

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
April 28, 2016 – 7:30PM

Present

Task Force Members – Bevilacqua, Davidson, Embick, Foster, Hatton, Kane, Kurth, Pomerantz, Van Tine and Yost. Absent were Barbacane, Murdock and Sennett. Also present was Township Planning Director Chris Patriarca; Sean O'Neill of the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC); John Snook, John Theilacker and Meredith Mayer of the Brandywine Conservancy; Jennifer Leister Reitz of Thomas Comitta Associates; and those mentioned below.

Call to Order

Mr. Patriarca called the meeting to order at 7:00 and started by thanking the volunteers for their participation as well as introducing himself and the consultant team of Mr. Snook, Mr. Theilacker, Ms. Mayer and Ms. Reitz to the Task Force. He stated the intent of the meeting is to provide the Task Force with an overall background on the project, the role of the Task Force as well as to simply meet one another and to allow for the Task Force members to meet the consultant team. Mr. Patriarca then gave a brief overview of the CCPC Vision Partnership Program (VPP) grant and formally introduced the consultant team.

Mr. Snook reiterated that Mr. Patriarca will be the primary contact for the Task Force and the consultant team. He stated that TCA will be very involved with the visioning workshop and that Brandywine will be leading the bulk of the compiling of the document and later meetings. Next followed brief introductions of all ten Task Force members in attendance with each stating their residence and tenure in the Township.

Mr. Snook next led a discussion on the overall expectations of the Task Force as part of this project. He stated the main expectation of the Task Force is to both review and assess all planning materials presented to the group to shape the overall direction of the plan. From this, the Task Force will also react to and guide policy suggestions and implementation strategies associated with the plan. All of these actions will be guided through the generation of overall consensus of the Task Force with their being no predetermined outcomes at the start. Mr. Snook then described what the Township Land Management Plan is and what it does. He stated it is fifteen years old and that the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires it to be updated. Further he indicated that much of Westtown has not changed since its adoption and that a fair amount of its guidance may be included in the update. However he did note the potential impacts of infill development and redevelopment.

Mr. Snook next stated the consultant team will review other Township plans and ordinances as well as those of neighboring jurisdictions and the County as to compliment the Westtown plan with those when applicable. He then indicated the Task Force will not meet as frequently during the data collection stages of the process, but will during the evaluation stage in the fall and winter months. The meetings will be topical in nature and generally not exceed two hours in length.

Next Mr. Pomerantz led an exercise that asked all of the Task Force members to write down what their overall expectations are of the comprehensive planning process given each members

unique experience. Specifically, Mr. Pomerantz asked what the one result of the process would be for each member. The responses were as follows:

- Mr. Foster – Preservation of landscapes and lifestyle and protection property rights
- Mr. Bevilacqua – Plan for future development, especially on the larger undeveloped tracts
- Ms. Van Tine – Plan for controlled growth and preserve large parcels and open spaces
- Mr. Davidson – Livable balance between open space and a reasonable tax base
- Mr. Embick – Development of a plan that will be followed
- Mr. Kurth – Smart Growth policies and preservation of remaining open spaces
- Mr. Yost – Preservation of existing open space
- Mr. Kane – Preservation of existing open space
- Mr. Hatton – Development of a useful framework for future growth
- Mr. Pomerantz – To make Westtown realize its potential and development a document that can be easily executed

Mr. Kane asked how the Westtown plan would complement the County 2025 plan. Mr. O'Neill stated this plan is an economic development plan, and that the Westtown plan will complement the County comprehensive plan, Landscapes2. Mr. O'Neill stated the intent of the VPP is to encourage the Township plan to compliment the County plan. He then spoke about the different types of "landscapes" identified in the County plan and indicated Westtown is predominately in the suburban landscape with a small portion in the rural landscape. Mr. Theilacker then stated the suburban landscape generally consists of areas that have a mix of low to medium density residential uses, limited commercial uses, and assumes that the area is mostly served by public water/sewer and other public infrastructure. Mr. Snook further noted the County plan is intentionally broad in nature to allow for flexibility in the development of local plans. As such he feels that the likelihood of the Westtown plan not aligning with the County plan is remote. Mr. Patriarca stated he would like to see the final document reflect the insights and input of the Task Force.

Next discussed were the positive impacts of agriculture throughout the County and what is being done to preserve farmland throughout the County and Westtown. Mr. O'Neill described the differences between the 2025 Plan and Landscapes2 and what can be done to make sure they do not conflict with each other. Specifically he stated the County is in the initial stages of updating Landscapes2 and that it will consider 2025 as part of the overall update. He further stated Landscapes2 has been officially adopted as the County comprehensive plan. Mr. Theilacker stated that where Landscapes2 and 2025 are in conflict, Landscapes2 will always supersede. He further stated Landscapes2 does not focus on agriculture within Westtown, but that the Township plan can provide focus and guidance on agriculture uses if the Township chooses to do so. Mr. Snook reiterated this point as Westtown still does have several large agricultural operations within the Township.

Mr. Davidson asked if the 2001 plan had been successfully implemented by the Township. Mr. Snook stated the zoning ordinance is consistent with the plan, and Mr. Foster noted there has not been significant change in the period since and the general sense he gets is that residents want to preserve the remaining open areas where practicable. Mr. Patriarca then provided a recent example of how the comp plan can impact development citing a proposed trail associated with an apartment development. Mr. Hatton followed by stating his preference for the "actionable" implementation strategies set forth on the Open Space Plan. Mr. Snook stated the

time horizon for the updated plan will be twenty years in the future. Mr. Pomerantz next spoke of a planning process that he worked on that combined comprehensive with economic planning. Further he stated the document produced by the Task Force should have strategies that are implementable for the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Mr. Pomerantz also noted he received a message from the Historical Commission requesting their needs are considered with the plan.

Mr. Embick noted the current plan incorporates many suggestions for conservation design, but that he did not feel it had been successfully implemented. Further he suggested that consideration be given for greater emphasis on this type of development as part of the update. Mr. Snook did note conservation design is promoted as part of the Flexible Development Procedure under the current zoning ordinance and discussed several of them. Mr. Foster then stated that a significant share of land that has been placed voluntarily under Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) in an effort to preserve agricultural operations in the Township and could also be incorporated into the update. Mr. Patriarca then concluded by stating through the comprehensive plan items such as the provision of active and passive open space can be evaluated and recommendations made to successfully implement them.

Next discussed was the relationship between the comprehensive plan and ordinances. Mr. Patriarca stated the comprehensive plan is the overall vision for the Township, and that the zoning and subdivision ordinances serve as implementation tools of the plan. He then gave an example of how conservation design discussed in the comp plan was implemented into the zoning ordinance through the Flexible Development Procedure. Mr. Snook followed and stated the plan will result in detailed and specific implementation recommendations for the BOS to consider.

Next discussed was the overall scope of work for the project as a whole led by Mr. Snook. He stated the data collection and document production would be handled exclusively by the consultant team. He stated the team will first evaluate both County and plans from adjacent municipalities for commonality with Westtown as well as update all mapping for the Township. Mr. Snook then stated the 2001 plan will serve as the foundation of the update, but that its overall format and/or approach may change. He concluded by stating the most important aspect of the plan will be the development of strategies to implement the plan. This will then be distilled to an easy-to-read and understand matrix as a reference. Mr. Patriarca followed by stating the Task Force will be responsible for driving the overall vision as well as to make sure what is produced adequately addresses it.

Next Mr. Snook discussed the principle milestones associated with the plan. The first of these is a sustainability assessment followed by stakeholder interviews. These will be followed with a visioning workshop as well as additional public meetings. Mr. Theilacker next described the sustainability assessment. He indicated this assessment will determine how much environmental sustainability is addressed in local ordinances and further identify areas that could be improved or enhances with regards to this. This assessment is done early in the process in order for the consultant team to become better acquainted with local ordinances as well as to provide for a baseline for possible strategies to handle sustainability in the plan. Mr. Theilacker stated this assessment will be discussed at the next Task Force meeting.

Ms. Mayer next briefly discussed stakeholder interviews. She indicated that the persons interviewed would have significant stakes in the community to get their insights on where Westtown has been, where we are going and how we should get there. Mr. Snook then stated the Task Force will assist in the overall development of questions to be asked in these

interviews.

Mr. Pomerantz followed and asked how the thoughts and insights of regular residents will be captured as part of the planning process. Mr. Theilacker stated participation from the general public is critical and that there will be several opportunities for them to have their voices heard through both a visioning workshop as well as other public meetings. Mr. Patriarca further stated a section of the Township website will be dedicated to the comp plan and serve as a portal for the planning process as a whole. Mr. Snook then stated the Task Force is also meant to generally represent the residents of the Township throughout the process.

Ms. Leister Reitz next discussed the visioning workshop. She stated this meeting is intended to create an open and interactive environment in order to solicit as much citizen feedback as possible. One of these exercises involves residents identifying places they “love” about the Township and places that present “challenges” for the Township. The end results in a map identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses throughout the Township. Ms. Leister Reitz then discussed the development of a word map inclusive of key topics representing the Township to further discussion of these strengths and weaknesses. Once these topics are narrowed down, those in attendance are then given “Westtown bucks” and they are “spent” by those in attendance on topics of most importance to each individual. This in turn provides for a clearer focus on topics of most interest by the residents.

Mr. Bevilacqua stated his concern with how historically in Westtown it has been very difficult to get residents involved in these types of projects and what is being done to inform the public of these events. Mr. Kane asked how the scope will be tracked in terms of the overall budget for the project. Mr. Snook stated the budget is capped at what was approved as part of the VPP grant and that he will be the person tasked with keeping the project on budget. Mr. Kane followed by asking how the Task Force will be able to track overall progress of the project. Mr. O’Neill stated he will be the person making sure all of the items in the scope are complete as the grant monitor from the CCPC. He did note that the project may not follow the timeline of the scope based on what the Task Force prioritizes, but that all of the salient points must be addressed. Mr. Patriarca also noted that the VPP grant ensures the plan will be completed within the 18 month timeframe and that Mr. Snook is responsible to keeping the project within the budget. Mr. Kane then asked are there project milestones that the Task Force should be aware of. Mr. Snook stated there are milestones, and that the largest is when draft text becomes available.

Mr. O’Neill next went through what the VPP grant entails and what the CCPC role encompasses. He then went through the CCPC checklist for the project to discuss their expectations. He noted the CCPC recommends the appointment of a Task Force chairman and that he is a non-voting member of the Task Force who will also review all deliverables. Mr. O’Neill then stated he is also responsible for the Act 247 review so that when it is undertaken by the CCPC the final document is in an appropriate state. He then concluded by discussing the reimbursement for the grant funding post-adoption.

Mr. Patriarca next stated he will be sending out an e-mail to the entire group to set a date for a regular meeting schedule. Mr. Snook stated that they are hoping to have one meeting per month with an alternate date also reserved if needed. He then followed by giving a brief overview of potential topics for the next Task Force meeting. Mr. Pomerantz noted the importance of the visioning workshop, and asked if there was any possibility to hold the visioning workshop in late June instead of waiting until September in an effort to build positive

momentum for the planning process going into the fall. Mr. Pomerantz further suggested the possibility of holding multiple visioning events if necessary.

Bobbie Pomerantz then suggested consideration be given to holding smaller meetings at various neighborhoods through the Township in an effort to get more residents involved in the process. Mr. Snook stated the constraint of this approach is budgetary as well as timing with schedules of the consultant team. The Task Force agreed the visioning workshop should be held in June and not September. Mr. Snook suggested the workshop could be done in late June and the Task Force could assist in the getting of the word out on the meeting at Rustin High School.

For the homework exercise, Ms. Leister Reitz requested the Task Force Review the current Township comprehensive plan as well as the links to various other plans the consultant team will forward to the group. Mr. Pomerantz concluded the meeting by stating some focus should be given to economic development as an element of the plan update. Mr. Snook concluded by thanking the Task Force for their participation and noted he was looking forward to a continued partnership through the planning process.

Public comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

9:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force Secretary