

Chester Township Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes

| Wednesday, January 17, 2024 7:00 PM |

Chester Town Hall

Audio Recording Available

Meeting Called to Order by Mr. Oswick at: 7:00 pm

Members present: Mr. Chess, Mr. Kats, Mr. Lauro, Mr. Oswick, Mr. Peto

Members absent: --

Admin present: Ms. McCarthy

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Oswick led the Committee in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes of January 3, 2024 as presented.
Moved by Mr. Peto; Seconded by Mr. Lauro
Mr. Chess/yes; Mr. Kats/yes; Mr. Lauro/yes; Mr. Oswick/yes; Mr. Peto/yes

Withdrawn Parks Amendment

Recent Parks amendment withdrawn. Still need to look to identify Parks as a Zoning District and to fall back on our research.

Attached Garages

Mr. Peto saw no reason to look at attached garage size to a home. Are we doing this because some residents feel one of our residents has built a structure that is too large? That property owner has done everything within guidelines.

Mr. Oswick said we still need to look at some of the legitimate loopholes in the Zoning Resolution. He cited several examples of where this may be a problem.

Mr. Lauro saw no reason to limit anyone on the size of the attachment to a home if it falls into the set regulations.

Mr. Chess was concerned about landscaping around the structure. There are no current landscaping restrictions able to be implemented.

Board is concerned to not act just because of some limited resident concerns. Rather look at the concerns of the larger community.

Question was presented on the number of parcels that may be affected. This exercise was done for the accessory buildings amendment and looking at how many parcels could be affected.

Mr. Radtke presented the possibility of documenting the issues that were identified. Detailing how you as a Board feel about this situation. Details supporting that decision would be helpful. Why you are or are not doing something. The Board agreed with this idea.

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Mr. Lauro suggested capturing this information in the meeting minutes. The group discussed this, the consensus was this and here is why.

Mr. Kats suggested the additional document could help as we could put together all those sheets of topics and refer to old information.

Mr. Chess suggested when we see something so unusual, like the large attached garage, we should be doing research. We should at least look at a couple of other townships. Mr. Chess agreed to do some of this research and bring to the next meeting. Perhaps talk to the Planning Commission and possibly Bainbridge Township.

Mr. Lauro was concerned we are trying to control something that doesn't need to be controlled. The property in question did everything within guidelines.

Mr. Oswick felt that we as a group should present an informed response on why we did or did not do something. Next meeting, we'll use the maps we used last time, and we'll finalize this document stating why we made this recommendation. If it is still insisted to be pursued, then so be it.

Signage

Mr. Peto told the group about his discussion with TJ from Boardman who runs Planning and Zoning for Boardman. There are over 11,000 registered businesses in Boardman. Their signage will be very different than ours. I think we would be better off comparing our Zoning Resolution to Bainbridge Twp., rather than Boardman. We should also cherry pick from Geauga Model Zoning.

Mr. Chess agreed. He listed out many of the similarities of Chester and Bainbridge.

Mr. Oswick said, while comparing the two similar communities we could start with looking at electronic signage and putting that in our Zoning Resolution. Then you would start putting in other sections.

Ms. Cotman suggested taking one meeting and just reading the signage section of the Chester Zoning Resolution. After that, go to the Geauga Model Zoning.

Mr. Oswick suggested working with smaller parts of the signage section of the ZR. This would enable quicker progress through the signage section. If a "large" amendment, with many changes is presented, the entire proposed amendment could come to a stop because of one small section.

Group agreed that the number one request/concern for signage would be electronic signage. Geauga County Model Zoning has already done that.

Mr. Oswick said that the Geauga County Model Zoning could be swapped out for the entire Chester Twp. Zoning Resolution.

Mr. Radtke said that electronic, changeable signs for monument signs is probably the number one issue in this township.

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Ms. McCarthy distributed a copy for review of a possible change to the electronic signage section of the Zoning Resolution prepared by the Chester Zoning Inspector, Asst. Zoning Inspector and herself. Group reviewed potential commercial properties (with 400' frontage) that could be affected by adding a change to the Zoning Resolution. It was later determined that every Commercial site may have a monument sign regardless of frontage per Section 9.06.0 A-2.

Mr. Chess reinforced the fact that not every property in the Commercial District should be able to have an electronic sign.

Typical costs of electrical signs was discussed. Mr. Peto suggested inexpensive ones can be bought from China for \$3,000. His 5' and 3' sign for his business is \$15,000. It all depends on where you source it from. Mr. Radtke asked what the typical business owner might be willing to spend.

Mr. Chess talked about research needing to be done. Mr. Oswick asked what would stop a business from putting up an electronic sign. Group discussion continued. Mr. Oswick also reminded the group that the ORC must be taken into account as well. Another legal question is, can we regulate where a sign goes for electronic signage.

Do we know how many monument signs exist in the township right now? Mr. Chess suggested we may want to have existing signs grandfathered in. Mr. Oswick said, we can only regulate what the ORC allows us to regulate. It's mostly setbacks, lumens and how many times it can flash.

Mr. Chess agreed he will contact Bainbridge and see how they do electronic signs. He also agreed he would drive down Mayfield Rd and determine how many monument signs are there. Mr. Radtke reminded the group that we also need to look at unanticipated consequences of these signs.

Of the items we are looking at, Mr. Oswick felt that looking at electronic signs made the most sense. He will look up what the ORC has to say about this.

Ms. Cotman suggested driving through a city that allows electronic signage. She didn't feel it would bother passers by as much as the groups thinks it will. She encouraged the board to keep an open mind.

Mr. Peto brought up that not having electronic signage is actually dangerous. People slowing down to look at small, poorly designed monument signs that are "too busy" can actually cause them to be rear ended.

Mr. Peto also felt that we may have to look at businesses in the Industrial District. Examples of businesses there that have mentioned they need electronic signs was given.

Future follow up on signs:

- Mr. Oswick will look up the ORC and their regulations on signage

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- Mr. Chess will drive thru Bainbridge to see what type of electronic signs they have.

Parks

Mr. Peto asked why the recently proposed Parks Amendment was withdrawn. Ms. McCarthy said it was because of the missing, accompanying map. The group again asked where the original document came from. Mr. Oswick affirmed that no one was actually against Parks, just wanted to have more history about why it was coming up.

Pool Covers

Mr. Oswick summarized the Zoning Commission had already looked at this and it is in the Zoning Resolution that a 4' fence is required. If a resident doesn't like that, they should just go to the BZA.

Mr. Radtke asked how many requests Zoning has received for just pool covers. If the answer is only two, then is it worth looking at this? Does the problem really exist?

Mr. Chess asked how we complete this. Mr. Radtke suggested filling out the form, explaining the situation, the lack of requests and why we're not doing it. Then the ball is in someone else's court.

The board agreed they will complete this form and move pool covers forward as something they will not be looking at.

Mr. Oswick summarized that we will be looking at signage first. Then we'll do our homework for the garages and pull the information.

We'll complete the paperwork for the pool covers and then move forward to the Board of Trustees.

We're not making a decision on Parks right now. We're not against it, just not going to look at it right now.

Meeting Called to Close at: 8:33 pm

Approved by:

Chester Township Zoning Commission February 7, 2024

Final Review by: _____
Jon Oswick, Chair