

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE MEETING

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

Present

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

Call to Order

Mr. Patriarca called the meeting to order around 7:00 and started by thanking the volunteers for their attendance. He next outlined what the primary discussion points were for the evening as well as what the role of the Task Force will be for events moving forward.

Visioning Session

Ms. Reitz first provided the Task Force with a handout outlining what the visioning workshop will entail. She stated the workshop is setup as a series of activities designed to elicit direct feedback from the residents on how they view the Township. This feedback in turn will be utilized to help frame the plan update. In terms of the event, Ms. Reitz stated several easels and maps will be available for viewing as people arrive. Next, she stated that Mr. Patriarca will open the meeting with introductions and a brief overview of the meeting.

After this, Mr. Comitta will lead the group in a “hearts and circles” exercise. This exercise will allow for those in attendance to place hearts around areas of the Township they love and circles around areas needing improvement. Mr. Comitta stated he has done this exercise at least eight times previously, and that it has been very successful in that it does allow for residents to give quick feedback on areas of importance to them. Once complete, he stated that common themes are usually apparent among all of those who participated in the exercise. Mr. Comitta further stated that much of what is learned from the exercise will be new for the consultant team.

After the “hearts and circles” exercise, Mr. Comitta stated he will next lead those in attendance through a discussion of the goals and objectives of the current comprehensive plan. The purpose of this exercise will be to evaluate what has been accomplished since they were adopted and what still needs to be marked on. Specifically, those in attendance will be asked to underline what goals and objectives they identify as important. This again will illustrate common trends among all of those in attendance for how they view the Township.

After both of these exercises are complete, all in attendance will be given \$100 in “Westtown Bucks” to spend on what they individually feel is the most important issue facing the Township. From this exercise, the residents in attendance will be able to assign importance on issues facing the Township in the manner they spend their “bucks.” From this, the consultant team will be able to better understand areas of importance of those in attendance. Further, the exercises will result in those in attendance giving greater thought and consideration to the issues facing the Township. Altogether, the information gathered will help guide the planning process as a whole.

Mr. Davidson commented first on how to best get people to attend the meeting, but to also have a “back-up” plan such as a survey to gather additional feedback from the community as a whole. Mr. Comitta stated that having these types of conversation at a public meeting allows for residents to hear and consider other opinions that may not have previously been considered. Mr. Sennett asked what has been done to date to get the word out on the meeting, and Mr. Pomerantz provided an overview to date where posters and flyers have been placed for the meeting as well as other ways the event information has been distributed throughout the Township. He then asked the Task Force to help get the word out on the workshop by either e-mailing out the flyer or handing it out to their friends and neighbors in the Township.

Mr. Sennett stated that more information on the actual activities of the meeting should be included in the flyer. Mr. Pomerantz stated the flyer was developed prior to the full program being complete and is intended to get residents interested in the planning process as a whole. Mr. Bevilacqua stated his concern is with the overall time of the workshop at over two hours as being something that may suppress turnout. Mr. Comitta stated that he could work to try to complete the workshop in a shorter amount of time.

Ms. Reitz next discussed how the Task Force may assist during the workshop. She stated that at least one Task Force member should sit at each table to serve as a “table captain” to assist residents with the exercises as necessary. Mr. Snook further stated that members of the consultant team will also be available throughout the event to assist both Task Force members as well as the public with their questions and concerns. Ms. Reitz stated that the Task Force members will also be allowed to participate in the exercises as well as serve as a “table captain.” She finally stated at the conclusion of the meeting, the Task Force will have a “debriefing” to quickly gather initial thoughts from the Task Force on the event.

Mr. Comitta stated in the event of a very large turnout, the exercise evaluating the 2001 plan may be truncated somewhat. He finally stated that at the end of the meeting he would tell those in attendance who were uncomfortable with speaking in front of the group to send their feedback directly back to the Township for consideration. Mr. Snook stated his feeling that turnout should be very good for the event based on all of the effort going into promoting the event. Mr. Patriarca further stated that those in attendance at the workshop will be contacted directly for future events associated with the planning process.

Mr. Foster asked how the information gained from the workshop will be incorporated into the planning process. Ms. Reitz stated this information will be one component of many that helps shape the planning process as a whole. Mr. Snook stated further that the Task Force serves as the citizen driving force behind the planning process as a whole, in part utilizing what was learned from the workshop. Mr. Foster followed by stating that a short survey would also be very effective in gathering citizen input. Mr. Snook stated he agreed to a point, but that not all residents will take the time to fill out a survey as well.

Mr. Pomerantz asked if the overall vision statement can be changed, to which the consultant team stated it can be based on how the process evolves. Mr. Davidson followed by asking if people involved in the process will be asked if they will be willing to pay for what they say they want for the Township. Mr. Comitta stated it will not be asked directly per se, but that the “Westtown bucks” exercise should help residents begin to think about how to pay for plan recommendations. Mr. Davidson next asked what is meant in the 2001 plan when it states “growth cannot be stopped.” Mr. Snook stated that growth cannot be stopped through

overregulation by themselves, it must be accommodated through them. He then discussed the Township's flexible development procedure as a mechanism to accommodate development as well as to preserve open space. Mr. Patriarca stated the Task Force will be responsible for prioritizing the goals and implementation strategies that result from the planning process as a whole.

Stakeholder “expert” Interviews

Mr. Snook introduced this topic and stated a stakeholder may be a resident or non-resident that can provide for differing insights into contemporary Westtown. He indicated there may be 12-20 of these undertaken, and asked the Task Force to assist in providing potential candidates to interview. Mr. Pomerantz then asked the Task Force to take a few minutes to each come up a few possibilities to interview as stakeholders. The suggestions from the Task Force were as follows:

Ms. Barbacane – Westtown School, Amish Market/Westtown Village, WEGO Police
Mr. Bevilacqua – Stokes family, Stratton family, recreational sports associations
Mr. Davidson – Westtown School, gas companies
Mr. Embick – Westtown School (John Bayer, John Evans, David Jones), Carman Battavio
Mr. Foster – Robinson family, ASA committee chair
Mr. Kane – Numerous community members
Mr. Kurth – Cheyney University, apartment owners, Stroud Water Research Center
Mr. Pomerantz – PennDOT, Ed McFalls/Westminster, John Jaros, Rick Smith
Mr. Sennett – Westtown Professional Center, Sewer Authority

Mr. Patriarca stated that next steps will be to develop the questions and refine the interview list further.

Sustainability Assessment Update

Meredith Mayer next started the conversation on the status of the sustainability assessment. She stated this assessment looked at all Township policies and ordinances to determine how well they promote sustainability. Ms. Mayer provided for a timeline of when this will be ready for comments from the Task Force. She stated the assessment reviewed each of these documents from the vantage of seven separate categories and identified what is working well and where needs improvements for issues related to sustainability.

Future Meeting Schedule/“Homework”

Mr. Snook led an overview of the schedule of the Task Force moving forward. He then started the discussion of the previous homework sent out to the Task Force asking for their reactions to sample plans they were asked to review and comment on. Ms. Barbacane stated her preference for the shorter document for the public to better understand, and Mr. Snook stated this can be done by having a lean policy document with a thorough appendix. Mr. Hatton suggested the plan potentially be broken down into several smaller, topical documents. Mr. Pomerantz stated he would like to see a glossary of planning terms included as well as a concise overview with the update similar to that of East Bradford. He also stated he liked the overall format/visuals of the East Goshen plan.

Mr. Sennett stated one of the documents he evaluated provided an overall context of the different agency responsibilities at the onset to better control expectations of the public. Mr. Pomerantz then suggested the plan should consider future technologies and trends. Mr. Davidson stated the plan should provide for recommendations as to how to better coordinate

with PennDOT and state agencies to engage for infrastructure improvements. Mr. Bevilacqua concurred with the East Bradford plan as being a good template to consider. Mr. Embick stated his concern with the lack of reference to the Pennsylvania Constitution relevant to environmental protections and sustainability. Mr. Hatton liked how “comprehensive” the East Goshen plan presented materials. Mr. Pomerantz stated his desire to have economic development be a component of the comprehensive plan as a whole. Mr. Snook then discussed issues that are important for the residents as a whole that may be under the purview of a different entity (i.e. WCASD, Chester County, etc.).

Public comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

9:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force Secretary