



# TOWNSHIP OF ABINGTON

*Office of the Township Manager*

## MEETING NOTES

September 24, 2019 7:30 a.m.

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TO: Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager

DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

SUBJECT: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

REFERENCE: EDC MEETING NOTES OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

ATTENDEES: DOUG CALLANTINE, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSIONER VAHEY, JIM MARSHALL, CHANCELLOR DAMIAN FERNANDEZ, BRUCE GOODMAN, MIKE MCPAUL, ERIN VIZZA, CHRISTOPHER LIONETTI, WENDY KLINGHOFFER, BOB REICH, ELIZABETH SMITH, DAVE MULVEY, MARK PENECALE, MARIA WYRSTA, CATHY GAUTHIER, CAKKY EVANS, NATALIE SHERSTYUK, RESIDENT, LORA LEHMANN, RESIDENT

SUMMARY: AS FOLLOWS

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General Discussion:

Meeting notes from June meeting were approved.

Old Business; the VPRB discussed creating a link on Township's website of realtors' listings for all vacant commercial properties and any questions about the use of the property or parking would be answered by the realtor.

Township's Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2007 and a copy was provided to the EDC. Comp Plan Development Team was created to work on updating the Comp Plan, which will take about a year or two to complete. The team is led by Commissioner Thompson and Mike Narcowich, County Planner of the MCPC. There will be a series of public engagement sessions held in October/November to introduce the Comp Plan process as well as to get in public input.

LERTA expires at end of October 2020, and the subcommittee will meet today after this meeting with the timeframe of work being done by January-March 2020, so the Board of Commissioners can consider extending it past the October 2020 timeframe.

New Business; an ordinance was authorized for advertisement to consider the creation of an Economic Development Corporation, and a presentation was made at the September Public Affairs Committee meeting of the Board of Commissioners by Obermayer, Rebmann, Maxwell & Hippel, LLP; their fees were capped at \$20,000. The Economic Development Corporation is not intended to take the place of the Economic Development Committee, which is advisory and makes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

An EDC is a quasi-governmental nonprofit corporation whose mission is to provide economic development to a targeted geographical area. The EDC would be created by an ordinance of the governing body; the EDC would create bylaws and articles of incorporation and pass a corporate resolution and the Board of Commissioners appoints directors to serve on the EDC's Board.

The Township will need to provide funds to cover start-up costs to fund projects and operations and then the EDC will sustain that on their own. EDC may be able to generate revenue through leasing developed sites, creating a loan facility to small businesses or sell developed sites, although if the EDC is not viable, then the Board does not need to keep it. Cheltenham, Conshohocken, Pottstown and Philadelphia are municipalities that have an EDC.

Prior to a formal public hearing, public informational sessions will be held for residents in October and then a final decision by the Board of Commissioners in November.

Grants; the EDC provides grants to local businesses for improvements to exterior of the property in which one grant was approved to Luigi's in the amount of \$1,500 and there is still a significant amount of money available. There has been another grant request from George G. Fitzpatrick Funeral Home for a new sign with cost estimated at \$6,700.

Proposed was to provide a \$2,000 grant; however, it was questioned whether grants are for those business owners who cannot afford improvements. It was agreed that not many applicants apply for grants and the EDC wants to encourage them to do so and to get the word out that grants are available to support the community; grant funds need to be expended this year.

Wendy Klinghoffer made a MOTION, seconded by Chris Lionetti to approve grant award to George G. Fitzpatrick Funeral Home in the amount of \$2,000 towards a new sign.

MOTION was ADOPTED 11-1. David Mulvey opposed.

Old York/Susquehanna Roads project; PennDOT is moving forward with demolition and reconfiguration of the intersection. Property of 1907 Susquehanna Road - owner has been unresponsive to Township's inquiry and the next step is still to be determined.

Business activity; use and occupancy permits have been issued; former K-Mart site has been taken over by At Home store that is now open.



### Presentation - Penn Station Abington:

Chancellor Damian Fernandez provided economic impact study of Penn State's entire school system including the Abington campus and enrollment has increased for fulltime students. Penn State's proposed project is a new academic building for office space and learning space for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning. It would be an investment in the quality of education while meeting the needs of existing students and provide a high-quality experience that includes hiring new faculty members. Initial sketch plan is being worked on and no final plans have been approved. Proposed is a three-story building with two-stories facing Cloverly; landscaping and text amendment. Project timeline is approval by December 2019. Penn State is an open campus and has been a resource to the community and Lions Gate has provided a successful cultural impact.

Meetings were held with the neighbors who expressed concern about enrollment growth; traffic/traffic calming measures as well as ascetics of the new building.

### Public Comments:

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, was opposed to Penn State's proposed text amendment; also, that "residents not being included on the plan for Old York/Susquehanna Road," and she was opposed to EDC grant award for sign.

Cakky Evans, EAC Member, indicated that the EAC is putting together an incentive program for municipal energy efficiency and she will forward the information to the EDC; renewable energy goals are to partner with reps of the business community and Abington Township to create a stakeholder taskforce and it is being considered whether to send out an RFP so as to hire an expert who would create an energy transition plan.

Natalie Sherstyuk, 1165 Delene Road, commented that she would like to learn more about an Economic Development Corporation; she was opposed to the vote to advertise an ordinance with no articles or bylaws as well as the method by which it is being done, and she feels residents are not being informed.

Next scheduled meeting is October 29, 2019 at 7:30 a.m.

### Action Items and Responsibility:

Grant award to George G. Fitzpatrick Funeral Home.

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary