

TOWN OF TRAPPE
PLANNING COMMISSION
TRAPPE TOWN OFFICE

May 15, 2018

7:00 PM

The meeting of the Trappe Planning Commission was called to order at 7:01 pm by Chairman Edgar Harrison. Other members present were Bobby Quidas, Scott Metje, and Norm Fegel. Also present were Zoning Administrator Cheyenne Cowell, Town Administrator Erin Braband, Attorney Brynja Booth, Peter Johnston, Don English, and Jim Thompson.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from April 17, 2018 were approved as presented.

Old Business

Edgar Harrison – Discussion of setbacks in overlay zones

Chairman Harrison read aloud Subsection 9.5 of the Zoning Ordinance (pg. 77, point 4), “The minimum side yard width shall be no less than the side yard width on the adjoining property, or five feet, whichever is greater.” He noted that his property has a side yard width that is greater than the width of his neighbor’s entire lot, and questioned whether the section was worded erroneously. Chairman Harrison noted that he recalled the original intention of the setbacks in overlay areas was to provide relief to homeowners that chose to rebuild after a disaster, allowing them to rebuild on the original footprint as long as a minimum 5 foot setback was met. Attorney Booth added that this was also used for design aesthetic purposes, allowing the Town to provide additional setback relief while keeping a consistent look. Attorney Booth proposed changing the wording to read “...or five feet, whichever is less”. Chairman Harrison stated that this may cause the issue of structures being built with less than the minimum side yard width because if the neighboring property was non-conforming the new structure could follow the same side yard width. Attorney Booth suggested adding this to a running list of issues/possible amendments for the Planning Commission to address in the future. Chairman Harrison noted that the Zoning Ordinance Table of Contents needs to be corrected and Attorney Booth stated that it could be changed by her staff at no cost to the Town.

New Business

Comprehensive Plan Update

Chairman Harrison and Attorney Booth described the Comprehensive Plan as a document to be referenced when making decisions for the Town. They noted that the document is comprised of suggestions, not laws, but should be followed closely. Attorney Booth explained that the Town also has a Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan, and that all of its parts were implemented into the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. State law now requires that municipalities have a water resources element in their Comprehensive Plan. Attorney Booth also explained that having an updated, solid Comprehensive Plan will make the Town more favorable for grants. She noted that the growth area element hasn't changed significantly, but will need to be "freshened up".

Peter Johnston, the Town's planning consultant, stated that the Comprehensive Plan establishes the Town's goals and objectives, and ordinances implement those goals and objectives. He noted that the municipal growth element should look at how the Town will support growth in respect to water and sewer resources, etc. There also needs to be a meeting with Talbot County to ensure that both parties are on the "same page" in terms of planning for growth. The Planning Commission should look at what has changed since the last Comprehensive Plan and what strategies will be used to meet the updated goals. Citizens will need to be engaged in the discussion. Social media has become a more effective method than public hearings when reaching out to citizens. Mr. Johnston noted that pop-up meetings in high-traffic areas are very effective. Administrator Braband stated that the Town's newsletter ("The Index") and Facebook would be good ways to reach out and conduct surveys.

Chairman Harrison stated that the Planning Commission may want to look at the highway corridor zone. Mr. Johnston stated that typically a highway corridor overlay would look at landscaping, signage, and architecture.

Attorney Booth stated that the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan would include the Planning Commission creating a draft, public interaction, making sure the drafted growth area planning is consistent with Talbot County, and sending copies of the draft to Talbot County and Maryland Department of Planning for comment. Mr. Johnston stated that the Planning Commission should work on coming up with a list of projects and issues. Mr. Johnston and Attorney Booth will use this input to work on a draft, and when significant changes need to be addressed, the Planning Commission will hold a workshop. Attorney Booth stated that the June 19th Planning Commission meeting may be a good time to hold a workshop. Mr. Johnston said that he would send the Planning Commission emails with documents to help outline the elements in a comprehensive plan.

Staff Items

None

With no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheyenne Cowell, Zoning Administrator