

**BENNER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
July 24, 2008**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Benner Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Robert Fugate at the Benner Township Municipal Building.

**ATTENDANCE**

Members present: Robert Fugate, Nate Campbell, Genny Robine, Jim Swartzell, and Dave Jackson. Members absent: Jim Swartzell and Joe Shultz. Also attending was Renee Swancer, Zoning Officer and Larry Jodon. Others present: Robert Szeyller, David Flynn, Ed Dunkelbarger, Ray Regan, Chuck Gambone, Tom Songer, Tom Brewster, Jacqueline Hall, Robert Hall MD, Howard Grove, Gary Sweeney, Paul Hartle, Paul Tomco, Jesse Schaeffer, Gerald Rogers, Denny Krout, Leo Corl, Everet Spicer, Carol Krout-Shuey, Bernard Corl and Kathy Evey.

**MINUTES**

The minutes from the July 10, 2008 meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Jackson moved the approval of the minutes. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion.

Vote: Mr. Swartzell: yes                      Mr. Fugate: yes                      Mrs. Robine: yes                      Mr. Jackson - yes  
      Mr. Shultz: absent                      Mr. Campbell: yes

**PERSONS TO ADDRESS THE BOARD**

Conditional Use Request - Nittany Glen for sales and maintenance office: Mr. Ray Regan from Penn Terra Engineering was present to discuss the conditional use request. Nittany Glen three years ago applied for a temporary permit for the sales and maintenance office currently used. The three year period is about to expire and Nittany Glen is requesting to extend this period. Mr. Fugate raised his concerns of having an "open-ended" timeframe for use of the maintenance and sales office. Mr. Sweeney indicated he could anticipate a 7 to 10 year timeframe would be more than sufficient since a permanent structure is planned in another phase of the project. With no other concerns, Mr. Campbell moved to recommend approval to the Supervisors with a seven year stipulation on the office. Mr. Jackson seconded the motion.

Vote: Mr. Swartzell: yes                      Mr. Fugate: yes                      Mrs. Robine: yes                      Mr. Jackson - yes  
      Mr. Shultz: absent                      Mr. Campbell: yes

**NEW BUSINESS**

Centre Peace: Mr. Tom Songer, Mr. Tom Brewsters—Centre Peace Executive Director and Chuck Gambone were present to discuss Centre Peace's desire to open a halfway house in the recently acquired Miller property directly behind the existing Centre Peace facility. The home has been used as a residence until several months ago. Centre Peace is looking into the possibility of opening a halfway house within it. The halfway house would be used for transitional housing for inmates released from the Centre County Prison. Centre Peace would like to have six individuals living in the home along with a resident manager. A small rent fee would be collected. These individuals could live in the home up to six months until they are "back on their feet." Mr. Swartzell asked how will the halfway house be funded? Mr. Brewster indicated with funds generated through Centre Peace. Mr. Swartzell stated that with his involvement with the church, the church provides funding to halfway houses in Erie and Harrisburg and Mr. Swartzell understands the "need" for this type of housing. Mr. Swartzell is supportive to the methodology of making this happen. Mr. Fugate noted the zoning in the General Commercial is not supportive to this type of use. Mr. Songer indicated he is reviewing the current zoning to see if halfway houses are permitted in

single family homes. Mr. Songer recommended to the Commission, halfway house could be listed as "conditional use." Ms. Robine noted methadone clinics are listed in the light industrial zone in the proposed zoning ordinance.

Mr. Fugate stated Centre Peace should demonstrate the following to the Board: (1) open with the residents in the neighborhood about Centre Peace's intentions; (2) residents residing in the halfway house should be "local"; (3) security plan prepared; and (4) demonstrate the "need" in the area.

Mr. Fugate asked about the timeframe Centre Peace has, and recommended soliciting support from the County Commissioners. Mr. Brewster indicated an October/November timeframe. Mr. Fugate asked Mrs. Swancer to discuss this use with our zoning consultant.

Benner Commerce Park Planning Module: This item was tabled.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Proposed Zoning Ordinance**

Regional Commercial: The Commission acknowledged the letter of July 23 from Mark Holdren regarding the College Township's comments on the regional commercial zone. The Commission asked these comments be forwarded Mr. Roth for review.

Agricultural Clustering: The agricultural clustering was discussed with residents and the Commission. Mr. Flynn and Mr. Dunkelbarger presented documentation on the Patton Township agricultural clustering regulations and asked the Planning Commission review it for this is what the farmers would like to see for Benner Township. Mr. Swartzell reviewed the comparison chart prepared by Ms. Swancer showing the differences between the Patton Township and Benner Township regulations. It was indicated that the Patton Township regulations require "permanent reservation" of the open areas and the proposed Benner Township regulations do not. Mr. Flynn indicated the farmers like the Patton Township regulations, but do not want the open area to be permanently reserved. Mr. Fugate indicated the Commission would review the documentation and forward it on to our consultant for review and recommendation.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Swartzell brought the Commission up to date on the Clair driveway situation.

## **ADJOURN**

With all business complete, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Renee Swancer, Zoning Officer