

Friends of Worcester meeting minutes Meeting date: March 12, 2008

Review of Minutes. The minutes of the February 2008 meeting were approved for posting on the website.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Wini Hayes reported that expected expenses this quarter will include the Arbor Day program at Worcester Elementary School.

President's Report. President Kim David welcomed several new members to the meeting. He announced that he and vice-president Rob Hayes met recently with Meadowood's new director, Paul Nordeman. Kim also announced the decision not to hold the Photo Contest this year because community response (other than the high school students) was weak, and resources could be devoted to other outreach activities.

Contributors/Supporters. Secretary Barb McMonagle reported that with the latest contributions from the annual fundraising letter, we have met our annual budget goal for contributions. The goal had been set considerably higher this year, in anticipation of our sending the fundraising letter to every township resident. Meeting this goal will enable FOW to increase our educational and outreach efforts.

Barb noted that many contributors did not provide email addresses and suggested that we make an effort to explain to our contributors that we ask for an email address so that we can use this method to contact them and apply more of their contribution to our programs, rather than to photocopying and mailing the agendas and minutes. An announcement to this effect will be placed in the next few newsletters.

Fundraising/Hospitality. Marie Amato reported that the ads for the spring newsletter have been finalized.

Township Reports.

Board of Supervisors. At the Feb. 20 public meeting, the board discussed applying for county open space funds for two projects: the purchase of approximately 5 acres of Heyser Field in Fairview Village, behind Community Hall, for public park and recreation purposes, and the completion of the township trail along Zacharias Creek from Green Hill Road to just west of Hollow Road. Worcester Township has been allocated approximately \$870,000 from the 2003 Montgomery County Open Space referendum. The program requires at least a 20% match from the township. At the March 3 public meeting, the board approved sending both of these funding applications to the Montgomery County Open Space Board.

The conditional use hearing for the Worcester Golf Course, which had been continued from the January 16 Board of Supervisors' public meeting, was concluded. Many residents raised concerns about the water supply if private wells are allowed with a community sewage disposal system, as well as increased traffic and stormwater management. The board has up to 45 days to announced its decision.

Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is finishing up the Comprehensive Plan. It will then be presented to residents at a public meeting, and a period for public comment will follow before the supervisors vote on its adoption.

The Planning Commission reviewed a preliminary subdivision plan for a 4-lot subdivision by Sparango Construction Co. on Bethel Road and recommended approval with several conditions.

Zoning Hearing Board. The application for a nonconforming use (produce stand) on Germantown Pike and Adair Ave. was continued to the March 25 meeting. The landowner has a number of outstanding violations and is working with the township to resolve them before the application goes forward. FOW has written a letter to the supervisors and Zoning Board members in support of this variance.

Volunteers are needed to attend Zoning Board meetings once a month and report to the group. Please contact Susan at info@friendsofworcester.org if you are interested. Maeve Vogan and Donn Atkinson volunteered for the team to attend Board of Supervisors meetings.

Joint Meeting. The Planning Commission reviewed the draft of the Comprehensive Plan with the supervisors. The next Joint Meeting of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, June 2, at 9:30 a.m. in Community Hall, Fairview Village.

Newsletter. The newsletter is on schedule to be mailed the first week of April. The newsletter label party was scheduled for Saturday, April 5, from 8 to 10 a.m. at Bean Road Nursery.

Outreach. Later this spring, FOW will participate in the Arbor Day program at Worcester Elementary School. A tree seedling and booklet will be given to each student. Several local businesses are sponsoring the program, including Bean Road Nursery, Willow Creek Orchards, and Merrymead Farm. The Home & School Environmental Committee is also helping out. The committee will hold a “potting up day” in April to transplant the seedlings and bind the booklets. There will be two shifts for volunteers: 9 to noon and 1 to 4. We will need enough large boxes to store all the potted seedlings until April 25. An e-alert for volunteers will be sent out closer to the date.

Website. Updates on the PECO, turnpike expansion, and land development projects continue to be posted as they are received.

Current issues.

Open Space. The two Worcester farms that are applicants for preservation in the Montgomery County Farmland Preservation Program are ranked #2 and #4 out of 47 applicants county-wide. Both were selected to be appraised in anticipation of possible offers later this year.

Land Development.

Worcester Golf Course – A brief summary of the conditional use issues was given. See the report of the conditional use hearing under Board of Supervisors. Two bases of opposition to the conditional use application were discussed. The owner has been approached to reconsider other options. FOW responded to a resident who contacted the organization last month and offered to meet with the residents’ group. There was no reply, so FOW will contact the resident again.

3206 Skippack Pike – Recent purchasers of the property on the corner of Hollow Rd and Skippack Pike have applied to the Zoning Board for a use variance to operate a counseling center. Several residents who are opposed to this variance summarized their objections, including concerns about increased traffic and lighting, and the loss of the neighborhood’s residential character. FOW’s concerns include the precedent that this could set for nonresidential growth outside the Center Point growth area in the Comprehensive Plan, the intense nature of the proposed use, and the possible increase in parking area.

It was noted that the previous owner, developer Rich Zaveta, had indicated that if he was unable to sell the house, he might consider demolishing it and subdividing the lot to build two new homes. There was discussion regarding a possible deed restriction on subdivision, and Dan Brennan volunteered to research this.

Kim David noted that when an issue is likely to negatively impact any portion of Worcester, FOW will take a stand to support the residents. He offered to contact the landowner to explain FOW’s opposition to the proposed variance. FOW will send a representative to the April 2 meeting of residents and the landowner. If necessary, FOW will write to the supervisors and the Zoning Board in opposition to the variance. An e-alert will be sent to the FOW e-mail list to do the same.

Haines Easement Donation – John Harris offered a summary of the situation for the benefit of the new members. Nothing will be done by the township until the results of the hearing with the judge are announced. The hearing is scheduled for April.

FOW spring 2008 meetings: Wednesdays –April 9, May 14

Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. at Bean Road Nursery (corner of Bean & Whitehall Rds.)

Respectfully submitted, Susan Caughlan