

**Brunswick Hills Township  
Zoning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes  
December 2, 2021**

**Call Meeting to Order**

Chair Wetterman called the Brunswick Hills Township Zoning Commission December 2, 2021 regular meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

A roll call of the board was executed.

- **Board Members in Attendance:** Patti Wetterman (Chair); Robert Norton (Vice Chair); Trica Murphy; Ed Kelly
- **Alternate Board Members in Attendance:** Barb Porter, Dean Collura
- **Board Members Not in Attendance:** Sy Mougrabi (Unexcused Absence)
- **Others in Attendance:** Evelyn Czyz, Zoning Inspector; Mary Jean Milanko, Zoning Secretary

Mr. Collura was seated to represent a full board. Mr. Norton led the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence for our military and first responders.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**1. Approval of the ZC November 4, 2021 Public Hearing Minutes / Text Amendments**

**Edits:** Mr. Norton noted a correction on page 3, second paragraph: *Mr. Collura said I don't they understood* to: I don't think they understood. **Motion:** Mrs. Murphy moved to approve the November 4, 2021 public hearing minutes on text amendments as amended. Mr. Kelly seconds. **Roll Call:** Mrs. Murphy-yes; Mr. Kelly-yes; Mr. Norton-abstain; Mr. Collura-yes; Mrs. Wetterman-yes.

**2. Approval of the ZC November 4, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Edits:** Mr. Norton noted a correction on page 3, first paragraph to add “ask” to the following sentence: Trustee Kusnerak said we will need to do a survey, but we have to ask people to be on the advisory committee first. **Motion:** Mrs. Murphy moved to approve the November 4, 2021 regular meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Kelly seconds. **Roll Call:** Mr. Norton-abstain; Mrs. Murphy-yes; Mr. Kelly-yes; Mr. Collura-yes; Mrs. Wetterman-yes.

**OLD / CONTINUED BUSINESS:**

**1. Review of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Updates**

- Board member questions /ideas for questionnaires
- Discussion of steering committee and citizen's group

Mrs. Wetterman stated in the coming year, the Zoning Commission will be involved in updating the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and asked the board for further discussion.

**Discussion:** Mr. Collura stated he went through *Appendix A - Community Survey* of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and noted a couple of things he had concerns about. Mr. Collura said question #14 asks if the minimum square footage of a home should be changed from 1250 square feet and wondered if the board would want that in a questionnaire. He said what people have now is grandfathered in, but do we want to have people think about a minimum square footage? Mrs. Czyz said yes because we do not allow anything less than the 1250 minimum square feet. She said if you start lowering that minimum square footage, then you will have a bunch of tiny houses and some of those are as small as 860 square feet. Mr. Collura asked

how you get around that with townhouses? Mrs. Czyz said because townhouses are in a building and the size is comprised of all of that – it's not just a single-family dwelling.

Mr. Collura noted *Township Services and Taxes*, question #23. which asks: *Would you be willing to pay additional taxes to: a. Purchase additional land for playgrounds; b. Sports fields and picnic areas; c. Create walking/bike/hike trails; d. Purchase land for permanent open space; e. Purchase the development rights from farm land or open space.*

Mr. Collura asked if it might be smart to add more police units and more fire/EMS units into that list. Mrs. Czyz stated I don't think the residents have that in mind, but it would be something to keep in mind as we start developing the questions. She said that the fire department is looking to put on a fourth full-time firefighter and there is a shortage of police. Mr. Collura said he was interested in seeing what percentage of the public would be willing to do something or not in improving the staff for each of those units. Mrs. Wetterman stated we will add that to the list when we start discussing it. Mr. Collura stated that the survey questions developed for the plan in 2005 were very good. Mrs. Wetterman agreed and said it was a good direction on how the residents wanted the township to grow.

Mrs. Porter referenced question #20. which asks: *Do you encourage or discourage Industrial Development* and then lists several types of industrial and manufacturing. Mrs. Porter thinks the question should be retained for the survey, however, due to our low amount of industrial zoned property, she wondered if the list of choices should be updated. Mrs. Porter also agreed with Mr. Collura on question #23. and wondered if there could be a better explanation of: *d. Purchase land for permanent open space and e. Purchase the development rights from farm land or open land.* Mrs. Porter also agreed that most of the questions are very good and are still appropriate with some updates.

Mrs. Murphy also commented on question #23. *Would you be willing to pay additional taxes for purchase of land for sports fields and picnic areas* and said I don't think we even have that in the township, so we wouldn't want to say "purchase land" for sports fields and picnic areas. Mrs. Czyz stated we do have a picnic area, Plum Creek, but it owned by the Park District. She stated we also have Princess Ledges.

Mrs. Murphy noted question #24. a. and b. that talks about the *view of the future balance of land use/zoning: a. maintain the current zoning and land use, and would accept fewer Township services to maintain current tax levels. b. maintain the current zoning and land use, and would pay higher taxes if needed to maintain current Township services.*

Mrs. Murphy said this question ties into Mr. Collura's comments on question #23. and said we should look at both of those questions together when formulating survey questions. Mr. Collura said when I saw the question, I thought there would be some benefit of splitting fire/EMS, police and maybe even road services as a topic just to see where the attitudes are. He said obviously on the last tax levy we know where the attitude is on one of those topics currently, but that could change.

Mr. Norton said I don't agree with any of it because right now my tax rate is out of this world and they keep bumping it up for schools, etc. and if you keep raising taxes, you are going to push me out and a lot of people out of the township. He said our older generation does not want to keep paying all of these taxes. Mr. Norton stated he has been in the township since 1959 and since his dad built his house, our property taxes have tripled in the same house with the same buildings on the same lot and I have nothing to show for it. Ms. Czyz noted that Brunswick Hills Township is one of the highest taxed communities in the county. Other board members agreed. Mr. Norton stated I am not against helping the police department as I am one hundred percent behind the police, but we just can't keep asking people to raise taxes.

Mr. Norton said and then we have these young people with children moving into the developments that want to raise taxes so they can have playgrounds for their kids, but they are not just the ones paying for

their playgrounds, we all are paying for these playgrounds. The city people who move here because it is too crowded want to come to us to build developments and then they want to push the city back on us. He said that is not the reason why we moved here and if this is how it is going to go, I will leave because I cannot see spending \$7,000 a year on taxes just to live where I live. Mr. Norton said that people who live on a fixed income cannot afford it so we are going to be pushing people out and the people who moved here originally.

Mr. Norton said when his father bought the property you had to have a certain amount of land, but now you look across the street and there are all of these developments with tiny lots. Mr. Collura stated the questions on taxes can be either yes or no choices. Mr. Collura agreed with Mr. Norton's comments and said we've been out here since 1978 and I'm retired, but I also look at what we pay overall for property taxes and close to 75% of it is all for schools and what the township is trying to live on for services makes it pretty hard pressed. Mr. Norton agreed that the money for township services is not much.

Mrs. Porter agreed with Mr. Norton's comments on taxes and said I've been here since 1966 and it's coming to the point with taxes where I am going to have to leave too because it is getting tough. Mrs. Wetterman said I've been here since 1955 and watched the prices, the taxes, all of the building, etc. and its discouraging. Mrs. Wetterman said these are questions that we have to be ready to discuss when we open this up to the public.

Mr. Norton said I work in construction and help build schools. He said repeatedly the schools ask for taxes to build the buildings and then when it comes time to open the schools, they say they don't have any money to operate them and then they say if you don't raise the taxes, we will take away busing, sports, etc. He said they can put a tax levy on the ballot several times for us to say yes, so why can't we put it back on to say, no, we don't want it. Once it's approved, we are stuck.

Mrs. Czyz also referenced question # 23. that asks about the purchase of land for playgrounds and said we got a grant to build playgrounds and the people in that particular subdivision said we don't want that, we don't want the noise, etc., but yet they want a place for their kids to play soccer. Mr. Norton noted an article he read on playgrounds that the big kids won't let the little kids play there, so it's a problem. Mrs. Wetterman said some of the homeowner associations, like Autumnwood, have torn down their playgrounds for that particular reason. Mrs. Czyz said the township could make them erect that again because that was part of the plan agreement to have tot lots.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Board of Trustees Letter to the Zoning Commission on Text Amendments**

Mrs. Wetterman read the letter dated December 1, 2021 from the Board of Trustees to the Zoning Commission into the record (Attachment 1):

The letter states the Board of Trustees held a public hearing on the proposed text amendments on November 23, 2021. Subsequently the recommendations were approved except for the deck definition. There was a question raised regarding the line "adjacent to the principal building" and referenced an example of a property owner with a few acres might want a "deck" near the back portion of their property, perhaps the wooded area and the current definition does not allow that. The Board of Trustees decided to send the definition of the deck back to the Zoning Commission for further review.

The letter further states that after doing more research and a conversation with legal counsel, it looks like our definition of a "structure" would cover the question of "adjacent to the principal

building”. The Zoning Commission must hold a public hearing and send the recommendation back to the Trustees for consideration. Signed: Christina Kusnerak, Trustee Zoning Liaison.

Chair Wetterman said the procedure is that we start all over with the definition of a deck, discuss it and send the revised definition back to the Planning Commission and legal counsel for their comments. The ZC will then have a public hearing and send the final recommendation to the Board of Trustees for their consideration.

**MOTION TO TABLE DECK DEFINITION:** Mr. Kelly moved that the definition of a deck be tabled to the first meeting of the Zoning Commission on Thursday, January 6, 2022. Mr. Norton seconds. **Roll Call:** Mrs. Murphy-yes; Mr. Norton-yes; Mr. Kelly-yes; Mr. Collura-yes; Mrs. Wetterman-yes.

**ADDITIONAL BUSINESS:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE:** Thursday, January 6, 2022 @ 7 p.m.

1. Organizational Meeting

- Nomination of Chair and Vice Chair / Review and adopt Bylaws

2. Regular Meeting

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Mr. Norton moved to adjourn the December 2, 2021 meeting. Mr. Kelly seconds. **Roll Call:** All in favor to adjourn. Meeting officially adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Jean Milanko, Zoning Secretary

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Zoning Commission Chair

Date