

**BOROUGH OF GREEN TREE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
OCTOBER 27, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Green Tree Planning Commission met on Wednesday, October 27, 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  
Todd Carter, Code Enforcement Officer  
Deborah N. Gawryla, Stenographer  
Ed O'Donnell, Former Planning Commission Member

**HEARING OF THE CITIZENS**

There was no one present who wished to be heard. Mr. Turocy noted that Chief Colin Cleary was in attendance at tonight's meeting.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Mr. Turocy**

Mr. Turocy reported that Mr. O'Donnell was present this evening, but has submitted his resignation to the Borough Manager and Planning Commission. Mr. Turocy thanked Mr. O'Donnell for his many years of service on the Green Tree Planning Commission.

Mr. Turocy said that Mr. Casadei was retiring from the borough and this would be his last Planning Commission meeting as well. He thanked Mr. Casadei for all of the help he has given the Planning Commission over the years and his dedication to service. Mr. Turocy said that Mr. Todd Carter, the borough's Code Enforcement Officer would be working with Planning Commission in the future.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**September 27, 2021**

**Motion:**

**Mrs. Bakin made a motion, seconded by Mr. McWilliams, to approve the September 27, 2021 minutes with the following deletions:**

Remove the sentence referring to "Another acronym, FCC," should be removed. Remove the two sentences referring to "lobbyists."

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**October 13, 2021**

**Motion:**

**Mr. Erwin made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Bakin, to approve the October 13, 2021 minutes as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

At this point the Planning Commission surprised Mr. Casadei with a cake and card to thank him for his years of service. Everyone applauded. Mr. Casadei stated that Planning Commission has always been very important to him. He said he had been a member of Planning Commission prior to becoming Green Tree's Borough Engineer.

Mr. Turocy stated that Mr. O'Donnell had resigned from Planning Commission after the last meeting, but was present tonight to celebrate Mr. Casadei's retirement. Therefore, the position of Planning Commission Secretary was open and asked for nominations for Secretary.

**Motion:**

**Mrs. Bakin made a motion, seconded by Mr. McWilliams, to nominate Mr. Al Erwin as Secretary of Green Tree Planning Commission.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**Review and recommendation to Solicitor's changes to the Green Tree Zoning Code**

Mr. Turocy said he had reviewed the Solicitor's redlined recommendations and had no problems with them except for the recommendation to add a definition and requirements for high-rise apartments. He distributed a draft for high-rise apartments for review. Mrs. Bakin said that some of the definitions for high rise apartments, mid-rise apartments, etc., had been put in the Zoning Code, but after a number of different reviews those definitions stopped appearing in later revisions of the code. She said that somehow they were most likely deleted by either Mackin Engineering or the administrative offices for some reason. The removal of these definitions has created problems for the borough.

Mrs. Bakin presented Planning Commission with their definition of high-rise apartment from her original notes in May 2012 and it had been recommended to be placed in the Light Industrial District. Mr. Turocy said that the Borough Solicitor had made the same recommendation in her list of changes and additions. Mrs. Bakin said that this recommendation would be for new apartments being built, but asked how to address the issue of the owners of existing buildings that want to convert their properties to apartments. Mr. Turocy said it would depend on the height of a building since mid-rise apartment buildings cannot be taller than four stories high in the borough. When asked, Mr. Casadei said that the tallest building in Foster Plaza was ten stories high. Discussion continued regarding the heights of existing buildings in the borough and whether they could be converted to apartments.

Mr. Turocy asked what the permitted height of a high-rise apartment building should be. Mr. McWilliams, a Green Tree fire fighter, said that the fire company's equipment only reaches approximately 105 feet high. Mr. Casadei felt that high-rise apartments should not be higher than the reachable height of a fire truck. The building code requirements must also be met. Mrs. Bakin said that building height should be added to the supplemental regulations. Discussion continued regarding the possibility of a conversion to a mixed-use building with apartments and businesses. They decided that a high-rise apartment should be greater than four stories high, which is a mid-rise apartment building.

Mr. Erwin asked if a high-rise apartment building could be 100 feet. Mr. Turocy suggested that it be limited to the number of units in the building as well. It should state, "High-rise apartment is a building that is greater than four stories in height where all units share a common entrance and/or

share a common interior corridor," which is the same verbiage as used in the definition of a mid-rise apartment. Mr. Casadei said that a high-rise should probably not exceed 65 feet high unless it is a Type 1 building, which is a building that is completely non-combustible and is made almost entirely of concrete. He did not think that any of the buildings in Foster Plaza were Type 1 buildings, but they were sprinklered buildings. Mr. Turocy said it should be defined as set in the building code. Mr. Casadei said it should include the version or year of the International Building Code (IBC) as the IBC is revised every few years. After a discussion, Planning Commission agreed that its maximum height for a high-rise building should follow the regulations set forth in the IBC 2015, Table 504.3, but not to exceed 100 feet.. Mr. Abdelahad said that the maximum height should be set by the building codes alone and a specific number does not need to be established. High-rise apartments should be a conditional use in the Light Industrial, Office Commercial, and Service Commercial Districts.

Mr. Turocy said that he had pulled the setbacks and heights from the PRD ordinance, which Planning Commission found acceptable. Mrs. Bakin said that there is a maximum building length, but a maximum building width is not mentioned. Mr. Casadei said the width should be determined by looking at the front entrance of a building. Mr. Turocy checked if there was a maximum width for mid-size buildings and could not find one. Mid-size was determined by the number of permitted units, but no width. Discussion continued whether a maximum width was needed since the height and length are established. Mr. Abdelahad said that the maximum width requirement was not necessary because there are already limitations in the maximum length and the length would be a longer dimension. Mrs. Bakin said that when developers have exact numbers that they much comply they are more precise with their plans.

Mrs. Bakin asked about the minimum building space allowable between buildings. She said that 20 feet between buildings does not sound like a very wide space. Mr. Casadei said minimum space is required for the passage of fire apparatus. Mrs. Bakin asked Mr. McWilliams how much space a fire truck needs to get between buildings. Mr. Abdelahad it would also be based upon the height of the buildings. Mr. Casadei said it was not necessarily the space needed for a fire truck to travel between buildings because they would not be parking a truck between buildings during a fire, but it is the need for fire apparatus to fight a fire in one building to prevent it from spreading to another building and a hose might be all that is needed. Mr. McWilliams estimated that about 50 feet between two high-rise buildings would be needed to fight a fire.

Chief Cleary left the meeting at this time.

Mrs. Bakin asked if the numbers taken from the PRD to establish setbacks, widths between buildings, etc., were reasonable. Planning Commission discussed buildings in the borough that do not seem to have much setback. Setbacks for office buildings versus high-rise apartments are different. Office building setbacks are 45 feet.

Discussion took place regarding setbacks for garages. Mr. Turocy read, "Minimum setback from any public or private street to a driveway leading toward a private garage should be 20 feet from the sidewalk." Mr. Casadei said that the driveway would have to connect to a street. Mr. Erwin suggested that it might mean the setback from the public street to the garage. Mrs. Bakin said the word "driveway" should be changed to "entrance." Planning Commission members were not sure what this wording implied. Mr. Casadei said that some municipalities regulate where parking areas can be situated, but Green Tree does not do that. Nowhere else in the ordinances are driveways regulated like this. Mr. Turocy said the wording should be changed to read, "Minimum setback

from any public or private street to an entrance leading toward a private garage should be 20 feet from the sidewalk. If there is not a sidewalk, then setback should be 20 feet from the curblineline." After further discussion it was decided that it should read, "Minimum setback from any public or private street to structure should be 15 feet from the sidewalk. If there is not a sidewalk, then setback should be 20 feet from the curblineline."

Item (B)(1)(g) should be deleted to avoid differences between public and private streets. If the same setbacks are for public and private streets there will not be future issues should a private street become a public street. Item (B)(1)(h) should also be changed from 50 to 75 feet. Item (j) is in conflict with what was just created in (h). Mr. Casadei said that was written because City Vista was originally going to have buildings built in both Green Tree and the city and a building cannot be built over the line.

Mrs. Bakin asked if item (i), which refers to landscaping, should reference the landscaping supplemental regulations. Mr. Turocy said supplemental regulations for planting and screening areas are in 420-38. When asked, Mr. Turocy confirmed that there should be 1-1/2 parking stalls per unit. Mrs. Bakin said that stall size and maneuvering should apply as set forth in 420-38, which is the same section as landscaping. Mr. Turocy said this section covers all off-street parking, loading and unloading, parking space design, planting, etc. Discussion continued regarding Urban Communities case for micro-apartments that is going to the Court of Common Pleas.

Mr. Turocy said that the entire package would be sent to the Borough Solicitor.

**Motion:**

**Mrs. Bakin made a motion, seconded by Mr. Abdelahad, to send the recommended changes to the Zoning Code for the redlined comments from the Borough Solicitor and the addition of a high-rise apartment definition and section, with changes to the high-rise apartment draft, as follows:**

- 1. High-Rise Apartments should be a conditional use in the Light Industrial, Service Commercial, and Office Commercial Districts.**
- 2. High-rise apartment buildings should be defined as over four stories, with a building height as defined in the International Building Code 2015, Table 504.3, but not to exceed 100 feet that share a common entrance and/or common interior corridor.**
- 3. Minimum spacing between high-rise apartments should be 50 feet.**
- 4. Item (B)(1)(f) should be revised to read, ""Minimum setback from any public or private street to structure should be 15 feet from the sidewalk. If there is not a sidewalk, then setback should be 20 feet from the curblineline.""**
- 5. Item (B)(1)(g) should be deleted to prevent difference between public and private streets.**
- 6. Item (B)(1)(h) should be increase the minimum setback from any district boundary line (nonresidential/residential) to 75 feet.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**Review and recommendation of Portable Storage Container Ordinance**

Mr. Turocy said he had completed some revisions to the proposed ordinance. He had gotten some feedback from Council regarding the ordinance. Council had asked about the use of dumpsters or containers used during new home construction or major renovations. In these types of situations, a 14-day limit for a dumpster is too short and there have been cases where dumpsters are used on construction and renovation sites for 12 months or more. Council suggested that a container permit could be tied to the building permit with a higher fee for a longer period of time or time extensions. Also, definitions of small and large containers may need to be reviewed with the size on the PODs website is indicated to be 17 cubic yards.

Mr. Casadei said that new construction and major renovations were noted in the proposed ordinance as follows, "However, if it is necessary for the removal of a construction or non-construction waste dumpster prior to the completion of said work, a additional permit shall be required." As long as work is continuing on the house, an extension application is permitted.

Mr. Turocy said that the concern for dumpsters seem to be primarily around their placement on a borough street. He asked why not regulate only those dumpsters, PODs, etc., that are on a street. Mr. Casadei said there have been issues with people keeping PODs in their driveways for months at a time, utilizing it like a shed, and that should not be permitted. Mr. Casadei said that while a home is under construction a POD can be used for storage. When the work is completed, the items stored in the POD should be removed and the POD should be returned. Discussion continued regarding the different types of dumpsters and POD storage containers.

Mr. Casadei said that item (B) refers to Portable Storage Containers but seems to be covering dumpsters instead. Instead of saying "waste container" it should just say "container" in order to cover both portable storage containers and dumpsters. Mr. Turocy said that it refers to the replacement of a dumpster with another dumpster, and with the placement of the dumpster on a borough street. Mr. Casadei said that it should not be necessary to apply for a new permit because one dumpster is full and needs to be replaced. Mr. Erwin asked if the word "dumpster" should be used or consistently referred to as a "portable storage container." Mr. Casadei said it appears that the ordinance does not cover temporary storage containers, such as PODs, to be used during general construction. Mr. Turocy felt the ordinance should cover both dumpsters and portable storage containers. Mrs. Bakin said that it appears that more work needs to be done on this proposed ordinance. Discussion continued regarding the details that need to be changed or reworked in the proposed ordinance.

Mrs. Bakin said that the ordinance has time limits on a portable storage container that would not allow enough time for any major renovation or construction. Mr. Casadei said that item (C) covers placing a storage container on a lot and that section could be crafted to include the duration of construction by adding a "for construction" use. Commercial buildings have to have a dumpster as part of the borough's ordinance for garbage collection, so commercial dumpsters are different from residential dumpsters. Planning Commission discussed the different sections referring to different types of dumpsters/portable storage containers and how they might be organized to cover the different types of containers.

**Comprehensive Plan Survey for November 10, 2021 Public Meeting**

Mr. Turocy distributed a draft of a survey to be handed out at the Public Meeting. Mrs. Bakin said that the same online survey should be used for the paper survey at the meeting. Additionally, verbal comments from residents would be solicited at the meeting. Comments could be displayed on large

display at the front of the room for later discussion. Once the comments from the meeting and the comments from the online survey are put together it should give Planning Commission a better idea on what issues should be addressed in the next survey. Mrs. Bakin was concerned that residents might be confused if a different survey with different issues was presented at the Public Meeting.

Mr. Abdelahad said that the paper surveys should be distributed at the beginning of the meeting with a request to complete it during the meeting to get more responses. Mr. Turocy asked Planning Commission if they wanted that online survey put into a paper format for the meeting. There have been approximately 100 online responses so far. After a discussion, Planning Commission agreed to make the paper survey the same as the current online survey.

Mr. Abdelahad said he had heard from others who asked why the school district was included in the survey. Mrs. Bakin replied that when the 2010 Comprehensive Plan was created there had been a lot of concern about whether Aiken Elementary would be closing and then a few years later the same concern arose at St. Margaret's School. Even though the borough cannot control the actions of the school district, the Comprehensive Plan can be a voice of influence. Mr. Turocy said it is important to have communication and cooperation between the municipality and the schools. Mr. Casadei said the quality of the school districts in a community could impact the property values and decisions regarding where families might want to live.

Mrs. Bakin said the meeting should be set up similar to a regular meeting. Planning Commission will welcome the attendees. They will explain that they will be taking comments and gathering information to put together the Comprehensive Plan. Private comments could be written on the paper surveys or submitted privately to a Planning Commission member. Speakers at the meeting should provide their names and addresses and there should be a time limit on the length of time a person is allowed to speak. Mr. Abdelahad suggested that a representative from the Police Department or the Mayor talk to the group about the community. Discussion continued regarding the plans for the Public Meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:**

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

**Motion carried unanimously.**

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James J. Turocy, Chairman

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Al Erwin, Secretary