

**MUNICIPALITY OF MT. LEBANON
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

DATE: Tuesday, December 17, 2019

TIME: 7 p.m.

PLACE: Mt. Lebanon Municipality – Commission Chambers

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: James Cannon, Andrew George, Dennis Pittman, Clint Rounsfull

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Suzanne Seiber

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Municipal Planner Ian McMeans, Municipal Engineer Dan Deiseroth

1. Minutes

- a. August 20, 2019 meeting.

Mr. Pittman moved and Mr. Rounsfull seconded to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2019, Planning Board Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Old Business

Mr. Pittman asked Mr. Deiseroth to give an update of the stormwater issue on Altoona Place.

Mr. Deiseroth said at the August Planning Board meeting a resident appeared before the board regarding a stormwater issue on Altoona Place. The municipality did meet with that resident at the bottom of Altoona Place where their garage was being infiltrated with water from adjoining properties on Marietta and Mapleton. Although this was a private matter, the municipality gave the resident some options and the matter has been rectified by the residents.

3. New Business

- a. Request for recommendation for an Ordinance amendment. Victor-Wetzel Associates has requested a text amendment to Chapter XX of the Municipal Code, *Zoning*, to Section 208 which contains regulations for the “R-7 High Density, High-Rise, Multi-Family, Limited Commercial District.” The requested Ordinance Amendment would:
- i. Add “Townhouse Dwelling” as a Use by Right in the R-7 Zoning District
 - ii. Add area and bulk regulations, lot width standards, and additional standards for Townhouse Units to the R-7 Zoning District
 - iii. Add “Townhouse Unit” as a defined term

Vincent Zappa, Zamaigas Properties, explained their property is within an R-7 district at Washington and Bower Hill roads. The proposed ordinance retains the R-7 zoning in the text change, but would like to add the use of Townhouse as a right. Currently the existing district allows for high rises up to 98 feet, and multi-family density, but not townhouses. They are trying to meet the needs of the Mt. Lebanon community, who indicate they desire more townhouses in a multi-family district; Kenmont Avenue is already non-conforming. They believe Mt. Lebanon is interested in “for sale” townhomes such as the units at the other end of the district at Uptown Place. Townhouses allow for more density,

just not high-rise density. They followed the same townhouse standards listed in other parts of the municipal code. They are asking for changes in the code area and bulk regulations to permit the subdivision of a townhouse dwelling within a townhouse unit, individual units with widths of 20 feet to the center line. This is consistent with what is already in the code for other districts, such as R-3 and R-4. All of the dwellings would conform to the front and rear yard setbacks, and the exterior side of the end townhouse units would conform to the side yard requirements. The townhouses at the other end of the business district sold quickly, and they would like to provide a complementary product on their end. If the planning board gives a recommendation to approve, there is still the entire process of designing the units, coming before the planning board, and receiving approval from the Commission. They did try several years ago to get an approval such as this through the zoning process, but they feel this is a better option.

Kevin McKeegan, Meyer Unkovic Scott, said this is not changing the current R-7 goal of a high-rise building, if it is desired and if the market allows for it. He came before the zoning hearing board approximately four years ago with a similar proposal but was denied. The market did not support high-rise buildings at that time, and still does not support high-rise buildings at this time. Their options now are to wait for the market to change, leaving an empty property, or to allow for a change in zoning requirements to provide for good quality townhouses similar to what are in other areas in Mt. Lebanon. They are not proposing eliminating high-rises in the R-7 district, but instead adding the use of Townhouse to the district.

Mr. Canon clarified that this change would not be immediate, and there are other steps that need to be taken before the next step.

Mr. McKeegan said that is correct; approving the change to the zoning would allow them to submit a land use application that would then go through the normal review process.

Mr. Canon suggested perhaps this item should be tabled to allow for more fact gathering deliberation.

Mr. George asked how many units are being proposed.

Mr. Zappa said they are unsure at this time how many units they are proposing; they are waiting until the zoning change happens before expending any more funds on a design.

Mr. McKeegan said the number would probably be greater than 25. However, when suggesting a zoning change to a district the needs of the community as a whole need to be considered. Until a zoning amendment is made it is premature to discuss the specifics of a proposed design, although they have shared with the municipality some conceptual plans.

Mr. McMeans said it is the purview of the planning board to recommend changes, and the Commission to accept or reject those recommendations which could affect any preliminary conceptual designs, since the use of Townhouses is currently not permitted in the R-7 district. An important factor for the board to consider is how adding the Townhouse use would affect other R-7 properties throughout the municipality. There are currently 32 R-7 parcels throughout the municipality and this proposal could potentially impact all of those parcels, and could open up other areas that are either single-family detached homes or duplexes to a potentially denser use of Townhouses. By far the largest impact area

is the Zamaigas property which is two-and-a-half acres of empty land, that is currently zoned high rises and could be opened up to allow for Townhouses. It is important to consider the broad impact of the whole district.

Mr. George said this wouldn't really be bookending since the other townhouses at the end of the business district bleed into single-family dwellings, not high rises where this property is located.

Mr. Pittman said more time is needed to fully consider the proposed changes and possibly tweak the language. He has not received any adverse feedback regarding those changes. He supports the planning board chairman's thought to table any recommendations in order to allow residents to comment, and to bring the new Commissioners up to speed.

Mr. McMeans recommended to the board two issues that might need to be considered that were not in the submitted proposal – building height requirements and parking requirements; those are referenced regarding townhouses in other parts of the ordinance. He offered to prepare a memo for the board containing those requirements. The current height requirement is 98 feet in the district.

Mr. Pittman asked if Mr. Zappa or Mr. McKeegan know what height requirements they would need in order to proceed.

Mr. McKeegan said the proposed townhouses are approximately two, to two-and-a-half stories high.

Mr. McMeans said the requirements in other districts is 35 to 45 feet.

Mr. McKeegan said regarding commercial uses, such as retail and restaurants, usually follow residential developments, so if this property is developed with residences then commercial development would most likely follow after it.

Mr. McMeans indicated that zoning requirements limit commercial uses in an R-7 district to the first floor of a residential building.

Mr. Deiseroth asked what type of entrance they are envisioning — walk-ups or at grade. He said the townhouses at the other end blended in well because the topography of the property allowed for grade-level entrances. There are design guidelines, but the entrance of these units is very important.

Mr. George recommended at grade entrances because of the location of the property could be very attractive to elderly residents.

Mr. Deiseroth said a nice feature of the Uptown Place townhouses is the setback that allowed for small yards in front of the units. That would be something to consider to the text amendment along with walk-up and at grade entrances.

Mr. Zappa said Zamaigas Properties wants to make a product the community can be proud of, and they recently won an award in the state of Pennsylvania for a project they did in Lancaster. They have a high-quality project going up in Sewickley with people wait-listed to get into it.

Mr. Deiseroth encouraged the board to consider design guides when considering a text amendment. Mr. Pittman said PennDOT gave Mt. Lebanon a turning lane and wants to make sure sight lines and safety concerns are considered.

Mr. Rounsful moved and Mr. George seconded to table the recommendation of an ordinance to amend Section 208 of Chapter XX of the Mt Lebanon Code, entitled “Zoning,” to add “Townhouse Dwelling” as a Use by Right to the R-7 Zoning District, add area and bulk regulations, lot width standards, and additional standards for Townhouse Units, and to add “Townhouse Unit” as a defined term, to allow the planning board further time to consider the testimony of the applicant and have additional discussion of the proposal. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

Mr. Pittman said Mr. Cannon’s term on the board ends on December 31, 2019. He thanked Mr. Cannon for his service.

Mr. McMeans also thanked Mr. Cannon for his time on the board and his service to the community. He also said that the planning board would continue to meet on the third Tuesday of each month throughout 2020.

5. Next Meeting — The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Mt. Lebanon Planning Board is **Tuesday, January 21, 2020**, at 7:00 p.m.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.