

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES – MAY 13, 2019

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the Municipal Building on May 13, 2019. Mr. Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Those present:

Planning Commission: Chad Wallace, Chair  
Craig Bryson, Vice Chair  
Charles Halboth, Secretary

Others: Jim Majewski, Director Planning & Zoning  
Barbara Kirk, Township Solicitor  
John B. Lewis, Supervisor Liaison

Absent: Ross Bruch, Planning Commission Member  
Dawn DiDonato-Burke, Planning Commission Member

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Halboth moved, Mr. Bryson seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of March 25, 2019 as written.

DISCUSSION AND MOTION TO RECOMMEND COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN UPDATE  
FINAL DRAFT TO BE PRESENTED AT THE MAY 15<sup>TH</sup> BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING  
TO AUTHORIZE ADVERTISEMENT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

Ms. Lisa Wolff and Mr. Luke Rosanova from the Bucks County Planning Commission were present to make the changes that Mr. Majewski had submitted and to make updates.

Ms. Wolff stated the Township had reached the ten-year time horizon envisioned in the current Comprehensive Plan in 2013 as the current Plan is dated 2003. She stated the MPC requires Municipalities to update the Comprehensive Plans/Master Plans every ten years so 2013 was the ten-year timeframe. Ms. Wolff stated they also wanted to account for studies and activities that the Township had undertaken since 2003 as well

as account for various changes in terms of additional growth and development since 2003. Ms. Wolff stated the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code has some specific elements that are required in a Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Wolff stated in terms of the studies and activities since 2003, the Township has been a participant in the Delaware River Flood Task Force, which was an outcome of some of the severe flooding that the Township experienced in the years of 2004, 2005, and 2006 and probably other times as well. She stated there was significant flooding along the Delaware River during those years that caused a lot of damage and interruption of services and impacted many River front communities. She stated the Task Force was developed, and Lower Makefield along with sixteen other River front communities formed to work together. Ms. Wolff stated as part of that Task Force, the Township committed to achieving specific actions identified in the Bucks County Hazard Mitigation Plan; and the Township has been active in adopting a number of various Ordinances, many of which relate to natural resource protection or low-impact type of development. Ms. Wolff stated the Township adopted a Green Building Code, looked at the floodplain management regulations, and came up with requirements for landscaping with native plants.

Ms. Wolff stated the Township also looked at uses and wanted to update the Zoning Ordinance in terms of providing for age-targeted housing and providing regulations for Traditional Neighborhood Development, the construction of which can be seen now. Mr. Wolff stated in 2009 the Township adopted an update to the Open Space Plan.

Ms. Wolff stated the process for the update was started in 2013, and it involved meeting monthly with the Planning Commission to review first drafts of each individual Chapter. She stated at the beginning of the project various Boards and Commissions that serve as advisors to the Board of Supervisors were invited to participate. She stated each of the Boards and Commissions have specific program ideas and recommendations that they provide to the Board of Supervisors at various times. She stated the Planning Commission was very clear that they wanted input from them at the beginning of the process. She stated discussion questions were developed and sent out to all of the Committee members, and the Committees were invited to Planning Commission meeting throughout the summer of 2013. She stated the discussion and feedback from these Township Boards and Commissions were taken into account as the Plan was updated.

Ms. Wolff stated following the review of the first draft, a second draft of the document complete with all the Chapters and maps was prepared for review by the Planning Commission. Following that, with further input, a final draft dated March, 2015 was prepared. She stated at the March 9, 2015 meeting, the Planning Commission recommended that document to be sent on to the Supervisors.

Ms. Wolf stated since that time, many of those on the Planning Commission are new members. She stated there are really no significant changes to the vision of the Township or the major recommendations, and for the most part there is no change of course in terms of land development or land use recommendations.

Ms. Wolff stated the Municipalities Planning Code sets out certain requirements that Comprehensive Plans should contain; and for the most part each Plan Chapter in the document addresses a different Plan element that is required by the MPC such as land use, housing needs, transportation, natural and historic resources, community facilities and services, interrelationships among Plan components, and the implementation strategy. Ms. Wolff stated the Planning Commission also decided several years ago to add a new Chapter on energy conservation which was not in the document in 2003, as well as an additional section in the Community Facilities and Services Chapter that deals with hazard mitigation, which was an outcome of the Flood Task Force. Ms. Wolff stated they also moved the Stormwater Management section to the Community Facilities and Services Chapter.

Mr. Rosanova stated one of the biggest updates to the Plan was the demographics section. He stated they have updated the numbers with the American Community Survey data from the 2013/2017 five-year estimates. He stated the Township has increased in populations, but the major development process was done in decades past. He stated following significant population increases in the previous three decades, the Township's population declined by .4% from 2000 to 2010; however, the decline reversed from 2010 to 2017 when the population increased by .2%. He stated according to Census data, the Township has fewer residents in 2017 than it did in 2000.

Mr. Rosanova stated after several decades with double digit growth in the housing numbers, housing growth has slowed considerably in the Township increasing only by 2% from 2000 to 2010 and 2.5% from 2010 to 2017. He stated the Township is nearly developed with little typical land remaining for larger scale construction.

Mr. Rosanova stated the Township's population is aging, and between 2000 and 2017 the number of individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 increased by 6.5% which is more than any other age set. He stated residents aged 55 years or older make up one third of the Township's population. He stated middle-aged residents between ages 35 and 54 make up almost one third of the Township's population as well, and school children ages 5 to 17 represent almost one fifth of the Township's population.

Mr. Rosanova stated regionally the Township has a higher level of educational attainment and a higher than average median household income. He stated Lower Makefield has a post-secondary education attainment higher than any other surrounding Municipality, and in 2017 slightly more than 67% of Township residents had earned a Bachelor's Degree or higher with 32% having earned a Graduate Degree or higher. Mr. Rosanova stated in 2017 the Township's median household income was almost \$140,000 which is higher than any other surrounding Municipality except for Upper Makefield. He stated this suggests a strong correlation between the Township residents' high education levels and types of employment.

Mr. Rosanova stated since the last Comprehensive Plan, the Township had expanded the park and recreation land and facilities. He stated major additions to the park and recreation system include additions to Memorial Park which has the Garden of Reflection Memorial and various playgrounds, and athletic fields. He stated the Dog Park was also built as was the Lower Makefield Community Center on Oxford Valley Road.

Mr. Majewski stated on the map, they have mistakenly labeled the Golf Course as Macclesfield Highlands; and that should be Makefield Highlands. Mr. Majewski also stated that the Township sold the Park & Ride to the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. Mr. Rosanova asked that they be advised of any other discrepancies.

Mr. Rosanova noted the Existing Land Use Map and stated most of the agriculture is in the north, and is preserved by the Farmland Preservation program. He stated the mixed housing is primarily in the southwest of the Township. He stated parks and open space are located in the southern portion of the Township with the Golf Course in the north. He stated the Commercial area of the Township is surrounding Edgewood Village.

Mr. Rosanova noted Map #5 – the Developable Lands Map. He stated there are a few discrepancies in the numbers they are finding for developable land per Zoning District which is one of the charts that is featured in the Demographic Chapter, and they are still working on ironing out all the details of that. He stated as of now for 2013 to now, the amount of developable land is roughly the same so not a lot of the narrative has changed, although they are still working on this to make it as accurate as possible and comparing it with their GIS. Ms. Wolff stated when the 2015 draft was prepared, to develop the developable acreage shown by Zoning District, the GIS had gone through a process of trying to net out the natural resources in order to get an accounting of potential development. She stated she believes this relates to the recreation land since there is a recreation land requirement per dwelling unit, and that ties into a later Chapter. Ms. Wolff stated the difference was not very significant in terms of acreages, but they want to make sure it is as accurate as they can get it. She stated it will not change the text, and it would just be in the Chart. Mr. Rosanova stated maybe in one of the Zoning Districts some land has been preserved, but it was only a four acres difference. Mr. Majewski stated that is a “moving target,” as to what is considered developable. He stated there are a few parcels where they have a house on the property, but it is a slightly larger piece of property that could potentially be subdivided; and the question is do you count it as developed or un-developed. He stated there will never be an exact answer because any parcel that is double what is permitted could potentially be subdivided in half, but this is the best approximation of what is remaining.

Ms. Wolff stated the 2003 Plan does have the map and that information in it, and they were just updating it. She stated she knows that one of the parcels that was mapped in the 2003 Plan is the property on Dobry Road, but that has been taken off the developable land because it is in the development process. She stated they started with the 2003 information and worked from that when they were looking at revising the map and the numbers. Mr. Majewski stated there will never be an exact answer on that.

Ms. Wolff stated with regard to the implementation recommendations, if there are other suggestions, they could add to or change the recommendations. She stated the Implementation Chapter at the end includes a compilation of specific tasks that are recommended to be completed in order to carry out what the Plan vision is. Ms. Wolff stated some of the recommendations are to continue with certain activities or certain actions. She stated the Implementation Chapter focuses on the new actions that have been put into the Plan. She stated the primary recommendations they felt should be highlighted include housing and to consider appropriate housing of varied types to ensure continued housing diversity such as considering regulations to allow

for in-law suites or accessory apartments along with appropriate regulations to supplement age-qualified housing. Ms. Wolff stated one of the reasons that is something important to look at in the future is because the population is aging, and there are probably residents that are experiencing the need to house older parents or as they get older maybe their children will be in the home.

Ms. Wolff stated stormwater management is also included and the recommendation is to prioritize Township stormwater problem areas including locations where obstructions and drainage issues exist for remediation. She stated such efforts would help to reduce the impacts following major rain storm events; and given the flooding that has occurred, this would become more important. She stated with regard to hazard mitigation, the recommendation is to continue to implement the Township's Hazard Mitigation Plan, and to evaluate and implement the most effective mitigation measures or projects when financial assistance is available. She stated they should attempt to address the needs of vulnerable community members in the event of severe weather such as the elderly population and individuals with special needs. Ms. Wolff stated this was something that the Planning Commission discussed and was concerned about. Ms. Wolff stated a recommendation is also to assess and mark emergency evacuation routes or exits for all areas and neighborhoods in the Township. She stated along with that also came getting the word out and putting more things on the Website and having contact information so that all residents get the information through their computer.

Ms. Wolff stated she included Transportation with Parks and Recreation since the bicycle/pedestrian path is discussed in two different Chapters. She stated one of the main recommendations is to continue to connect segments of the bicycle/pedestrian paths throughout the Township and also to consider long-term maintenance needs of such paths. She stated one of the important recommendations in that Chapter is to link the bicycle/pedestrian path to the towpath along the Delaware Canal.

Ms. Wolff stated with regard to transportation, they should correlate land use considerations and transportation planning to insure that transportation facilities have adequate capacity and also that heavy Commercial traffic is oriented more to Interstate and major highways rather than the local streets. She stated the Township should plan where they allow the higher-volume type of uses.

Ms. Wolff stated with regard to land use, the recommendation is to re-evaluate permitted uses in the O/R Office Research District to determine whether they should be updated taking into account pending or approved development within

that District as well as the adjoining Edgewood Village area. Ms. Wolff stated along with that was to try to look at ways to maximize pedestrian connectivity between the O/R District and Edgewood Village.

Ms. Wolff noted the issue of sustainability. She stated an emphasis in the Plan is placed on sustainability with the focus of managing the current infrastructure and resources. Looking ahead, it is recommended that efforts should focus on following a course of maintaining the public and community assets that would continue to meet the needs of those who live and work in the Township. Ms. Wolff stated that goes along with the whole realization that Lower Makefield is pretty much developed. She stated there is still some developable land, but in terms of the thinking about the future, sustaining and how they will take care of what the Township has will probably become more of a focus.

Mr. Wallace stated the Planning Commission has gone through this process a great deal over the last few years. He stated while not all the current Planning Commission members have been on the Commission since the beginning of the process, most of the members have had the opportunity to review the changes and suggestions.

Ms. Sue Herman asked if she could get a copy of the draft e-mailed to her, and Mr. Majewski stated there is a link on the Township Website.

Mr. Majewski stated a year to a year and half ago some of the newer Planning Commission members asked for more details on the traffic; and the Citizens Traffic Commission, including Ms. Herman, had come up with some language which has been reviewed with the Traffic engineer, and that has been incorporated into the latest draft. Mr. Majewski stated they also added a lot of the sewer information. He stated Mr. Lewis has advised that the Township has adopted the 537 Plan. Mr. Majewski stated the Plan is a “moving target” as the Comprehensive Plan is a view of where the Township was in the past, a snapshot of where they are now, and what the vision is going forward; and it is the “snapshot” that gets “a little off” if it is not kept right up to date.

Mr. Wallace stated he feels they have done a good job of reaching out to all of the local groups to get their input so that everyone has had the opportunity to review it and make suggestions of what they feel is best. He stated he feels that was a good process to follow, and he is happy with the way this has turned out.

Ms. Wolff stated there were some questions prepared to try to get input from the different Boards and Committees, recognizing that not all members of those Committees would come to a meeting; however, all members did receive the questions.

She stated there were some members from probably all of the Committees who attended a meeting at some point even if it was only one representative from the Committee; however, all of the members did have an opportunity to submit comments.

Mr. Wallace stated the Comprehensive Plan is a guideline to state where they have been, where they are at, and where we think we should go. He stated obviously circumstances can change, and they cannot predict those.

Ms. Wolff stated everything was discussed at the Planning Commission meetings and the public was present at various meetings.

Mr. Lewis stated with regard to Lower Makefield's strategic positioning within Bucks County and the Region, one of the things he has noticed is that Bucks County, compared to peer Counties in the area, is not growing population wise and is relatively stagnant; and this concerns him because we need economic growth and population growth to deliver that. He stated currently the Township has one of the highest per capita incomes in the Country for places with population over 30,000, but he worries that the rest of Bucks County is not growing at the same rate. He asked if we should be concerned about what is happening in neighboring Municipalities, and what is the County view on where we should be going. Ms. Wolff stated for Lower Makefield, while they are in Bucks County, a lot of what happens here related to what happens across the River. She stated Lower Makefield has a lot of other factors that maybe some other communities in the County do not have.

Mr. Bryson stated the only thing that concerns him about Lower Makefield are the demographics since one third of the population is over 55, and in the next ten years they would not have that many places to go in Lower Makefield if they do not want a single-family home. He stated if all of the "baby boomers" were to leave, we would only capture a certain percent with what we have available for downsizing. He stated they have tried to adjust that by looking at some of the Districts as Overlay Districts with different ideas for multi-family or mixed use. He stated he does not know if this is an issue across the County, and Mr. Wallace stated he feels it is across the Country.

Ms. Wolff stated the baby boomers are aging. She stated a lot of communities also have the "brain drain," when young people go away to School and then go where the jobs are so the young adults are moving away. She stated this is the situation in many suburban communities. Mr. Wallace stated looking at the School District projections there is a dip in the coming years, but beyond that you start to see an increase.



Mr. Lewis stated he feels Lower Makefield is fortunate in that of the suburban communities our housing stock is relatively new, and we have a great location compared to peer Municipalities and relatively good transportation. He stated in general there seems to be a trend toward smaller houses in more urban areas. He stated no one wants to work in office parks in the suburbs anymore which is the O/R question that the whole County is dealing with. Mr. Lewis stated Lower Makefield is very dependent on high-end single-family homes, and we over index in homes over \$500,00; and when the economy is great they moved, but in Lower Makefield homes over \$650,000 stay on the market a while, and homes under \$400,000 move instantaneously. He stated this is why he wonders If we have built ourselves out in a way that is not positioning us for where the economy is going. He stated this is why diversified housing stock is crucial not just for aging out baby boomers, but also homes in transition where you may have divorces, widows, separations, and younger families so that they can grow into Lower Makefield.

Mr. Wallace stated the challenge moving forward is the O/R District and how we handle that; but those are for Plans that will come forward, and we will have to evaluate those as they come. Mr. Wallace stated the O/R District and Overlay Districts are what they may need to discuss moving forward, but he does not feel they can effectively put that in a Master Plan. Mr. Wallace stated as the development projects come before them, they will have to evaluate them on a case-by-case basis to see how that impacts it, and that has been discussed in the document. Ms. Wolff stated with regard to the O/R, the recommendation is just to look at it, and not necessarily to change it. She stated she understands that there are some vacancies in the office parks that are mentioned in the Plan. Mr. Lewis stated they did source their first Fortune 500 corporate headquarters this year, so they are starting to close the gap on that. He stated they should get that re-assessed for higher property taxes. Mr. Majewski stated at one point we were up to 50% vacancy, but the vacancy rate is now getting better. Mr. Majewski stated while the vacancies have dropped, they were filled with lower-paying rents; and they are now trying to make it nicer so that they can attract high-end companies back.

Mr. Halboth stated he does not feel that there was any synergy that would make people want to go to those areas to work; and he stated he feels the developers short-changed themselves by not making a better commitment to developing something that could thrive and sustain. Mr. Wallace stated when those were developed, the business model at the time may have been different as those properties were done twenty years ago. Mr. Majewski stated it is also partly the way the Ordinances were set up at that time, and it was not a cohesive effort to blend uses to have uses other than just offices in the office park.

Mr. Bryson stated with regard to the Comprehensive Plan, there are actionable items that they should make sure they do. He stated there are four large parcels in the Township that are susceptible to “McMansions” and they should start looking at that and consider a plan for those parcels instead of waiting for someone who will come in and indicate that they are putting in 120, 3,000 square foot homes. Mr. Majewski stated one of the recommendations is that right now the Farmland Preservation piece of our Ordinance which allows you to cluster homes and have smaller homes on smaller lots while preserving half of it for agriculture is by Conditional Use , which is a more cumbersome process; and the Planning Commission has recommended that be a use by right. Mr. Majewski stated it was also suggested that as part of the Low Impact Development Ordinance, it be for non-farmland pieces as well, and developers would be allowed to cluster the homes so that there could be smaller lots with a higher density if you preserve half the land and it would just be open space and not necessarily agriculture. He stated in some ways, he feels we should mandate that. Mr. Bryson stated he agrees that the Township should look at that instead of having it as an option. Mr. Wallace stated he believes they have included that in the document. Mr. Bryson stated while that is true, if it just sits in the document and never gets implemented, it does not do any good until someone comes in with an Application, and then it is too late. Mr. Majewski stated from the 2003 Plan the Township did take a number of the recommendations into consideration, and some were implemented or are in the process of being implemented. He noted particularly Traditional. Neighborhood Development.

Mr. Halboth stated he feels Lower Makefield will always have an advantage because of the availability of good transportation, and that is what initially attracted him to this area. He stated it is almost equidistant from New York or Philadelphia, and that is a tremendous advantage. Mr. Halboth stated he feels they can look for better opportunities to better enhance the transportation from the respective public transportation areas. He stated he feels the bike path goal within the Township is one of “the best things around,” but there are a number of areas that need to be added. He stated he also feels they should consider the smaller electrical vehicles being able to use those kinds of paths.

Mr. Majewski thanked Mr. Rosanova for updating the demographics and the Tables.

Mr. Majewski stated it would be appropriate for the Planning Commission to make a recommendation tonight to the Board of Supervisors as it is going before them Wednesday when they will discuss it and potentially authorize advertisement for a Public Hearing. He stated that Public Hearing would be a minimum of forty-five days after advertisement so it will probably be sometime in July.

Ms. Herman asked if there were any changes to the roadway class, and Mr. Majewski stated there were not.

Mr. Halboth moved, Mr. Bryson seconded and it was unanimously carried to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to adopt and approve the final draft of the Comprehensive Master Plan update as presented by the Bucks County Planning Commission with the updated maps and Amendments as presented.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bryson asked what happened with the voluntary Tree Preservation issue, and Ms. Kirk stated it was eventually adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Wallace asked the status of the Marrazzo project, and Mr. Majewski stated he has not seen anything on that since they came before the Township in March, 2018. He stated he has heard that there may be some possible movement on that. Mr. Wallace stated he assumes they would come back to the Planning Commission before anything could happen; and Mr. Majewski agreed adding they may do a Sketch Plan or may choose to prepare Plans and proceed to get their approval.

Mr. Wallace stated at the last meeting, the Planning Commission was discussing the warehouse project, and he asked the status of that. Ms. Kirk stated it is in front of the Zoning Hearing Board, and it was Continued until June. Mr. Majewski stated they are supposed to be preparing some traffic data which the Township traffic engineer will review; however, he has not seen anything on that yet.

There being no further business, Mr. Bryson moved, Mr. Halboth seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charles Halboth, Secretary

