

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township
March 22, 2017 – 6:30PM

Present

Commissioners – Rodia, Pomerantz, Hatton, Lees and Yaw. Absent was Adler. Also present was Township Planning Director Chris Patriarca, Township Manager Rob Pingar and those mentioned below.

Call to Order

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 6:30 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was approved unanimously as presented (SY/JL).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Commission (PC) meeting of March 8, 2017 were unanimously approved as amended 5-0 (JL/SY)

Reports

Mr. Hatton presented the March 20 Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting. At their workshop they discussed proposed pipeline ordinance amendments and the public works garage expansion. At their regular meeting the BOS had reports from the Police Chief, Township Solicitor and Parks & Recreation. Under old business they made several payments and stated applications were still being accepted for the PC vacancy.

Announcements

Mr. Patriarca stated applications for the PC vacancy will be accepted through March 30 and that he expects the appointment to be in place by May.

Public Comment – Non-agenda items

There were no non-agenda public comments.

New Business

PennDOT informational and Q&A session

Mr. Pomerantz opened the discussion with Fran Haney and Gene Blaum from PennDOT to discuss intergovernmental cooperation between the Township and PennDOT, PennDOT's planned transportation improvements in and around Westtown, and future planning for regional transportation needs. Mr. Pomerantz emphasized the discussion was not to be a referendum on the Crebilly/Toll Brothers conditional use application and any person with a question will be allowed to ask them.

Mr. Pomerantz first asked what the Township comprehensive plan update should consider as it relates to PennDOT. Mr. Haney discussed the importance of coordination with the County to get Township road projects included on the Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), and inclusion on the TIP is required for federal funding. He also suggested land use planning be considered to promote additional connections to the existing road network and mitigate impacts

on existing state roads. Mr. Blaum reiterated the importance of having a project listed on the TIP and stated it is updated every two years. Mr. Pomerantz asked how PennDOT plans for large projects, and Mr. Blaum stated they are generally separated into multiple phases for funding purposes. He then asked how projects are prioritized, and Mr. Blaum stated it is based on funding and overall complexity of the project. Specific to the 202 corridor, Mr. Blaum discussed the evolution of its improvement project from limited access to the current intersection improvements at Route 1 and Route 926. Specific to 926, he stated preliminary engineering should be completed by the end of 2017 for its proposed improvements.

Mr. Pomerantz asked what Westtown can do to elevate the priority of Westtown transportation needs and projects. Mr. Blaum reemphasized coordination with the County and inclusion on the TIP for capital projects. Mr. Rodia asked how funding is allocated and how roads are prioritized for repaving. Mr. Blaum stated the paving program has expanded as a result of Act 89 funding since 2014, but that PennDOT is still dealing with a significant backlog of repaving projects. He noted all roads are fully evaluated and ranked on need as part of their five year paving program and stated that both 202 and 926 in Westtown will be repaved in 2017.

Mr. Pomerantz asked for the cause of poor pavement conditions experienced throughout the state road network. Mr. Blaum stated Pennsylvania has more miles of state highways than all other surrounding states, and that comparison to neighboring systems is not a fair comparison. Mr. Rodia asked where funding comes from and if there is enough manpower to complete projects. Mr. Blaum noted that maintenance funding has been relatively flat in the past resulting in a compounded backlog of projects. He further stated pavement design is based on formulas that factor in overall use of the road in question.

Mr. Haney discussed the problems with maintenance as a result of an aging road system and how it is cost prohibitive to simply rebuild the system in its totality. He further noted the damage resulting from two strong winters and a lack of funding to make necessary repairs as of late. Mr. Haney then discussed how funding for ADA ramps throughout the state has taken 30 percent of the overall maintenance budget in recent years prior to being funded through a separate line item. He then discussed how State Police funding impacts PennDOT budgeting and how newly proposed legislation may increase their funding by requiring municipalities to pay for State Police service. If these changes are implemented, Mr. Haney stated state roads will significantly improve over the next decade with increased maintenance funding in place.

Specific to paving technology, Mr. Pomerantz asked if PennDOT uses similar technologies as other states that experience cold winters. Mr. Haney stated there is some variation and Mr. Blaum stated winter problems are exasperated in Pennsylvania as a result of a near-continuous freeze/thaw cycle that damages roadbeds that is not experienced in states where the freeze is more prolonged. Mr. Yaw asked what the "shape" of proposed PennDOT project along 202 is at this time, and Mr. Blaum described the 202/926 project estimated for completion by 2019 regardless of any current development projects. Mr. Yaw then asked if anything was being done to alleviate northbound traffic issues, and Mr. Haney stated that although no new lanes are proposed there will be improvement resulting from the realignment and new signalization proposed for the intersection. Mr. Yaw asked if the improvement will be similar to those at 202/Matlack Street and Mr. Blaum stated they will be.

Mr. Haney next discussed the importance of planning to avoid off-set intersections as part of land developments. He stated off-sets reduce efficiency and overall safety of the road network as a result of additional conflict points they create. Mr. Haney then discussed the improvements

at the 202/1 intersection and the completion of the circular road. He noted the Wegman's leg was constructed with mainly private funding and was completed much sooner than PennDOT would have built it. He then stated the Hillman connection of the loop road is now also proposed to be completed by a developer resulting in the potential to reallocate its funding to other projects. How that money is reallocated is based on conversations with the DVRPC and PennDOT.

Mr. Hatton asked how reallocated monies could be used in Westtown, and Mr. Blaum stated coordination would need to occur between the Township, County and PennDOT to get the project on the TIP for capital funding. Mr. Hatton then asked about signal coordination, and Mr. Haney stated signal coordination is not effective for signals spaced far apart, but rather ones in a dense corridor. Specific to message system controls, Mr. Blaum stated they are managed by the PennDOT Traffic Management Center at King of Prussia and messages are based on real-time conditions evaluated from their camera network. Mr. Haney further stated PennDOT can dispatch their own personnel to assist emergency responders when an incident occurs to quickly restore the travel lanes.

Mr. Hatton next asked about the noise associated with the new 202 concrete, and Mr. Haney stated it results from the tining of the concrete to improve traction for vehicles when the pavement is wet. Specific to how concrete or asphalt is selected for a road, Mr. Blaum stated an analysis is undertaken that evaluates use and type of traffic for the road and that heavier use roads utilize concrete as it is more durable and lasts longer. Mr. Hatton asked why concrete was not utilized along Route 100, and Mr. Haney stated that limited concrete could be used at stops to reduce wear on the roadway by heavy vehicles. Mr. Hatton concluded by asking about the impacts of a right-in/right-out access, and Mr. Haney stated if designed properly, these types of access have minimal impact on the principal road. A full access has significant impacts as it creates additional conflict points for motorists. All access should be modeled to determine if sufficient gaps exist for vehicles to safely make turning movements at access points.

Mr. Pomerantz next asked what considerations should be given to residents of an existing development when PennDOT requires a new road align with it. Mr. Haney stated a variety of factors should be considered inclusive of resident feedback, reduction of conflict points and improved connectivity. He emphasized PennDOT believes alignment of roads improves overall safety due to this reduction in conflict points. Mr. Pomerantz then asked why PennDOT does not require developers to improve a Level of Service (LOS) for an impacted intersection more than what their proposal will generate. Mr. Haney stated state law will only allow for PennDOT to require mitigation of traffic back to the condition existing at the time their development was proposed and nothing more. He did note in some cases approved mitigation can result from things such as signal retiming, but mitigation can also include construction of additional travel and turn lanes. Mr. Haney further stated there is flexibility to allow for off-site improvements that result in an offset to the total LOS impact resulting from a new project.

Mr. Pomerantz next asked how PennDOT will address potential traffic issues associated with the Mariner East 2 (ME2) pipeline project construction along 352. Mr. Haney stated he has not seen a submission for a highway occupancy permit (HOP) from Sunoco for construction within their ROW along 352. They both stated they cannot speculate on what the impacts would be without a formal application explaining the project. Mr. Blaum stated the permitting can take some time to complete, and Mr. Haney stated utilities may operate within their ROW by permit only.

Mr. Pomerantz concluded by asking for their thoughts on driverless cars in the future and what the planning implications for this technology are. Mr. Haney noted this technology is already occurring and that PennDOT is very involved in the testing of driverless technologies as well as establishing a task force to evaluate how the technology should be regulated. He stated he is unsure of when this switch would occur, but that the technology is already here. Speaking to potential benefits, Mr. Haney stated safety should be improved as it reduces human error as well as make more efficient use of the existing road infrastructure.

Michael Gill asked Mr. Haney to describe the scoping process associated with a land development application. Mr. Haney stated the scoping application gives PennDOT all of the general information and background on the project to provide for some initial comments on the project as a whole. He emphasized that the municipality participate in any PennDOT scoping meeting scheduled with a developer and that the municipal and PennDOT process need to be concurrent in an effort to best meet all party needs.

Bob Dilullo – 1004 Supplee Way: Mr. Dilullo asked who established the LOS criteria and Mr. Haney stated it is a nationally accepted standard. He then asked how often intersections are evaluated and Mr. Haney stated they are only when a project is proposed, not randomly. Mr. Haney then discussed the criteria evaluated for a LOS inclusive of current, future traffic without development and future traffic resulting from the proposed development.

Jim Kane – 1044 Edgewood Chase Drive: Speaking about driverless vehicles, Mr. Kane expressed his concerns with this technology relative to safety issues related to computer hacking. Mr. Haney stated this is one of the considerations of the PennDOT task force looking into the issue of driverless vehicles and that this will be an ongoing process as the technology continues to evolve. Mr. Kane asked who owns traffic signals and Mr. Haney stated municipalities currently own and operate signals, but that PennDOT is looking at potential control and ownership of signals in critical corridors.

Bill Hosier – 1556 Marlboro Road: Mr. Hosier asked who is responsible for the maintenance of trees and other vegetation within the PennDOT ROW along 352. Mr. Haney stated this would be the responsibility of the Township as they are responsible for the access itself. Mr. Blaum asked Mr. Hosier to speak with him after the meeting on this issue.

Matt Kelly – 22 Robins Nest Drive: Mr. Kelly asked if any base repairs are proposed for the 202/926 repaving projects, and Mr. Haney stated small repairs will be made as needed but no large-scale base repairs are proposed for either project. Mr. Kelly then asked if PennDOT regulates “jake brakes,” and Mr. Blaum stated the municipality must pass an ordinance that is then reviewed and approved by PennDOT. Mr. Kelly next asked if additional turn lanes and left turn signals could be added to Skiles Boulevard during peak school hours. Mr. Haney stated changes in signal timing may be proposed by the Township. However a study must be done to see what the impacts of the change would be, but noted additional delay on 202 would not be viewed favorably.

Tom Foster – 734 Westbourne Road: Mr. Foster asked if any projects other than the 202/926 improvement are on the current TIP for Westtown, and Mr. Blaum stated there are not. Mr. Foster then asked if funding for bicycle/pedestrian facilities impacts maintenance funding. Mr. Blaum stated that bicycle/pedestrian funding is not part of the maintenance budget and has a separate line item in their overall budget.

Mr. Pomerantz asked about what types of grants are available for municipalities to apply for. Mr. Haney emphasized the importance of having some engineering complete for a project prior to making an application and then discussed a variety of grant opportunities including: PennDOT multi-modal, Transportation Community Development Impact (TCDI), DCED multi-modal, DCNER C2P2, DCED Greenways, Trails & Recreation, Automotive Red Light Enforcement (ARLE), Green Light Go, and Safe Routes to School grants. Mr. Pomerantz asked if smaller municipalities the size of Westtown are successful in acquiring grant funding. Mr. Haney stated many have and the most important aspect of a grant application is the amount of work already done towards completing the project in question.

Mr. Hatton asked if they see any of the major arterials in Westtown being expanded upon over the next twenty years. Mr. Haney stated he does not see this occurring on 926 or Route 3, and that PennDOTs focus now and for the foreseeable future being on maintenance of existing infrastructure and not adding of additional capacity. Mr. Blaum noted that some additional capacity may be included with maintenance projects and cited I-95 through Philadelphia as an example of this. Mr. Pomerantz asked what the one takeaway is for the Township from the discussion had what would it be. Mr. Haney stated this would be that PennDOT is a partner that should be engaged at the earliest point for any project impacting state roads. He further stated that PennDOT constantly balances the needs of a wide array of groups as they address issues across the state. Mr. Pomerantz then closed the discussion and thanked both Mr. Haney and Mr. Blaum for their attendance.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

8:40 pm (JL/SY)

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca
Planning Commission Secretary