

*South Franklin & Green Hills Zoning Ordinance & SALDO
Public Meeting #1: Summary - September 19, 2011*

Welcome & Introductions

Amy Wiles, AICP, project manager and lead senior planner at Mackin Engineering, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance at 7:05 PM. There were 19 public citizens in attendance in addition to Susan Morgan from the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington (RACW), and two additional Mackin staff members: planning department manager Brandi Rosselli, AICP, and staff planner Amanda Miller, AICP.

Amy introduced Mackin and the project, explaining that the zoning and subdivision ordinance re-writes, and the choice to pursue a joint ordinance with Green Hills, emerged from the Joint Comprehensive Plan completed in 2009. Both the creation of a joint zoning ordinance and a re-write of the existing subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) were listed as priority projects in that plan. The project is being funded by Local Share Account (LSA) grant money which is being matched by the municipalities. Both ordinances are currently in the early draft stages.

A Steering Committee was appointed to oversee the development of the ordinances, which is comprised of representatives from the Borough and Township (Planning Commission, elected officials, and residents). The Committee meets monthly to help review draft regulations and make suggestions for the new zoning map and districts. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to present what has been drafted thus far and receive public input on it in order to ensure it is meeting community goals.

Presentation Part #1: Joint Zoning Ordinance

Amy then explained why the two communities chose to pursue a joint zoning ordinance, and some of the benefits that a joint ordinance offers. The decision to pursue joint zoning was in this case motivated by the fact that Pennsylvania treats joint zoning ordinances as an entire "region." Instead of having to provide for every use within municipal boundaries, for instance, municipalities that participate in joint zoning can instead choose to distribute uses throughout the region, in one or more of the other participating municipalities. This allows for a more logical, thoughtful pattern of use designation so that primarily residential communities do not have to create unnecessary commercial or industrial districts. It also helps insulate communities from "fair share" legal challenges.

Another benefit of joint zoning is cost savings, as the municipalities received grant funding to complete the project due to their partnership. Joint zoning also ensures a high level of consistency so that neighboring municipalities are able to maintain a more uniform and attractive appearance.

While it will be a joint ordinance, Green Hills and South Franklin will administer and enforce the ordinance separately. Each community will have its own Zoning Hearing Board, who will be

responsible for decisions affecting its' municipality only. Green Hills will likely contract South Franklin's zoning officer on an as-needed basis only.

Presentation Part #2: Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances (SALDO)

The second part of the presentation focused on the SALDO. While in the case of zoning, the communities would share a joint ordinance, each community will have its own SALDO. However, they will be consistent and compatible with one another. While zoning regulates the use of land, including things like dimensions of a lot, density, and building height, the SALDO regulates the actual subdivision of a parcel and/or the development of the land itself. The SALDO will address items such as the procedure to submit an application for a subdivision or land development; the layout of streets and sidewalks; public and private improvements; landscaping; and lighting.

Questions & Answers

Amy opened the floor for general questions and comments. The following was discussed:

- ***Will all of this information be available online?***
 - Yes. Information from tonight's meeting, including the draft Zoning Map, will be made available on the Township website. Those in attendance who provided an email address will receive notification when the information is posted.
- ***If my active farm is in an area that is going to be changed to residential, does that affect the value of my land for the future? I'm concerned too much land is zoned as residential.***
 - The purpose was to create a more noticeable difference between the Agricultural District and the Rural Residential District. Currently, the minimum lot size for both districts is one acre. With the current lot size standards, it would be possible to build a subdivision anywhere in the Township, even on prime agricultural land. The proposed changes to the Agricultural District seek to remedy this by requiring larger minimum lot sizes and permitting more intense agricultural uses not appropriate for residential areas.
 - However, it is extremely important to note that Pennsylvania law regulates farming and that small farms will still be allowed to continue in residential districts – it is only larger agricultural operations that will be regulated.
 - It should also be noted that any use that is currently taking place now will be permitted to continue and even reasonable expand no matter in what district it is located.
- ***What is the definition of rural residential?***
 - The purpose of the Rural Residential District is to accommodate single-family residential development and compatible uses such as public recreation, educational institutions, and churches. The proposed R-1: Rural Residential District is similar in nature to the current South Franklin R-2 District. Currently,

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R-2 is the low density district and R-1 is the higher density residential district. Since this is not the traditional order for a zoning ordinance it has been changed. Districts – when numbered – should start with the lowest density and work their way up.

- ***Is the five-acre minimum lot size only for the Ag district?***
 - Yes, at this point we are examining a variety of options for lot sizes but R-1 will likely have a 1-acre minimum and the Ag district will have something larger like 5 acres.
- ***Is the reasoning behind the Flex Commercial Industrial District the business park proposal for the airport?***
 - Yes.
- ***Are Green Hills and South Franklin merging?***
 - There are no plans for the two communities to merge at this time. This is merely a cooperative zoning ordinance effort; it does not affect the governance of the two municipalities.

Stations Summary

Amy concluded her presentation by explaining that the activity for the evening would focus on rotating through three stations: one station focused on residential districts, one on commercial and industrial, and a final station focused on general overall regulations.

Proposed Zoning Map Revisions (see attached map):

- A-1: General Agricultural /R-1: Rural Residential
 - There is too land designated as R-1, much of which includes active farms. Suggested revisions include:
 - The western side of Valley Vista should be A-1
 - The eastern side of Deerfield Rd should be A-1
 - Most of the properties along SR 18 south of Vaneal Rd should be A-1
 - Lagonda Rd east of SR 18 should be mostly A-1
- Industrial Overlay District
 - Revise to have the eastern border as SR 221
 - Extend north to Carcraft Rd
- C-1 Local Commercial
 - Revise large parcel south of Lagonda Road to A-1 (currently an active farm)
 - Some of the C-1 back from SR 18 should not be commercial but should be A-1 or R-2 – why does the C-1 go so far back from the road?
 - Note: the portion of the proposed C-1 District that is in question is part of the parcel that fronts SR 18.
- MU: Mixed Use Residential/Commercial
 - Revise to include small hubs of MU Mixed Use along SR 221 intersections with Old Scales Rd and Vaneal Rd; commercial is more likely to occur there since there is more traffic

Station #1: Agriculture & Residential Districts Notes

- A-1 Agriculture
 - Should permit smaller lots as subdivisions for family heirs
 - Oil and gas wells
 - Currently they are a permitted use; however, some feel it should be a conditional use similar to that of other mineral extraction activities (i.e. currently, coal mining activities are conditional uses under A-1) and in doing so, it would require a public hearing and keep the residents informed
 - Others felt that it should be a permitted use in A-1 and that changing it to a conditional use would only drag out the approval process and cost the Township money
- R-1 Rural Residential
 - Permit agriculture in this district by way of larger minimum lot sizes than residential uses

Station #2: Commercial / Industrial Districts Notes

- MU- Mixed Use
 - Most of it is in floodplain so this should be recognized in the Supplemental Requirements section ordinance
 - Note: there is a Floodplain Overlay District, which will address this
 - Move sewage treatment facility to conditional use, not permitted
- C-1 Local Commercial
 - There is too much, it will never happen
 - Commercial should stay north of Lagonda or directly adjacent to SR 18, should not extend far back from road
- Industrial overlay
 - Oil and gas should be conditional use
 - Commercial uses should be added to industrial ones – restaurant, small retail, etc.

Station #3: General Requirements / Design Standards / Special Concerns Notes

- Lighting for safety at entrances and major intersections
- No street lights or sidewalks in Franklin Manor
 - Type and intensity of lighting is important to regulate
- Gateways and landscaping and lighting and signage for entrances to subdivisions
 - Subdivisions need screening
- Sidewalks in subdivisions
 - Many people walk on roads
- 10% or some percent of open space should be required for subdivisions
- Design guidelines for commercial uses
- Commercial uses such as gas stations should have supplemental regulations to protect rural character

- Regulate number of pumps at a gas station
 - Township doesn't need a huge amount of pumps
- Landscaping and buffers for parking lots
- Signage is not currently an issues but should be clear for future development (no neon or flashing)
- Safety standards should be consistent
- Sound barriers for industrial uses
 - Compressor stations
 - Coal mining
- Guiderails installed in areas with drop-offs
 - Smooth transitions or guiderails
 - Need to be monitored / enforced
- Shared access for major routes

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.