

**COLLEGEVILLE BOROUGH  
PLANNING COMMISSION/JOINT BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Thomas Gamble.

Roll Call Planning Commission:

In Person: Chair, Thomas Gamble, Alex Tweedie

Via Zoom: Richard Wallace, Charles Faulkner, Shannon Spencer, Dean Miller

Absent: Josh Macel

Roll Call Borough Council:

In person: President, Cathy Kernen, Gary Hoffman, Craig Farr, Mayor Wright-Riggins,

Via Zoom: Valarie Beckius, Kathy Costello, Marian McKinney, shannon Spencer

Others Present: Engineer, David Leh, Solicitor Dan Grieser, Planner Mike Lowrey and Manager Tamara Twardowski

Approval of Minutes: MOTION by A. Tweedie with some grammatical corrects to approve the minutes of April 15, 2021 meeting, second by C. Faulkner. Motion approved

NEW BUSINESS:

**Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission** – Valerie Beckius gave an overview of items discussed at the meeting.

**WB Homes – Freeland Square**

Justin Stahorn was present to discuss a deminimus change to the Freeland Square final plan. The developer would be able to revise the plan for Freeland Square to allow for adding seven parking spaces along Third Ave and a waiver to eliminate a three-foot grass strip along Third Avenue. This would not affect the impervious surface percentages of the site since this is in the road right of way. The parking spaces would be Borough parking spaces and would not be specifically for the Town homes.

C. Draskler, Shakespeare Drive, inquired what the street width would be and if it would be Penn Dot minimum. Would these spots be for anyone from the public and was told yes, they would be.

B. Fox, Third Ave feels that we need more parking in town but that creating parking in this area of the street where there is currently no parking may create problems.

Motion by A. Tweedie to recommend to Borough Council removal of the grass strip and installation of seven additional parallel parking spaces as shown on the plan, Second by S. Spenser, motion carried.

**Collegetown Car Wash** has submitted a zoning variance and the hearing has been scheduled for September 9, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. via zoom. Planning Commission has discussed this project previously and their comments are on record in the minutes.

## **Main Street Overlay Ordinance – Cathy Kernen**

### **Purpose of the meeting:**

- To present the recommendations of the Borough’s Business Development Committee to revitalize the 400 block of Main Street
- To find out what aspects of the recommendations the Planning Commission and Council support or do not support, and to provide a forum for their suggestions and ideas.

### **Assumptions:**

- The 400 block of Main Street is a mix of mainly residential homes and about 10 commercial properties.
- Ursinus College owns seven properties in the 400 block currently used as dormitories. Over time, the College wishes to move all the students to their campus and Residential Village in the 500 and 600 blocks. That will leave the buildings available for renovation or tear downs. This would make way for new builds with first floor commercial spaces for retail and restaurants and apartments or offices in the floors above.
- Our goal is to create a “College town” feel in this block that will appeal to both students and residents.
- The positioning for our Main Street based on our demographics is “family-friendly”: A destination that should include things to do and entertainment options for young and older kids through adults.
- The Ursinus campus is open to the community. We see the richness of the College’s music, theater, art, dance lectures and more as one of the most valuable assets to Collegetown Borough.
- The College has taken the first step in revitalizing our Main Street by building the Schellhase Commons. The bookstore and Café 2020, along with the campus, is now permanently open to residents.

### **Community and Economic Development Goals**

- Jumpstart development at the top of the 400 block of Main Street to increase both commercial and residential density.
- Attract vibrant businesses and amenities that residents can walk to, which increases the desirability of living in the Borough. Over time, this will result in an increase of property values, and a higher tax base for the Borough in the future through rising house prices.

## **What Collegeville Needs for a Successful Main Street Business District**

- A public outdoor space where people can meet and enjoy music, and dining. With global warming, there is increasing emphasis on the importance of shade, seating and the preservation of green space.
- More restaurants, entertainment and retail rather than service businesses. Over 60 percent of our businesses are hair salons, fitness studios, and medical and insurance offices
- More people patronizing businesses both during the day and the evening. We need some office presence in order to have lunchtime clientele for the restaurants, along with our local and regional residents who have dinner there.
- Keeping our “Village” feel by preserving the significant buildings that matter
- Sufficient parking with wayfinding
- A pleasant pedestrian experience: Green verges to separate the sidewalks from the street, wider sidewalks, street trees and streetscapes
- Uniformity for building setbacks, and the addition of infill or use of functional green spaces to create density

## **Visual examples of some of our Main Street challenges—Mike Lowrey**

### **Next Steps**

- Create a College District Mixed Use Zone, “the College Gateway Overlay District” for the transitional area at the corners of Fifth Ave. and Main Street, which connects the campus to the business district.
- Update the zoning for the Main Street Commercial District
- Change the zoning of Borough Hall side of the 400 block from residential/office to an overlay that includes Main Street Commercial

### **Discussion/Questions**

- How does this affect tax revenues – the goal is that some of the Ursinus owned properties would come back onto the tax rolls; buildings that are renovated may increase in value, there may be an increase in Local Services Tax and Earned Income Tax revenues.
- Sam Smith, owner of multiple properties, doesn’t think this will benefit Collegeville. People don’t want to live in Philadelphia, they move here because they want to live in the community as it is.
- Chuck Draskler, Shakespeare Drive, echoed that people moved here to get away from crowding. It seems contradictory to move buildings closer to Main Street but also create green space. We need to be careful what we do so that we don’t devalue property in town.

- Shannon Spenser, member of Planning Commission and Borough Council said that appreciates those comments but she does not feel that anyone on these committees want us to become Collegeville.
- Clint Dittmar, Freeland Drive, who is going to have say over which building stay and which buildings move up to the curb. Response: no buildings will have to move, the thought that the property could be developed so that there is a patio or courtyard some other type of feature that invites pedestrians to the business. This will not be forced on anyone. The overlay is an option for the property owner to use if they want to, otherwise they can just continue on with the original zoning.
- Penny Balzereit, Freeland Drive, commented that she appreciates the BDC's work on this and that the community is engaged and wanted to thank everyone for the time they are spending on this.
- Brian Fox, Third Ave, commented that he also appreciates the planning but that we need to try to keep our quaint, unique feeling.
- Mayor Wright Riggins commented that after raising children and grandchildren here, he feels it is imperative in what we create to make it so that family friendly businesses want to come here and that people who grew up here want to come back here to raise a family.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.**