected questions/comments from his July 1, 2011 email and the July 11, 2011 meeting.

Ms. Bush addressed the Commission's questions/comments from Chairman Woldorf's July 1, 2011 email and the July 11, 2011 meeting. She advised the members on her review of parking requirements of various municipalities in comparison to Newtown Borough and of the book "Parking Generation" with regards to parking requirements and various land uses. To date, she has been unable to find a good comparison. She stated that parking requirements should not be considered a way of controlling density. Options for arriving at a livable density are a local decision and depend on what the Borough is trying to achieve. However, options also depend on the community and the market. She discussed developers challenging ordinances with regards to density. Regarding the comment about allowing more on-street parking on State Street to the south of Penn Street, Chairman Woldorf reported that he measured the roadway, and that according to the Borough's standards, the area north of Penn Street permits parking on both sides as currently exists. Parking south of Penn Street on State Street likely would permit single parking, based on PennDOT standards. He noted that State Street is a State road and approval to add parking at this location would be needed from PennDOT. Ms. Bush agreed that if approved by the State, it would be possible to increase the on-street parking on State

Street. Ms. Spector remarked that residents on Penn Street are concerned about parking and that additional on-street parking along State Street may help with traffic calming. She thanked Ms. Bush for addressing her concerns. Ms. Bush advised that her review resulted in guidelines recommending 0.9 parking spaces per bedroom. Ms. Bush noted that the area of a parking space in a standard parking lot is 400 sq. ft., which includes an allowance for aisles. Chairman Woldorf reported that the Borough's standard is 9'X18' and 10'X20' for accessible spaces. Ms. Bush advised that population density is not a factor in Bucks County when considering parking guidelines. She stated that she is unsure of the parking guidelines used by other local communities that do not have mass transportation and of the guidelines for studio apartments. Mr. Salvatore commented on there being size standards for apartments, the number of people living in a unit and how the number of vehicles per unit could be affected. Chairman Woldorf advised on the research he has done with regards to the square footage and the number of parking spaces recommended per dwelling unit. He reported that the Commission needs to decide what to base the numbers on.

Ms. Bush suggested not making the process too complicated and to leave some flexibility for changes. She commented on the Borough needing to know its overall goal.

Ms. Spector provided aerial photographs of Newtown and Doylestown to visualize the actual locations of existing parking lots. She stated that the Borough should not plan for the worst case scenario, but rather should promote the walkability of the community.

Ms. Bush reported that the BCPC is in favor of reducing the number of commercial parking spaces.

The members discussed the parking problems in the town, the need for parking enforcement and the possibility of introducing parking permits or meters.

Mr. Snyder commented on the newly written TND ordinance permitting an urban mix blend.

Mr. Burke commented on the proposal to reduce the parking requirements; he referenced the BCPC's May 4, 2011 correspondence - comment #6 on the draft proposed multi-family dwelling unit parking regulations. He questioned why the Borough would want to reduce those numbers. Chairman Woldorf discussed the parking requirements in the proposed ordinance with regards to the reduction. He suggested that fewer parking spaces would be more appropriate for smaller dwelling units. He noted that the current ordinance may require too much parking.

Mr. Walker noted the loophole in the current zoning ordinance that permits a developer to not provide a third parking space on site. Chairman Woldorf noted that the members began reviewing the proposal regarding multi-family residential parking in March. The primary goals were to assign an appropriate parking complement for each multi-family dwelling unit type and to remove the loophole. He commented on the need to address future parking and that the current ordinance requires more parking than may be needed.

Mr. Walker discussed the current parking issues and noted that a developer should look for parking relief if needed.

Mr. Sellers advised that parking should not be used to control the development of a project. He discussed the abuse of variances and explained how a variance should be used. He commented on the current requirement being three (3) parking spaces per unit and questioned if there is enough parking in town. The Borough needs to develop appropriate parking standards per dwelling.

Chairman Woldorf stated that parking numbers need to be determined for a specific use and should not be calculated as a means to resolve the Borough's parking issues.

Mr. Walker advised that he is concerned with the parking requirement number being too low.

The members discussed the Toll Brothers development with regards to the parking requirements being three (3) spaces – one of them being permitted on a public street.

The members discussed the residential use descriptions in the ordinance and the average number of vehicles per household.

Mr. Sellers commented on there being no template from other municipalities for the Borough to use regarding the parking requirements, there being no easy answer and the need for a complete review to make an accurate decision.

Ms. Bush commented on the developer meeting the Borough's need.

The member discussed what the right parking requirement numbers are for the proposed uses and agreed that the Borough can't allow the development to make parking conditions worse in the Borough.

Ms. Spector asked about the BCPC's concern regarding the original proposed parking schedule submitted. She questioned why and what needs to be done to address its comment that the numbers proposed are insufficient. Ms. Bush advised that after this discussion, she has a better understanding of why the Borough proposed the parking schedule, and that she feels that the PA standards are too low and would like to research the matter further.

Ms. Haeckel commented on the potential for increased traffic in the town. She expressed her concerns with getting the required parking space numbers correct and on her interest to protect the community.

Ms. White commented on the proposed parking requirements being fractional. Chairman Woldorf discussed the ordinance with regards to fractional numbers and how they are currently addressed. The members discussed overflow parking.

Ms. Bush noted that parking would depend on the design layout. She advised that she would review the “Parking Generation” book further for parking standards and provide the information to Chairman Woldorf.

Mrs. Donofry commented on the need to educate the public with regards to walking in town, rather than driving.

The members agreed that there needs to be a balance regarding the number of required parking spaces.

Mr. Salvatore noted that he does not want to make parking worse in the Borough. He suggested that the parking requirements be as follows:

- Studio/Efficiency – requires 2 parking spaces
- 1 Bedroom – requires 2.5 parking spaces
- 2 Bedroom – requires 3 parking spaces
- 3 Bedroom – requires 3.25 parking spaces
- 4 Bedroom – requires 3.25 parking spaces

The members agreed to the requirement numbers being proposed.

Mr. Salvatore made a motion to close the loophole in the ordinance with regards to off-street parking, and that the parking requirements be revised as follows:

- *Studio/Efficiency – requires 2 parking spaces*
- *1 Bedroom – requires 2.5 parking spaces*
- *2 Bedroom – requires 3 parking spaces*
- *3 Bedroom – requires 3.25 parking spaces*
- *4 Bedroom – requires 3.25 parking spaces*
- *All parking spaces will be provided on-site,*
- *and that the total amount of parking spaces required, if resulting in a fractional number, be rounded up if ½ or greater.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Snyder and passed unanimously (7-0).

The members thanked Ms. Bush for her time.

New Business

Ms. Spector reported on an email she received from resident Greg Lewis with regards to permit parking and how that may affect parking on Liberty Street. She suggested that the Borough’s businesses encourage employees to use alternative parking areas and that the Long Term Parking Committee reviews the Borough’s parking agreement with the Methodist Church.

Mr. Young advised the members that due to relocating outside of the Borough, he would be resigning from the Commission. The members thanked Mr. Young for his service to the community. Chairman Woldorf requested Mr. Young to forward him a resignation letter.

Approval of July 11, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the regular meeting of July 11, 2011 were reviewed. Ms. White reported that she had one change. On page 3, the first sentence should read – Ms. White said there was a “loophole”: allowing overflow parking off site.

Ms. White made a motion to approve the minutes from July 11, 2011 as corrected. The motion was seconded by Mr. Young and passed unanimously with three members abstaining due to absence from the meeting (4-0-3).

Public Comment

Mr. Auerweck discussed a prior survey conducted by the Long Term Parking Committee during the time he was a member. Chairman Woldorf commented on the loss of public parking within the Borough as was stated at a previous meeting. Mr. Auerweck reported that there may be a few exceptions, but the majority of public parking is still available. Chairman Woldorf thanked Mr. Auerweck for the information.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Woldorf requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Salvatore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. White and passed unanimously (7-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 P.M.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 12, 2011 at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Christy Holley-Flaherty
Recording Secretary