

**DELHI CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 11, 2013**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig, Goodall, Hayhoe, Leaf, O'Hara, Olson, Weaver, Zietlow
MEMBERS ABSENT: Todd
STAFF PRESENT: Malone, Miller

Chairperson Weaver opened the meeting at 7:03P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance

Amendments to Agenda: None

Approval of the February 25, 2013 Planning Commission Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Goodall and seconded by Commissioner Olson to approve the February 25, 2013 meeting minutes as presented.

A Voice Poll was recorded as follows: All Ayes

MOTION CARRIED

Public Comment (Non-Agenda Items): None

Case #13-874, Proposed Chicken Zoning Ordinance - No. 39.160

The Township Board has asked the Planning Commission (PC) to re-visit the issue of urban chickens and make a recommendation to the Board on the matter. The Planning Commission spent a significant amount of time and completed lots of research on this topic in 2010. At that time a draft ordinance was created, however no action was taken because there appeared to be a general lack of support at the Board level. Ms. Miller reviewed the previously proposed draft ordinance amendments and the rationale behind many of those items.

Ms. Miller also reminded the PC that there are currently two (2) zoning districts in which chickens can be kept. Specifically, the A-1:Agricultural and R1-A:One Family Rural Residential (on lots of 40,000 sq. ft. or more) districts permit chickens in some manner. Recently the Township has received a couple of inquiries about more than just the urban chickens, such as goats, etc. This evolution of the urban agriculture issue from just urban chickens to now other farm animals may warrant further discussion and reaction from the PC when formulating a recommendation to the Township Board.

Commissioner Leaf mentioned that the real topic is what size lot is appropriate for the keeping of chickens or other farm-type animals. Under current ordinance it is clear. In the past when discussing urban chickens, it is always brought up that a person is permitted up to four dogs with no restrictions on the lot size. Many believe that this is excessive, especially on smaller lots, and this is with dogs, which are definitely "pets".

Commissioner Olson does not feel that urban chickens or any other ordinance permitting agricultural animals on residential lots is needed. She stated that it is her opinion that we have areas to live within the Township where people can keep chickens, goats, etc. (in the A-1 and R1-A districts). Further, there

is a readily available farmer's market in which to get organic and fresh foods. She felt that raising farm animals in town is not an appropriate land use and that people who desire to do so can make the choice to live in the areas that permit it.

Commissioner O'Hara used the example of home occupations to highlight his belief that the issue of urban chickens, or other urban agriculture animals, is not currently "ripe". He illustrated this point by explaining that many years ago, the Zoning Ordinance did not adequately address home occupations because it simply was not something that occurred frequently. Technology has changed and now many people are able to operate businesses from their homes. When this occurred, the ZO needed to be changed to address this overwhelming need and shift in practices. It is his feeling that keeping urban chickens is not something that most people would want to do or would be supportive of occurring in their neighborhoods. Further, it is not so ubiquitous that a general amendment to the ZO is necessary to accommodate it. It is not an issue that must be or should be addressed at this time. Further, Mr. O'Hara believes that permitting chickens in residential areas is a slippery slope and that we've already now seen the discussion escalate to goats.

There was general discussion about the fact that when the PC was previously looking at this issue, many letters, emails and phone calls were received in opposition of urban chickens. In contrast, there are only a handful of individuals requesting that urban chickens be permitted. Staff was asked how many code enforcement cases relative to chickens or other farm animals are addressed each year. Ms. Miller responded that she believed that there had been "less than two handfuls" of cases over the past five years.

Ms. Miller pointed out the PC is the board within the Township that is specifically appointed to consider land use issues and make appropriate recommendations and decisions regarding land use issues within the Township. The PC should make a recommendation to the Township Board that reflects their opinions about what land use policy makes sense with regards to urban chickens or other farm animals.

Commissioner Zietlow expressed her opinion that the PC has looked at this topic sufficiently to understand it and is, therefore, not supportive of urban chickens or other animals for a variety of reasons. She believes that if that recommendation is made and the Board feels differently, they can take action to direct the PC to come up with ordinance language to permit one or all of these types of farm animals in residential neighborhoods.

Commissioner Leaf feels we have provisions in the Township which provide for chickens and those existing ZO provisions address urban chickens and other farm animals in an appropriate manner currently. The PC Board has done research and come up with a draft ordinance that could allow for urban chickens and after review of the matter it is his opinion that the existing ZO language is sufficient and appropriate.

The PC members expressed their consensus that keeping agricultural animals on residential properties, other than what is currently permitted, isn't consistent with the land use patterns within the community, the future land use plans, the development goals and is not in the best interest of the healthy, safety and welfare of the Township.

It was agreed that the PC would not move forward to recommend adoption of the previously drafted zoning ordinance amendments pertaining to urban chickens, but instead Ms. Miller will draft a memo which attempts to summarize the consensus of the PC for review at the next meeting. Based on the consensus, she will also draft a possible motion that could be used, or modified, by the PC to communicate their recommendation to the Township Board.

Master Plan Update

Ms. Miller gave the PC an overview of the working draft of the Master Plan. She highlighted several areas including the organization of the document in general the goal of the reorganization is to create a more user-friendly document. Ms. Miller pointed out the "Goals and Visions" now are in a table format which are easier to read, and the supporting demographic-type data has been moved to the appendix section.

Commissioner O'Hara would like to see more on the volume of registered rental properties and their location proximity and how it is impacting our residential neighborhoods. Ms. Miller agreed that this would be a good addition to the MP and will work to incorporate the information.

General Discussion & Updates:

Ms. Miller responded to PC questions regarding the status of the fuel station at the corner of Aurelius & Holt Roads and the Two Men and A Truck expansion.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donald Leaf
Secretary