

Minutes of the Monroe County Planning Commission  
Meeting December 15, 2011  
Rocky Parsons for Jim Menard

Attendance:

Ronnie and Brenda Riner, Rod and Helen Graves, Garry Taylor, Clyde Gum, Chuck and Barbara Nikolaus, Aaron Elswick, Rose Preston and Ronnie Brooks, Rocky and Sandy Parsons.

The members of the Planning Commission and their spouses and friends met at 6:00pm for an informal gathering to celebrate the holidays. Sodas, bottled water, cheese, crackers, fruit, vegetables and dip were enjoyed by all.

President Rod Graves called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:00pm.

As this was planned to be an abbreviated meeting, we dispensed with the reading of the minutes from last month's meeting.

Presidents Report:

A public meeting on the proposed Unsafe or Unsanitary Structures and Refuse Ordinance was held at the Courthouse on December 12. Several citizens as well as some members of the Planning Commission were in attendance. Comments on the proposed ordinance ranged from negative (questioning the need for the ordinance) to positive (recognizing the need for the ordinance to protect the health and safety and property values of the public). Overall, it was apparent that the ordinance has the support of the public. It will be necessary for the Planning Commission to meet with the County Commissioners in order to discuss some of the changes suggested by the public.

Rod attended a conference in Pennsylvania concerning horizontal drilling. Penn State Extension Service sponsored the conference. Stakeholders representing various views on horizontal drilling attended the conference. What Rod learned is that people on all sides of the issue are talking to each other. Communication is key to resolving problems. Community Task Forces are being formed in order to keep the dialog open. The Task Forces meet with the local commissioners in order to address concerns.

The biggest environmental concern expressed at the conference was not fracking as much as spills on drill sites and due to highway accidents involving trucks hauling water generated from drilling.

Rod's role at the conference was to talk about the potential impact drilling would have on local infrastructure. Small communities such as we have in Monroe County can not handle the infrastructure needs that a large drilling program would require (housing, roads, entertainment, schools, etc.). We are not "elastic" enough.

Rod will relay to Brian Wickline, WVU Extension Agent, what he learned at the conference.

Rod also attended a conference at WV DEP's headquarters office concerning Green Infrastructure. This was an organizational meeting in order to identify stakeholders interested in protecting sensitive ecosystems and to establish goals and objectives. These sensitive ecosystems need to be identified and their footprint defined so that communities can provide for their protection when planning infrastructure and development.

Rocky Parsons gave a brief summary on the legislation on horizontal drilling that was passed by the West Virginia Legislature yesterday. The bill contains many comprehensive provisions including: surface owner notice and compensation, water quality and quantity management, repair of state roads, public notice and comment, disclosure of additives used in fracking, impoundment design, etc. Rocky had not finished reading the entire 99-page bill and could not give a complete summary of the legislation.

Rod mentioned that Senator Ron Miller has been appointed Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Rod reported that the Planning Commission had a good and productive year but that we need to finalize our policies and procedures.

The meeting adjourned at 7:13pm.