

The Athens Township Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting December 11, 2019
6pm The Plains Public Library
Meeting Minutes

The Athens Township Zoning Commission met in regular session on December 11, 2019 at 6pm at The Plains Public Library, 14 S. Plains Rd. The Plains

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairperson Sean Jones called the Commission to order at 6pm.
Commission members Sean Jones, Brian Dearing, Rick Fernow, Ken Robinson, Michael Hornsby, and alternate Teena Thornton were in attendance. Consultant Bob Eichenberg was also present.

MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES FOR 11/20/2019

Mr. Jones motioned that the minutes for the previous meeting appeared to be in order, and for the Commission to accept the minutes as entered. Mr. Dearing abstained, having not read the minutes.
Jones: Yes; Dearing: Abstained; Fernow: Yes; Hornsby: Yes; Robinson: Yes

PUBLIC COMMENT

Two members of the public were present: Mr. Ken Gilbraith and Mr. Josh Morrison; no public comment from either.

EDEN MARKETING WEBSITE PROPOSAL

Mr. Robinson reported that the Athens Township Trustees had agreed, at their last regular meeting on December 10, to the Commission's proposal for funding of the Zoning Commission's website tab. Funding was also provided to make the entire Athens Township website mobile-friendly. The cost is \$2000. Eden Marketing will bill the Athens Township Trustees directly. Mr. Robinson will begin working with Eden Marketing after the holidays in the creation and implementation of the website, which will include training in the uploading of documents.

HOUSING INSPECTIONS

Mr. Eichenberg, having sent out emails previous to the meeting, reported that he had "serious doubts about housing inspections..." as being within the purview of the Zoning Commission. Mr. Jones didn't see any reason why it couldn't be built into the code. Mr. Eichenberg stated that zoning is more about land use and not about the structures per se. Mr. Eichenberg recommended that we ask Assistant Prosecutor Zachary Saunders if townships are empowered to do anything more beyond zoning within the constraints of the Ohio code. Mr. Dearing stated that the township is enabled to establish a fire code. Mr. Dearing felt that the position of a zoning inspector will be incentivized if the person hired can double up on their work by including housing inspections. It was agreed that Mr. Eichenberg would contact Mr. Saunders for recommendations and invite him to a zoning meeting.

Mr. Eichenberg had also sent out an email about garage sales, with an example table included to lead to discussion about the issue. Ms. Thornton said members of the public might object to someone telling them how many garage sales they could have in a given year.

REVIEW PRELIMINARY ZONING MAP AT LENGTH

Mr. Jones led a discussion about the different zones as outlined by the Commission. Mr. Jones proposed a third residential zone (R3), which would be for large apartment complexes and buildings. Mr. Fernow opined that R2 should be located next to business districts, and wondered if two R districts was enough. Mr. Jones said R2 could be duplex or triplex multiple family dwellings, while R3 could be for larger structures. Using the ARCGIS software, Mr. Jones began mapping out various areas of The Plains. Commissioners appear united in allowing commercial zoning along Route 682 and the Johnson/Connett corridor. Mr. Jones and Mr. Robinson agreed for the need to go one block further back from those streets for businesses; Rite-aid and the Methodist Church were cited as examples for the necessity of enlarging the commercial zone. Initial debate centered around the Ohio and Clinton Street area. Mr. Eichenberg cautioned that residents in the area might take offense at being in a business district or an R2. Mr. Dearing said we should look at current land use, with Mr. Fernow proposing that we could make it all R1 but non-conforming for the foreseeable future. Mr. Eichenberg said that portions of street blocks could be divided into R1 and R2. Mr. Dearing thought it would be easier to sell the plan by not dividing up streets too much; Mr. Robinson concurred.

The Zoning Commission agreed informally to look at obvious R1 districts and then branch out to potential R2s and R3s. Existing subdivisions appeared to be automatic R1s, taking in some abutting property. Shady Lane and the Valley Drive area were also seen as inherent R1s. Trailer parks were touched upon but not discussed in detail. Open spaces - including The Plains Elementary Land Lab and The Plains Park - were zoned as park districts. A spirited discussion followed, as the Commission began to formulate a map of The Plains into R1, R2 and R3 districts, taking into account the current land usage. Mr. Eichenberg said constantly revisiting the map would be wise. A potential split of business districts was proposed: B1 zones for smaller stores and businesses, with B2 zones for more sizeable development. It should be noted that this is a preliminary discussion and not a formal proposal, subject to much revision.

PUBLIC Q & A

Community member Ken Gilbraith asked about the land across Route 33 and if it was in Athens Township. Mr. Dearing explained it was partially in Dover Township. Josh Morrison wondered why that property would be labeled business. Mr. Dearing noted that the property owner was pushing for commercial development, and that being zoned for business doesn't preclude it from being used for other purposes. Mr. Morrison also asked about the entirety of Route 682 and its zoned use. Mr. Dearing explained the scope of the proposed zoned area and how we were trying to square up the plan. Lower 682 would not be in the zoned area.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:03 pm, with the next regular session scheduled for December 18, 2019.

Mr. Jones motioned; Mr. Fernow seconded.

Jones: Yes; Dearing: Yes; Fernow: Yes; Hornsby: Yes; Robinson: Yes