

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
September 22, 2016 – 7:00 PM

Present

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

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order around 7:00.

Comprehensive Plan Update overall progress

Mr. Theilacker first provided the Task Force with an overall update of their progress on the plan. He stated they had been working through the summer doing the demographic analysis and from this analysis will develop population projections to assist in the development of the overall plan. He then stated they will be undertaking an analysis of the remaining developable properties in the Township. Mr. Theilacker further stated they are developing a series of new maps to illustrate the various amenities and conditions of the Township.

Mr. Kane asked if millennials are being accounted for as part of their analysis. Mr. Theilacker stated the population data is collected by age cohort and will illustrate the millennial population. He then followed by stating a concern with housing affordability and Mr. Theilacker stated this will be evaluated as part of the plans housing component. Mr. Pomerantz then listed the various proposes either under construction or in progress in the Township.

Stakeholder interview update

Mr. Pomerantz led the discussion and stated of all of the people that interviews were requested of, only one declined. He then listed the persons interviewed as part of the process. He further stated that each of the persons interviewed were very engaged and offered a wide variety of insights on Westtown as a whole.

Mr. Patriarca stated that several of the persons interviewed spoke on the issue of millennials. Specifically there were concerns with how to provide for more workforce housing in the County that allow for millennials to consider residing within the County. Ms. Barbacane asked if the new apartment construction was being targeted to millennials, and it was stated these apartments were seeing various groups of people residing there from millennials to retirees. Mr. Patriarca then stated a second theme that arose through the various interviews was an acknowledgement of the barrier that 202 creates between the eastern and western ends of the Township. He further stated that all of the people speaking on this issue said the Township should think big on this issue and work incrementally over time to address this issue. The third issue that came across in multiple interviews is more of an awareness of the few remaining farm properties and what types of strategies could be implemented to maintain these farms and open spaces in perpetuity. Specific to the Stratton Farm Mr. Foster stated there is a piece of ground that was donated to the Township that has a current farm lease on it for the Stratton family to utilize.

Mr. Hatton stated that one of the issues that struck him was the emphasis on technology and how it will impact the future. He also noted that numerous individuals indicated there are financial resources available for projects, but that they will not come to the Township and should be sought out. He further stated an issue that was discussed was the Township should continue to foster relationships with entities within the Township in an effort to better implement common goals. Mr. Hatton also reiterated the issue of millennials and housing affordability previously discussed.

Mr. Pomerantz followed by listing subject matters that occurred as part of all of the interviews. He stated these issues included open space, traffic, parks and recreation, culture, multi-generational housing, emergency responders, regional planning, redevelopment, agriculture, economic development, education, labor force housing and plan execution. He then stated all interviews ended by asking what they viewed as the most important issue to tackle in Westtown and he stated that technology and how new technologies may impact the Township moving forward. Mr. Patriarca then gave the example of how technology may impact future development as being driverless vehicles and how they impact current road infrastructure. Mr. Pomerantz then spoke more in depth on the interviews with PennDOT and open space preservation. He then concluded by stating the issues that struck him most were relevant to the 202 E/W divide and the notion of what does Westtown want to be.

Mr. Sennett asked what would happen if what is proposed for development is completed, but there is no demand for the final product. Mr. Pomerantz stated this issue did come up during some interviews and that it is outlined in the meeting notes. Mr. Patriarca also stated that the plan should not be so rigid as to preclude new technologies from being integrated into the Township. Mr. Embick suggested one of the interesting things that will be learned is what exactly Westtown thinks of itself now. Mr. Pomerantz also stated that several of the person's interviewed stated Westtown ordinances are generally in good shape overall.

Mr. Pomerantz concluded the discussion by asking what each of the interviewers found to be the most surprising issue learned. Mr. Patriarca stated the issue that most surprised him was with what the school district contends with and how they legally must operate within Pennsylvania. Mr. Hatton stated his biggest surprise was learning from the school district that larger homes do not necessarily equate to more school children. Mr. Pomerantz stated his biggest surprise was with a general preference of those met with was for a Board of more than three members.

Vision and Mission Statement discussion

Ms. Reitz led the conversation on vision and mission statements. She first provided copies of the statement submitted by Task Force members and asked for their initial thoughts on them. Mr. Sennett noted there is a general sentiment favoring open space preservation throughout the Township and that he personally does not fully agree with this as he does not view its preservation as something that directly impacts him. He did state that open space in lieu of additional congestion, etc. is a desirable thing, but not just open space for the sake of open space preservation. Open space should be functional, not just passive open space. He stated what is attractive to him was that it was an affordable place in a good school district that is a great place for families.

Mr. Foster stated that he views the visioning and mission process as something that should occur after information learned through the interview process and other data collection have been evaluated and incorporated into the overall thought. He also stated he did like the ideas of

incorporating agrarian heritage in these statements and further stated he views open space as meaning areas predominately being utilized as farms. Mr. Bevilacqua stated the statements all generally reflect Westtown's mixture of physical beauty, open space, recreation, housing and services provided that are all very positively viewed. Ms. Barbacane stated that open spaces are very important for the Township. Mr. Yost stated that many of the statements have overlapping themes, and that what struck him was Westtown's historic heritage and embracing of more diversity. Mr. Kane stated that some of the items being considered as part of the statements are out of reach of the Township as they require cooperation from entities outside of the Township.

Mr. Kurth stated the statements provided are not very different from others he reviewed from other Townships. Mr. Embick stated he would like to see a statement with more of an emphasis on sustainability. Ms. Van Tine stated the statement should represent where the Township wants to be irrespective of whether or not there is the ability of the Township to do so on its own. She further stated Westtown should strive to be the best Westtown it can be. Mr. Hatton stated he would like to have an expansion in what is considered to be a family as well as likes the incorporation of heritage and open space into the statements.

Mr. Pomerantz stated his vision as being more aspirational in nature stating the Township should strive to be a "top ten" ranked town by the time of the next comprehensive plan. He suggested the statement should be more aspirational in nature as to constantly have something to drive towards. Ms. Barbacane stated she generally likes the statements provided, but expressed a concern that what is desired is not consistently implemented. Mr. Foster stated his concern with a more aspirational vision as it may not be reflective of most people who reside in the Township.

Mr. Pomerantz then stated he views vision and mission statements as being sequential by nature with the mission providing the roadmap to implementation of the vision. He believes the mission is where we are and the vision is what we constantly strive towards. Mr. Davidson suggested the technology component should be combined with land management, housing and modernization to determine the vision moving forward. Mr. Sennett stated he liked the idea of an aspirational vision statement to tell the citizens that as a Township we are aiming high. Mr. Embick stated he was also in favor of an aspirational vision statement as well, but that it should also provide for some guidance on how to get there. Mr. Pomerantz further stated the aspirational approach is also effective in forcing the Township to continually be proactive and not reactive.

Ms. Reitz noted that in her experience vision and mission statements are generally very similar by nature, and the idea for one that is more aspirational is appealing to her. Mr. Davidson stated the statement should integrate change and stability in order to best motivate the residents for change. Mr. Hatton stated a preference for an aspirational vision statement as it does inspire a more proactive approach to attaining overall goals. Ms. Barbacane stated a vision statement will evolve as the process continues on. Mr. Pomerantz stated the primary downfall of the aspirational vision is the risk of it not being attained.

Next Steps

Ms. Reitz stated the next meeting will look at demographics as well as start the conversation on goals and objectives. There was an initial consensus to have the November meeting on November 17.

Public comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

8:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force Secretary