

Friends of Worcester meeting minutes Meeting date: January 11, 2006

Present: Kim David, Wini Hayes, Barb McMonagle, Bill Fox, Don Atkinson, John Harris, Susan Caughlan, Doug Rotondo, Ken Lord, Marie Amato, Rob Hayes, Dave Cardy

The November meeting minutes were approved as written and will be posted at friendsofworcester.org.

John Harris presented an overview of the “Growing Greener” ordinances that the township is considering. The township will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, January 31, at 7:30 p.m. in Community Hall (Fairview Village) to present the ordinances to residents and answer questions.

The subdivision ordinances would introduce a Four-Step Design Process for new subdivisions:

1. Prepare a map identifying the important resources on the site (natural, historic, cultural, and scenic).
2. Designate the areas containing resources to be conserved. Wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors, and steep slopes must be conserved, plus 50% of the remaining developable land.
3. Locate the homes in the developable area.
4. Draw the roads and lot lines.

Township officials, including the Planning Commission and engineer, will take part in this process, which allows the township to be involved in planning a subdivision based on what resources should be preserved.

The same number of homes are allowed as under our current AGR ordinance. A yield plan is prepared to determine how many lots would be allowed under conventional development. Because these homes must fit on half the available land, the average lot size will be a bit less than one acre, but unlike a conventional development, the homes will have open space at their front and/or back doors. Alternatively, the developer can opt to build fewer homes on larger (4-acre) lots with no common open space. A third option allows developers to have 5- to 10-acre “estate” lots, which would permit up to two additional (smaller) units per lot, such as a garage apartment or in-law suite.

The open space can be dedicated to the township for use as an active or passive recreational area, or for preservation of important natural resources. Alternatively, it can be owned and maintained by the homeowners’ association. Under a third option, the original landowner could continue to own most of the open space and use it for farming or horse pasture. Septic drain fields may be permitted in certain parts of the open space if they cannot be located on lot. Each homeowner would have an easement allowing the use of a small portion of the open space for a drain field, and would be responsible for maintaining the field.

These ordinances have been enacted in other townships in southeastern PA and have been working well. One developer in Worcester has already volunteered to use the Four-Step Design Process in his proposed subdivision. The Planning Commission spent several months reviewing these ordinances with the assistance of a consultant from The Natural Lands Trust, under a grant from the state. The township views the Growing Greener ordinances as a win-win situation – township representatives will have the opportunity to be involved in the design of a development from the beginning, and the township will be able to preserve at least 50% of the land in each new development.

John asked that everyone attend the January 31 public meeting as well as the public hearing that is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday evening, February 15, to voice support for these ordinances. The Board of Supervisors needs to hear from residents that we support changing our ordinances to the “Growing Greener” model.

In order to support the township’s efforts, Friends of Worcester will be activating our e-mail list and phone chain, as well as posting information about these meetings on our website. We will also include a notice of the Jan 31 public information meeting in our fundraising letter, which will be mailed next week.

Treasurer’s Report. Wini Hayes reported that FOW has a net positive balance and asked that the Board of Officers determine how best to allocate these assets to further the group’s goals.

President’s Report. Kim David thanked Rob and Wini Hayes for hosting FOW’s very enjoyable and well-attended holiday potluck party in December.

Kim distributed a worksheet listing FOW's goals for 2005 to start discussion of proposed goals for 2006. We agreed that some goals for 2005, such as our brochure, had been completed. Others, such as the newsletter and website, are strategies to achieve our 2006 goals. The group decided on five goals for 2006:

1. Explore options for a village commercial ordinance to preserve our villages as they develop. Bill Fox volunteered to work on this effort.
2. Pursue a municipal referendum to establish a dedicated funding source (bond and/or earned income tax) for open space projects.
3. Work with the township to implement the Growing Greener zoning and land development ordinances.
4. Support historic preservation efforts.
5. Continue to foster community support and build alliances within the township and with other community groups.

Implementation strategies for these goals will be developed at our next meeting. Additionally, the Board of Officers set a goal to develop a long-range strategic business plan which they will present to the group. They hope to have this plan in place by the end of the year.

Contributions were approved to the Farmers Union Horse Company and the Worcester Fire Company.

Contribution and Support. Barb McMonagle reported on her analysis of the growth of our supporter base. From 2002 to 2003 we had a 12% increase in supporters. From 2003 to 2004 the increase was 1%, and from 2004 to 2005 the growth was 10%.

Fundraising/Hospitality. The annual fundraising letter will be mailed next week.

Township Reports.

Board of Supervisors. At the **December 6 meeting**, the Board gave preliminary and final approval to Stony Creek Village (the commercial development proposed by Ross Myers at the corner of Whitehall and Township Line Rds). The plan includes a trail easement in favor of the township along both roads.

Representative of the Westrum Development Co presented a report on the sewage disposal system proposed for The Reserve at Center Point (on Trooper Rd). The woodland drip irrigation system is no longer being considered. A package treatment plant behind the barn is now proposed. This is the same system that is used in Berwick Place in Fairview Village, except smaller. The system would be owned by the homeowners association, not the township. Plans will be submitted for the township's approval.

At the **December 21 meeting**, the Board approved the 2006 budget. Copies are available for review in the township office. The Board acknowledged with thanks an anonymous contribution of \$50,000 to the township's open space fund.

The sewage management plan for the Zaveta development on Hollow Rd (individual on-lot systems) was approved. Preliminary approvals were granted for the Reserve at Center Point (on Trooper Rd) for phases 1 through 4 (three individual lots and the 24-lot cluster subdivision). Waivers were also requested but will be handled at the final approval phase. A conditional use plan by Mike Evans to develop his 123-acre farm under the township's existing RPD cluster ordinance (55 proposed lots) was accepted for review.

Planning Commission. There was no December meeting.

Zoning Hearing Board. Nothing to report.

Joint Meeting. The December Joint Meeting was cancelled. The next Joint Meeting will be March 6.

Newsletter. Rob Hayes was welcomed as the incoming newsletter coordinator. The timing and articles for the newsletter will be discussed at our February meeting.

Susan reviewed the e-mail feedback we received from the last newsletter. We heard from several residents agreeing with our fall newsletter article that “now is the time to preserve open space.”

Outreach. FOW presented a very successful and well-attended public information meeting on November 14 titled, “What Is Worcester’s Future?” The powerpoint presentation will be posted on our website. Among other topics, the meeting provided a forum for discussion of the township’s proposed Growing Greener amendments, as outlined above.

We will discuss the timing and content of our spring outreach activity at the February meeting. It was suggested that we focus on the issue of stormwater control for individual homeowners. We discussed putting a survey on our website. Bill Fox presented examples of several possible formats for questions. We discussed whether to make responses available on the website, changing the questions on the survey over time, and including a notice about the survey in our newsletter. Everyone was asked to bring proposed survey questions to the next meeting.

Website Development. We are still waiting to hear from google regarding the use of their copyrighted aerial photos on our land developments page. Meanwhile, we may use other base maps in order to get these pages on line. We discussed posting a photo gallery of all the great photos that Don Atkinson is taking for us. A chat gallery was discussed, but the group decided that the detriments outweigh the benefits.

Current issues.

Curbs. Susan was asked to meet with Joe Nolan to find out when and why the township requires curbing in some development plans. FOW’s position is that curbs prevent the use of infiltration techniques to control stormwater and also contribute to a more developed look in the township. The township ordinances currently require curbs in new subdivisions, although waivers are sometimes granted. The BOS currently has a policy of requiring curbs on major roads in the township but not necessarily on roads that are interior to a development. Following are some points regarding curbs and natural road edges:

- Curbs are not any safer than natural road edges if the road edges are properly constructed and maintained so that they do not crumble.
- Curbs can negatively impact traffic safety by giving the impression of a wider, straighter travel lane, which encourages drivers to speed up. A narrower road with natural edges can discourage excessive speed. A natural road edge also fits with Worcester’s rural character.
- Storm drains installed along with curbs collect stormwater in underground basins and discharge any overflow to a piping system that ultimately sends it into a local stream. Natural road edges allow the use of roadside beds that let stormwater infiltrate back into the ground, cleansing it of pollutants as well as reducing the volume of water that is ultimately discharged to our streams.
- Maintenance is an issue with both curbs and natural road edges. State gas tax money is distributed to the township to be used for road maintenance of any kind.
- PennDOT has a policy of installing curbs at intersections when it upgrades those intersections. PennDOT is moving toward “context-sensitive design,” which means it might consider a request not to install curbing if the township can demonstrate that natural road edges will not have a negative impact on safety and are in the best interest of the township.

Susan was asked to draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors summarizing these points and expressing FOW’s view that natural road edges should be encouraged in favor of curbs when development is proposed.

Zoning. At the Board of Officers’ request, Susan prepared a spreadsheet and analysis of the ZHB’s decisions over the past three years. The majority of waiver requests were from residents seeking to build an addition, swimming pool, fence, garage, etc., for which they needed relief from setback or other requirements. Almost without exception, these waivers were granted. The other category of requests included several decisions that impacted the township more significantly, such as the Eckerd Drug Store, which was approved over the protests of many residents. In some cases, FOW or individuals spoke at the hearing or wrote letters, and this may have influenced the ZHB’s decision.

Administrative Assistant’s Report. Susan worked on the publicity and presentation for FOW’s November 14 public outreach meeting, continued to work on the “land developments” page for our website, worked

with Don Atkinson on his photography efforts, and cataloged the historical papers donated to FOW by Letty Schultz concerning the Peter Wentz Farmstead.

New Business

1. Letty Schultz has once again generously donated valuable historic documents to FOW, this time concerning the acquisition and development of the Peter Wentz Farmstead as a county historic site. The documents have been cataloged and will be shared with the staff at PWF.

2. Don Atkinson, who has been busy taking many fantastic photos of historic homes in Worcester, suggested that FOW produce photo notecards to sell at the Horse Show. The idea was very well received, and we discussed costs and logistics. Discussions will continue at the next meeting.

3. State Representative John Fichter will not be running for reelection this year. John has been a valuable ally in support of Worcester's and FOW's goals at the state level. In particular, he helped in our fight against a turnpike slip ramp in Worcester Township. We discussed the importance of the new candidate continuing this work at the state level. If the next candidate is not from the Worcester area, we risk losing valuable support that could impact our ability to further our goals.

Residents are encouraged to contact your Republican or Democratic Committee representatives and express your concern that their candidate understand and support Worcester's and FOW's goals in the state legislature. **Please take a minute to phone, e-mail or write! An ally at the state level really helps!**

Republican Committee contact information is as follows:

- Phone:
 - Worcester East #1 (vote at Bethel Hill UM Church) – Wini Hayes (610-584-0371) & Steve Quigley (610-584-1784)
 - Worcester East #2 (vote at Variety Club) – Marilyn Berkey (610-584-5480) & Tom Moogan (610-584-9213)
 - Worcester East #3 (vote at Central Schwenkfelder Church) – Lance Asher (610-584-8454) and Art Bustard (610-584-5163)
 - Worcester West (vote at Community Hall) -- Jeannie Steigerwalt (610-489-7904) and John Harris (610-584-8395)
- E-mail: wtrcom@voicenet.com
- Letters: Worcester Township Republican Committee, P.O. Box 317, Worcester PA 19490

Democratic Committee contact information is as follows:

- Elaine Syres (610-584-6707) or esyres@verizon.net

FOW 2006 meeting dates and events:

Meetings –Wednesdays, February 8, March 6, April 12, May 10. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. at Bean Road Nursery (corner of Bean & Whitehall Rds.)

Horse Show – Saturday, June 3, 8 a.m. to ??

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Caughlan