

**WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 2009**

A work session of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 7:00 PM at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA for the purpose of reviewing the agenda of the public meeting to be held that evening. Planning Commission members Vince Philomeno, Rick Shorin, Mark Clemm, and Harry Phifer were present. Township Engineer Roman M. Pronczak, Assistant Township Engineer Jim Blanch, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, and Recording Secretary Michele Alifano were also present.

1. Review Zoning Hearing Board applications.

#1851-09. This application is a request to allow the addition of a fixed roof with columns over the existing 16'- 2" x 22' concrete slab patio reducing the minimum required side yard from 45' to 36'- 4" and reducing the minimum required aggregate side yard from 100' to 87'- 4" at the subject property.

Mr. Pronczak stated that this request is for a residential property and the Planning Commission generally remains neutral in such cases.

2. Review of "Off-Premises Sign Ordinance".

Mr. Rieker provided some background information regarding the Ordinance stating that the Code Enforcement Officer had indicated the necessity of making the language of the Sign Ordinance more definable, specifically dealing with billboards, which are presently permitted in the Township, and real estate (directional) signs. Mr. Rieker stated that his Consultant's report makes recommendations for the limits in height, square footage, and illumination of the billboards, which are limited to display in Industrial Districts.

Mr. Pronczak added that the Township was approached by a group of realtors who complained about the restrictive requirements for "open house" signs, and with the way the Building Code is written, it states that any sign requires a building permit. In the case of these directional signs, the permit would cost more than the sign itself. The Ordinance will lift the requirement for a permit for these types of signs, and establish regulations for how they are installed.

Mr. Clemm inquired about what height and square footage to which billboards should be limited. Mr. Rieker stated that the billboard industry has a full size and a half size, roughly 740 sq. ft. and 370 sq. ft. respectively, that is considered to be the industry standard, and he would like to see the smaller of the two adopted as the standard for Whitpain Township. This dimension is of a greater size than what the Code currently permits.

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Mr. Pronczak advised that there are no billboards located in the Township presently. Mr. Rieker also commented that roof-mounted signs will not be permitted.

Mr. Clemm stated that he did not believe that there is any constitutional right to have billboards, and he was wary of encouraging the erection of billboards within the Township. There was then some discussion regarding litigation being pursued to adopt curative amendments to allow specific uses in other Townships, and how that situation could be avoided in Whitpain Township by allowing the billboards, but placing restrictions upon them. Mr. Pronczak advised that currently, billboards are only allowable in the Limited Industrial District as a special exception.

Mr. Clemm suggested that the Planning Commission make a recommendation to allow billboards to be 35 feet in height, and to remain at the presently allowable square footage of 120 sq. ft.

Mr. Rieker commented that the dimensions of billboards that he refers to in his Planning Consultant's report for the month of December are industry standards.

The work session was adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Alifano, Recording Secretary

**WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
DECEMBER 2009**

The eleventh meeting of the Whitpain Township Planning Commission for the year 2009 was held on Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at the Whitpain Township Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell, PA. Vice-Chairman Vincent Philomeno presided with Commission members Rick Shorin, Mark Clemm and Harry Phifer present. Township Engineer Roman M. Pronczak, Assistant Township Engineer Jim Blanch, Township Planning Consultant E. Van Rieker, and Recording Secretary Michele Alifano were also present.

Vice-Chairman Vincent Philomeno called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

1. Approval of minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Shorin, seconded by Mr. Phifer, to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2009 meeting of the Planning Commission. The motion passed 4-0.

2. Zoning Hearing Board Applications.

- a. #1851-09. Application filed by Steven R. and Nancy W. Vignau as owners of the property located at 1029 Stony Brook Drive, Blue Bell, PA, 19422 for variances from the terms of Article V, Section 160-17 and Article XXVIII, Section 160-203 to allow the addition of a fixed roof with columns over the existing 16'- 2" x 22' concrete slab patio reducing the minimum required side yard from 45' to 36'- 4" and reducing the minimum required aggregate side yard from 100' to 87'- 4" at the subject property.

The zoning classification of the subject property is "R-1" Residence District.

A motion was made by Mr. Philomeno, seconded by Mr. Clemm to remain neutral on the subject application. The motion passed 4-0.

3. Review "Off-Premises Sign Ordinance".

An Ordinance amending the codified ordinances of Whitpain Township, Chapter 160 (Zoning), Article II (Definitions), Section 160-7 (Word Usage and Definitions) to add a definition for "Billboard", to amend Article XXVI (Signs), Section 160-188 (Permitted Signs) to add a new subparagraph "C" permitting certain off-premises signs as specified in Section 160-191 (Schedule of Sign Regulations) and in accordance with all other provisions of Article XXVI (Signs); to amend Section 160-189 (Permitted Signs) to revise subparagraph "K" to delete the requirement

that off-premises signs be located in the Limited Industrial District only and to establish general regulations for billboards; to amend Section 160-189 to add a new subparagraph "M" to establish general regulations for off-premises signs; to amend Section 160-191 (Schedule of Sign Regulations) to permit off-premises signs in certain Zoning Districts and include billboards as a permitted sign in the Limited Industrial District.

Mr. Rieker commented that this Ordinance strives to meet the needs of the real estate industry, and it will establish regulations for billboards, which is considered an off-premise sign. He suggested that the size of the sign area be increased from 120 sq. ft. to 336 sq. ft., the maximum height be set at 35 ft, and that roof-mounted signs would not be permitted.

There was some continuing discussion regarding certain proposed definitions in the Ordinance, and the importance of clarifying the language contained therein.

A motion was made by Mr. Clemm, seconded by Mr. Phifer to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the authorization to advertise, and that the language of the Ordinance be adopted subject to revisions submitted to the Township Solicitor by the Township Planning Consultant. The motion passed 4-0.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Mr. Philomeno, and seconded by Mr. Shorin to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Shorin, Secretary