

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING  
ORDINANCE NO. 13-17  
APRIL 3, 2017 – 6:45 P.M.

ORDINANCE NO. 13-17 AMENDING CHAPTER 19 ZONING  
ORDINANCE, SECTION 30E HILLTOP SCHOOL PROPERTY  
OVERLAY DISTRICT

Mayor Hilliard opened the public hearing at 6:46 p.m.

Diane Griffith, ward 1, 52 Grove Street, said there has been some work towards trying to make Hilltop School something that fits our community. It's her neighborhood. The prospect of having a change in the zoning to allow apartments; its where we began many years ago. She is sorry that the people ahead of the current council didn't do what was needed. It is something that should have been designed for our community. The apartment route is a cop-out. She would like to see a boys/girls club or something similar.

Diane read a letter from her husband, Bill Griffith, who could not attend the meeting:

We are mourning again another loss of the Hilltop School, and seeing the beginning of the demise of the Hilltop as they know it. There is always change, but these changes are non-essential and these changes affect the very quality of things. Such is the decision to take a moderate density neighborhood, and zone it as crowded, and bury it in the realm of a for-profit enterprise. Because the City does not know what else to do. The City is looking for an easy way out. The Hilltop will never be the same; a place where you can take a walk in a quiet place. The section of the city around the School will change forever. Since we are a city, we can add another urban setting; there will be traffic and parking enforcement issues. Not a place where children can safely play, ride bikes, and walk their dogs. This will not be a no smoking zone. If forbidden on the property, it will move to the streets. Count the people who are abutters and count the potential residents of the apartments. The quantity will change; the quality will change.

When he speaks to his students about ethics, he says he is not equating ethics with morality, although the two are related. He is speaking about survival, not minimal survival, but optimal survival, or the intent to create it. One of the subtopics looks at outcomes of decisions through the lens of dramatic rehearsal.

He's sure most people have done this frequently in their lives. Supposed you are offered a new job. Do you sit back and imagine, with reason and emotion, what you think and feel it would be like to do that new job; to live it out in your mind, not just look at the job description and benefit handout. He bets that the greater majority have not done that with this Hilltop decision.

He advises them to spend some time up in the neighborhood, and see what it's like now, and then imagine what it would be like to live there with 30+ apartments, and 45+ cars in the lot or along the street.

IF you change the zoning, he believes it is a backward process. If you change the zoning, to satisfy a prospect, and not to make the prospect fit the zoning and to provide a reason why a variance would be given.

He sites a case in a zoning board request; the Chester Rod and Gun Club, Inc. vs. the Town of Chester. The board was to determine whether granting a variance would "alter the essential character of the locality." His sense is that making a decision to alter the zoning of the Hilltop plot would do precisely that. It will change the character of the neighborhood, and of course lower the property values considerably. If he understands the situation, a 'yes' vote would not make a variance necessary. Why haven't the people of the neighborhood showed up in force? He believes it is because we have lost too many Hilltop battles and have pretty much given up. Hilltop neighborhood that we know today, Rest in Peace.

There being no further comments from the public, Mayor Hilliard closed the public hearing at 6:55 p.m.

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Trish Harris, City Clerk

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Dana s. Hilliard, Mayor