

LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
WORKSHOP MEETING

February 23, 2009

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Fredrick Lighty  
Roy Newsome  
Dennis Guise  
Ernest Gingrich  
Robin Lindsey

**ALSO PRESENT**

Lori Wissler, Planning & Zoning Officer  
Dianne Moran, Planning & Zoning Officer

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Lighty called the workshop meeting of the Lower Paxton Township Planning Commission to order at 5:30 pm, on February 23, 2009 in Room 174 of the Lower Paxton Township Municipal Center, 425 Prince Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Mr. Lighty led the recitation of the Pledge.

**ROUTE 22 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

**General Discussion**

Mr. Lighty stated a Business Improvement District, or BID, is composed of commercial contiguous properties. A small assessment is levied on those commercial properties. A board is established, NIDMA (Neighborhood Improvement District Management Association). The three main goals established so far are: advertising/branding, beautification/streetscape improvements, and transportation improvements. The transportation improvements ranged from moving customers between shopping centers, to a network operations center using the existing fiber lines along the corridor. There is not yet a ratio for the three goals. If the goals are represented in a pie chart, the pie slice sizes have not been determined yet.

Mr. Newsome stated the BIDs have a long history, but have been used less frequently in suburban areas, focusing more on "downtown" type areas. Lower Paxton Township's downtown or main street is Route 22.

Ms. Lindsey asked if the businesses are aware of the discussions. Mr. Lighty stated that they are not yet aware of it. Some background work has to be done first. After the Commission got to a certain point, they took their ideas to the Board of Supervisors, who have asked the Commission to move forward.

Mr. Guise stated the next step is to meet with Goktug Morcol to help define and guide the process.

Mr. Guise stated that the BID will be established unless 40% of the businesses vote against it. Mr. Gingrich stated that the Commission will need to meet with the businesses soon.

Ms. Lindsey was shown which properties will be included in the District, on the paper map, running basically from Colonial Road to Harley Davidson. Mr. Newsome stated that there is an issue to be resolved on how to connect Ollie's/Sheetz/Harley Davidson to the rest of the corridor. As it is now, there are residential properties disconnecting them. Residential properties may not be included. There was discussion previously about if the road can be the connection, or if the District even had to be contiguous. Mr. Guise read from the regulations, which does not indicate it must be contiguous, so he felt it was allowed to have a gap. Mr. Lighty thought the properties had to be contiguous. Mr. Guise stated that not all the properties in the District have to be designated. So the properties within the District that are residential uses would not be designated since they are not used for trade or commerce.

Mr. Newsome stated the Commission should begin the process by thinking about projects that would be of interest to businesses, or ideas that would basically be the selling ideas. It should pay particular attention to getting the ideas together for the presentation to the businesses. He suggested an overview or general scheme be worked on first. Mr. Guise stated that before working on the preliminary plan or anything formal, the Commission might want to consider meeting with the businesses, even though it is not specifically required. They could get the businesses ideas and give them a briefing. Mr. Lighty stated that if there is nothing to tell them, there could be issues. Mr. Guise stated it could be approached positively and give them the general information, letting them know that the Township is considering such a plan, and wants to know what improvements they want to see. The gamble is that opposition to paying another "tax" could solidify and kill the project before it even starts.

Mr. Newsome stated that valuable information came out of involving the commercial people, during the sign ordinance review. They provided good ideas and valuable guidance.

Mr. Gingrich suggested an early meeting might be appropriate if you could invite those that could give positive or useful feedback. Mr. Lighty stated that the people that are not invited will get offended. Mr. Guise suggested inviting them all, and most will not come anyway. Mr. Guise felt it was important to let them say what improvements they want to see or what is important to them. Mr. Lighty wants to get their input, but noted there should be some parameters set so discussions stay focused. Ms. Lindsey suggested that the things the Commission wants to present to the businesses should be very clear to keep the discussions focused. Mr. Gingrich stated that would include the purpose, and the benefits. Ms. Lindsey stated that the Commission has to be prepared to discuss cost, because that will definitely be questioned.

Mr. Guise suggested giving general ideas, then asking for the businesses' specific suggestions for improvements and what services they feel are valuable to their operation. He noted that cost couldn't really be discussed at that time since the improvements wouldn't be determined or researched until finding out what the owners want.

Mr. Lighty suggested that Professor Morcol might be able to guide the Commission on when to meet with the businesses and what to discuss with them.

Mr. Guise stated that the district has been identified, and the properties within it. There is a concept and basic parameters. The information needed from the businesses is what services would be most valuable to them. Mr. Lighty stated they could comment on and discuss what should go into each slice of the pie, how the pie slices are divided up, but not necessarily suggest new slices. Mr. Guise suggested someone facilitate the brainstorming meeting, or divide them into subgroups to work on it.

Mr. Newsome stated the presentation could be done in Power Point, and must start at the beginning: what is an improvement district. Mr. Gingrich agreed that many may not even know what BIDs are about.

Ms. Lindsey asked where the idea of an improvement district originated. Mr. Lighty stated the idea has been tossed around for years, and at one point, the Supervisors sent a memo to the Planning Commission asking them to research it.

Ms. Lindsey asked about the businesses paying into the project. Mr. Lighty stated that there is an assessment on the parcel, so the bigger the parcel the bigger the assessment, but noted that there are caps to that as well. It is not a huge amount of money. Ms. Lindsey stated that there are businesses that are not doing very well right now. Mr. Lighty agreed, and the businesses may see this as a way to get business back on track, or they may not want to spend any money on something new when they are not making it as it is.

Mr. Newsome asked the difference between the owner of the shopping center, and store owners within that shopping center. Mr. Guise stated it is an assessment against real property, so it is put on the owner of the shopping center, who will most likely pass that cost on to the tenants.

Mr. Newsome stated he will see the director of the State College Planning Commission. He will ask her about improvement districts there.

Mr. Guise asked if there is a list of the properties. Ms. Wissler stated there will be, and it will include parcel ID, physical address, business name, property owner name & address, parcel size, and non-profit status. Mr. Lighty asked if that can be exported from the map with the parcels, since it is simply a layer within the GIS software.

Mr. Lighty stated that one hurdle is getting a representative from the larger properties, who are most likely large real estate management companies. There should be local contacts, but there may not be. Mr. Guise stated that if they are invited, and no one from any level of the organization comes, that is on them. Ms. Wissler stated they can designate someone to come on their behalf. Mr. Lighty stated the invitation letter could be worded to encourage them to send someone.

The Colonial Diner and Goodyear Tire are situated on three parcels of land owned by one entity who is neither business. Do they get three votes-one for each parcel; one vote for the group of parcels

under common ownership; or two votes-one for each business. If there are two businesses on one lot, the owner of that lot gets one vote. The owner of a tiny parcel with a tiny business gets an equal vote as the owner of Colonial Commons. Or, the owner of Colonial Commons gets 5 votes for the 5 parcels it sits on, versus 45 small businesses on small parcels. The regulations refer to "property owners" so the owner of each property gets one vote. Each parcel gets one vote. The small businesses could rally and defeat the big centers, or they could push the district to proceed against the wishes of the large centers. The assessment is based on property value, so they are different in that aspect.

Mr. Guise noted that to do nothing, is to vote in favor of it. A vote in the negative is the only one that counts.

Mr. Guise asked who the Township Clerk is. Mr. Lighty suggested it is probably the Township Manager.

Ms. Lindsey asked about the improvements. Mr. Lighty stated that advertising is important, and can serve multiple purposes such as branding and creating a sense of place, both of which are good for the entire community. Traffic improvements: timing of the lights-as handled by an operations center with a real person operating it. Beautification: PennDOT has already studied the corridor, and their plan calls for turning the concrete islands into planted medians and decorative street lights.

Ms. Lindsey asked who would be in charge of maintenance of those improvements since it is a State roadway. Mr. Lighty stated there will be a management association for the BID. He noted that the Harrisburg DID (Downtown Improvement District) found a volunteer, the Horticultural Club of Harrisburg, to tend to the hanging planters. Mr. Lighty stated it can be done as long as it is within the right-of-way.

Ms. Wissler asked if the State College person could also be invited to the next meeting. Mr. Newsome will talk to her about that.

Ms. Lindsey asked about Derry Township. Mr. Lighty stated that is a Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Newsome asked about the Goodwill store between Allentown Blvd and Old Jonestown Road. It is included in the District, even though it is in the CN Zoning District. Mr. Guise noted it might be exempt because of being non-profit. Mr. Lighty asked how that will be determined. The owner of the land may not be the non-profit entity.

Mr. Guise noted that there will probably turn out to be many more businesses than property owners.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The next Planning Commission workshop session regarding the Route 22 Improvement District is scheduled for Monday, March 16, 2009, at 5:00 pm, in Room 174 of the Municipal Center. There will be a light dinner available.

The next regular Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 12, 2009, at 7:00 pm at the Lower Paxton Township Municipal Center, Room 171.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Hiner  
Recording Secretary