Bethel Township
Board of Supervisors
Zoning/Map Amendment Hearing
December 16, 2019

The Bethel Township Board of Supervisors Zoning/Map Amendment Hearing was called to order by Chairman Jacob Meyer at 6:00pm. in the Bethel Township Meeting Room, Bethel PA.

Attending the hearing were Robbi Lane, Michael Graby and Jacob Meyer. Also, in attendance were Solicitor Stephen Price, Engineer, Jeffrey Steckbeck, and Township Sec Treas. Jayne Seifrit.

Jake Meyer stated this has been a long process. The Board is responsible to do what is best for all residents.

Jake Meyer turned the hearing over to Solicitor Stephen Price.

Stephen Price stated the reason for the hearing is to receive testimony for the Zoning/Map Amendments. Stephen Price entered exhibits into the hearing. Those being: 1 notice of hearing, 2 proof of publication, 3 posting of property, 4 mailing to Berks County Law Library and Reading Eagle, 5 Berks County Planning Commission letter, 6 Tulpehocken letter, 7 mailing notice to property owners and adjacent municipalities. Jake Meyer was given the list of people wanting to speak.

Betty Martin presented a petition signed by 131 residents opposing rezoning the Bowman properties to the Board. Betty Martin stated farmland needs to be preserved. She stated she served as secretary on the Planning Commission many years ago when discussion ensued to preserve farmland and the forests. She stated they moved here in 1957 and then she and her husband set up housekeeping in the 1980s. She said for more than fifty (50) years, sixty (60) years they lived in Bethel Township. Betty Martin stated within a five (5) minute walk there are 34 families that will be in close proximity to the proposed rezoned Bowman properties. There are concerns about water runoff, standing water and increased traffic with a warehouse as a proposed use. Betty Martin is asking the Board of Supervisors not to rezone the properties on Daub Road and Myer Dr. Not to take the Bowman properties from Agriculture Preservation to Industrial Commercial.

Anthony Fitzgibbons stated the traffic will be directed from I-78 onto 645 then into the property. A warehouse would use less water than an intensive agricultural use.

Lee Ziegler stated he is against warehouses; he has lived there for 46 years. Bowman’s warehouse would do away with farming there.

Judy Apgar is against the Bowman properties going from AP to IC. She reiterated there are 34 families that would be affected. They would see concrete and lights. Judy Apgar further stated the Township is to have the residents in their best interest. She said they are busing people in to work at the warehouses, increasing crime. Judy Apgar also pointed out there are warehouses sitting empty here and in surrounding communities, she would rather see chicken houses. She said leave it Ag; the Bowman’s don’t live here.

Burnell Bross pointed out we need farms. He stated there will not be enough food produced for people by 2050.

Bob Yeager, Best Trucks, stated he is in favor of changing the Bowman properties to IC.
Dwayne Brubacker stated he purchased his property four (4) years ago as IC. He doesn’t know what might happen in the future but he would like to have the option to use as IC. He does not want to be changed to Agriculture Preservation. He has fifty (50) acres.

Marjorie Hix stated she has 12 acres and feels there are enough empty warehouses.

Larry Schmehl stated he is against changing the Bowman properties to IC. He would like to see the Musselman property to go back to Agriculture.

Lisa Hassler has been following this for about six (6) months. She stated she doesn’t believe this was planned well in the past. She thinks the Brubacker track could stay IC. The IC should be at the interchanges of I-78.

Jerry Bowman presented to the Board a petition signed by residents in favor of rezoning the Bowman properties to IC. Jerry Bowman stated he lived here 71 years. He owns two (2) properties. He also stated he has a business in the township. There would be a buffer for the residents and would be better than intensive agriculture. He further stated they don’t have a buyer for the properties.

Calvin Maciejewski works at Dollar General and lives here. He stated Dollar General does not bus in workers. He said Dollar General owns 100% of their property as does PetSmart. Dollar General employs 700 plus workers. They support the community. He is opposed to more warehouses until the ones built are filled.

H Fred Bowman stated several months ago the Planning Commission stated the Bowman site is more ideal for IC.

Anthony Fitzgibbons stated the nine (9) acres is not able to have intensive ag, the best use of the Bowman properties is IC.

Corey Houser stated he believes the Bowman properties is where IC should be. Corey Houser also stated people should be coming to meetings so they are informed and not waiting until the last minute.

Stephen Price stated the hearing will be continued as there are three (3) tweaks that the Board would like to see. Those being the Musselman property (owned now by M B Investments) go from IC to AP, twelve (12) properties along Salem Road should not be Commercial they should remain in Village and the northern property along 419 that is owned by BRI Realty Partnership LP was missed and should be kept in IC. Jake Meyer made a motion to include proposed changes, authorize posting and notices to property owners, seconded by Mike Graby. All agreed. Motion carried. Mike Graby made a motion authorizing map update on Township website and notice on website stating the continuation of hearing until January 20, 2020 at 6:30 pm, seconded by Robbi Lane. All agreed. Motion carried.

The hearing closed at 7:22 pm and will reopen on January 20, 2020 at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Jayne K Seifrit
Township Secretary