

**WRIGHTSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING OF NOVEMBER 9, 2006**

The Wrightstown Township Planning Commission met on Thursday, November 9, 2006 in the Community Room of the Village Library, 727 Penns Park Road, Wrightstown, PA. In attendance and voting were: Frank Davis, Chair; Dr. Joseph Conroy, John Fowler, Dr. Ann Mark, William Perry, James A. Peruto, and Lary Whalen, Members. Also in attendance were: Township Engineer Mario Canales of Pickering Corts and Summerson, Inc., Township Planner Judith Stern Goldstein of Boucher and James, Inc. and Township Supervisor Chester Pogonowski.

Call to Order: Mr. Davis called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: *Mr. Whalen moved to accept the Minutes of October 26, 2006. Mr. Fowler seconded and the motion passed 6-0-1, with Dr. Mark abstaining.*

JMZO – Wineries and Vineyards: Mr. Davis had expected to review this ordinance, however members were not provided with the most recent revisions. Discussion was tabled.

JMZO 2006-04 – Livestock and Poultry: Resident Robin Hoy was in attendance to discuss suggested changes she would like to recommend to the Amendment revised on October 5, 2006. She had provided written comments to the Amendment in advance of the meeting.

Dr. Conroy pointed to page 3, item six, and found the wording confusing. He said that as written, he was not sure how many animals could be kept in combination. As written, he took it to mean the total maximum of grazing plus the maximum of non-grazing.

The Members discussed the use of the word “pasture” in describing the size of parcels. Mr. Pogonowski was very concerned that requiring acreage of pasture would be difficult to enforce. Information about parcel size is available to codes officers through zoning maps, however measuring the portion of a lot to determine the size of a pasture would be difficult.

Ms. Goldstein said that by requiring three acres of pasture, three acre lots could not have livestock at all. This might be considered too restrictive. Although Ms. Hoy said that it would be easy to measure the size of a pasture by counting fence posts, Ms. Goldstein disagreed.

The Commission discussed the meaning of a “companion” animal. The Ordinance did not clearly describe whether the “companion” referred to companionship to a human or to another animal. There was a question as to whether a companion to a human would be a pet, whether a certified working companion, such as a trained guide animal, could be restricted by the Ordinance at all. Mr. Perry said that in some instances ponies are kept as companions to thoroughbred horses.

Ms. Hoy made the suggestion that the word “unit” be used to replace the word “head” in determining the number of grazing and non-grazing animals permitted on a parcel. She said that agricultural colleges and the Penn State Cooperative Extension use this terminology. A unit of livestock would equal 1000 pounds of animal, or one horse or cow, five sheep or six goats. A unit of poultry would equal 10 pounds of poultry or one chicken.

Mr. Peruto said that he thought it would be difficult to enforce the Ordinance if weight were used. Code Enforcement officers are not equipped to weigh, or estimate the weight of animals. He was also concerned about a weight limitation for poultry.

Ms. Goldstein agreed with Mr. Peruto. She noted that by including a weight, or a limit for certain animals, there is too much room for interpretation. It is possible for residents to contest a determination of “one unit” in the case of lighter weight animals, for example if a resident had a small horse weighing 800 pounds, it could be argued that the resident would be entitled to an additional 200 pounds of goats.

Mr. Perry said that he would like the Ordinance to remain lenient enough to encourage the use of smaller parcels for sustainable agriculture.

The Commission discussed other ways to word the Ordinance to be more flexible in the keeping of smaller animals. Mr. Conroy suggested preparing a more extensive list of permitted animals, expanding on the “one horse equals five sheep equals six goats” formula. He suggested expanding the definitions of poultry as well, with all animals not specifically listed equaling one head.

Referring to poultry, Dr. Mark suggested that all poultry must be fenced, or otherwise contained.

The Commission discussed whether to require that fencing be inside the property line by a number of feet. Ms. Goldstein pointed out that if fencing is ten feet inside the property line, owners lose a great deal of land, plus create areas between fences that become neglected.

Ms. Hoy suggested that the numbers for poultry be increased if the poultry is confined. She suggested 100 chickens per acre for lots between three and ten acres.

Mr. Peruto said that he has concerns about permitting so many chickens on smaller lots. He noted that his own home and his neighbors’ homes are on lots of about four acres, but are narrow, so that houses are not far apart. Hundreds of chickens, even confined, would be very offensive.

After further discussion the Commission agreed that 25 chickens per acre, with 25 for the first three acres, and 25 for each additional acre, for a total of 200 chickens on ten acres would be a reasonable number. Pet chickens would be excluded from the calculations.

Mr. Davis suggested that Ms. Hoy work with Mr. Pogonowski on an Ordinance that would take into account the Commission’s concerns about the use of the words “unit” and “pasture” and the confining of chickens. The Commission agreed that a list of various specific livestock animals to be included as equaling “one head” should be prepared, with all animals not specifically listed to equal one head. This Ordinance could be presented to the Board of Supervisors without further Planning Commission review.

JMZO 2006-08 – Lighting: The Commission discussed an appropriate height limit, reviewing the height on a number of newer fixtures throughout the Township.

Mr. Whalen suggested that at some later date the Commission should have a presentation on lighting by an engineer.

Mr. Fowler moved to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve JMZO 2008-06, Lighting, with the condition that in Section B, the height is limited to 20 feet. Dr. Mark seconded and the motion passed 6-0.

JMZO 2006-19 – CM Revisions: The Members briefly discussed the removal of “places of worship”.

Mr. Fowler moved to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve JMZO 2006-19, CM Revisions. Dr. Mark seconded and the motion passed 6-0

JMZO 2006-20 – Zoning Map Change QA to QA-A and Fireworks: *Mr. Whalen moved to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve JMZO 2006-20, Zoning Map Change QA to QA-A and Fireworks. Mr. Fowler seconded and the motion passed 6-0.*

Mr. Fowler moved to adjourn at 10:30PM. Dr. Mark seconded and the motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted:

**Mary Donaldson
Recording Secretary**