**Meeting Minutes of Planning Commission**

**Town of Laytonsville**

**March 28, 2024**

Chair Wenger called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:31 p.m. Members Brian Kline, Obed Pellegrino, Tom Jackson, Brendan Deyo and Alternate Tim Shortley were present. Town Clerk Mary Burke, Mayor Charles Hendricks, Dave Ager, Dave Stadler, Lisa Stadler, and several residents were present.

The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting on December 21, 2024, were approved as submitted.

**Zoning Moratorium Update:** Chair Wenger shared that the Mayor and Town Council met on March 19, 2024, and that the moratorium has been tabled.

**Hope Builders Update:** Chair Wenger shared that Hope Builders submitted their updated Forest Conservation Plan and it has been reviewed by the Town Engineer, Steve Crum. The Planning Commission will meet on Thursday, April 11th at 7:30 via Zoom to discuss the Forest Conservation Plan.

**Comprehensive Plan Review 2024**: Dave Stadler, owner of Stadler Nurseries along with Lisa Stadler, shared the following information: Knowing that the Comprehensive Plan was up for review they paired with Brian Kline and his family and hired Dave Ager of Townscape Design, LLC. We've invited Dave tonight to share his insights and vision of how we may assist Laytonsville in accomplishing its goals. We're thrilled with what he's suggesting and think his insight hits on many of the desires that our neighbors here in town have been expressing in recent public forums.

Dave Ager began a presentation that he referred to as a high-level discussion of elements of the Comprehensive Plan, with a focus on the commercial district at the south end of town. After reading the Comprehensive Plan, he took away the concept of a safe, walkable community, and agrees that this is a good objective. The challenges are that Route 108 is an auto oriented network, and that a 150’ right of way does not work with a town like Laytonsville. There's an emphasis on auto oriented network development. Right now you have the bypass referred to as the bypass. It is going to help direct traffic around the historic district, but it's now part of your town. One of the challenges to your safe walkable community is if that road is designed as an auto oriented roadway. Speed management is another critical factor. Pedestrian fatalities are a direct result of the speed of the vehicle. So, speed management is a critical important element to the town. This is also what happens in the new vision 0 plan at the county level which has target speeds for all new streets at 25 miles an hour unless it's a major highway. And then, finally being a small town, it's very important that whatever's done, as in the context of the Comprehensive Plan is in the context of the community itself. So introducing what they call multimodality, basically allowing all the users of the town, the pedestrians, the bicycles, people driving all to have a safe and purposeful way to get through town. The second opportunity is to create a network of blocks along Route 108 to start to create a main street opportunity. On the land use and housing side we think that there's an opportunity to introduce what we call attainable housing versus the high-end housing that's currently being introduced in town. Long term looks at some public sewer, possibly to counteract the issue of failing septic in the area and for other development, future development. And then, finally, how do you implement that? You want to get your zoning ordinance and your subdivision regulations updated after you do your Comprehensive Plan and allowing some flexibility in that would be great. So those are some suggestions for your consideration from us. Thank you very much for the opportunity to make this presentation.

Member Deyo asked if he was trying to facilitate the subdivision of these properties, and the answer was no.

Alternate Member Shortly said that he applauds the initiative, and that now is the time to put it on the table. Forward and creative thinking is welcome.

Member Pellegrino asked how development would impact the town if the bypass does not happen.

Chair Wenger said that was a fair question. These are just conceptual ideas. These ideas are not new to the Planning Commission or to Laytonsville. Being a walkable community is an important part of our plan. How can we recapture the center of town? Route 108 is a state road and not a town road. If the bypass happens, it will become a state road and the town would have a main street in the center of town. He urged that the Planning Commission and citizens of the town to have an open mind.

Kirk Knight, who represents the owners of Parcels 733 and 400 shared that they were actively looking at developing that property. They believe that it will be a beautiful development that will enhance Laytonsville. Chair Wenger stated that this is the property currently owned by YCK Holding. This property could be houses by 2030.

Member Deyo said that he appreciates that this is not a near term thing, but when it is in the plan, you are setting the framework to allow it to happen.

Chair Wenger stated that the Comprehensive Plan has meaning, and we’ve got control over it, knowing that it can change. It’s not set in stone, and it can be reworked.

Alternate Member Shortley asked why not use the Kline and Stadler idea to use further in town. To do more with a progressive Mayor and Town Council that is willing to look at options.

Chair Wenger said that's fair. We all might have our personal opinions and things like that. Part of what the Planning Commission is supposed to do is look at these things and then decide. How does the town feel about these things? And then where do they belong? Within the plan? There are elements within this plan that are dictated by the State. We need to address each one. We need to modernize each one. It doesn't mean we have to address all sorts of future things.

Member Kline stated that it is going to take sewer brought to town to make all this change. Laytonsville has changed dramatically in the last decade. Let’s plan for the future.

Chair Wenger shared that it is hard to open your mind and entertain things that will ultimately happen. The water resources element has 2 main parts. It's got more than that, but 2 main parts and one is potable drinking water, and part of that is sanitary sewer. That's what we're talking about when we talk about public sewer. We have a mixed town in the sense that we have older properties with old infrastructure and old septic, and we have new properties with modern septic and large lots, and they're good for many decades. Whether you like it or not, sanitary sewer is going to have to come to the town of Laytonsville. He then asked if everyone had read the comments relating to the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission needs to determine how to write these into the Comprehensive Plan, even if they are sensitive.

Member Kline said that the Planning Commission drafted a letter about public sewer for the mayor to be sent to the County Council, and it didn’t go anywhere. Chair Wenger said there were concerns about the way the letter was written.

Mayor Hendricks stated that Brian is right that the Planning Commission prepared a letter, and I worked with him and Eric to make revisions of it. We brought it to the Council for consideration, and there was certainly a lot of skepticism expressed in the council about the pros and cons of having public sewer brought to Laytonsville. At the beginning of Mayor Ruspi’s tenure there was a meeting held with WSSC to evaluate the possibility of bringing a sewer service, particularly to the shopping center. It was concluded at that time by all concerned at this meeting that it would just be inordinately expensive even to take it to the shopping center it.

Chair Wenger asked if anyone was familiar with Hyattstown. It is a smaller town than Laytonsville. They had a failed septic and the state built them a community septic system.

Member Deyo said that he had challenge with all options because all options are not a vision.

And it's not just for the septic consumer, but it's for the bypass and for everything. Determine what is the vision and turn the vision into the options, not have options create an economy of different vision statements.

Chair Wenger said we're talking about the future. I know there's a lot of opinions and differences of opinions, but it's up to the Planning Commission to write these things into a Comprehensive Plan so that they meet the State's goals. We're going to have to write stuff down. We can't debate this forever. We need to say these are the ideas that we're comfortable with. We're going to have to get them completed and written down. I think we've got a tall order in front of us. The countdown to completing the Comprehensive Plan.is ticking, and there's a lot of other things in front of the Planning Commission.

**Special Message from Chair Wenger:** I am going to step down from my position as Chair. I am no longer able to handle the load that is being placed on me. I will be here for the April 11th meeting. I will still be available to consult with. The town will need to hire a consultant to assist with the Comprehensive Plan review. Brian, Vice-Chair, will become Chair, and Tim will move from Alternate to Member.

**Members:**

Member Kline made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:01, Member Jackson seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Burke, Town Clerk

March 28, 2024