

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COLLEGE TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS HELD ON  
NOVEMBER 23, 1968

A special meeting of the College Township Supervisors was held on November 23, 1968 at 1:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building. All supervisors were present.

The only order of business was to consider adoption of the Regional Codes for Building, Electricity, Housing, Fire Prevention and Plumbing and the Joint Municipal Agreement between the townships of College, Ferguson, Patton, Halfmoon and Harris and the Borough of State College for the enforcement of the above codes.

A number of citizens were present to express their opinions about the codes.

The Chairman stated that the codes had been prepared by a joint code committee composed of representatives of the municipalities concerned after consultation with builder, plumbers, electricians and others. The Regional Committee has been working on these codes for more than a year and a half. The Chairman said the purpose of this meeting was to consider adoption of the codes. Any person who wished to give testimony should do so at this meeting. This testimony would be passed on to the regional committee for their consideration. The Regional Committee was empowered to decide which part of the codes would not be enforced if they felt that to do so would work a hardship on the community.

Mr. Peter McChesney asked whether or not the supervisors had received anything which would indicate that these codes were needed. He stated that he was at the meeting to ask for a continuance, to ask that the supervisors not act on the codes at this meeting. He expressed the fear that the codes and their enforcement thereof would give too much power over township affairs to the Borough of State College since the ordinance states that the inspector appointed by the townships shall at all times be the same person as designated by the Borough.

Mrs. Thora Hardy objected to the codes and to the manner in which the meeting was to be conducted.

Mr. Jack Mitchell stated that he had a number of questions regarding the codes, and he was concerned that these questions were not be answered at this meeting and there would be no opportunity to get suggested changes to the persons concerned.

The Chairman stated that under the Joint Municipal Agreement, a Code Enforcement Committee would be set up with representation for each municipality, and that the agreement provides for amending the code ordinances. Amendments can be made by the Regional Council of Government. The testimony and suggestions made today will be transmitted to the Code Enforcement Committee through the township representative on that committee. This Committee will meet before December 31st and will consider the suggestions at that time. If the whole committee approves them, the suggestions will be put in effect.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he noticed that the codes eliminated orange-burg pipe. He said lots of people used this type of pipe and wondered why the codes eliminated it.

Mr. Mitchell also objected to the adoption of the codes because he thought the Borough would have too much influence in running the government of College Township. He stated that he felt he should have more time to study the codes. Action should be postponed because of the following reasons: 1. The newspaper advertisement has contained several errors. 2. Time was needed to study the codes further. 3. The time of the hearing was objectionable.

He also stated that he had a number of specific suggestions concerning possible changes in the codes, but that he did not want to bore the audience by a detailed reading of them.

The Chairman suggested that Mr. Mitchell or anyone else who had detailed suggestions that they did not want to present at this time, should bring them to the township office so that they could be forwarded to the Regional Code Enforcement Committee.

Rodger Granlund expressed his approval of the code ordinances in general. He stated that he had some reservations about certain provisions concerning repairs which could be made by property owners and other replacements and alterations which property owners might wish to make. For example, in the plumbing code, the only exception to a permit was the changing of faucet washers. He felt that this should be expanded to include other repairs which do not require major installation, such as shut-off valves which, in themselves, do not cost much but would become more expensive with the payment of the permit fee. In the electrical code, if the appendices were to be adopted, a permit would be required for the installation of a television antennae. This, too, would increase the cost for another installation commonly made by homeowners. He suggested also that the regional committee order copies of the codes so that individuals could buy them if they so desired since some of the code books can only be ordered in lots of six or more.

Mr. Peter J. McChesney stated that in Ordinance #34 under Section B, "the District Inspector of the Middle Association of Fire Underwriters or his duly authorized agent shall have the authority to enter any building, structure or premises in the township of College, at any reasonable time for the purpose of making any inspection as provided in the National Electrical Code." He felt that this section might more properly be worded, "representatives of administrative authority or designated representatives shall, after proper identification, and reasonable advance notice, have the right to enter any premises, etc..."

In Ordinance #31, Article 6, H601.4, appears the statement, "The operator (of any rooming house) shall keep a list of occupants up to date at all times in a permanent record book and shall make this book available to the Centre Regional Code Enforcement officials and shall submit an up-to-date list of current occupants to the Township Secretary upon request." Mr. McChesney stated that he didn't feel that the maintenance of such a list would have any significance and that it would not be possible to keep such a list up to date.

The last paragraph of Section 7, states "Updating of the BOCA Housing Code shall automatically occur as these revisions are approved by Building Officials Conference of America..." He felt that this was undesirable because if one of the other townships had a reason to have the ordinance changed, College Township officials would have to go along with the change even

though it did not apply in the township.

Mr. James Knepp asked why the building inspectors would work out of the Borough office.

Mr. Gale Whiteman objected to the way in which inspectors were to be secured. He felt there should be a panel of 3 or 4 men selected to act as inspectors in College Township. He was opposed to having borough inspectors do the job since he felt that, judging from past performance, some of them were quite lax when they should have been firm and vice versa.

Mr. J. H. Mitchell objected to a statement in Ordinance No. 32, Section 7, as follows: "The qualifications of the members (Building Board of Appeal) as provided in the Code need not be mentioned." He was greatly concerned about the qualifications of the members of the appeal board since they should be persons who were competent to make rulings. For example, if the problem involved plumbing disputes, someone with knowledge about plumbing should be involved.

Mr. Ralph McChesney stated that the supervisors were elected to work for the residents of the township, not to copy the borough or any other government body.

Mr. Peter Shapiro stated his general support for the development of these codes. He felt they were designed to improve the quality of construction and generally improve the safety and well being of the citizens of the township.

Mrs. John Gibbons indicated her support of the codes. She felt they would protect the home buyer from houses with faulty wiring and plumbing.

Mr. Granlund stated that College Township was not part of the Borough; neither was it the same as College Township of ten years ago. He felt that to have orderly growth, some regulations were needed. If we do not have code regulations, we face the danger of becoming a slum within future years. He stated that if orderly growth could be accomplished without regulation, he would be for that, but past experience has shown that codes were necessary to insure good construction.

Peter McChesney inquired if members of the Planning Commission had been involved in developing the codes. He said that the local Planning Commission had never been consulted.

Mr. Granlund stated that these ordinances were first proposed by the Regional Planning Commission, but that it became obvious that the planning commissions were not the proper persons to work on them. Persons with a knowledge of building, plumbing, electricity, etc. were needed, so the planning commission turned the ordinances over to a committee of persons who had experience with building problems.

Mr. Jack Mitchell asked if these ordinances were the same as those now in effect in the Borough.

Mr. Fisher, Borough Manager, replied that they were substantially the same.

Mr. Dan Stearns, former Zoning Officer for College Township, stated that he had worked as the College Township representative on the Regional Code Study Committee. The Committee had studied these codes over a period of from one and one-half to two years. On this committee was a large contractor, an architect, a plumber, and another large landowner and developer. The people on this committee understood building and construction. The committee had gone over each code paragraph by paragraph and discussed them separately. Some paragraphs they deleted entirely; some they modified and adapted to fit local conditions.

He also assured the audience that homeowners would still be able to make improvements and repairs to their property without hiring a licensed person. He stated that, as Zoning Officer, he was at times asked by people to make inspections of work being done, but, since that was not the function of the Zoning Officer, he had not done so. He had seen instances of shoddy workmanship. Although most contractors were doing a good job, there were a few who were attempting to get by with poor quality work. He had seen instances of houses only ten years old, where the roofs were falling in. If these codes prevented this type of workmanship, they would be worthwhile and benefit the people of the township.

In answer to several questions, the Board indicated that the ordinances specifically state work which is exempt and which can be done without a permit or without licensed personnel. The Regional Code Committee has the right to designate work which is exempt and can make any changes. Also, the Committee can designate that certain portions of the codes need not apply in this area if they find it desirable to do so.

Mrs. Thora Hardy stated that she had not been able to figure out the fee schedule. It was suggested that she stop into the township office and look over the codes and secure help in figuring out the fee schedule.

Mr. John Mitchell asked whether or not the fees collected would be given to the Borough. Mr. Levine stated that he would explain later how the fees were to be handled.

There being no further testimony or questions from the audience, Mr. Levine then made a statement for the Board. With respect to the statement made in the meeting that there had not been correct following of the legal procedure for the hearing, he stated that the code ordinances had been advertised in accordance with the second class township code and the meeting conducted accordingly. The first advertisement had contained a few errors made by the newspaper, but the following day the advertisement had been run again with corrections made, and that this second advertisement had met the notification legally required by the second-class township code.

With respect to fears that the Borough would be taking over the township, this is certainly not the intent. These codes are going to be adopted by all the townships in the Centre Region as well as the Borough. All had representatives on the enforcement committee. This does not make the Borough a "kingmaker", but means that a resident who moves from one area to another will be afforded the same protection in both areas by the ordinances.

The codes will not prevent an individual from doing his own repair work, wiring or plumbing, etc.

With respect to the fear that some one township might make changes

in the codes which would hurt College township, the Joint Municipal Agreement provides that all the townships would have the opportunity to study any changes or amendments to the ordinances before any action would be taken to change them and any such action would be voted on by the code enforcement committee composed of township representatives.

The suggestions and testimony given at this meeting will be presented to the Regional Code Committee and if the Committee feels that these suggestions are good and changes should be made, the committee members will be able to make them after joint consideration.

With respect to the qualifications of the persons appointed to the review board, the township supervisors who make these appointments will take into consideration the qualification the person has for the job and they will appoint persons who have knowledge and who will be helpful.

In answer to the question about the disposition of the fees collected, they will be used to finance the operation of the program. No one township will be able to pay for all the inspectors needed, but under the Joint Municipal Agreement, we have set up a system whereby we jointly pay and own the personnel and equipment to operate the code enforcement program. Residents of each township and the borough will be contributing to the support of the program at first. In addition, the state has made a grant of \$25,000 to help get the program under way. Once started, the program will be largely self-supporting. The inspectors will be housed in the Borough building. The program will operate like that of the regional planning commission and the parks and recreation board, which are supported by all townships and the borough. These two boards are housed in the borough building, but every township has equal rights to their services as those the borough.

Questions concerning the rates charged will be brought to the consideration of the Joint Committee.

Copies of the codes are available in the township office for inspection by residents.

Any persons with further suggestions that they wish sent to the Regional Code Committee should bring them into the township office so that Mr. Williams, the township representative, will be able to present them to the committee..

Mr. Williams moved and Mr. Weaver seconded that the Board of Supervisors adopt Ordinances 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35, which constitute the Regional Housing, Building, Electrical, Fire Prevention and Plumbing codes. The motion carried.

Mr. Weaver moved and Mr. Williams seconded the motion that the township adopt a resolution approving College Township's participation in the Joint Municipal Agreement with the townships of Patton, Ferguson, Halfmoon and Harris and the Borough of State College to implement the code enforcement program. Motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted.