

A public hearing before Bloomsburg Town Council was held Monday, August 23, 2010, beginning at 6:05 p.m. in Council Chambers, Town Hall, 301 East Second Street, Bloomsburg, PA. Present were Mayor Dan Knorr; Council Members Diane Levan, Paul Kinney, Sylvia Costa, Kathy Shepperson, W. Carey Howell and William Kreisher; Code Enforcement/Zoning/ Planning Officer Ed Fegley; Town Administrator Carol Mas and Solicitor Jack Mihalik.

PUBLIC HEARING – REZONING REQUEST FOR BLOOMSBURG MILLS PROPERTY – SIXTH AND WEST STREETS

Bloomsburg Town Council held a Public Hearing at 6:05 p.m. concerning a request by Matthew Zoppetti to rezone the former Bloomsburg Mills property to a Business Campus District.

Solicitor Mihalik opened by defining the public hearing as a meeting for developers and Town Council to discuss the proposal. There is no time limit for council to make a decision. He stated the definition as proposed for light industrial was dangerous and read Scott Township's definition. He did not believe the definition changes E. Fegley proposed were substantial in nature so the ordinance would not have to be re-advertised if the changes were accepted.

Mr. Zoppetti's attorney, Thomas Leipold, began by addressing the 2009 Comprehensive Plan that mentions a business campus district within Bloomsburg, including this property, with mixed uses, such as residential, light industrial and commercial. He did say that there are areas within the property that would remain as currently zoned.

Matthew Zoppetti stated that he is leasing warehouse space to Reiter Automotive. There are gas lines at the property which could be used for fuel cell technology in the future. He has had discussions with a life care facility to locate here and bring up to 100 jobs as well. He reiterated that he has no plans for student housing as it is currently defined.

Gregg Wirth, Bloomsburg Planning Commission member, made Council aware that Mr. Zoppetti could rent to one (1) student per unit. Solicitor Mihalik cautioned that not allowing a student to rent a unit at this facility would be close to illegal. The town cannot be exclusionary. Mr. Mihalik told Council they could try and exclude all students from the rental units and then see if anyone were to challenge the ordinance in court. D. Levan mentioned that some students could be older individuals returning for an undergraduate degree.

Steve Coladonato, 210 West Third Street, knew of communities that set an age limit of 50 or older for renters at their developments. Attorney Leipold believed that was at the developers request and not set by ordinance.

Barry Thorne, Bloomsburg Planning Commission member, said he voted against Mr. Zoppetti's proposal when it came before the Commission. He ran the numbers and could see Mr. Zoppetti renting to students if he could not fill the units with seniors.

Greg Gregory, 514 Jefferson Street, asked if a traffic study had been completed. The Mayor did not believe so but does not believe there will be any more traffic than there was when Bloomsburg Mills was at its peak. G. Wirth explained that a traffic study would not come into play until the developer submitted plans for the project. Mr. Wirth commended Mr. Zoppetti for working diligently with the Planning Commission and taking students off the table.

Patricia Roadarmel, 539 Market Street, believes Council should pursue not allowing any students at this property since Solicitor Mihalik did not believe it was completely illegal. Ms. Roadarmel does not believe that Mr. Zoppetti can be trusted since his background is in student housing. Mr. Zoppetti responded by listing other projects he has done that

does not involve student housing. Ms. Roadarmel also expressed her concern about the activity this project will bring around the elementary school.

Greg Gregory asked for an explanation of the current grassy area. Rich Kisner, Columbia County Redevelopment Authority, said it would be similar to the housing project underway above the Bloomsburg Hospital.

Mayor Knorr defended Mr. Zoppetti by mentioning the successful projects he has witnessed since being Mayor; the building at the corner of Main and Center Streets; the building on the corner of Center Street and West Pine Avenue and most importantly, the Capital Theatre project.

Sue O'Donnell, 155 West Third Street, questioned whether the project would be reviewed after zoning approval for items such as parking and cell towers. The answer was yes it would.

Mayor Knorr read over the permitted uses in the proposed Business Campus District followed by Solicitor Mihalik defining a Special Exception. A couple of the uses need further definition; commercial uses and light industrial.

Steve Coladonato inquired about free standing parking lots. They are not a permitted use in any other district in town. He is worried that the lot will be used to warehouse student vehicles. Mr. Zoppetti interjected that he can park cars there now as it is currently zoned. K. Shepperson said that teachers have been parking there for years.

APPROVAL OF ADVERTISING ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

On a motion by D. Levan, seconded by W. Kreisher and voted on unanimously, Council approved advertising the zoning ordinance amendment after defining commercial uses and light industrial.

There being no further business, the hearing adjourned at 7:30pm.

CAROL L. MAS
Town Administrator & Secretary