

WORK SESSION
February 3, 2009
7:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call: Council Members Crawford, Edge, Lynch, Raymond, Smith (ABSENT), Vike, VanSciver (ABSENT) and Mayor McGlone (ABSENT)
2. Council Vice President announced that copies of the Agenda are available at the Press Desk. This is a Work Session of Council and, as such, there is no public forum scheduled; however, citizens/taxpayers are invited to offer comments during the discussion phase of each agenda item.
3. Planning Commission Recommendation for 101 Church Street – Council Vice President Raymond expressed surprise at the Planning Commission’s recommendation to adopt a zoning change for 101 Church Street.

Wendy McLean, Esq., stated that the big issue is that this is a non-conforming use and has been a non-conforming use since it stopped being a firehouse. If an owner is trying to get financing on a building like this, it is difficult if you have to tell your lender you need three variances and special exceptions to do what you want with the building. If it doesn’t work out, you would need more variances and special exceptions. If the building is zoned commercial, you only need a zoning permit. The owners of this property may still need variances because of the parking situation, but that will not be known until a plan is submitted. Having to go through a lot of hoops may kill a deal like this.

Jerry O’Connor, 22 Sunset Drive, the builder for Andrews Management, stated that they have 26 sq.ft. of available parking in the rear of the property.

Chris Mongeau, Chairman of the Planning Commission, stated that the Planning Commission made the recommendation with many of Wendy’s comments being considered. Also, the Planning Commission felt the property is so closely located to a C3 to make it a conforming use. By changing the zoning from R5 to C3 makes sense.

Council Vice President Raymond questioned why that wasn’t taken into consideration when the Zoning Ordinance was recently overhauled.

Council Member Vike explained that in the Green Street and Roberts Lane area, on the north side of Green Street, after the turn, there are properties along King Street that back onto Green Street.

Wendy McLean explained that there is a triangular shape from a building on King Street that extends back towards Green Street that is zoned commercial.

Council Member Vike stated that the Comprehensive Plan addresses commercial districts encroaching on residential districts. This would have been a firewall type of thought. After you go one block, now it is residential even if there are one or two parcels that are non-conforming, the members of the task force did not want to allow the commercial to creep into the residential so they erred on containing the commercial district. If you look at the map now for this property vs. Odd Fellows lot, that is another block and encroaches into another residential area. Council Member Vike stated that he has no problem with this being moved into the commercial district as it has never been what is included in the R-5 District.

Council Vice President Raymond stated it is one thing to permit the use of 101 Church Street for office, but once we change the zoning, we may be making problems down the road if it becomes another use. She stated that she would like to have that issue addressed at some time.

Council Member Crawford stated that he can understand the slippery slope argument, but once again, just as Wendy said, it should be addressed at the public hearing, and we should move forward with the hearing.

Wendy McLean stated that the Chester County Planning Commission will also provide comments before the hearing.

The public hearing will be advertised for the March 17th Borough Council meeting.

4. VFSA & Tredyffrin Township Request for Letter of Support for H2O PA Grant – the Manager explained that both the Valley Forge Sewer Authority and Tredyffrin Township will be applying for the H2O Grants for upgrades and expansion at their facilities. If they are successful in obtaining these grants, the cost of the upgrades at the facilities will reduce the Borough's share of the costs. The grants are a 50% match.

Council agreed to send the letters of support with some minor changes to the proposed language in the letters.

5. Sidewalk Survey & Planning Commission Recommendations – Council Vice President Raymond stated that the Council President, Woody Van Sciver, has additional comments regarding the Sidewalk Survey and she would like to table this discussion until he and other Council members are present.

The Manager was asked to provide the Sidewalk Survey in electronic format to the members of Council.

6. Electronic Filing of Liquid Fuels Reports – the Manager reported that there were no costs associated with the electronic filing of liquid fuels reports, as questioned at the January 20th meeting. Any costs associated with electronic filing would have to be borne by those municipalities who did not already have computer access or internet access.

7. Coatesville Clean-Up – the Manager requested permission to attend the Coatesville Clean-Up event tomorrow. Many municipalities were sending manpower to Coatesville to help collect and dispose of flammable items on residents porches or in their yards to deter the arsonist(s) who are plaguing the City. Council granted permission.

8. Public Comments:

David Sloan, 8 High Street – questioned the emergency tax that was mentioned in the letter to the residents that was sent by Borough Council.

It was explained that the Borough did not know how the declining economy would affect income from real estate and earned income taxes, etc., and the Borough is responsible for providing essential services to its residents, as well as, meeting contractual obligations. If the Borough takes in less revenue and operating costs continue to escalate, there is a possibility that the Borough would not be able to meet their obligations. Council apologized for the use of the term “emergency fund” and explained that it was really a capital reserve fund for emergencies.

Council explained that during the budgeting process, they did discuss what would happen if the Borough was faced with a significant recession and they talked about submitting grant applications to the County and questioned how a project would be funded. It was determined that if we were awarded the grant, we would have at least 18 months to move forward with the project and we would know within those 18 months whether or not we could afford to move forward with the project. If the Borough did not have the funds, the project would not move forward. There was a lot of thought put into the budgeting process.

9. Adjournment:

All business having been discussed, a motion was made by Council Member Crawford, seconded by Council Member Edge and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra L. Kelley
Borough Manager