

Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee Meeting Minutes – 24th September 2008

Members: Charlestown Township Hugh Willig, Rick Reis
 East Pikeland Township Rusty Strauss
 East Vincent Township Christine McNeil, Elaine Milito
 Phoenixville Borough Rich Kirkner
 Schuylkill Township Lee Ledbetter
 West Vincent Township Ken Miller
Others: Liz Lankenau, Jim McMaster, Jim Wendelgass

Chairman Rich Kirkner called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rich asked for a formal roll call; all municipalities were represented.

Approval of Minutes: Rusty made a motion to approve the minutes, and Lee seconded his motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Approval of Invoices: Two invoices were presented by KSK: June, 2008 services dated 6th August 2008 for \$2,091.53; and August, 2008 services dated 10th September 2008 for \$870.84. The Secretary failed to note any formal action taken except that the Borough will bill each municipality separately for their share. A formal recommendation to recommend payment should be made at the October meeting for the minutes.

Under Old Business:

Municipal Managers Meeting

- Jim McM. reported that he had met today with the municipal managers with the exception of East Vincent; Mary Flagg was on vacation.
- There was concern expressed over the administrative duties associated with the regional activities. The managers would prefer that an official regional secretary be appointed to handle these. KSK is bridging some of the need for clerical support in the short term. Also, there was a concern about the need for space associated with filing of regional documents, although there is limited storage available. As each municipality will be retaining its own copies of the records, no central regional repository of records is planned at this time.
- The need to budget funds for the consistency reviews plus incidental amounts for miscellaneous items was identified.
- Jim reviewed the pros and cons of escrowing funds from applicants to cover any consistency reviews required. As the Borough is looking to promote development, \$10,000 was felt to be too much, and will likely set the fees lower than that. Each municipality will be responsible to cover any shortfalls, so can set the fees individually.

- The handling of “discretionary reviews” (that is, reviews not expressly set out in the regional comprehensive plan) was discussed. The general consensus was to inform applicants at the time of application, with a time limit set on reaching a decision.
- For applicants that refuse to provide requested escrow amounts, the municipality has the option of rejecting the application and entertaining a re-submission when payment of past costs or paid. Alternatively, municipalities can condition approval on the payment of all fees. There is no case law in this area to provide guidance, so appeals may be unlikely.
- The ordinance consistency review process was discussed.
- To hold down logistical and filing resource demands, the region could consider going paperless (email, electronic documents, e.g., PDFs). But all agree that the region is probably not yet ready for that step.
- Each municipality’s fee ordinances and application checklists will need to be revised to include the additional regional review fees.
- Each municipality can set its fees associated with the regional process. Likely the Borough will set a lower level, but all will need to set a threshold at which time escrowed amounts will need to be replenished.

Consistency Review

- KSK is performing a first pass and expects to be done in the next month. This will trigger a memo to each municipality’s Planning Commission to arrange a discussion on how any items identified for consideration should be approached. Nothing has been identified in the reviews completed thus far, although East Vincent’s bonus density and the discouragement of sprawl outside growth boundaries was discussed.
- East Pikeland and East Vincent are each in the middle of a 537 plan review. They have not yet checked this against the growth boundaries in the regional plan, but per Jim McM., they should. Rusty mentioned that East Pikeland is contemplating the feasibility of pulling back the current sewer areas in the 537 plan.
- Rich indicated the consistency review comes at a good time for the Borough as they are in the process of preparing an RFP for an update to their Comprehensive Plan.
- KSK will prepare a draft memo to the region’s Planning Commissions for review at the October regional meeting.

On-Call Services Contract

- Changes to the language were reviewed. Most notable was to allow 60 days for the region to review and pay invoices to allow at least one meeting of the region to review and recommend payment so each municipality’s governing body could approve the invoice for payment.

Short Term Goals

- The consistency reviews will examine environmental aspects, including stormwater standards.
- Both East Pikeland and East Vincent share concerns on the economic development along Rte 724.
- East Pikeland is updating the Historical Resources inventory and should be done in a month or so.

- East Vincent feels they and East Pikeland need to consider a master plan for 724. There is a break in commercial use at the western boundary of East Pikeland, where it changes to mixed use, but further west, East Vincent zoning is commercial. As part of this, they need to support Phoenixville but also create rate-ables.
- Christine suggested that some way needs to be found to break the mold of strip mall after strip mall. KSK indicated West Vincent was very prescriptive in what commercial uses they would allow. East Pikeland would prefer guidelines that set up standards instead of the approach taken by West Vincent.
- The Borough has renewed their steel mill master plan for 10 years.
- Discussions will be continued next month.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.