

# WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Stokes Assembly Hall  
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township  
April 5, 2017 – 7:30PM

## **Present**

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

## **Call to Order**

Mr. Hatton called the meeting to order at 7:30 and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Adoption of Agenda**

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

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Planning Commission (PC) meeting of March 22, 2017 were unanimously approved as presented with Ms. Adler abstaining (SY/JL)

## **Reports**

Ms. Adler presented the April 3 Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting. At their workshop they held PC interviews and a discussion on an additional driveway access for Westtown Woods. At their regular meeting the BOS had reports from Public Works, the Historical Commission and the PC. Under old business they had an escrow release for PNC, approved a resolution, and made an appointment to the P&R Commission. The BOS then had a presentation from Chester County Emergency Services relevant to emergency operations planning and procedures in the event of a pipeline emergency.

## **Announcements**

Mr. Patriarca stated the April 19 PC will be canceled as it is the same evening as the Crebilly conditional use hearing.

## **Public Comment – Non-agenda items**

There were no non-agenda public comments.

## **New Business**

### **Sidewalks in the Township**

Mr. Hatton opened the general discussion on sidewalks in the Township and how they may be addressed through the comprehensive plan and potential ordinance amendments. Mr. Hatton stated the discussion was to be general in nature and that they would not be in any position to make any formal recommendations on the issue to the BOS at the conclusion of the discussion. Mr. Patriarca reiterated what Mr. Hatton stated as being the focus of the discussion and that in his opinion sidewalks are not appropriate for all streets in the Township. He suggested sidewalks be thought of more strategically for locations where they will connect public spaces with existing sidewalk and trail networks. He further suggested consideration should also be given to utilizing existing resources such as the Township paving and striping schedule to include more pedestrian amenities within existing ROWs. Mr. Pingar then stated he developed a handout with various topics relevant to sidewalks for the PC to consider.

Mr. Yaw stated he is not adverse to the inclusion of sidewalks on one side of the street as part of larger, new developments, and further agreed prioritization to select areas for new sidewalks connecting public amenities was not a bad idea when driven by the public. He opposed the notion of sidewalking the entire Township stating it is not being practical, especially when compared to other Township needs. Mr. Lees stated due to the built-out nature and physical layout of the Township, as well as costs to be borne by the residents, construction of sidewalks throughout the township is not practical. He did agree that they should be included with new development and prioritization should be given to connecting public amenities.

Ms. Adler asked if all pedestrian amenities are required to meet ADA requirements. Mr. Pingar stated this generally is based on the overall size and scope of a project. However he did state any road crossing will need to be ADA accessible as to keep crossings barrier free. Ms. Adler stated her belief there should be more safe ways for pedestrians move throughout the Township and that pedestrian facilities should be included as part of development and redevelopment proposals. Mr. Rodia echoed the sentiments of both Mr. Yaw and Mr. Lees and further questioned if all residents would be in favor of a comprehensive network constructed throughout the Township. He agreed they should be included as part of new development proposals as well as prioritization of critical pedestrian connections. He further emphasized great attention should be given to what type of amenity is provided (sidewalks, trails, shared-use path, etc.). Mr. Hatton noted the issue of sidewalks is likely something that will be included as part of the comprehensive plan update and the Task Force could use input from the PC on this issue.

Mr. Pomerantz stated he is not opposed to sidewalks in general and noted in places he previously lived with them, sidewalks were treated as infrastructure maintained by the governing body. He questioned if it is fair for the Township to require existing residents be given the responsibility for maintenance and repair of sidewalks they may not even desire. He stated he is in agreement with the requirement sidewalks be installed as part of new development, but if the Township were to install sidewalks they should be treated as infrastructure and paid for accordingly. Specific to the health issues associated with sidewalks, although sympathetic, he does not feel the burden should be placed on property owners for maintenance and repair. Relevant to pedestrian safety, Mr. Pomerantz suggested traffic calming and additional signage be provided to promote greater safety. He concluded that further discussions of sidewalks should be had as a public forum and that a plan should be developed to demonstrate where they are needed and that a public referendum should be considered to allow for residents to determine if they want sidewalks to be treated as public infrastructure. Referencing current planning documents, Mr. Pomerantz noted they promote sidewalks connecting a trail network, and suggested future planning documents have attainable implementation strategies inclusive of funding mechanisms.

Specific to bicycle paths, Mr. Patriarca stated he views this as a separate issue, but bicycle accommodation could be addressed through the development of bike routes and the addition of bicycle "sharrows" on the pavement. Specific to maintenance costs for sidewalks, Mr. Patriarca stated current Township ordinances place the responsibility on the abutting property owner, but noted the Township has accepted dedication of some pedestrian amenities, such as the Rustin trail, and the resulting maintenance costs, but that this is more an exception to the rule. He emphasized long-term costs are an important consideration needing to be included in any sidewalk discussion. Mr. Pingar noted the current ordinance requirements relevant to sidewalks are discretionary, but that maybe consideration should be given to requiring them for new

development. He further noted many neighborhood streets have wide paved areas where pedestrian use can be safely accommodated. Mr. Pingar also stated the importance for pedestrian amenities proposed by the Township connect places such as parks and schools.

Mr. Patriarca stated any future ordinance amendments should allow for a degree of flexibility in order to implement the most appropriate pedestrian amenity on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Rodia stated the first thing to be addressed should be a prioritization of critical pedestrian connections from a higher level and discussed some of the challenges associated with their construction (land acquisition, engineering costs, etc.). Mr. Pingar noted the more regional "rail trails" have significant state and federal funding associated with their construction and serve as the backbone of more localized trail networks. Mr. Patriarca stated some trail planning has been identified within the existing Township planning documents. Mr. Pomerantz suggested the PC think about areas where sidewalks may not be appropriate to focus effort on the prioritized areas. Ms. Adler stated flexibility is very important when determining the mode of pedestrian amenity for a particular location.

Martha O'Malley, 1126 Kolbe Lane – Ms. O'Malley suggested consideration be given to pedestrian accommodation along utility easements when opportunities become available. She further suggested additional pavement markings be considered to allow for safer passage for bicyclists.

Walt Pavelchek, 1050 South New Street – Mr. Pavelchek provided several comments and observations on the issue of sidewalks. He noted the ultimate costs for sidewalk implementation will be on the residents of the Township. He noted the Township already requires fees from residents for many things deemed important and it needs to determine if sidewalks raise to that level. He agreed there should be flexibility when dealing with this issue as the Township is a very dynamic place. He agrees that collector and arterial roads should be given sidewalks for safe travel by the general public. Specific to trails, Mr. Pavelchek stated the proposed Township wide system has never been implemented and its implementation at this time is nearly impossible due to the built-out nature of Westtown. He also noted the difficulty of getting trails implemented at the rear of residential properties and cited the failed trail along Dunvegan Road as an example of this. He then stated the advantage of sidewalks is in their location at the front of their homes, and not at rear like trails.

Mr. Pomerantz asked how he would recommend the Township notify those impacted by sidewalk installation they are now responsible for the maintenance, or if they should be treated as infrastructure and maintained by the Township. Mr. Pavelchek stated sidewalks can be constructed by the BOS citing safety concerns. Mr. Pomerantz reiterated his concern if sidewalks are not uniform throughout a neighborhood, only some residents would be responsible for maintenance and repair, not all. Mr. Patriarca stated the Township has wide latitude to regulate responsibility for sidewalks, but common practice is for maintenance and repair to fall to the abutting property owners. Mr. Pomerantz argued that if sidewalks are considered to be infrastructure that costs for their implementation should be handled by the municipality.

Tom Foster, 734 Westbourne Road – Mr. Foster told about an initiative to add sidewalks along Westbourne Road in 1979 to allow for children to walk to school. Initially viewed positively, Mr. Foster stated the public soured on the project after a series of public meetings resulting from the

costs associated with their implementation the residents would be responsible for.

Mr. Rodia stated the focus maybe should be on neighborhood connections and safety issues for the Township to possibly take on for implementation. Mr. Patriarca stated he views sidewalks in three ways. The first are the “critical connections” linking parks to neighborhoods, the second being a larger discussion on the issue led by the BOS and the residents as a whole and the third being case-by-case examples based on safety concerns. Mr. Hatton noted there is already a framework in place to identify areas needing pedestrian amenities through existing planning documents. Mr. Patriarca stated the topic of sidewalks will likely be discussed by the Comp Plan Task Force, but that anything further on this issue should be directed from the BOS.

### **Comprehensive Plan Update**

Mr. Hatton opened the discussion the status of the comprehensive plan update and topics covered to date. Mr. Patriarca stated all of the materials to date are located on the website with the development of goals, objectives and implementation strategies forthcoming. He stated a wide array of topics have been discussed to date in compliance with the approved scope of work and MPC. Mr. Hatton next spoke about the three proposed future land uses of neighborhood conversation, mixed-use and greenways. Mr. Patriarca emphasized the importance of the update to be flexible in what it proposes as to best reflect future changing trends. Mr. Pomerantz stated he and Mr. Hatton have pressed the consultant team to expedite the process further and discussed the strategies learned from the East Goshen speaker.

### **Public Comment**

Martha O'Malley, 1126 Kolbe Lane – Ms. O'Malley stated that public transportation should be a consideration as part of the mobility component of the comprehensive plan and spoke of the possibilities of a bus along Route 202.

### **Adjournment**

9:00 pm (EA/SY)

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Patriarca  
Planning Commission Secretary