

A meeting of the Planning Committee was held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the banquet hall at the Neptune Fire Company located at 20-22 E. Main Street.

The Committee Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present were President Kelly Bricker, President Pro Tem Larry Hartman, Secretary Rebecca Schnoke, Zoning Officer Glenn Bertolet, and Urban Research & Development Consultant Charlie Schmehl.

There were 26 residents in attendance that signed in.

President Bricker stated that the planning committee consists of Kelly Bricker, Larry Hartman, and Matthew Johnson. President Bricker advised that this is the first of two public meetings to be held regarding the new zoning ordinance draft. President Bricker introduced Charlie Schmehl from Urban Research & Development.

Charlie Schmehl summarized the major policies of the zoning draft, following the summary memo provided to all attendees, which is also available for review at richlandborough.org. Charlie Schmehl advised that there are no proposed changes to the zoning map.

President Bricker opened the floor for visitor comments.

Andrew Kriss – 34 N. Race St. – Expressed concerns regarding the excessive number of white vans parked behind Speedway. Zoning Officer Glenn Bertolet advised they got a permit to park vehicles on their property and this use is a permitted use in that district and that Lebanon County said no land development plan was required.

Joy Ebling – 106 Church St. – Inquired about the noise ordinance times, President Bricker advised that the noise ordinance is a separate stand-alone ordinance and the times designated in the ordinance are 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Travis Duffy – 18 Church St. – Inquired about landscaping regulations. Charlie Schmehl stated proposed changes and stated the full ordinance is available online and is a word searchable PDF.

Gary Althouse – 20 N. Race St. – Inquired about restrictions pertaining to historical digs. Charlie Schmehl advised historical digs are not regulated by this ordinance.

Jay Wenger – 201 Leffler Dr. – Questioned whether burn pits are permitted by this ordinance and expressed concerns regarding smoke emitted by them. Zoning Officer Glenn Bertolet advised they are permitted but there are restrictions regarding the placement and proximity to the owner's home and neighbor's home. Charlie Schmehl read the corresponding language and stated the current stand-alone burning ordinance continues to prohibit the burning of trash and rubbish and this is strictly for recreational fire pits.

Brian Horning – 34 E. Main St. – Inquire about the timeline for the completion of the New Zoning Ordinance. President Bricker advised the plan is to have a second public meeting and to adopt the new zoning ordinance by the end of the year.

Andy Kriss – 34 N. Race St. – Questioned what specific provisions and standards are being changed. Charlie Schmehl stated the big policies from the current zoning ordinance are staying the same but are updating the standards for everything. Zoning Officer Glenn Bertolet advised the new ordinance carries over the core policies of the current zoning ordinance but looks very different as it addresses and regulates everything and anything, because by law all uses must be permitted somewhere, the new ordinance tries to address all possible uses. Glenn Bertolet stated that only 10-12% of the ordinance will be used on a regular basis but the rest establishes regulations to avoid potential legal expenses and deter unwanted uses.

Ryan Gahres – 207 Oak St. – Questioned if the commercial lighting restrictions apply to the Borough streetlights. Charlie Schmehl advised the zoning ordinance only regulates private property and streetlights are public property.

Jay Wenger – 201 Leffler Dr. – Inquired what is happening with N. Race Street. Brian Horning who works for PennDOT stated the contract was bid as part of a larger project, the contract has been awarded and the anticipated completion date is 2024, but stated there is a lot of work to be done to N. Race Street.

Dominic Mulhern – 100 N. Race St. – Questioned if they will be doing anything to the hole in the asphalt in front of his house. President Bricker stated this will be addressed in the project, and Brian Horning stated once the contract is awarded the liability to maintain safety of the road falls on the contractor, if they choose not to correct the matter.

Charles Dana – 32 N. Race St. – Questioned why ordinance being rewritten and if anything prompted the changes. Charlie Schmehl advised the current ordinance is old, outdated, and has a lot of loopholes, rewriting the ordinance reduces risk of large legal battles, addresses issues that are not currently addressed, provides more clear and concise regulations, and saves work and money in the long run.

Joy Ebling - 106 Church St. – Questioned what is defined as junk and are there restrictions on appliances and junk. Glenn Bertolet advised that the property maintenance code addresses these issues.

Barbara Rutter – 101 Birch St. – Questioned why the code enforcement officer does not drive around and issue violations for everything observed, and stated the town used to be beautiful and now there are junk cards and rubbish all around town.

President Bricker advised that code enforcement is complaint driven and is all done on a complaint basis if there are issues to please contact the Borough Office and submit a complaint form. President Bricker reiterated that Code Enforcement is complaint driven. Discussion occurred regarding this matter. President Bricker advised there is difficulty in enforcing some matters due to no longer

having a Richland Borough police officer and because State Police will not enforce ordinances, Council is currently looking into a Quality-of-Life ordinance that would help enforce some of these issues.

Owen Landes – 509 Elm St. – Clarified the code enforcement process, stating if you have an issue, submit a complaint, names stay anonymous, and the code enforcement officer addresses the issue.

Holly Mulhern – 100 N. Race St. – Inquired about white goods and appliance pick up options. President Bricker advised a letter has been mailed to inform residents that the November 14, 2023 Council meeting will be held at the Neptune Fire Company to review the new trash contract and this matter will be addressed at the meeting.

Brian Horning – 34 E. Main St. – Inquired if the trash contract was put out for bid. President Bricker advised the contract was bid, there was one bid received, the annual price will be increasing and everything will be discussed at the November meeting, that Council is still working on the matter.

Travis Duffy – 18 Church St. – Inquired about landscape buffering.

Nancy Wenger – 201 Leffler Dr. – Inquired about new trash hauler. President Bricker advised the 2024 contract was awarded to Weidle Sanitation.

Andrew Kriss – 34 N. Race St. – Questioned what the biggest changes are affecting residents. Zoning Officer Glenn Bertolet advised the changes are positive changes that are less restrictive for common general home improvements and more restrictive for unwanted uses.

Joy Ebling – 106 Church St. – Inquired if there are changes to the impervious coverage amounts. Glenn Bertolet advised the percentage coverage depends on the district, but the new ordinance increase the percentage that can be covered, but keep in mind stormwater management falls under the Lebanon County SALDO and would be reviewed as well.

Duane Weiler – 415 Oak St. – Questioned what a quality-of-life ordinance is. Charlie Schmehl advised it is a separate ordinance, it does not change what is regulated but makes it enforceable and is more cost-effective enforcement. President Bricker advised enforcement will remain complaint driven.

Dana – 32 N. Race St. – Inquired if a permit is required to install a fence. Glenn Bertolet advised a permit is required, and the current permit fee for a zoning permit is \$90.00.

Andrew Kriss – 34 N. Race St. – Questioned why this process is occurring. Charlie Schmehl advised it is to simply bring the zoning ordinance up to current standards. Glenn Bertolet advised additional reasons the ordinance was rewritten are to have a clearer, more specific ordinance for the benefit of the zoning hearing board to make decisions, but also to make common general home improvements easier so they don't require zoning hearing board approval.

Brian Horning – 34 E. Main St. – Inquired if RHD homes per acre amount is standard or can it be decreased. Charlie Schmehl advised the numbers are standard but have already been lowered per previous committee discussions, did not want to decrease too much, and discourage affordable housing due to the increased demand for it.

Barbara Rutter – 101 Birch St. – Inquired about fence setbacks and permit requirements. Glenn Bertolet advised a permit is required for a fence and the setbacks are set by the zoning ordinance, and if something is observed and is of concern contact the Borough office to see if a permit was obtained and if not, the matter will be addressed.

Charlie Schmehl stated as a reminder that there will be one more public meeting regarding the new zoning ordinance before the ordinance is considered for adoption, the date for the meeting has not yet been determined.

President Bricker advised that anyone that is not on the Rave Alert System should contact Secretary Schnoke to provide their contact information to be added to the system to receive emergency alerts.

President Bricker thanked all residents for their understanding and cooperation during the water main break emergency that occurred over Labor Day weekend.

President Bricker asked if there were any additional questions or comments, with non-presented she thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Rebecca Schnoke,
Richland Borough Secretary