

DOYLESTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 9, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

The meeting of the Doylestown Borough Planning Commission was held at Borough Hall at 7:30 pm on January 9, 2024. Members present were as follows:

James Lannon, Chairman
W. Andrew Happ
Heather Mahaley
MaryAnn Baenninger
P.R. West
Nicholas Caramenico
Lynn Bush

The meeting was also attended by Bucks County Planning Commission consultants Michael Roedig and Lynn Lai, Doylestown Borough Council Members Ben Bell and Dennis Livrone, EAC member Stephen Nelson, and Doylestown Borough Director of Building and Zoning Karyn Hyland.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Mr. Lannon, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance in honor of Martin Corr.

MEETING MINUTES: The meeting minutes from the November 28, 2023, meeting were approved as submitted.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE: Mr. Roedig from the BCPC gave an update on where we are in the timeline for the Comp Plan. Mike explained the documents attached to the meeting packet and how things have been reorganized to help consolidate the topics experiencing a lot of overlap.

One change Mr. Lannon asked for was to remove Caitlin Hernandez from the role of staff member assigned to the position of point person for action items related to economic development. Mr. Lannon noted that Ms. Hernandez already has a large workload and suggested that a volunteer from one of the Borough Boards or Commissions would be better suited to the task or that this position should be further developed by staff and Borough Council. Mr. Roedig agreed and will make that change. Mr. Lannon also asked for clarification on a bullet point referencing parking. He requested that it be changed to note the bullet point is referencing the County's parking facilities and changing signage on those facilities.

Mr. Bell asked for clarification on the spreadsheet the Bucks County Planning Commission presented. Mr. Roedig and Mr. Lannon answered his questions regarding what the various column titles mean and how they will be used within the role of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Livrone had additional follow-up questions, looking for more in-depth answers. Specifically, he wanted to know how tonight's presentation would ultimately end up as an implementable Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Roedig answered his questions and let him know Ms. Lai would have more information later in the evening, using other municipalities as an example. Mr. Roedig believes we are moving in the right direction with the plan and where we stand now.

Ms. Bush spoke to the documents provided. She believes an overall summary of the plan theme is stewardship. The Board agreed and added to her sentiments. Mr. Happ noted how this plan will show future generations that the citizens of the Borough were listened to and their ideas were heard. Mr. Caramenico pointed out that the County Planning Commission consultants did a great job synthesizing the various concepts into tenable ideas. Ms. Bush would like to see more coherence between what would be included in the plan and what the principles and values were in the first place. Mr. Bell's comments were related to this as well. The reorganization document is good, but she doesn't want to throw out the principles that should drive change and planning. Mr. Happ would prioritize the values more since they transcend time. The values could look similar in 20 years because those values are woven into the fabric of this community.

Mr. Roedig wants to start forming the plan. He is looking for agreement on the direction of the plan and the priorities of the plan. Ms. Mahaley wants to know if a bigger picture can be presented to help narrow down the direction of the plan. She would like to see other examples to help guide how to proceed. Mr. Lannon thinks the focus should be on the values of the community. Maybe using the values instead of the principles is what the Planning Commission is looking for. These values would become the connective tissue of the entire plan. Mr. Caramenico thinks the bigger picture should be considered by using the values listed in the document. The great things in this town only exist because they were valued in the past. He wants to keep growing on those values and use those for the bigger picture of this plan. Mr. Happ believes a macro approach should happen versus a micro approach.

Regarding the next workshop, Mr. Roedig thinks we are not ready yet. Mr. Roedig knows we will reach a very distinct point where we are prepared to present the plan to the public, but we are not quite there yet. Ms. Hyland stated the document should start to come together soon. Right now, it is just a bunch of lists, and she wants to know how this document will tell a story. Mr. Lannon thinks what was discussed tonight will help with the introduction to the plan.

The sustainability and conservation issues still need to be covered. Mr. Lannon thinks it needs to have the same amount of discussion time as the other slides had. The Commission and the County Planning Commission members had a lengthy discussion on sustainability and conservation. There were questions about whether specific ideas were operational, the EAC's role, and how to implement various concepts within this topic. After a healthy dialogue between commission members and members of the public, it was decided that specific critical points from the sustainability and conservation topic need to be included. However, the detail and length of their inclusion should align with the in-progress DCAP while leaving room for flexibility.

The County Planning Commission consultants will return on the second Tuesday in March to present their updates. Ms. Lai briefly shared examples from other municipalities recently implementing new Comprehensive Plans. She showed examples of towns similar in size and demographics to Doylestown.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: No land development application are anticipated for the February regular meeting. For the next planning commission meeting, we can discuss reorganization and then continue to discuss what we have for the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Hyland suggested these meetings could be moved to a more comfortable space to help facilitate discussion.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:29 pm in honor of Libby White.

Respectfully submitted,
Erika Fellman