

**EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2011**

A meeting of the East Norriton Township Planning Commission was held at the East Norriton Township Building, 2501 Stanbridge Street in East Norriton, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, June 15, 2011. Mr. Tornetta called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Attending were East Norriton Township Planning Commission members Keith Tornetta, Judith Belkowski, Frank Brouse, William Griffin, Kevin McDevitt, Jeffrey Moller, Robert Schottmiller and Kristl Wiernicki. Zoning Officer, Bryan Bortnichak and Township Planner, E. Van Rieker were also in attendance.

1. Approve Minutes of the May 18, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting:

Mr. Tornetta made a motion to approve the May 18, 2011 meeting minutes. Mrs. Wiernicki seconded the motion and the motion was passed 8 – 0.

2. Review Zoning Text Amendment

Zoning Officer, Bryan Bortnichak reviewed the background on the proposed curative amendment explaining that M.C. Outdoors would like to put up billboards in East Norriton Township and filed a validity challenge alleging that the Township's Zoning Ordinance does not allow billboards. Mr. Bortnichak stated that billboards are a recognized use and that the Township has to provide for them.

The Township's current ordinance limits billboards to sixteen (16) square feet in area and allows them only in the Industrial District. The Board of Supervisors has acknowledged that a sixteen (16) square foot billboard is not viable billboard size for someone interested in displaying commercial advertising. The proposed curative amendment acts to fix the size problem by allowing for larger billboards, and it also proposes other limitations and requirements that Township staff believe are appropriate. There are three billboards being proposed in the Eastern end of the Township by M.C. Outdoors through the validity challenge. The Township has 180 days from when the Board of Supervisors declared a portion of our ordinance invalid to adopt the curative amendment which is before the Planning Commission tonight.

Mr. Bortnichak reviewed the proposed changes to the current ordinance. The amendment would provide a definition of "Billboard" – A sign that directs attention to a business, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold or offered at a location other than the premises.

Mr. Moller questioned the placement location of the proposed billboards via the validity challenge. Mr. Bortnichak stated that the billboards sought through the validity challenge are proposed for DeKalb Pike opposite McDonalds, for Germantown Pike near Olympia Pizza and another near Hassan's Auto Repair on Germantown Pike. Mr. Moller asked about the proposed signage size. Mr. Bortnichak stated the proposed signs are 672 square feet in size.

Mr. Bortnichak reviewed that the Township curative amendment will require that a billboard be installed on properties at least one acre in size and permits them only on properties in the Industrial District with frontage on either Germantown Pike or Trooper Road. These locations were chosen in part because they are along arterial roadways and because the existing ordinance also allows billboards in the Industrial zoning district. Mr. Rieker reviewed the process that staff went through to come up with these proposed changes to the ordinance and noted that areas in the Industrial District have less distractions to drivers than areas in the commercial center of East Norriton Township. The Industrial District has enough opportunities for placement of the billboards.

With regard to size, no billboard may have more than two sign faces and neither face may exceed two hundred (200) square feet in area. Mr. Bortnichak advised that this size was selected in part because of the lower vehicle speeds on local arterial roads as opposed to highway speeds which necessitate larger billboards and because they would be more in scale with the built environment of Trooper Road and Germantown Pike. As a means of comparison, Mr. Rieker made reference to the sign in front of Plymouth Meeting Mall which is approximately 180 square feet. Mr. Rieker also noted that the curative amendment would limit the height of billboards to twenty-five (25) feet as measured from the elevation of the centerline of the roadway in front of the billboard.

Billboards would have to be set back twenty five (25) feet from any ultimate right-of-way. In order to protect existing residential districts which are near the Industrial zoning district, no billboard may be erected within two hundred (200) feet of the perimeter of an AR, BR, BR-1, or CR Residential District. In order to prevent too many billboards from being installed along Trooper Road and Germantown Pike, no billboard may be installed within five hundred (500) feet of any other billboard structure. Mr. Rieker reviewed the possibility of sign placement on Trooper Road and Germantown Pike with the proposed restrictions and noted that one billboard sign could be installed on Trooper Road, three or four along Germantown Pike near Foundry Road and one or two on Germantown Pike near Felton Road.

Mr. Bortnichak reviewed that the message of the billboard shall not change more frequently than once per thirty (30) seconds and the change shall be instantaneous. These limitations are proposed so as to limit distraction created by the billboard signs to motorists. Mr. Rieker made reference again to the digital billboard sign at the Plymouth Meeting Mall and noted that Plymouth permits the sign to change only once every 60 seconds. Township staff feels that thirty (30) seconds is appropriate for the locations

where the billboards would be permitted under the proposed ordinance considering the speeds, slope of road and roadway distractions.

A requirement that no image may project beyond the perimeter of the billboard face is proposed to limit the display too strictly within the two hundred (200) square foot area. Staff is aware of billboards where a portion of the image projects beyond the billboard edge such as smoke rising above a billboard which is novel and therefore cause a motorist to look at it too often or for too long to drive safely. A requirement concerning pixel pitch or equivalent resolution being not greater than twelve (12) millimeters is proposed to provide as clear an image as possible, again to limit distraction to motorists.

A requirement that billboards automatically adjust brilliance levels based on ambient light conditions is proposed because a brilliance level that would be appropriate for a sunny day would not be appropriate for a cloudy and overcast day or during night time hours when an extremely bright sign face could be a distraction to drivers. A requirement that no sign image shall be interactive, display interactive messages or 3-dimensional images or produce sound is proposed, again so that the billboard display is not a distraction to drivers.

Mr. Bortnichak reviewed similar restrictions and prohibition for all signs, billboards and others alike, that are proposed as part of the curative amendment.

Mr. Tornetta asked about the two hundred (200) square feet and if there is a limit to the shape of the sign. Mr. Bortnichak stated that there was no shape requirement to the two hundred (200) square feet – a billboard could take any shape as long as it meets the 200 square feet and twenty five (25) foot height limitations. Mr. Bortnichak described how staff did discuss maximum length requirements but decided against it. Mr. Tornetta asked about the about the resolution of not greater than twelve (12) millimeters. Mr. Bortnichak reviewed the spacing between the LED's noting that the tighter the LED spacing, the clearer the image, and the less time that a driver would need to look at the sign to understand the message displayed.

Mr. Moller asked if the Township can earn money from the placement of billboards. Mr. Rieker stated that if the Township owned the property on which the sign would be installed. Mr. Bortnichak added that a sign permit fee is required, but that there would be no annual fee or tax levied upon the billboard. Mr. McDevitt asked if the billboard would give any value to the property. Mr. Bortnichak will verify the process with the County and noted that any value added to a property by the billboard may be offset by reduced property values of properties surrounding the billboard.

Mrs. Belkowski asked about the maintenance of the billboard and what if the billboard is abandoned. Mr. Bortnichak reviewed that the billboards that have digital display would just go blank if not maintained as opposed to a non-digital billboard which may fade or fall into disrepair over time if the message is not kept current.

Mrs. Wiernicki asked if the Township can stipulate or limit the messages or types of advertising. Mr. Rieker noted that staff believes that any regulation of the messaging may give rise to constitutional issues and that the Code should be content neutral. Mr. Bortnichak noted reviewed that the Township cannot restrict the messaging – if a service or business is legal, it can be advertised on a billboard. A discussion ensued concerning undesirable uses such as casinos that may seek to advertize in East Norriton Township.

There being no further comments, Chairman Tornetta made a motion for recommendation of approval to the Board of Supervisors for Ordinance No. 538. The motion was seconded by Mr. Schottmiller and passed 8 – 0.

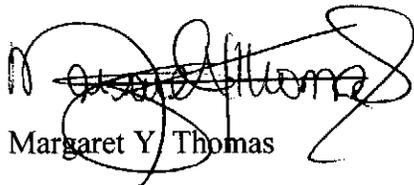
3. Other Business

Planning Commission members reviewed the construction and land development update provided by Mr. Bortnichak.

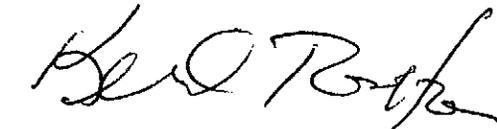
4. Adjournment:

Mr. Tornetta made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Schottmiller and passed 8 – 0. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Y. Thomas



Keith Tornetta
Chairman