

**MINUTES
SCOTT TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
301 LINDSAY ROAD, MAIN MEETING ROOM
SCOTT TOWNSHIP, PA 15106
March 5, 2025**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Mox at 7:34 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Joe Orbovich	Present
Donald Kaminski, Secretary	Present
Kenneth Lee, Vice Chairman	Present
Todd Tulowitzki	Present
Robert Burlett	Present
Jane Sorcan	Present
Mark Mox, Chairman	Present

Present – 7

Absent – 0

Also, Present: Mark Mox, Planning/Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer
John Vogel, Tucker Arensberg, PC; Township Solicitor
Marie Hartman, Alex Maloney, Lennon, Smith, Souleret; Township Engineers
Stephanie Wilshire, Planning/Zoning/Code Enforcement Administrative Assistant

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS LISTED ON THE AGENDA

There were no public comments on items for review and consideration.

ITEMS FOR REVIEW & CONSIDERATION

Motion to approve the Minutes for the January 2, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting

Motion by Burlett, second by Kaminski to approve the Minutes for the January 2, 2025 Planning Commission meeting after the addition of one comment.

**All in favor
Motion Carries (7-0)**

3/05/2025

Review and Recommendation of the Variance request for the property located at 570 E. Main St., Carnegie PA 15106, for relief from strict compliance of the sign size and sign number requirements in order to place three signs on the building.

Applicant:

Howard Kastle - Owner
114 Walker St.
Oakdale PA 15071

Mox began by reminding the Planning Commission that this commercial building is zoned Residential and therefore must abide by the residential limits. The Engineer Review letter dated February 27, 2025, states that the sign cannot exceed six (6) square feet and only one sign per street frontage is allowed in a residential district and this is why the applicant is seeking a Variance. He would like to install a total of three signs on the building – one facing the road and then one on each end of the building. He asked the applicant to come forward.

Kastle explained why he's seeking a Variance and the importance of signage on the building. The signage currently allowed wouldn't be visible because the building is very close to the road. The building cannot be moved back because there's a hillside behind it which is holding up an off-ramp of the parkway. He said that he wants a visible-enough sign so he can operate his business.

Mox asked Kastle to read the narrative he wrote regarding the criteria needed to grant a Variance.

Kastle explained that the existing building is too close to the road and a 2ft x 3ft sign would not be visible to traffic. The hardship is that the building cannot be moved or changed to strictly conform to the zoning ordinance. The variance will not alter the building or site plan or impact the character of the neighborhood in which the property is located, and the request represents the least modification for maximum size and height.

Mox asked if there is any possibility that the property could be developed in strict conformity with the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance?

Kastle said if he did no one would be able to see or read the sign because it can only be 2ft x 3ft. He said he's done a lot to improve the site in general but he definitely needs a larger sign than what is allowed.

Mox asked if there are other buildings with similar signs?

Kastle said there are several other auto repair businesses in the area with large signs.

Mox asked if the sign size and sign number is the minimum needed to provide relief.

Kastle said yes.
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Lee agreed that identifying the building at this site is challenging. Drivers will not look sideways so the signs must be visible.

Kastle said he's also trying to slow down drivers and has been talking to the Chief of Police. He's told his existing customers about the new location, but new customers will never see the shop because drivers are driving 50-60 miles per hour in that section of the road. It's 25 miles per hour zone and the chief would like to slow drivers down too.

Lee asked if he would repeat the same message on all three signs.

Kastle said he has two smaller signs for the ends, and then the larger sign on the side of the building, facing the road, will explain what he does – state and emissions inspections.

Burlett noted the position of the large sign appears to be mounted over two downspouts. He asked if the sign would be hung three inches off of the building

Kastle said that the sign company has developed an aluminum bracket so that the sign could be hung over the downspouts. The bracket will mount to the block wall and then the sign will be mounted on the bracket. The sign will stick out about an inch past the downspouts.

Lee asked if the downspouts would remain.

Kastle said yes and that he has replaced the gutters. He's removed trees around the building and area around it looks pretty nice now.

Lee said that customers driving by may not know where the front door is.

Kastle said he'll get larger numbers for the building. He's already gotten a larger mailbox with larger numbers.

Lee is concerned that the sign mounted over the downspouts will look like a mistake.

Sorcan asked if he is set on the size of the sign and not smaller. Sixteen feet is a large sign.

Kastle said he went with the maximum allowable for a commercial building. He wants the sign big enough to be visible.

Mox noted that this is one of areas the Township being looked at for the Comprehensive Plan because of the number of different mixed-uses.

Vogel assured the applicant that whatever decision of the Comprehensive Plan will not affect the Variance, if granted.

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Motion by Tulowitzki, second by Orbovich to recommend to the Zoning Hearing Board approval of the Variance requests for the property located at 570 E. Main St., Carnegie PA 15106 for relief from strict compliance of the sign size and sign number requirements in order to place three signs on the building as proposed in the application.

All in favor
Motion Carries (7-0)

Review and Recommendation of the Variance request for the property located at 2070 Greentree Rd., Pittsburgh PA 15220, for relief from strict compliance of the freestanding sign requirement to allow a sign to be constructed zero (0) feet from the street right-of-way line.

Applicant:

Michael Zilner – AdVision Signs
4735 Campbells Run Rd
Pittsburgh PA 15205

Paige Zilner – Owner Rita’s Italian Ice
2070 Greentree Rd
Pittsburgh PA 15220

Mox began by stating that this is the site of the Rita’s Italian Ice which had an existing free-standing road sign at one time. The applicant recently had the property surveyed and pinned. The previous road sign may have been installed in the state right-of-way. This application is to install the freestanding sign at the right-of-way line and not in the right-of-way. The Engineer Review letter dated February 27, 2025 states that the previously existing road sign appears to be located within the right-of-way on Greentree Road, a state road, and any encroachment into the state road right-of-way would require coordination with PennDOT.

Mr. Zilner is assisting his daughter Paige Zilner, who recently purchased the Rita’s business at 2070 Greentree Road. They didn’t realize they couldn’t install a new sign where the old sign was. The topography of the area, a hillside and a bend in the road, somewhat hides the building. He explained that the landlord won’t allow them to put a sign in the parking lot area, which would make the sign compliant with setback requirements.

Mox said if the sign was located in the parking lot it would eliminate two parking stalls out of the ten there.

Miss Zilner said that without the sign customers have been pulling into the veterinary office parking lot next door. Some will attempt to turn left on Greentree Road and then come into our lot, which is pretty difficult. But some are staying in the parking lot next door which might interfere with their business. She thinks that the visibility of the sign will help customers easily find the store and pull into the right parking lot.

Mox asked if the employees park in the Rita’s lot.

Miss Zilner said for now they are. Her landlord has an agreement with the owners of the 2090 building where there’s a big parking lot in back. When it gets busy her employees will park over there.

Mox asked if there are any additional variances requested besides the location of the sign.

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Mr. Zilner said no.

Mox asked how the sign will affect the essential character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Zilner said it will have little affect on the character of the neighborhood except to identify the business location. The sign will allow customers to slow down and safely enter the parking lot.

Mox asked if there is any room to move farther from the right-of-way line.

Mr. Zilner said that there might be a little room to move the sign. He said they want it close to the road to maximize visibility, but it also needs to stay in the small grassy area to maintain the parking spaces.

Mox asked how wide the sign is.

Mr. Zilner said they were allowed 60 square feet and six feet wide. With the single pole is would measure three feet in each direction.

Burlett asked what the height would be at the bottom of the sign. If the sign were moved closer to the parking space and a portion of the sign was over the space, could a customer hit their head on the bottom of the sign?

Mr. Zilner said it would be unlikely that someone would hit their head but maybe a tall vehicle, like an RV, might hit it.

Miss Zilner said her other store in Robinson has the same sign and it's walked under frequently, and no one has hit their head.

Mr. Zilner said the overall height of the sign is fifteen (15) feet. The height would be roughly five and a half feet from the ground. He would like it to be taller, but he didn't want to ask for too much.

Mox said the only way the sign would be allowed to be taller is if he asked for a height variance. He added that it's very important that the sign is fully inside that landscaped area and not allow it to overhang into the parking stall.

Lee asked if the survey in the application packet is a recent one.

Mr. Zilner said he thought it was the original plan before the building was built.

Lee said the sign is shown directly above the gas service on the old survey. He advised Mr. Zilner to be careful not to hit the gas service because it's conceivable that the gas line may be as deep as the three foot sign foundation.

Mr. Zilner said he always uses 811 to have sites flagged for gas, water, etc., and he believes the sign will be installed at least five feet away from the gas service. He also had a current survey done.

Mox recommended Mr. Zilner bring a copy of the new survey to everyone attending the Zoning Hearing Board. He added that the new survey shows the actual gas line is several feet away from the proposed sign.

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Kaminski said customers use the veterinary parking lot on weekends. He asked if there's a safe way for them to walk through to the Rita's lot without going into the street or hit their heads on the sign.

Mr. Zilner said they may be able to add some landscaping stones to keep customers from going into the street.

Hartman said there appears to be power lines directly above the grass area, using Google Earth, which can be deceiving. She advised they be careful of the height of the sign.

Mox said the new survey shows the power lines located in the right-of-way.

Burlett commented on Kaminski's point and said it looks like there's a fence that will have customers walking in the right-of-way.

Mox said it looks like the fence stops where the parking stall ends. He added that there's a bollard that protects the entrance or exit sign that appears to be on the right-of-way line.

Mr. Zilner agreed.

Burlett said that the edge of the sign will be on the right-of-way line.

Mox agreed. It looks like the digital board will too.

Burlett said if the edge of the sign is at the right-of-way line, then the pole would be inset enough to alleviate some of their concerns of the sign being too close to the parking space.

Mox agreed and said it's just going to be protecting the bottom edge of the digital board if it overhangs into the parking lot at all.

Mr. Zilner said he can modify the plans for the sign - the height or width. The sign hasn't been made yet.

Burlett said that it might be a concern, so that Miss Zilner doesn't have a liability.

Motion by Lee, second by Sorcan to recommend to the Zoning Hearing Board approval of the Variance request for the property at 2070 Greentree Rd., Pittsburgh PA 15220, for relief from strict compliance of the freestanding sign requirement to allow a sign to be constructed zero (0) feet from the street right-of-way line.

All in favor

Motion Carries (7-0)

Discuss the Scott Township Comprehensive Plan update

Mox began by telling the Planning Commission that the Township is committed to producing a new Comprehensive Plan. A copy of the last Scott Township Comprehensive Plan from 2005 was given to everyone at the meeting. Another joint plan focusing on the Carothers Avenue corridor in cooperation with Carnegie and Heidelberg was completed in 2013 and was more limited in scope. He introduced two visiting Scott Township Ward Commissioners who will be representing the Board of Commissioners in the steering committee to create a new Comprehensive Plan – Angela Wateska and Sam Dalfonso.

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Guests

Angela Wateska
Scott Township Board of Commissioners – Ward 8

Sam Dalfonso
Scott Township Board of Commissioners – Ward 4

Denny Puko – Comprehensive Plan Advisor
20 Jaycee Drive
Pittsburgh PA 15243

Mox introduced Denny Puko. Puko, who is a resident of Scott Township, co-wrote *Off the Shelf and Into Action: How to Create an Implementable Comprehensive Plan* and has been asked to assist the township with the Comprehensive Plan. A steering committee will be formed, consisting of two members of the Board of Commissioners (BOC), three members of the Planning Commission (PC) and also a couple of residents, including Puko. The Township has received a grant to hire an intern for the summer and the BOC has already approved hiring him. The intern will handle the day-to-day operations, collecting information, etc. The Township has also applied for another grant to pay for a consultant to implement the plan. He estimates it will be mid-summer when this all gets started. The intent is that a ten-year plan is prepared that shows where the Township should be heading. When complete, there may be recommendations to revise our recently updated Zoning Ordinance which wasn't codified for that reason.

Burlett asked what the timeline would likely be.

Mox expects this to be a multi-year venture.

Puko recommended that the process would involve as little down time as possible and suggested not going further than the end of 2026.

Vogel said that he remembers the last Comprehensive Plan process lacked momentum.

Mox said for budgetary reasons the committee may want to take a couple years. But if there's an additional grant the BOC might want to push this through, but without rushing.

Lee asked for the criteria for public engagement. Will this be advertised?

Mox asked Lee to read the plan. Inside there was a questionnaire that was presented to residents that allowed them to answer questions and provide input. Those data records are present. However, there were about 17,000 residents at the time and only 400 responded. He said the committee should want to increase that number and represent the community better.

Puko said his career was a professional planner and the last five or six years he's had his own consulting business. Fifteen years prior he worked for the Department of Community and Economic Development and ran the grant program that the township has applied for to get funding for the plan. Before that he was Planning Director in Mercer County.

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Puko explained that the Comprehensive Plan is a document that memorializes the planning work that's done. More than that, it's a guide for the future development - an opportunity to think about the future and analyze the needs of the community. It should be very focused.

Puko passed out a flyer that showed the post-World War II population of the Township went from 6,300 people in 1940 up to 19,000 people in 1960. His wife's family has roots in the area and used to own the land that the current "Bird Land" neighborhood inhabits. This neighborhood resembles many others in Scott Township built in the post-war era – small, modest homes. He said that these small, modest homes are aging and that may be taking a toll on the growth of the Township. These are the kinds of things to look at in the Comprehensive Plan. In the current economy, the best places are winning and what can the Township do to maintain that quality of life.

Puko looked at recent surveys that show the average income in Scott Township is higher than the average in Allegheny County and Pennsylvania, and lower than average in poverty. The surveys also show that 78.5% of Scott Township's housing stock were built prior to 1980 compared to 77% in Allegheny County and 68% in Pennsylvania and 51% in the nation overall. The Township needs to continue to be an attractive place to live.

Puko said he wouldn't be surprised if the Township received eight to ten proposals from consultants interested in working on the Comprehensive Plan. He suggests interviewing candidates and being underway sometime during the summer. He suggests having a brainstorming session to create the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Dalfonso asked what the Board of Commissioners could do to assist between now and when the steering committee is put together.

Puko again suggested a brainstorming session involving people who are familiar with the Township. The session will identify the issues that the consultant team should address in their proposal. Later, when there's public involvement and surveys, these issues addressed early on might change. Brainstorming in advance is good because consultants have certain skillsets, and we want to get the right consultant on board.

Mox said the township is mostly built out and will see very little development in the future. Most of the new things the Township will see is redevelopment which needs to be managed in the best interest of the community. He asked Puko if he was aware of any way to incentivize residents to improve their homes so that home values continue to increase.

Puko said that would be a great item to add to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mox asked how to begin. Should it begin with the Planning Commission.

Puko suggested an issue-oriented brainstorming or work session which would also contribute a lot to the RFP. It would be good to have as many people participate as are interested - the best way to create a Comprehensive Plan is to involve people. This would be a group that's advising the consultant team.

Wateska asked how the Board of Commissioners would be updated on this process.

Mox said it should be added to the agenda just like he does Code Enforcement updates. He would also like to see the intern be involved in these updates.

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Lee asked if there would be a cap on the number of people on the steering committee.

Mox said seven was approved – three PC, two BOC and two residents. But this can be looked at.

Puko said it's best to be flexible because the consultant team may want additional feedback from residents.

Dalfonso said it would be easier to add more members than to reduce. He said he would like to see all the boards, the department managers and even the engineer and solicitor at the brainstorming session.

Puko suggested coming up with five to ten "starter issues." This will advise the consultant team of the kinds of things they'll be working on if they get hired.

Mox asked Puko to put a list together for those attending the brainstorming session to think about and be prepared.

Lee asked if the 2005 Comprehensive Plan is typical of these plans. He said it looked more like a benchmarking plan or zoning plan without much strategy.

Puko said that's why he wrote the book. For a Comprehensive Plan to get implemented it's got to have depth and detail, and it's got to be strategic. It's not possible to do everything and the plan must be tangible.

Sorcan said the old plan had lots of recommendations but not a roadmap to get there. The new plan should tell us how to get what is recommended.

Puko said there will be priorities planned out with a lot of depth and detail. Things are changing so quickly that the committee might want to look at this as a three-to-four year plan, rather than a 10-year plan.

Mox said the township has lots of issues with infrastructure, in particular sewers and roads.

Hartman added drainage.

Mox asked if a date for the brainstorming meeting can be agreed on.

Vogel said he would need to verify if the meeting needs to be advertised.

Burlett asked if the results of the brainstorming session need to be reviewed by the steering committee.

Puko said there needs to be two groups. The steering committee's purpose is substantive feedback of the elements of the plan. There should also be a group that manages process too – the township manager, the planning officer and maybe himself. If the steering committee could review the RFP quickly then yes.

Burlett said he wants to understand if the steering committee should have any part of the RFP.

Mox said he didn't feel that there would be a need for the steering committee to review the RFP after it's agreed upon at the brainstorming session. He hopes that Puko will be able to facilitate the brainstorming session in a way that will prioritize the concerns.

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Public Comments:

There were no additional public comments on items not on the Agenda.

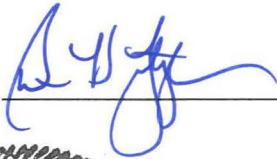
Adjournment

Motion by Burlett, second by Orbovich to adjourn the meeting.

All in Favor
Motion Carries (7-0)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Attest: _____



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