

## Conestoga Township Planning Commission Minutes: April 24, 2023

**Present:** Scott Kriner, Ron Wagner, Wes Bruckno

**Others:** See attached attendance sheet

**Call to Order:** 7:00 pm

**New Business (there was no old business):**

### **Zoning Map:**

Wes briefly explained some of the background regarding the circumstances surrounding the zoning map. Briefly, it appears that the zoning map amendments that were discussed circa 2010 that were approved by the Supervisors at that time apparently were not properly adopted; therefore, the updated zoning map did not take effect and the previous map of circa 2007 is still currently in effect.

### **Comments and recommendations from the public:**

Residents and property owners offered their comments and recommendations.

**Follin Smith:** There was a 14-year span whereby people relied on the zoning map that they thought was updated in 2010. Does a procedural error during the adoption process outweigh the decisions that were made since that time? Ms Smith recommends that the Supervisors propose a curative amendment to officially adopt the map of circa 2010.

**Carol Clancy:** The Supervisors took a legal position during 2008-2009 when they approved the updated zoning map. The procedural error should not make the updated map invalid. We are all operating under the 2010 map. She is not asking for a change.

**Jeff Swinehart, President, Lancaster Farmland Trust.** Mr Swinehart presented a map and list showing the permanently preserved farms in the Township, with approximately 1000 acres and 26 farms. The Ag Board requires that preserved parcels be zoned Agricultural. He recommended that the Township consider the amount of preserved farmland and the zoning map should be consistent. He noted that Ag zoning minimizes confusion and risk. (The map and list are attached to these minutes).

**Tom Grassel, Jr.** Mr Grassel doesn't want Conestoga to be developed as a metropolis. Property owners always have the option to ask for their zoning designations to be changed. Owners should have a choice of their zoning. How much development has occurred in the Township's southern end to warrant a zoning change?

**Bob Hershey.** The Township Comprehensive Plan of 2002 put lots of land south of Main Street in the Rural Conservation land use category. Later recommendations were to change it to Ag. Lots of land in the RC category are no good for Ag use. Lots are comprised of sand (i.e., Sand Hill Road) and only good for hay, which does not provide much value. We should keep in mind that some of the farms are not really farmable. Mr Hershey wants to retain the opportunity for the best use of these lands, while

controlling growth because controlled growth is good to maintain the tax base. Mr Hershey thinks it was a mistake to change the RC to Ag. Mr Hershey also stated that his comments were as a citizen and he was not speaking on behalf of the Board of Supervisors.

Also, Mr Hershey recommended that we should ask people if they are affected by the map change; they should not have their properties devalued. We should not have a “blanket” zoning. The issue of the tax assessment of RC land should also be considered.

**Steve Rice.** Mr Rice said that everybody who bought or sold property under the old zoning map was affected more fairly. The old map should stand.

**John Wiker.** If we change zoning from RC to Ag, property values will go down. Zoning can always be changed later. Mr Wiker wants to stay in the RC zone. It will be easy to go from RC- to Ag later.

**Bill Stull.** Dollars and cents are on the table. Shouldn't ag zoning be for agricultural land? Ag land should be tillable. We should also have planned growth.

**Motions for approval:**

First Motion by Wes: **To recommend to the Supervisors that the Township take no action on the zoning map issue, meaning that the zoning map of circa 2007 will not be amended.**

Second: **This motion did not receive a second.**

Discussion: **No discussion; the motion died for lack of a second.**

Second Motion by Wes: **To request the Supervisors to instruct the Township Engineer to provide to the Planning Commission at least three copies of the zoning map showing property lines for further review and potential recommendation for zoning changes, with the intent of more accurately reflecting soil types and slopes, agricultural conservation easements, and other factors that will make the zoning map more accurately reflect the objective physical conditions of the lands and reflect the Township's policies and resident's preferences and concerns.**

Second: **Second by Ron.**

Discussion: **No further discussion.**

Vote: **Motion approved 3-0-0**

Motion by Wes to adjourn at 8:00 pm, Second by Scott; approved 3-0-0.



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