

Friends of Worcester meeting minutes Meeting date: November 11, 2004

Present: Kim David, Rob Hayes, Wini Hayes, Charley Muir, Doug Rotondo, Jeannie Steigerwalt, Barb McMonagle, Marie Amato, Susan Caughlan

The minutes of the October meeting were approved as written and will be posted on the FOW website, www.friendsofworcester.org. A question was asked about follow-up with Rep. John Fichter about noise barriers along the Northeast Extension reconstruction project. Wini volunteered to contact Rep. Fichter to get more details on when the subject of noise barriers will come up and whether it has already been discussed or decided by PennDOT.

President's Report. Kim has completed a draft of the fundraising letter. He announced that FOW has hired Susan as a part-time administrative assistant. Her duties will include assisting the President with fund-raising and other tasks, producing minutes of meetings, enhancing our supporters database, working on outreach and education issues, writing grant applications, and interfacing with other nonprofit conservation organizations.

Membership. We are beginning to see contributions as a result of the recent newsletter.

Fundraising/Hospitality. Jeannie presented a draft of a letter to be sent to local companies asking them for support. Some revisions were suggested, and she will incorporate these into a new draft that will focus on asking for corporate sponsorship at various levels.

Township Reports.

Supervisors. The Supervisors approved the exoneration of real estate taxes for the Korean Church, including back taxes. The church is eligible for tax-free status but had neglected to request it until recently.

The Supervisors voted to send the township solicitor to the next ZHB meeting to request certain conditions (which were not enumerated) on the request for variances by John Westrum on the Reserve at Center Point.

Planning Commission. The Commission reviewed plans for the 209-unit age-restricted Stony Creek Farm residential development at North Wales and Township Line Rd. Open Space Coordinator Susan Caughlan requested that the developer include an easement to accommodate a possible future township trail through the parcel to connect from Whitehall Rd to the corner of North Wales and Township Line Rds. The developer's representative readily agreed to do this, asking only that the township trail remain separate from the residential trails internal to the development. The Planning Commission did not approve a recommendation of the entire site plan at this meeting because of their concern that too many outstanding issues in the township engineer's letter remained unaddressed.

On the commercial parcel at the corner of North Wales and Township Line, the PC recommended approval with two conditions: the sewage treatment plan must be resolved, and an adequate screening buffer must be provided between this property and the adjacent residential property on North Wales Rd.

Joint Meeting. There was no Joint Meeting since the last FOW meeting.

Zoning Board. Zoning variances were requested for the Reserve at Center Point (the former Posen/Hitchens farm on Trooper Rd.) in connection with subdivision of the existing house and barn into two parcels. Concerns were expressed about the ZHB repeatedly granting variances to zoning regulations, and the need to have ZHB members who do not so readily approve variances to our ordinances. The township solicitor was not heard to express the need for any conditions on the requested variances. The Board will announce their decision at the November ZHB meeting.

Newsletter. The Newsletter Committee was thanked for a fantastic newsletter -- the best one yet, according to some.

Outreach. Wini and other committee members reported that we reached a large number of township residents at the polls last month with a flyer encouraging them to attend the township Open Space Committee's public meeting. The public meeting was very well attended as a result. Wini reported on an invitation from Meadowwood to do a presentation on open space issues in the township. Barb has already updated the "saving land saves money" information, and the committee just needs to meet to prepare the presentation. Barb agreed to join the committee since she has expertise in this area.

Dave sent a revised draft of the brochure for comments. We reviewed additional photos for possible inclusion. The committee will review the text and photos at their next meeting and give Dave their comments.

Website. It was suggested to have a button for "upcoming events" so the website will remain current and informative to repeat visitors as well as first-timers. Other suggestions for additional material included a page listing land development projects that have been proposed and approved, when they will be discussed at township meetings, and what residents can do to have meaningful input into these decisions. Another suggestion was a slip ramp page, for posting updates to turnpike issues. It was noted that traffic is an ever-present concern of many township residents, but most do not make the connection between traffic and development. Susan was asked to put together a plan for expanding the web site offerings. Volunteers who would like to help with the expansion of the web site are asked to contact Kim or Susan. Susan will check with the Methacton Community Service club and also the community service requirement to see whether student help is available for this kind of project.

Current issues.

Open Space. Susan reported that FOW's initiative at the polls was a significant factor in getting a good turnout at the Open Space Committee's public meeting one week later. The meeting attracted 50 to 60 residents interested in identifying natural, historic, scenic and cultural resources in the township for possible future preservation. Residents were particularly interested in historic resources, and several asked about the township enacting a historic preservation ordinance similar to those in neighboring townships. There was discussion whether FOW should write to the supervisors to recommend such an ordinance. It was decided to defer this until it is clear whether they will initiate this on their own in the near future. The supervisors are sensitive to issues on which they receive phone calls or letters from residents, e.g. traffic and flooding. If they receive calls and letters from residents asking for a historic preservation ordinance, they may be motivated to seek one. Susan was asked to explore with NLT the possibility that such an ordinance might be included as part of the Growing Greener ordinance package now being drafted.

New Issues. The county will hold public meetings on November 15 and 16 on its proposed Water Resources Plan. Susan has a copy of the plan, if anyone wants to see it.

FOW 2005 meeting dates: Jan 20 (Thursday); Feb 23 (Wednesday), Mar 17 (Thursday), 7:30 p.m., Bean Road Nursery (corner of Bean & Whitehall Rds.)

FOW Holiday Party: December 29 (Wednesday -- please note the change from the previous date of Dec 30), 5 to 9 p.m., home of Wini & Rob Hayes, 3033 Fisher Rd. Potluck; families welcome. RSVP (610-584-0371) by Dec 26.