

September 15, 2016

A Public Hearing was held this evening beginning at 5:30 PM. The purpose of the meeting was held to receive public comment regarding the proposed zoning amendment, to add (place of worship) as a permitted use in the (C-H) Commercial Highway District. The amendment would allow churches to locate with that area. The Danville Redeemer Orthodox Presbyterian Church has petitioned the Mahoning Township Supervisors for the ordinance change as described in the Mahoning Township Zoning Ordinance, § 250-79

Chairman Ken Woodruff, Vice Chairman Bill Lynn and Supervisor T. S. Scott were in attendance along with Zoning Officer Dean VonBlohn.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Also present were Karen Blackledge of the Danville News, Attorney Brian Crane representing the church, Ross Reason, Tom Cook, Douglas Weeks, Mike Chartowich, Megan Sweeney, Linda Bird, Shirley and Ed Draugelis, George Wagner, Jeff Meadows, Tom Snyder, Jonah Snyder, Thomas Snyder, Ann Poler, Barb Snyder, David Walker, A. Poler, and Dan Hartman.

Zoning Officer Dean VonBlohn reported the formal request July 14, 2016 was made by the Holy Redeemer Presbyterian Church to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow places of worship in the (C-H) Commercial Highway District. VonBlohn stated this request was reviewed by the Mahoning Township Planning Commission with their recommendation to the Mahoning Township Board of Supervisors to approve the amendment. The request then went before the Montour County Planning Commission where they also reported there was nothing wrong with the proposal. VonBlohn noted the amendment will allow churches as a permitted use in this district.

Ed Draugelis said that approving the request could open this up for spot zoning in a commercial highway district as well other zoning districts in the township.

Attorney Crane then spoke on behalf for the church told the supervisors the many problems the church has encountered in trying to find a permanent home. Crane noted that people today don't walk to church but rather drive and the problems in residential districts is there is not adequate parking available. He also said this location is ideal and within reasonable driving distance and there is plenty of parking spaces available at the site.

Attorney George Wagner of Riverside said that he is not a member of the church and wasn't asked by any member of the church to speak, and the zoning change would benefit the entire area and he didn't think spot zoning was an issue. He also said the church would be consistent with the entire area which includes a hospital, and nursing homes where visitors to those locations are looking for somewhere to worship.

Michael Chartowich, an elder, the church had encountered a saga of epic proportions to find a permanent home which he reported to the supervisors. He reported 70 to 80 members attend the current church and there is the need of a permanent location. He said they had been searching for 4 or 5 years for a location.

Pastor Ross Reason, the pastor said he believes the location also helps in his counseling of the members at the church when needed. Currently they have to go the private residence when counseling is required.

Jeff Meadows, an engineer currently living in Williamsport is on their building committee and they have found several locations that may have been suitable but most of them require a demo of the existing building and new construction, making them cost prohibitive.

T. S. Scott stated that places of worship are traditionally the moral underpinning of society and provide services to the community which if not available would be to the detriment of individuals and a significant portion of our community. He further stated the any place of worship of any faith should become a significant portion of our community and the residential parking requirements make the particular district more appropriate to places of worship.

Township Zoning Officer Dean VonBlohn said places of worships had been allowed in moderate density and agricultural forest districts and institutional districts. Chairman Woodruff announced the hearing of testimony was now closed.

T. S. Scott made a motion to amend the zoning ordinance pertaining to the Commercial Highway District and this was seconded by Bill Lynn,

Chairman Woodruff then asked for a vote and Supervisors T. S. Scott and Bill Lynn voted in favor of the change while Chairman Woodruff abstained because he is member of the Elks and a former exalted ruler. Amendment change passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Motions passed.



Dean VonBlohn, Zoning Officer