

Wallace Township Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Forum

May 22, 2013
7:30 PM – 9:00 pm.

MEETING NOTES

In attendance: committee members Albert, Frommeyer, Mackrell, Moore; Supervisors D'Angelo and Moore; sub-committee members Eschbacher and McCabe; Chester County Planning Commission representative Carol Stauffer; Township Manager Randzin; and, consultants Kologie and Hutchinson. The meeting began at 7:45.

Introduction

1. Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan Update – Jim Mackrell, Chairman, Wallace Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and member, Wallace Township Planning Commission.

Mackrell gave an overview of the Comprehensive Plan process, noting the public committee meetings and on-line survey.

2. This evening's forum – Comprehensive Plan consultants Craig Kologie, Castle Valley Consultants; and, Ann Hutchinson, Natural Lands Trust

The consultants reviewed the evening's agenda.

Community Voices

3. Residents' Views on What's Unique and Special About Wallace Township

- Woodlands and Streams – Mark Eschbacher, Environmental Advisory Council

Mark highlighted rural character as an aspect special and worthy of consideration as the Comprehensive Plan moves forward. Among the features that define rural character are the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek and the surrounding, unique wooded areas, ridgelines and stream buffers. Wallace is noteworthy for interlinked woodlands and streams, and open spaces that remain relatively undeveloped, the absence of road arterials being one contributing factor. Rural character is also enhanced by the absence of direct stream discharge and local geology of "rocky ripples and bedrock buffers" that keep the stream pH at an optimal level. Low impervious surface also contributes positively to stream health and rural character.

- History – Janet Grashoff, Historical Commission, Planning Commission

Due to a last minute family emergency, Ms. Grashoff was unable to attend and Ann Hutchinson gave an overview of historic resources. She noted the contributions of the late Jane Davidson, Wallace resident, to the historic preservation movement in Chester County and in documenting historic resources in Wallace Township. Indiantown School remains a Township icon, dating from

1859. Ann described the changes in Springton Manor from an 8,000 acre William Penn land grant to the 270-acre Chester County park today. She noted the recent listing of Glenmoore Village on the National Register of Historic Places, listed for its Victorian architecture and last remaining train station on the Downingtown to Honeybrook train line. Noting that not all historic resources are buildings, she concluded with a photo of an abandoned road and stone wall on the former McClure Farm, now proposed as a Township trail as part of the Hankin Group's conditional use approval for Hamilton.

- Parks, Trails and Community Events – Mary McCabe, Trails Preservation Board and Audra Matlack, Parks & Recreation

Mary presented photos showing the character of over 20 miles of trail in Wallace Township. That trail network ranges from those in Marsh Creek State Park to perimeter trails dedicated in new developments. Such trails are mostly unpaved, in keeping with the rural character of the Township. Some of these trails are more than a century old. She noted that the proposed Struble Trail connects the two commercial zoning districts in the Township, as a pedestrian trail, potentially offering residents an alternative to driving to these areas.

4. The Wallace “top three” - audience participation.

The participants answered the question: If you had to move away from Wallace Township today, what three things would you miss most? (See responses in 6., below.)

5. A really great idea that would make Wallace a better place to live – group participation.

The participants divided into three groups and were asked to develop one idea that their group believes would make the Township a better place to live. (See responses in 6., below.)

6. Summary of what we have heard tonight – Craig Kologie and Ann Hutchinson, consultants.

Three things that would be missed the most. *The responses can be grouped into categories, or “themes” all of which centered on:*

RURAL CHARACTER AND ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE, with supporting statements regarding:

- a. Quiet, peaceful, private and slower pace of life*
- b. Self-sufficiency regarding drinking water and waste water treatment*
- c. Low crime (with noted recent exceptions)*
- d. The Brandywine Creek with its small tributaries, high water quality, surrounding woodlands, greenspace and accessibility to residents*
- e. The community – a sense of belonging to a “tight-knit” place, with a “non-urban”/country/small town feeling.*
- f. Low traffic and traffic lights*
- g. Living near nature, offering diverse experiences including: places habited by peepers and bluebirds; Springton Manor and Marsh Creek Parks; hiking trails; dark skies; beautiful trees, flowers, open fields, woods and great vistas.*

One Great Idea.

GROUP 1: A family restaurant with good food and good prices in Wallace Township.

GROUP 2: A Town Center. Further explanation noted that they didn't have a new, big, mixed-use development in mind. Instead, a place that people could gather in the community, perhaps over coffee, and accessible by trail, as well as by driving.

GROUP 3: Preserve the rural character!

Concluding Remarks and What to Watch for Next

7. Jim Mackrell, Chairman –

- *In closing, Jim commented on the excellent work of the 1985 Comprehensive Plan, preceding the current effort. He stated that the earlier plan centered on “preserving rural character”, a theme that dominated this evening’s forum. The 1985 goal of preserving working farms is unlikely to carry forward. Mr. Albert commented that prices for land rose so much since then that many farms changed hands and farming changed/ceased. Mackrell also stated that the former population projections of the Township reaching 7,000 residents has not occurred (the current population is around 3,240).*

Jim concluded the evening with the goal of the steering committee taking action and ensuring that the Township can accomplish the strategies in the updated Comprehensive Plan.

- The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meets during the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meetings. Our next meeting at which the Comprehensive Plan will be discussed is on Wednesday, July 10th at 7:30 pm (note that we will not be discussing the plan in June). All meetings are open to the public.
- If you have not completed the on-line survey, please do so by visiting the Township website at www.wallacetwp.org . To date, 203 residents have responded. The survey will be available until early June.