

**BOROUGH OF GREEN TREE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 25, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Green Tree Planning Commission met on Wednesday, August 25, 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
Cheryl Bakin
Al Erwin
Ed O'Donnell

Also Present:

Deborah N. Gawryla, Stenographer

Absent:

Firas Abdelahad
Rebecca Chembars
Robert McWilliams

HEARING OF THE CITIZENS

There was no one present who wished to be heard.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Mr. Turocy

Mr. Turocy shared the draft of the page of the upcoming newsletter that promotes the public meeting on November 10th.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Erwin said that a 2019 population estimate was available online and the final census numbers should be available sometime in September.

Mr. Turocy asked Planning Commission members about their review of the Executive Summary in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. He said it indicated that Green Tree is a safe and inviting place to live and work, but is also an inviting place to play with all of its recreational resources, such as the parks, gym, Nature Center, the pool, and various programs. He felt the recreation resources should be emphasized.

Mr. Erwin asked about the status of the pool repairs. There had been talk about totally rebuilding the pool somewhere else. Mr. Turocy said he was not aware of what had been decided. Mr. O'Donnell asked where a new pool would be built. Discussion continued regarding possible solutions to the pool repair issues.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if Planning Commission wished to review the Community Objectives from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to see if any of those objectives were still valid objectives for the revised Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Turocy said the objectives were relatively general and

suggested that Planning Commission look at possible stakeholders to make sure they are included. Additionally, it would be helpful to have a quick survey available to residents to complete. Mrs. Bakin said the survey could be promoted in the weekly email from Green Tree advising residents to go to the website and complete the survey. Mr. Turocy said that responses from the survey could be tracked. He suggested that demographic information be asked in the survey to see the various interests of different types of stakeholders and see who is responding to the survey. Mr. O'Donnell said that some of the stakeholders' concerns in 2010 were to fix Greentree Road or put utility lines underground.

Mr. Turocy asked Planning Commission members for topics to be included on the survey. Mrs. Bakin said residents should be asked what they like about Green Tree and what they might like to see changed. Mr. Turocy said residents should be asked about what businesses they might like to see come into the community. Mr. O'Donnell said they could be asked what are the best and worst things about Green Tree. Mr. Turocy said it would be nice to have a shopping district in Green Tree. Mrs. Bakin agreed and said that Green Tree has no pharmacy and the small businesses that used to be part of the community's fabric have been eliminated.

Mr. Turocy said that the 2010 Comprehensive Plan had indicated the need for a public parking lot on Greentree Road, but it has been tried repeatedly without success because the property along Greentree Road is too expensive. Mr. O'Donnell said the Greentree Road parking lot was marked as a high priority. Discussion continued regarding the parking situation along Greentree Road.

Mr. Erwin said the 2010 Comprehensive Plan listed items for consideration such as the quality of life, leadership, feeling safe, and the opinion of the local police department. He asked if those same items might be included in the survey. Planning Commission agreed that these and some other items could be included for residents' input.

Mrs. Bakin suggested that paper copies of the survey should also be available on the night of the public meeting for those in attendance to complete. She said the survey should not have more than 15 items for input and be only one page. Discussion continued regarding details of the survey.

Mrs. Bakin said the biggest challenge for the Comprehensive Plan might be the issue of housing. She said consideration should be given regarding what the borough might allow or disallow regarding housing, hotels, office spaces, etc. She felt that none of the office buildings would be returning to their previous occupancy before the pandemic. Discussion continued regarding the impact the pandemic has had on office space.

Mr. Turocy said that the borough has to be careful regarding permitted occupancy or use of office space. He said it is important to find out what residents feel the character of the community should be and if it should be changed and how. Discussion continued regarding a borough hotel that is seeking to convert to micro-apartments and the impact it would have on borough resources.

Mrs. Bakin presented an article from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette stating how downtown apartments are working to bring in young, unmarried individuals who often work in the technology, education, and medical industries. She said there is a need for housing in the area. Mr. Turocy said that the type of housing available could shape the character of the community. Discussion continued regarding various types of housing that could be made available in Green Tree. Mrs. Bakin said that the developers wishing to convert the Pittsburgh Plaza Hotel to micro-apartments would be coming before the Zoning Hearing Board on September 2nd.

Mrs. Bakin said that Planning Commission should reach out to the Keystone Oaks School District to get their input, although they were not very responsive to Green Tree in the past. It would be helpful to have basic information about the schools, such as the number of students in each grade. Mrs. Bakin said that the school district had not been cooperative during the creation of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Turocy said the first step would be to contact Aiken's principal along with the Green Tree school board directors and the superintendent.

Mr. Erwin said that there are number of questions on page 1-13 of the Comprehensive Plan that might be considered for survey use. Mrs. Bakin said that those questions could be asked at the November public meeting for in-person discussion. Mr. Erwin said he could take the items listed on the Quality of Life page and put together a rough draft of a survey for Planning Commission's review. Mr. Turocy said that the Action Plan items on page 4-55 could also somehow be incorporated into the survey. A review of those items listed as high priority should be reviewed to see if they had been addressed, if they are still important, and if they should be included in the new Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Erwin said that pages 4-60 and 4-61 contained some medium priorities that were to be addressed by the Planning Commission. Mrs. Bakin said that the Zoning Code had been revised and should be removed. The item for reduced parking requirements could become a problem. Discussion continued regarding some of the other Action Plan items.

Mrs. Bakin said the Action Plan items need be reviewed individually to determine which should be kept, revised, or removed. Mr. Turocy asked Planning Commission to review the Action Plan items in Chapter 4 for the next meeting. Planning Commission continued to discuss various items listed in the 2010 Action Plan.

Mrs. Bakin read from the minutes of the Green Tree Borough Council meeting of June 7, 2021 regarding having Planning Commission begin the review of the Comprehensive Plan. It stated:

"Mr. Lorenzini made a motion to have the Green Tree Planning Commission begin and review and revision of the borough's Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Rea said that before effort is put into revising the Comprehensive Plan, Council should consider Peer Assessment from DCED and review borough administration and other borough departments and their policies to determine what improvements could be made."

Discussion continued with Mrs. Bakin stating that a DCED review of borough departments should not be part of the Comprehensive Plan. The minutes continued:

"Mr. Sampogna stated that Planning Commission is an independent body that could do whatever it wants, but they cannot spend money that is not approved by Council. If Planning Commission wishes to start a review of the Comprehensive Plan they can do so. The need for the assessment that Mr. Rea spoke about should be done, but Planning Commission can get started. Mr. Sampogna said it is clear that there is a consensus by Council to allow Planning Commission to begin the review at this point and a motion was not needed.

There was no second on the motion so the motion fell to the floor and was not considered by Council at this time."

Mr. O'Donnell said it appeared that Planning Commission could begin the Comprehensive Plan review, but could not spend money at this time. Mrs. Bakin said she wanted to make it clear that there was no formal motion authorizing Planning Commission to begin its review and it was only a consensus of Council. Mr. Erwin said that Planning Commission is an independent body and could end up doing all this work to revise the Comprehensive Plan only to have Council dismiss their actions. Mr. Turocy said that might be the case, but eventually Planning Commission would have to pull in an outside consultant to help with the Comprehensive Plan. Planning Commission would have to provide some concrete results to Council before a consultant is requested.

Mrs. Bakin asked if Planning Commission wanted to follow the same format as the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Turocy felt that was what Planning Commission would be doing, but could still make changes or additions as they saw fit. Planning Commission members agreed that using the previous format was the direction they hoped to follow. Mrs. Bakin said that evaluating the 2020 census data and inserting it into a Comprehensive Plan would probably require outside assistance. Mr. Erwin asked if the borough does a review of the census data. Mrs. Bakin did not think that was done in Green Tree. Mrs. Bakin said the previous Comprehensive Plan looked at census data and decided how it impacted housing or office occupancy. She felt Planning Commission would need help with the census data analysis and help pulling the survey information together for analysis.

Mrs. Bakin said that the University of Pittsburgh offers a service called Pitt Commons where current students and recent graduates can be hired for projects either on-site or remotely. Discussion continued regarding the possibilities that student assistance could provide.

Mrs. Bakin hoped that the survey and other information could be placed on the website. Mr. Turocy said he would contact the Borough Manager about using the borough's website for the survey and a proposed list of Green Tree businesses.

Mrs. Bakin said she has been doing a review of the Zoning Code and came up with several items:

1. Air BnB - Mr. Turocy suggested looking at other municipalities ordinances.
2. Correct the table listing the districts and correct where multi-family begins.
3. A disclaimer should be put on the table indicating that it is a guide to help find information in the Zoning Code and is just a tool. Mr. Turocy said that the Solicitor could help create some language to that effect.
4. Multi-Family needs to be better defined.
5. High-Rise needs to be clarified to describe what constitutes a high-rise building or

apartment. Mr. Turocy said that Planning Commission had done that, but it appears that it was taken out of the Zoning Code.

6. Boarding House or Boarding Home needs to be defined. It is on the list, but has no definition. Mr. Turocy said that Planning Commission had discussed this item.
7. Office Commercial - review the permitted uses and considered medical offices or medical clinics.

Mr. O'Donnell said that he had been asked about zoning for AirBnBs as these locations are being abused and neighbors are not happy about it. Mrs. Bakin said that AirBnBs were just starting up during the time Planning Commission was revising the Zoning Code and it may have been felt that Bed & Breakfast regulations would cover it.

Mrs. Bakin said that recommendations from Planning Commission for amendments to parts of the Zoning Code could be made at any time. She felt there would need to be other revisions made in the zoning due to the impact and changes from the pandemic.

Mr. Turocy asked Mrs. Bakin to send members an email with the items she outlined that need to be discussed so Planning Commission can prepare for the next meeting.

Mr. Turocy said for the next meeting:

1. Mr. Turocy will follow up with the Borough Manager about a business list and a survey to be placed on the Green Tree website.
2. Planning Commission should review the chart on page 1-13 and the Action Plan chart starting on page 4-55 for discussion.
3. Mr. Erwin would create a draft survey to be reviewed.
4. Planning Commission would also discuss Mrs. Bakin's list of ordinance revisions.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

Mrs. Bakin made a motion, seconded by Mr. Erwin, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

James J. Turocy, Chairman

Ed O'Donnell, Secretary