

Swarthmore Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date February 15, 2023

Commission Attendees

James Levine -- Chair
Doug Harnsberger -- Vice Chair
Rex Brien -- Secretary
Don Jones
Chris DeBruyn

Steve Minton
Douglas Perry
John MacCallum
David Virgil

Also in Attendance

Scarlett McCahill

Borough Council Member

Meeting Location

Borough Hall

- James Levine called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM
- **Agenda Item 1:** Approval of January, 2023, meeting minutes. So moved, seconded, and passed with one nay.
- **Agenda Item 2:** Presentation by Development and Affordable Housing Task Force
 - Presentation by Task Force member, Jayatri Das
 - Task Force was authorized by BC to study affordability of housing in Borough, focusing on creating entry for people currently priced out of housing in Borough because of increased median home values. Have conducted public forums with expert witnesses. Found that ½ of renters in Borough are “cost burdened”, meaning spending over 30% of income for housing. Approximately 30% of renters are “extremely cost burdened”, spending over 50% of income for housing. Reports that expert, Joe Gyourko, believes there is room to increase density in Borough without harming character of town.
 - Presentation by Task Force Chair, Rachel Pastan
 - After reviewing wide range of options, Task Force is narrowing focus on two approaches: 1. market rate approach focusing on accessory dwelling units (“ADUs”); and 2. income qualified approach involving set asides and requiring large construction projects to include units below market rates. The Task Force’s report is due by the end of March, 2023, and will be presented to the Planning & Zoning Committee.
 - **Discussion**
 - James Levine noted that PC has had prior discussions on this issue including ADUs and that community support for ADUs and subdividing larger homes has increased over the years. James asked how the Task Force envisioned implementation of set-asides. Rachel Pastan noted that set-asides for

affordable units in new development would be more complicated than ADUs and likely would require professional assistance. Regarding the use of a housing or community land trust to fund affordable housing, possibly qualifying as a non-profit, James noted the potential impact on the Borough tax base.

- Don Jones agreed that Borough residents have come around to the idea of ADUs and co-housing. With respect to co-housing, Don recalled a question regarding how the property would be owned, that was not resolved. He noted that HUD public housing involved strict design requirements. Don asked whether there is state or county money available to assist in address affordable housing issue and whether the Task Force could provide ordinances from other municipalities in the region addressing this issue.
 - David Virgil suggested that co-housing, care-giver suites and other conversions should revert upon sale of the property. With respect to set-asides, David noted the importance of providing sufficient incentives to the developer. He also supported subdivision of larger house near Town Center. David noted that prior discussions addressed the difficulty of drafting ordinance provisions that would be difficult to enforce.
 - Chris DeBruyn noted that setback rules are a hindrance to ADUs and agreed that the lack of enforcement in the Borough is a concern.
 - John MacCallum addressed discussion about parking issues and noted the conversions should not design around parking, as it presents a bias against rentals. He also asked about administrative requirements related to set asides. Rachel Pastan suggested that the developer should bear the cost of administering lower income renters.
 - Doug Harnsberger asked how many residences in the Borough are available for conversions.
 - The consensus of the PC members was to encourage means to provide for affordable housing in the Borough.
- **Agenda Item 3: Proposed Ordinance Regulating Chicken Coops and Chicken Runs**
 - James Levine noted that BC previously passed a health and safety-related ordinance pertaining to chickens which did not address chicken coops. James distributed a mark-up of BC's proposed ordinance regulating chicken coops and runs. Discussion focused upon proposed setbacks and how a 10-foot setback may preclude coops in many of the narrow lots in the Borough. Consensus that proposed requirement that coops and runs shall be at least 20 feet from any principal building on any adjacent lot was sufficient to address neighbor concerns, while agreeing that 3 foot setbacks from rear and side yards was acceptable. Agreed that new coops and runs should be considered accessory buildings requiring a permit.
 - Motion to recommend proposed ordinance, as revised, to BC; seconded and passed.
 - **Agenda Item 4: - Committee Reports**

Committee	Meeting info (time is PM unless noted.)	Planning Commission Liaison
Borough Council		
Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)	4 th Tuesday @ 7:30	No liaison appointed.

Traffic Advisory Committee	Meetings as needed.	No meeting scheduled.
Tree Committee	David Page – Meets as needed.	No liaison appointed.
UCC Board of Appeals	Meets as needed.	
Zoning Hearing Board	Meets as needed, 4 th Tuesday.	Rex attended and reported on 1/31/23 hearing on Swarthmore Swim Club's application for a special exception.
Borough Council – Environment	4 th Wednesday 7:30	Don attended meeting discussing PECO's proposed tree removals; presentation by Community Energy re: increasing renewable energy and decreasing solid waste.
Borough Council – General Government & Hum. Services (Library, town center)	Sarah Graden – 3 rd Monday @ 7:30	David attending presentation by Centennial Foundation proposing making TC portion of Park Avenue permanently one-way, to increase pedestrian traffic.
Borough Council - Planning & Zoning	Kristen Seymore – 2 nd Wednesday 7:30	No report.
Borough Council - Public Safety	Jill Gaiieski – 3 rd Tuesday	
Borough Council - Public Works/Parks & Rec.	Francie Halderman – 3 rd Thursday 8:30 AM	John advised that a meeting was scheduled for 2/16/23.
Development and Affordability Task Force	1 st Thursday 7:00	
Borough Council – Finance	TBD – 4 th Monday @ 7:30	Steve Minton attended meeting discussing capitol projects and standardizing reporting.

- Chris DeBruyn reported on a Delcora public hearing, with considerable opposition to Aqua's plan to acquire Delcora. In related litigation, the judge advised that the proposed sale will not go forward until all legal issues have been resolved including ownership issues.
- Scarlett McCahill advised that the first meeting with the Borough's ordinance review consultant, FHI Studio, will take place on February 22, 2023, and that Nancy Templeton and Chris Kenney will attend.

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 PM.

NEXT MEETING:

The next scheduled meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2023 at Swarthmore Borough Hall.

End of Meeting Minutes