

WELLSBORO PLANNING COMMISSION – SEPTEMBER 28, 2011

CALL TO ORDER: Planning Commission Chairperson Ron Comstock called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room of the John E. Dugan Fire Station-Municipal Building at 28 Crafton Street, Wellsboro, PA. 16901.

ROLL CALL: Planning Commission present were Ron Comstock, William Yacovissi, Richard Black, James Prevost, Lou Prevost, Sue Trescott, Assistant Secretary Florence Martino

PLEDGE TO FLAG: The pledge of allegiance to the flag was given by all present.

MINUTES: Jim Prevost made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Lou Prevost.

UPDATING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

NEW BUSINESS: RENTAL HOUSING- Lou Prevost stated the next item on the agenda is concerning having some control on rental units in the borough. Lou Prevost handed out a copy of an application for rental housing units, which would give the borough some control of rental units. Lou Prevost said Jay Erb did a good job on preparing the plan and the outline is very comprehensive in nature and is very similar to two other boroughs, which Lou Prevost was able to review.

Lou Prevost said borough council could determine the amount, of the fee the application now has a \$30.00 fee. Lou Prevost said the borough council could decide to increase or decrease the amount. Ron Comstock asked if the Planning Commission was recommending this apply to all rental units. Ron Comstock said on the application it has single family, two family, multi-family and boarding houses. Lou Prevost said it should be as broad as possible to prevent anything from not being covered. Lou Prevost said the annual fee is needed to create revenue to offset the expense of additional manpower to implement the program and enforcement of the ordinance. Ron Comstock said 95.9% of the single-family rental units in Wellsboro would not pass the inspections. Ron Comstock said the new code dictates the height of ceilings and all other types of things that we don't usually think of, he said when Mansfield was discussing this 95.9% of the rental units would not pass the requirements. Lou Prevost said if the property met basic safety codes and the fire department did the inspection and said the house met fire codes then the home would be approved. Lou Prevost said we could add a sentence that if the fire chief said the home was safe then the home would be approved. Council President Hart said the fire chief goes now with the borough secretary and building inspection when doing a home inspection.

Ron Comstock said he had two points, one being he did not want to weaken it by having a fire inspection clause because there are other issues to consider and the second item being, he thinks in order to pass this quickly it would need to exempt single family homes. Ron Comstock said there is no grandfather clause in rental units. Lou Prevost said the Planning Commission should make it as stringent as possible and then the Borough Council could make changes to exempt certain types. Ron Comstock said Borough Council would reject it due to the storm of residents that would come to Borough Council and complain about the ordinance. William Yacovissi said he would like to make a difference between owner occupied housing and those homeowners who live out of the area and own rental properties in Wellsboro. Jim Prevost said the ordinance should protect both sides; it should protect the owner and also the renter. Lou Prevost said it should also protect the neighbor.

Lou Prevost said the Fire Chief or designated officer would err on the side of safety. Ron Comstock said in Mansfield they had to exempt single-family homes. Lou said we could add a statement stating the Fire Chief would monitor single-family homes and all other rental units would need to follow the building code. Council President Hart said the Borough of Wellsboro has never adopted the International Building Code; Wellsboro is still under the BOCA code. William Yacovissi said he would exempt owner occupied and single family homes from the inspections. Ron Comstock said the borough needs to have a restrict code for multi-family housing. Ron Comstock said multi-family units consisting of three or more units are a for profit income property.

Lou Prevost made a motion to recommend to Borough Council to approve the ordinance as submitted with the Wellsboro building code once the Fire Chief has approved the wording. Lou Prevost said he

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would vote to leave the ordinance as broad as possible and let Council make any part exempt, seconded by Jim Prevost. Jim Prevost said it should be as broad as possible, and would allow Borough Council to set any exemptions, motion carried 5-1 Ron Comstock voted against the motion. William Yacovissi made a motion to amend the first motion to exempt owner occupied housing, seconded by Jim Prevost, motion carried 4-2 Jim and Lou Prevost voted against the amendment.

Jim Prevost made a motion to approve both of the amendments to the zoning ordinance #615 as submitted. The first amendment defining adult entertainment/adult establishments and the second being to adopt additional sign regulations, seconded by Lou Prevost motion carried 6-0.

Lou Prevost informed the Planning Commission members the next Comprehensive Plan Workshop would be held on October 14th at 2 p.m.

Lou Prevost said a journalist in the Philadelphia area who was writing an article on the Marcellus Shale impact on small towns had interviewed him. He spoke to her about the impact it was having on Wellsboro.

ADJOURNED: 8:05 p.m.