

Plumstead Township Planning Commission
September 4th, 2008
Meeting Minutes

The special meeting of the Plumstead Township Planning Commission was held at 7:30 pm on September 4th, 2008, at the Plumstead Township Municipal Building, 5186 Stump Road, Plumsteadville, PA.

Present:	Dave Mortimer	Chair
	Gary Talbot	Vice-Chair
	Donald Veix	Member
	Steve Rush	Member
	Louis Fineberg	Land Use Director
	Jonathan Reiss	Township Solicitor

Absent:	Andy Thomas	Secretary
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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mr. Mortimer and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

No minutes were approved.

Confirmed Appointments

Church of Scientology Conditional Use

The applicant was represented by Robert W. Gundlach, Jr., Esquire. Present for the applicant were Rhodes Wilson and Jana Wilson.

Jonathan Reiss gave an overview of the conditional use application process. Mr. Reiss also explained that the applicant is required to demonstrate that the proposed use meets all parking, design and buffering requirements of the Township zoning ordinance. Jonathan explained that the applicant does not have an engineered plan, but one is required per the zoning ordinance to determine if the proposed use meets the zoning requirements. Mr. Reiss referenced the applicable sections of the ordinance. The applicant explained that they are proposing to use an existing structure on the site as a place of worship. They explained that the property fronts on 611 and that the proposed use is in close proximity to other places of worship. Mr. Reiss explained that no occupant capacity information was presented for the building so it is not possible to determine if the existing parking is sufficient for the proposed use. Jonathan explained that the site area calculation for minimum required area does not include rights of way, easements, buffer yards or any other item deemed by the zoning ordinance to be excluded from said calculation. The applicant asked how building capacity is determined. Mr. Reiss explained that the fire marshal using the UCC and L & I standards would make that determination.

The applicant gave an overview of his reasons for wanting to create a place of worship. He explained that it would be a low key operation that would serve as a mission rather than a place of worship. He explained that the nearest churches are located in Philadelphia and New York City. The applicant explained that there would be no established services where members of the

congregation assemble at one time. The applicant estimated that no more than twenty individuals would be there at one time. There would be a receptionist and minister there on an ongoing basis and members would make appointments to see the minister. The applicant would be willing to state that the structure would not be used for a residence as well as a church. The applicant stated that he is not proposing any changes to the exterior of the structure. There would be no changes in lighting. The applicant stated that they would like to put up a sign on 611. The applicant stated that facility would be used until there was enough of a congregation to warrant the construction of a new facility. If the Township was not in favor of expansion at that time, they would look elsewhere to build a bigger facility.

Mr. Reiss asked the applicant to explain various programs that the applicant stated would be offered at the site.

Mr. Reiss explained that a recommendation of approval by the Commission could be conditioned upon the applicant repeating the conditional use process if in the future the applicant seeks to expand the facility.

Stacey Mulholland asked Mr. Reiss if there is a distinction in the zoning ordinance between mission and church. Mr. Reiss explained that they are both considered places of worship. Ms. Mulholland also asked if there would be a lease on the building. The applicant stated that there would be a lease. Tom Alvare asked if the church had tax exempt status. The applicant applied in the affirmative. Mr. Alvare also asked if there was adequate site lighting. The applicant applied in the affirmative. Bob Melker, a resident living behind the proposed use, stated that his property is receiving storm water run-off from the applicant's property. He also stated the applicant knocked down a number of mature trees and replace them with smaller ones. Mr. Reiss explained that a Class 'A' buffer yard would be required. The resident expressed that the proposed use would have a detrimental impact on his property value.

Motion by Talbot to recommend approval of the application to the Board of Supervisors (with the understanding that the applicant had failed to submit sufficient information for the Commission to determine if the all of the requirements of the conditional use had been satisfied) conditioned upon the applicant meeting the requirements of the Township zoning ordinance, adequate buffering of neighboring properties to the satisfaction of the Township Engineer, the correction of all storm water run-off problems to the satisfaction of the Township Engineer, no expansion of the existing structure without obtaining a new conditional use approval, no overnight occupancy or residency within the structure, hours limited to between 9 AM and 9 PM, no new structures on the site, no daycare use on site, no cemetery use on site nor other permitted accessory uses and compliance with all other local and state ordinances. Motion seconded by Rush. Approved 4-0.

Planning

The Planning Commission discussed the format of the proposed amendments to the Township Comprehensive Plan. The Commission recommended that the Township utilize its existing plans in drafting the new comprehensive plan. Shorter and more general would be preferable to longer and more specific. A narrative would be required to tie the individual plan into an integrated whole.\

Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Plans to Accept for Review

Plumstead Christian School.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made at 8:50 by Veix. Talbot seconded the motion. Approved.