

Township to update zoning codes

By Gary Budzak - March 30, 2024



LEWIS CENTER — Orange Township is seeking to update its zoning code.

Development and Zoning Director Robin Duffee went over the zoning code changes at a public meeting on March 13 using a 13-page PowerPoint presentation.

"Zoning is a tool to regulate the development of a community," Duffee said. For example, there are regulations on business signage so that U.S. Route "23 doesn't look like the Las Vegas Strip," he said. At the same time, "We want businesses to succeed in Orange Township."

When the last zoning code was adopted in 1993, Orange Township had 4,500 residents. Now there are 35,000 residents, and the zoning code is outdated in many ways, requiring a total rewrite.

Orange also now shares borders with the cities of Columbus and Westerville in southeastern Delaware County. While the Polaris Mall area is part of Columbus, Orange is to the north.

Duffee said some of the code changes came about due to trends in the types of variances requested at Board of Zoning Appeals meetings. "When we see these BZA variances over and over again, that raises a red flag," he said.

That may mean a relaxation in some regulations, such as residential rear setbacks for patios and pools. Another area of change could be in home occupations (home-based businesses). Interestingly, though, Duffee said zoning and homeowners associations are meant to coexist in terms of their authority.

He said at present, there are more than 200 different planned districts in the township, each with their own sets of rules. With the updates, there would be a simplification of zoning districts, allowing for more uniformity. However, those areas that are non-conforming would be grandfathered in.

Unique areas, such as the new Evans Farm development and the older Lewis Center Village, would have their own separate districts.

"The (Zoning) Resolution defines each 'zoning district' by detailing the type of uses and development standards permitted within that particular district," said a handout at the meeting.

Work began on updating the 300-page zoning code in January 2022, Duffee said, with open houses being held for public input. Now in the last round of edits, the code is expected to be adopted by the Orange Township Board of Trustees as early as next month and take affect by year's end.

The township's Winter 2024 Newsletter said last year was a record-setter for the Zoning Department, with 803 total permits processed (including 531 residential, 126 commercial, and 121 signage), and \$195.5 million total in construction projects.

For more information, visit orangetwp.org.