

Special Meeting

July 1, 1992 1:00 pm

President Simpson opened the meeting at 1:00 pm with the following members of Council present: Mr. Ditzler, Mr. Troxell, Mr. Schmitt, Mr. DeHaas, Mrs. Gustafson, Ms. Giles and Mr. Zellner. Also attending: Mayor Linn; Dr. Leah Maitland, John Eline and Craig Long of Gettysburg Hospital; Andrew Larson and Wm. Parker of the Borough Planning Commission; Cathy Gault, Zoning Board solicitor; C. W. Sterner, L. E. Weikert, and W. Powell.

President Simpson informed Council she had called the meeting to consider the Gettysburg Hospital expansion. The Zoning Hearing Board recently denied a variance request for lot coverage where the Hospital desired to add to an existing parking lot.

Mr. Sterner explained the relationship between the Council and the Zoning Hearing Board. If Council was not pleased with the Board's decision, Council had several options: to ask the Hospital to resubmit its request for variance, to appeal the decision to County Court, or to change the zoning ordinance.

Sterner further noted that the Borough was contemplating a complete study of the zoning ordinance, and in fact did obtain approval for a planning grant for this work. The current status of that study is to complete the grant paperwork, prepare an RFP for a consultant, and proceed with the study. This process may take some time, minimum of six months.

The recommendation of the Borough staff (Sterner, Weikert and Powell) was to change the Hospital zone from Institutional to Health Care, and to permit lot coverage up to 70 per cent. This could occur quickly, permitting the Hospital to proceed with its plans for construction later this fall. Further study by a qualified planner would be required if other changes were to be considered. We do need to be careful in planning for the growth of the Hospital, to ensure that problems do not develop in the neighboring residential areas.

Dr. Maitland outlined their building plans, noting the Hospital is the second largest employer in the County, serving a considerable population with both in-patient and out-patient services, all requiring considerable parking area. With the expected population growth in the area served by the Hospital, additional demand for hospital services (and parking) will be necessary.

Cathy Gault reported to Council on the zoning hearing. For the Zoning Board to grant a variance, property owners must prove that the ordinance creates a hardship on the use of their property. The Hospital did not prove a hardship in its case for variance, and in fact probably could not for their parking needs. The proper procedure, then, would be to change the ordinance, should Council find that the Hospital's need for parking was legitimate.

Andrew Larson, Chairman of the Borough's Planning Commission, agreed that we should focus on the Hospital current need, and that body stands ready to assist. The Borough solicitor should prepare a proposed ordinance for the Planning Commission's review at its July 20th meeting.

Walt Powell noted that institutions like the Hospital should communicate with Council and the Planning Commission in their planning process. He further noted this would be an ideal time to update the Borough's Comprehensive plan, Zoning and Land Development ordinances, as all are well over 15 years old. Grant funds are available to proceed with this work.

Code Officer Weikert agreed that the Zoning Ordinance was in need of an update, but cautioned Council about being too hasty with too many individual changes. As to the process for changing the zoning ordinance, he outlined the schedule which requires both Borough and County Planning Commission review, a public hearing, and would require 60 to 90 days to affect.

A consensus of Council was agreed upon, whereby it directed the Planning Commission to review the current proposal to change the Hospital property to Health Care Zone, permitting lot coverage to 70 per cent, and to report back to Council at the August 13th meeting. It was further agreed that the staff should proceed with the grant paperwork, and prepare an RFP for assistance from a consultant.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles W. Sterner
Borough Manager-Treasurer