

Friends of Worcester meeting minutes Meeting date: February 23, 2005

Present: Kim David, Charley Muir, Doug Rotondo, Jeannie Steigerwalt, Rob Hayes, Wini Hayes, Dave Cardy, Susan Caughlan

The minutes of the January meeting were approved as written and will be posted on the FOW website, www.friendsofworcester.org.

Treasurer's Report. Barb McMonagle is organizing FOW's receipts and expenses in a computer program that will enable us to review annual changes in these categories and formulate an annual budget.

President's Report. Kim applauded FOW's recent excellent internal development. Financial tracking has been improved, and the outreach committee is making good progress on the development of the brochure, website, and public presentation.

Membership. It was proposed and agreed that the name of this committee be changed to "Contribution and Support," to reflect the fact that legally, FOW is not a membership organization. The committee's responsibilities remain the same. There was no report this month.

Fundraising/Hospitality. A draft of the corporate fundraising letter was reviewed. The suggested changes will be made. Proposed recipients were discussed. Susan will work on identifying an appropriate addressee at each company. The letters will be mailed when the brochure has been printed.

The Farmers Union Horse Show this year is Saturday, June 4. FOW will have a food tent as usual. It was suggested to have an extra tent and chairs so that people can sit and chat when they get their food. Assuming the weather cooperates, we will raffle off the items that were donated for the last raffle, which was rained out.

Township Reports.

Board of Supervisors

1. Work Session, Feb 7. Final subdivision approval was discussed for the Malone 4-lot subdivision at Wentz Church & Fisher Rds. The developer was asked by the twp to straighten the intersection and has agreed to do so by redirecting one road onto about 15 feet of his corner property.

Final subdivision approval was discussed for the Thompson-Scott 23-lot subdivision on Berks Rd & Skippack Pike. Noted that the developer still needs DEP approval to construct the sewage disposal system.

Discussion of ZHB applications:

1. Worcester Dental Office on Germantown Pike & Church Rd – Discussion of waiver request to construct 1600-sq-ft addition to existing house, which is used solely for the dental practice (by special exception in 1999). The addition would double the size of the building; possible need for even more parking. Noted that lot is undersized (29000 sq ft) for this zone (R-100) b/c owner subdivided a 1-acre lot into two smaller lots. Noted that applicant was not demonstrating the required hardship.
2. Dive Shop on Trooper Rd south of Germantown – Discussion of application to expand sales to include firearms and sports equipment. Property is zoned commercial, but existing retail sales are permitted by special exception. Solicitor noted that there is no legal mechanism to limit sales of firearms in the twp.
3. Korean Church – Discussion of application to subdivide 12 acres from existing 37-acre property for purchase (and assumed development) by a member of congregation. Zoning requires

minimum of 25 acres for church. When church received conditional use to build, they agreed not to further subdivide property. Solicitor will look at transcript of that hearing to see whether neighbors had made any objection to development on this part of the property. BOS discussed whether to negotiate a deed restriction to the remaining 25 acres in exchange for not contesting the subdivision of the 12 acres. BOS noted that contractor's punch list for construction of church is still outstanding and he has not responded to township's requests.

4. Willow Creek Farm – Discussion of application for waivers to sign ordinance to install multiple signs and increase size of some signs for farm market. All signs will be on farm property. Suggested to ask applicant to combine some signs to reduce the total number of signs, and to make some smaller.

Informational Items:

State will install two signs on Skippack Pike & Valley Forge Rd (state roads) directing people to Willow Creek Farm Market, as part of state's tourist program.

By requirement of DEP, East Norriton twp has been asked by Ross Myers to accept sewage from the AQRC & commercial developments at N. Wales Rd & Twp Line Rd.

2. Public Meeting, Feb. 16

Township solicitor authorized to oppose ZHB application for waiver to expand Worcester Dental Office.

Final subdivision of Malone 4-lot tract approved. Two-story existing building to be removed, public water & private sewer.

Final subdivision of Thompson-Scott tract approved. 23 lots (21 new, 2 existing) on 54 acres under RPD cluster ordinance, public water & sewer.

Public hearing: Ordinance to prohibit further expansion of nonconforming structures. No public comment. Ordinance passed.

Public hearing: Ordinance to allow zoning uses not mentioned in a municipality's ordinances, only in LI zone and only by conditional use. No public comment. Ordinance passed.

Planning Commission. The proposed drip sewage disposal system for the Reserve at Center Point (Trooper & Township Line Rds) was discussed. Developer proposes installing the drip field in the mature woodland. The PC expressed concern that the installation and operation in the woods would compromise the health of the trees and also the operation of the system. The PC will review material provided by the system contractor and will also visit an installation at Delaware Valley CC before making a recommendation. Clarifications to the trail easement were also noted.

Plans were accepted for review for the Great Valley Woods 14-lot subdivision and the Russell Bryant Jr. 3-lot subdivision.

Joint Meeting. The Joint Meeting of the PC and BOS scheduled for March 7 was cancelled.

Zoning Hearing Board.

Jan. 25. Nothing applicable.

Feb. 22. The application to expand the Worcester Dental Office by 1647 sq ft was continued to the March meeting. The application by the Korean Mission Church to remove a development restriction on 12 acres so they can be subdivided and sold was continued to the April 26 ZHB meeting.

The application of the scuba shop on S. Trooper Rd to expand retail sales to include other outdoor sports equipment, such as fishing and hunting, was granted as to sale of outdoor sports equipment and accessories and denied as to the sale of firearms, because of the residential nature of the surrounding properties.

The application of Willow Creek Orchards for signage for the farm market and to prevent trespassing was continued for one week.

Newsletter. The next newsletter is targeted for publication in April.

Outreach. The presentation to be given at Meadowood on March 29 was discussed. It will be a community-wide presentation. Susan will notify the local papers for their community calendars. It was also decided to purchase a small ad in the Times Herald the weekend prior to the event.

Dave circulated a final draft of the brochure and received many compliments. Susan will get quotes on printing.

FOW will have an information table at the Worcester Historical Society's 30th Annual Antique Show and Flea Market on Saturday, May 7, from 8 to 4 at Community Hall in Fairview Village. Susan will send around an e-signup sheet for volunteers to staff this event. We will have our brochure and newsletter available. Jeannie suggested having some photocopied drawings of Worcester-related scenes for kids to color.

Several designs for magnets were presented. The group decided on a business card size. Susan was asked to look into getting 3-inch FOW buttons.

Website. We are still looking for a few people interested in participating on the website development committee. Knowledge of website technology is not required – the committee is tasked with developing and designing content. Susan was asked to prepare a website development plan for the next FOW meeting.

It was suggested that the status of Zoning Hearing Board applications be posted on our website to keep residents informed when an application is unexpectedly continued to a future meeting date. Postponing an application at the last minute is a technique that might be used by an applicant to avoid a hearing if residents' opposition is expected at the meeting. When these applications are continued at the last minute, residents are inconvenienced by coming to the meeting without knowing that the application that concerns them has been postponed to a future meeting. Because the township is not required to re-notify these residents of the new meeting date, residents who otherwise would be interested might not appear for the postponed hearing.

Current issues.

Open Space Initiatives. FOW is applying to apply to Montgomery County for a private nonprofit matching grant to help preserve the Schierenbeck horse farm on Stump Hall Road. Susan and Ross Pilling will present this grant application to the county Open Space Board on March 8. This is FOW's first foray into land preservation and marks an important milestone in the group's development as a land preservation advocate in Worcester.

Open Space Plan. Worcester has a new county planner, Matt Schelly, who will be working with the Open Space Committee on revising our OS Plan.

Historic Protection Ordinance. Nothing to report.

New Issues.

Schierenbeck Grant Application. The Board of Officers has authorized FOW's application to Montgomery County for a private nonprofit matching grant to help preserve the Schierenbeck horse farm on Stump Hall Road.

Strategic Planning. Montgomery County Lands Trust has arranged a workshop for local nonprofits involved in land preservation, to introduce officers, directors, and staff of these organizations to techniques that can be used to manage and grow their organization. FOW intends to send three representatives to this training, which is fully funded by a grant from the William Penn Foundation.

School Board. The upcoming primary election, in which four school board members will be chosen, was discussed. There was a report on the recent school board meeting, at which the district's Facilities Committee presented a consultant's report on the proposed new elementary school and renovations to existing schools. The cost will be over \$63 million, which is the equivalent of an entire year's school budget in this district. The school board will be making a decision on this presentation in the next few months.

National Issues. The Lands Trust Alliance reports that a Congressional tax committee has recently proposed a drastic cutback in the allowable deduction to landowners making a charitable donation of land for open space preservation. This proposal, if passed, would have a dramatic negative effect on land preservation throughout the country, whether it involves donations of land, donations of conservation easements, or the sale of land at less-than-market-value prices. The charitable deduction available to landowners who participate in these conservation efforts is often the carrot that makes these deals possible. A concerted lobbying effort is being undertaken to keep this proposal from being enacted. FOW will post information and links on this issue on our website.

Administrative Assistant Report. This month our AA's time was spent developing the powerpoint presentation for the March 29 outreach event at Meadowood, and working on the brochure and magnet.

Tree Trimming. Concern was expressed over the excessive tree trimming being done in the township by PECO contractors. It was decided to draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors stating our concerns. It was also suggested that FOW send the Times Herald a letter to the editor.

Grant Possibilities. Jeannie suggested looking at the possibility of a wildlife protection grant from the Sierra Club. Collaboration with local scout troops on Eagle and Gold Award projects was also suggested.

FOW 2005 meeting dates: Mar 17 (Thursday), April 18 (Monday), May 24 (Tuesday). All meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at Bean Road Nursery (corner of Bean & Whitehall Rds.)