

**BOROUGH OF GREEN TREE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 11, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Green Tree Planning Commission met on Wednesday, August 11, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sycamore Room of the Green Tree Municipal Center, 10 West Manilla Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15220.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

James Turocy, Chair
Firas Abdelahad
Cheryl Bakin
Al Erwin
Robert McWilliams

Also Present:

Louis A. Casadei, P.E., Borough Engineer
Deborah N. Gawryla, Stenographer

Absent:

Rebecca Chembars
Ed O'Donnell

HEARING OF THE CITIZENS

There was no one present who wished to be heard.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Mr. Turocy

Mr. Turocy said that the Borough Manager has informed him that the 2020 census data is not yet available. However, she sent him a link to other borough statistics that could be helpful with demographic information, population, etc., for the Comprehensive Plan.

Mrs. Bakin said that the 2020 census data is supposed to be released in September. It has been delayed because of the congressional redistricting. She was not certain when local municipalities would be able to access their communities' census information.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

July 14, 2021

Motion:

Mr. Erwin made a motion, seconded by Mr. McWilliams, to approve the July 14, 2021 minutes as presented.

Motion carried, with Mrs. Bakin abstaining because she had not attended this meeting.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Turocy said he had been unable to obtain the video, "The Implementable Comprehensive Plan," at this time. He will continue to try to get a link to this video at a later time.

Mr. Turocy asked Planning Commission members to review the Community Objectives in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to determine which items had been completed, which items were still relevant, and which items could be eliminated. Mr. Turocy referred to the D.A.R.E. Program, which was listed in 2010, but that program is no longer offered to Green Tree schools.

Mr. Turocy asked Mr. McWilliams, as a volunteer fire fighter, to review possible items to be addressed regarding the Green Tree Volunteer Fire Company for the Comprehensive Plan. The fire company is a very valuable service to the community. Mr. McWilliams said that the fire company goes to the local schools and preschools in October during Fire Prevention Week and talks to the students and lets them climb on the fire engine, try on equipment, and spray the fire hose with low pressure. The fire company, along with the police department and MRTSA, held National Night Out on August 3 at the fire station to help connect residents with their local first responders. Mr. Turocy said these types of programs should be mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan as being important to the community.

Mrs. Bakin said Planning Commission should schedule an open public meeting for residents to provide their ideas for the future of Green Tree. They should be asked what they like about Green Tree, what they would like to see in the future in Green Tree, and what are their concerns. In 2010, there were ideas about the 125th anniversary of the borough and speeding along Greentree Road and some of the residential cut-through streets. The speeding issue was addressed with the installation of several speed bumps. Other concerns might include parks, Parkway Center concerns, housing, etc. This could be a public meeting to express those concerns and ideas, but a paper survey could also be distributed at the meeting with general questions for residents to answer. After the public meeting, Planning Commission would digest the information and discuss where it would fit in the Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Bakin said that as a result of the changes that occurred with the pandemic there are a number of buildings and offices that are empty, which could result in the buildings' owners to petition for a reduction in their assessments, which would reduce Green Tree's tax base.

Mr. Casadei said that some changes that have taken place since 2010 are the City Vista development, new owners at Foster Plaza, a turnover of a hotel into apartments, etc. Mr. Turocy said that Planning Commission had discussed adding a page of local businesses on the borough's website. He suggested that several Planning Commission members could attend a Green Tree Farmers Market to ask residents about their concerns. Planning Commission should pick a date for a public meeting so it could be included in the upcoming newsletter. Discussion continued regarding ways to get residents involved in the planning of the Comprehensive Plan. A group of stakeholders would be identified from business owners, residents, community groups, people who work in the borough, etc.

Mr. Erwin said a survey should be available on the website for residents to electronically reply. Mrs. Bakin said that when a survey is ready it could be advertised through the borough's weekly email to make residents aware of it. Mr. Abdelahad suggested various ways to get residents involved in completing the survey or attending the public meeting. Discussion continued regarding the areas of interest that should be presented in the survey and ways to get the community involved.

After a discussion, Planning Commission decided to hold the public meeting on the Comprehensive Plan on Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center.

Mr. Turocy asked if Planning Commission was interested in approaching residents about the Comprehensive Plan at an upcoming Farmers Market. Discussion continued regarding various ways to reach the residents for input by utilizing the borough's website, Facebook, Twitter, weekly email, Municipal Center monitors, and Verizon PEG-TV channel. Mr. Abdelahad said it would be difficult to engage younger residents and students in the Comprehensive Plan development. Mrs. Bakin said that in 2010 the Keystone Oaks School District had not been very cooperative in recruiting students as stakeholders in the process. Mr. Casadei said the information could be posted on bulletin boards in the Municipal Center as well.

Mrs. Bakin distributed information that had been used during the creation of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to give Planning Commission members some idea of the issues that should be considered when reviewing the demographic data. Mrs. Bakin said that a big concern is the many office buildings and office spaces that are currently sitting empty. She asked what those empty areas could be used for. Although newer office space is often selected over older areas, some of the developments in other municipalities are also offering incentives to businesses to move to their developments. Mrs. Bakin said the borough should consider what it could provide to help attract businesses to Green Tree office space, such as tax incentives.

Mrs. Bakin said the 2010 Comprehensive Plan's major item was to rewrite the Zoning Code. It took several years before the process actually began. Mr. Turocy suggested that a list of borough businesses be added to the borough's website. Mrs. Bakin said that providing such a list can sometimes be seen as an endorsement by the borough and the list must continually be updated and maintained. Mr. Turocy said the borough could partner with community groups, such as the Rotary, to work on this kind of a list. Also, the borough could partner with real estate providers to promote available real estate, including both office spaces and houses.

Mr. Erwin asked if Planning Commission and Council had ever met to discuss the Comprehensive Plan objectives. Mrs. Bakin said the two groups never met. There had been a committee that wrote the Comprehensive Plan. The plan was supposed to be reviewed by Planning Commission, and then presented to Council. A public hearing had been held, followed by Council voting to adopt it.

The rewrite of the Zoning Code started with the Borough Manager selecting a committee of about eight residents and only a couple of those people had any knowledge about zoning regulations. This committee met for six or seven months and it ended up being a waste of the consultant's time. At that point, Planning Commission took over the revision of the Zoning Code and started from scratch.

Mrs. Bakin said a consultant from Mackin Engineers had worked with Planning Commission to help and guide the direction of the Zoning Code rewrite. Planning Commission also got assistance from the consultant when input from other communities was needed in developing a section of zoning. The process took several years. After Planning Commission had completed a draft of the Zoning Code it was presented to Council for review and approval. Council went

through the draft, section by section, and definitions were rewritten, some sections were removed, and other items were added. Council continued their review for several more years until the Zoning Code was adopted.

Mr. Erwin said that the 2010 Comprehensive Plan included an Action Plan that recommended items to be addressed, the importance or priority of the item (high, medium, or low), and the person, group, or committee who should take action to address it. Mr. Erwin said that there were some items that were supposed to be addressed by Planning Commission and he wondered if anything other than the revision of the Zoning Code had been addressed. Discussion continued regarding the lack of action taken on many of the Action Items listed in the Comprehensive Plan, followed by the steps taken in the development of the Zoning Code.

Mr. Erwin felt that the 2010 Comprehensive Plan was a good document to use as a basis for the development of the new Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Bakin said that the public hearing in November would help guide plans and ideas for the creation of the new Comprehensive Plan. She said that when the draft of the new Comprehensive Plan was completed, a Public Hearing would be held. She anticipated the Public Hearing taking place in spring or summer of 2022.

Mrs. Bakin said it is difficult to find committed stakeholders to work on the Comprehensive Plan, from businesses to churches to youth groups. She hoped that the KO School District would be more cooperative and helpful in participating for the creation of this plan. Mr. Erwin hoped it would be easier to access young people through social media than it was ten years ago. Discussion continued regarding the reasons people chose to move to various communities.

Mr. Turocy said Planning Commission should review the Action Items from the 2010 plan and focus on has not been addressed before the public meeting. He suggested that the Green Tree website should list what businesses are available and what real estate is available in the community. Mrs. Bakin said that Planning Commission could begin to create some of listings and links before the public meeting. Mrs. Bakin asked if the borough could offer paid listings to businesses outside of the borough who might also want to be listed on Green Tree's list of businesses. Mr. Casadei said that although the borough has a list of borough businesses he was not sure if that list could be used. Discussion continued regarding ways to obtain a complete list of borough businesses and how the list should be organized.

Mr. Turocy said that for the next meeting on August 25th, Planning Commission should move ahead with a business list for the website and ask the Borough Manager about creating the list. Planning Commission should also review up to Section XXI to the end of the Executive Summary, and create a list of questions to be asked for the survey. Planning Commission reviewed the 2010 data on population, age, etc. and decided they should start to meet twice a month to review, decipher, and plan ahead for the public meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Casadei said the Zoning Hearing Board would be meeting on August 12th to hear the variance request from Urban Communities. Urban Communities wishes to create approximately 215 separate micro-apartments out of the current Pittsburgh Plaza Hotel, which exceeds zoning requirements. Mr. Casadei said that current zoning allows a total of four stories for a mid-rise

apartment building with a maximum of 8 units per story, or a total of 32 units. In the Zoning Code Use Table there is a section called Multi-Family that is permitted in the Office Commercial District. The hearing is for a challenge of the zoning interpretation and if they do not get the interpretation they want, they wish to get a variance. Mrs. Bakin said that Planning Commission had written a definition of Multi-Family. Mr. Casadei said it is divided up under Dwelling as Multi-Family or Multiple Family, Cluster Housing, Duplex, etc. They continued to review the definitions and Use Table in the Zoning Code. It appears that the text is different from the Use Table, and the Use Table is different from the definitions. Mr. Casadei said he was reviewing the International Building Code that requires 200 square feet per occupant. He is working on determining if there would be sufficient living area for these micro-apartments. The application is under appeal at this time. Discussion continued regarding the details of the plans.

Mr. Casadei said the Borough Solicitor is working on a list of items in the Zoning Code that she recommends changing or correcting. The Borough Solicitor said the document reference section is causing confusion and problems and she is making some recommendations regarding that section as well. There are a number of redundancies and the references and cross-references should not be in it. Mr. Casadei expected to receive the Solicitor's recommendation to the Zoning Code sometime in October. He noted that the Use Table itself had been placed in the wrong area of the Zoning Code.

Mr. Casadei said the Zoning Hearing Board would also be hearing a variance request for an additional dentist office/rehab facility in the building on Greentree Road near the Parkway off-ramp. That area is in Neighborhood Commercial District and doctors and clinics are not permitted in that district. The Solicitor is suggesting that clinics be added to the Neighborhood Commercial District.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

Mr. Abdelahad made a motion, seconded by Mr. McWilliams, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

James J. Turocy, Chairman

Ed O'Donnell, Secretary