

**FREEDOM TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 27, 2019  
7:00 P.M.**

**PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

Kim Beckett, Secretary  
John Sica  
Edward Buchheit, Jr.

**TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS - PRESENT**

Zachary Gulden, Township Manager  
Harlan Lawson, Adams County Planning Dept.  
Robert Thaeler, Adams County Planning Dept.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT**

Cliff Frost, Sherry Frost, Ronald Hagerman, Ernest Shriver, & Paul Kellett

**CALL TO ORDER**

Secretary Beckett called the Planning Commission's Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Chair Belt and Vice-Chair Sharrer were noted as absent.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**ANNUAL BOARD REORGANIZATION**

Secretary Beckett called for the 2019 planning commission chairperson nominations. Mr. Sica nominated Wayne Belt for chair. Secretary Beckett asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Secretary Beckett closed nominations. Secretary Beckett made a **MOTION** to approve Mr. Belt as the 2019 chairperson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Buchheit. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Secretary Beckett called for the 2019 planning commission vice-chairperson nominations. Mr. Sica nominated Paul Sharrer for vice-chair. Secretary Beckett asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Secretary Beckett closed nominations. Mr. Buchheit made a **MOTION** to approve Mr. Sharrer as the 2019 vice-chairperson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Sica. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Secretary Beckett called for 2019 planning commission secretary nominations. Mr. Buchheit nominated Kim Beckett for secretary. Secretary Beckett asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Secretary Beckett closed nominations. Mr. Buchheit made a **MOTION** to approve Ms. Beckett as the 2019 secretary. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Sica. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Secretary Beckett called for the approval of the Minutes of the December 5, 2018 Planning Commission's Meeting. Mr. Buchheit made a **MOTION** to approve the Minutes of the December 5, 2018 meeting. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Sica. The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Zoning Ordinance Update Discussion**

Mr. Lawson and Mr. Thaeler first discussed the history of planning and zoning in Freedom Township. The Township's first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1993. The Township used the Adams County Zoning Ordinance shortly after the adoption of the comprehensive plan. This was the first time that the County's Zoning Ordinance was applied to an entire municipality in Adams County. It was meant to be in placed temporarily while the Township crafted its own zoning ordinance. The Township enacted its own zoning ordinance on June 27, 1996, and it has been amended a few times.

Mr. Thaeler said in the early 2010's, Freedom Township partnered with Carroll Valley Borough, Fairfield Borough, Liberty Township, and Hamiltonban Township in order to develop the Southwest Joint Comprehensive Plan. All adopted the plan in 2015 with the exception of Freedom Township. The current Board of Supervisors adopted the Southwest Joint Comprehensive Plan in 2018. Mr. Thaeler highlighted key recommendations of this plan:

#### **Land Use Plan:**

- Establishes a Primary Designated Growth Area (Primary DGA) focused on the US Route 15 / Emmitsburg Road interchange and land area south of the interchange between Emmitsburg Road and Bullfrog Road. Recognizes long-standing Township planning policy to allow development in this setting.
- Applies the Rural Conservation future land use designation to much of the Township. Recommends rural and open space conservation, and recommends that future residential development be no higher than 1 dwelling unit for every 10 acres.
- Applies the Mixed Use future land use designation to much of the Primary DGA. Suggests a mixture of residential and community serving commercial uses even within a single development project.
- Applies the Commercial future land use designation to land immediately adjacent to and surrounding the US Route 15 / Emmitsburg Road interchange.

**Land Use Goal:** Retain the rural character of the Southwest Adams region while, at the same time, accommodating the current and anticipated future needs for land uses of all categories.

**Objectives:**

1. Establish Primary Designated Growth Areas and Secondary Designated Growth Areas of sufficient size and of appropriate location to accommodate a majority of the current and likely future growth within the region.
2. Enhance existing village character (primarily Fairfield Borough and Orrtanna Village) by retaining existing mixed use character and historic and architectural integrity.
3. Employ a variety of techniques focused on conserving rural character, landscapes, and uses in settings outside of Designated Growth Areas.

**Natural Resources Plan**

- Consider ordinance regulations designed to minimize the removal of forest cover.
- Evaluate ordinance regulations designed to limit development on steep slope lands.

**Natural Resources Goal:** Regain the broad array of significant natural resources within the Southwest Adams region.

**Objectives:**

1. Employ a variety of techniques designed to conserve resources on a landscape-wide basis outside of Designated Growth Areas, and particularly within the western portion of the planning area.
2. Employ a variety of techniques designed to conserve natural resources, based on specific resource settings, within Designated Growth Area in a manner that appropriately integrates and protects such resources in the context of new development.

**Water Resources Goal:** Ensure that water of sufficient quality and quantity remains available to provide for the current and future needs of residents within the Southwest Adams region.

**Objectives:**

1. Focus efforts on development of additional public / community water supply within the Gettysburg Formation portion of the planning area.
2. Pursue a variety of techniques to protect groundwater supply in areas where groundwater is currently or is expected in the future to be relied upon for future public / community water supplies.
3. Employ a range of techniques to protect groundwater quality in all settings within the planning area.

**Housing Plan**

- Ensure that land use ordinances enable housing that is consistent with likely future demographic patterns (for example, resident age and household type) in the Township.

**Housing Goal:** Ensure that housing of a variety of types remains available and affordable for current and anticipated future residents of the Southwest Adams Region.

**Objectives:**

1. Retain existing housing stock.
2. Focus the development of new housing within Designated Growth Areas and where said housing can be serviced by necessary public / community infrastructure.
3. Ensure that municipal land use regulations provide for the dwelling unit types and densities necessary to address changing demographics and lifestyle choices.

**Community Facilities**

- Rely upon privately developed community sewer and water systems for sewer and water service respectively within the US Route 15 / Emmitsburg Road Primary DGA.
- Rely upon properly designed on-lot septic and well systems for sewer and water service respectively outside of the Primary DGA. Limit development densities outside the Primary DGA to reduce the potential for public or community sewer and water systems having to be extended into non-growth areas.

**Community Facilities Goal:** Ensure that a broad range of necessary community facilities are provided to meet the current and future needs of the residents of the Southwest Adams region.

**Objectives:**

1. Pursue regionalization of public / community water and sewer services within Designated Growth Areas where such services already exist.
2. Pursue active cooperation with private water and sewer system providers to address needs within Designated Growth Areas where such services do not currently exist.
3. Work cooperatively with local school districts to ensure that school facilities are renovated, expanded, and / or constructed to meet current and future demands of the residents of the planning area.
4. Cooperatively pursue regionalization of local police, fire, and emergency response provides to ensure that such essential services are provided in a manner sufficient to protect current and future residents

**Transportation Goal:** Retain and enhance the existing transportation network in the Southwest Adams region to ensure the safe and efficient movement of persons and goods within and through the region.

**Objectives:**

1. Pursue improvements to existing roadways as needed to ensure that roadway capacities meet the needs of current and future residents of the planning area.
2. Program improvements at intersections to address current and future safety concerns associated with such intersections.
3. Encourage the enhancement of alternative modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, public transportation) to decrease reliance upon the private automobile.

**Economic Development Plan**

- Retain the regional agricultural / rural economy. Encourage the use of effective

agricultural zoning to conserve existing agricultural lands and uses, and allow income generating farm activities to occur within these settings.

- Encourage appropriately scaled home occupations and cottage industry uses, including within the rural settings of the Township.
- Consider economic development opportunities with the Primary DGA. While the Southwest Adams Joint Comprehensive Plan focus its discussion on the Fairfield / Carroll Valley Primary DGA, consideration could also be given to evaluate the potential for such opportunities within the US Route 15 / Emmitsburg Road Primary DGA.

**Economic Development Goal:** Retain and expand the economy of the Southwest Adams region and ensure access to economic opportunities for current and anticipated future residents.

**Objectives:**

1. Work cooperatively with entities within and outside the region to encourage appropriate economic development projects within Designated Growth Areas.
2. Enhance elements of the region's existing rural-based economy by actively promoting existing agricultural and cultural / recreation resources.

**Heritage and Cultural Resources Goal:** Conserve the wide variety of historic and cultural resources that help define the Southwest Adams region.

**Objectives:**

1. Retain and protect existing historic structures and historic districts.
2. Employ a variety of techniques and participation in regional efforts to conserve the extensive historic and cultural resources associated with various landscapes within the region.

**Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenways Goal:** Expand and enhance the existing network of parks, open space, and greenways to meet the current and future needs of residents of the Southwest Adams region, and to conserve existing natural and cultural resources.

**Objectives:**

1. Expand and enhance existing park lands and park facilities to ensure that all current and future residents of the planning area have access to parks and park facilities that cater to persons with wide recreation interests.
2. Evaluate the potential for cooperatively deliver park lands, park facilities, and recreation programming at a regional level.
3. Formalize an open space and greenways system that includes mega-greenways, landscape-oriented greenways, and greenways along streams and man-made corridors.
4. Develop a regional trail system that connects schools, neighborhoods, parks, and other activity centers with each other and with corridor and landscape-oriented greenways.

The Adams County Planning Department provided initial descriptions of general Character Areas that exist in Freedom Township:

**Character Areas:**

1. **Agricultural Landscape:** The Agricultural Landscape Character Area is identified within three settings of Freedom Township. This includes northern Freedom Township roughly north of Red Rock and Camp Gettysburg Roads, central Freedom Township roughly bounded by Bullfrog and Middle Creek Roads, and the extreme southeast corner of the Township. Lands are primarily used for agricultural purposes, and specific agriculture uses include pasture and crop production. Each setting includes at least one property that has been permanently preserved, through participation in either the Adams County Purchase of Agricultural Easements (PACE) Program or through donation of conservation easements to the Land Conservancy of Adams County. Lot sizes are typically large, and only very few nonagricultural, smaller lots have been subdivided over time.
2. **Rural Landscape – Housing:** The Rural Landscape – Housing Character Area is identified within two settings of Freedom Township. This includes northern Freedom Township roughly bounded by Red Rock and Cunningham Roads, and southern Freedom Township roughly bounded by Middle Creek and Coyle Roads. These settings have been subject to low density residential development over the past several decades, primarily on lots exceeding 10 acres in size. In many cases, rural features (such as agricultural fields and wooded areas) have been retained even as the original farm was subdivided. Some agricultural uses have been retained by these settings, but many are of smaller scale than in other settings within the Township and often adjoin large residential properties.
3. **Rural Landscape – Forested:** The Rural Landscape – Forested Character Area is identified within two settings of Freedom Township. This includes extreme southwest Freedom Township along Boyle Road and southcentral Freedom Township roughly south of the US Route 15 / Emmitsburg Road interchange and between Emmitsburg Road and Mason-Dixon Road. Lands are often used for agricultural purposes, but are also characterized by a higher proportion of forested area when compared to comparably sized property in the Agricultural Landscape Character Area. This area also includes many important natural features such as important streams (portions of Middle Creek and Marsh Creek) as well as significant topographic features (such as Harpers Hill). As in the Agricultural Landscape Character Area, only a few nonagricultural, smaller lots have been subdivided in this area over time.
4. **Rural Corridor:** The Rural Corridor Character Area is identified as generally following the US Route 15 and Emmitsburg Road corridors within Freedom Township. Lot sizes are often smaller within this setting when compared to other locations within the Township, although most of the lots remain to be used for residential or agricultural purposes. The area exhibits the highest concentration of nonresidential uses in the Township, yet these commercial or similar uses do not constitute the dominate use category within the setting. Properties tend to be oriented to, and strung along, the road corridors unlike in other settings of the Township where lots often spread over an entire area.

The following provides initial discussion regarding issues and observations resulting from the development of the Character Area Analysis and Map:

**Issues and Observations:**

1. **Rural Setting:** Even with the presence of an interchange along a major 4-lane highway (US Route 15), the Township can be characterized as almost completely rural in character. That said, per the Character Area Analysis, it can be argued that the Township includes a variety of types of rural character. Some of these areas are agricultural based, while others are based on types of rural character. Some of these areas are agricultural based, while others are based on natural resources or residential properties. Each of these settings may require different approaches with regard to zoning standards and techniques to address the conservation, development, and related goals of each type of rural setting.
2. **Causes of the Rural Development Pattern:** The Character Areas Analysis reveals discernable differences between the various rural settings of the Township. However, it does not appear that there is one main determinant that can define how the rural lot and use pattern has evolved over time. The different character areas do not strongly correlate with features like soil quality, common topography, or natural features. Rather, we anticipate that the rural setting pattern more strongly reflects coincidental decision-making by individual or groups of property owners.
3. **Limited Commercial / Industrial Uses:** Review of the Existing Land Use Map and Character Areas Map confirms the relative lack of commercial and industrial uses within the Township. In most instances, commercial and industrial properties stand-alone – that is, they are surrounded by properties housing different uses. The notable exception is the small concentration of commercial uses near the US Route 30 / Emmitsburg Road interchange. Accordingly, identifying appropriate settings to accommodate commercial and industrial uses may be challenging.
4. **Potential Area of Transition:** The Character Areas Analysis focuses on the existing features within the setting, and specifically the identification of settings that share common features. As noted, the entire Township is generally described as having rural character. Yet, the Township's adopted comprehensive plan (the Southwest Adams Joint Comprehensive Plan) identifies a Primary Designated Growth Area around the US Route 15 / Emmitsburg Road interchange. Various elements of the plan establish general goals and objectives as how to accommodate future development within this area. A significant discussion within the Zoning Ordinance development process, therefore, will be how to permit the reasonable transition of this setting from rural to developed. Significant conversations will be required to hone in a community vision for this area, and how to use the new Zoning Ordinance to help achieve this vision.

The Planning Commission also reviewed and discussed the following maps of Freedom Township:

- Aerials

- Clean and Green Properties
- Preserved Lands
- Steep Slopes
- Water Features
- Elevation
- Soils
- Existing Land Use

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business Secretary Beckett made a **MOTION** to adjourn. The Motion was **SECONDED** by Mr. Buchheit. Secretary Beckett adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.