

**Planning Commission
Minutes
October 10, 2022
7:00 PM**

Present:

Brett MacKay
Joseph Vavra
Patricia Younce
Nancy Becker
Ed Buonocore
Dennis McGeehan
Douglas Leach
Matt Chartrand

Staff:

Carolyn Shisler, Asst. Zoning & Planning Officer
George DiPersio, CKS Engineering
Mary Stover, Township Engineer CKS

Supervisors Rich Marino was present.

Approval of the September 12, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Vavra made a motion to approve the September 12, 2022 meeting minutes. Ms. Younce seconded. All were in favor. Mr. Leach and Mr. Chartrand abstained.

New Business

Mr. MacKay announced that Mr. Joseph Gibbons resigned.
Discussion regarding training programs for Zoning and Planning.

Sidewalk Connectivity Study – Committee Meeting #1

Presented by: Peter Simone
Emma Haley - Project Manager Architect
Bryce Brucker – Project Manager Architect

Mr. Simone explained that the meeting tonight is a work session.

Mr. Simone presented an overview of the project and explained the study and the plans they have done thus far for safety for pedestrians and connectivity as well as bike paths and sidewalks.

Mr. Simone explained the purpose is to decide where trails and sidewalks are needed and stated there is a lot of funding for this type of thing. Mr. Simone stated they will prepare cost estimates and prepare a report. He outlined how the public meetings will be conducted and the next steps for the project and public outreach.

Mr. Chartrand stated that the pedestrian that was killed last year at the intersection of Allentown Road and was a resident of Dock Mennonite and when Dock Mennonite came in for Land Development and asked for relief for sidewalks the Planning Commission started to think of requesting the developers place sidewalks at other places and not recommend deferrals.

Discussion regarding the accident and the other schools and institutions in our Township. Mr. Simone stated there will be a tool called Wikimapping and it will work interactively. They will also talk to the Township engineer and get their advice with where connectivity is most needed.

Mr. Simone spoke about future residential growth and how it will happen at higher density than anticipated. He explained Towamencin has 18,000 residents currently and the projection for the next 20 years could be 1,800 more. Mr. Simone stated that remote working is also a factor in needing more sidewalks and safe spaces. He explained covid made us value the outdoors more than before and sidewalks and trails connect residential areas and parks.

The DPRC does mapping. Mr. Simone showed the mapping currently here in the Township and the gaps that are shown on the map.

Ms. Younce stated she feels the neighborhoods need to be connected to the attractions. She explained she lives near Kriebel Road, which is so narrow, and yet people still jog and ride bikes along it. Mr. Simone stated they will look at neighborhoods and not just every place the mapping shows gaps.

Mr. Simone explained that PECO is not allowing trails along high voltage lines, and they must reevaluate what was previously planned for trails in these areas. Mr. Chartrand asked why, and Mr. Simone stated it is not a liability issue; but possibly for future income and possible utilities that could go into these areas.

Mr. Simone stated that bike riders and runners use an app called Strava and those exercise loops get recorded in a heat map. Mr. Simone showed the map where people using this app are running and cycling in this Township.

Mr. Simone stated there is only one bus route that goes along Welsh Road. He explained that connecting buses with sidewalks and trails expands the network and it is another way to expand non-automobile transportation in the Township.

Mr. Simone showed major destinations in the Township and where these are on the map. He went over the fact that the practice of waiving for sidewalks at the developmental level has almost stopped, but deferrals still happen. He reiterated that once sidewalks are in place, they must be maintained by the property owners and snow removal and repairs are required. His assumption is that the Township is not going to go to the property owner, but possibly go after grant money and possibly general funds and match it with grant money.

Mr. Simone asked Mr. Marino if the Board of Supervisors have ideas of where sidewalks are most needed. Mr. Marino stated they are continuing to work on this, but they do not have the data compiled yet.

Mr. Simone explained the study uses all different standards, examples of designs, standards from PennDOT and bike lanes, as well as shared use paths. He stated they follow the required standards as this is all about safety. He explained signage is also considered and there are standards for those as well.

Along with the study, Mr. Simone stated they will be using the improvement toolbox for sidewalks, crosswalks, special crossings, speed tables, speed cushions, and ADA curb cuts, etc. Public works will need to be involved in these discussions as whatever is installed will impact the plowing.

There was a survey question discussion and Mr. Simone stated the hope is to get 200 to 300 responses. Mr. Simone explained it is not a vote; it is a way for people to get involved without having to come to meetings, etc.

Ms. Younce asked how the surveys are going to be presented. Mr. Simone stated they will be presented online for the people to complete, and it is a survey monkey tool. Ms. Younce asked if it will be on the Township website and on a QR code on posters. Mr. Simone stated they will have the QR code available in many locations as well as online.

Mr. Simone went over the survey questions with the Planning Commission members and took notes with their suggestions for the changes to the survey.

Ms. Younce stated that when the culinary school opened it would have been helpful to have a bus stop there. Mr. Simone agreed and stated assuming the village area develops with more residents, getting a bus route from these locations to the train station would be very useful.

Mr. Simone explained that the survey does not have to be finalized until November 10th or 11th. The Planning Commission members can discuss and get back to them via email or phone.

Mr. Chartrand added that he hopes everyone takes the time to do this and he realizes this is hard. He was concerned for a first blush if it should be boiled down to something smaller or basic, as his concern is that the survey is too long. Mr. Chartrand stated he plans to do it, but he is concerned that people may not complete the survey if too lengthy. Mr. Simone stated they could cut the survey down a bit, and they do not have to ask every one of these questions. He explained they can send this to the committee and see what everyone thinks.

Mr. Chartrand stated that no one has the time or patience for anything anymore and he is concerned it is too long. Mr. Simone will cut out some and Ms. Haley stated that they can set up the survey that if someone does not have school age kids it will skip those questions, etc. Mr. MacKay agreed with this, and Mr. Chartrand suggested they would like to have a place that they can put their addresses as he feels this is valuable. Mr. Simone stated there is a place for that. He suggested it circulate to TYA and the newsletter and e-blast for the Township.

Ms. Younce stated if you live in the Township, people should have an interest. Mr. Buonocore asked if they can be printed and put at the polling and voting places. He agreed that post cards can be made up and placed around and QR Code and website.

Ms. Becker asked about the survey questions asking for question numbers 1 to 5 and if there will be bubbles or lines. Mr. Simone stated they will be lines. Mr. Simone explained they will work with the Township to get the word out to the schools and at the next meeting they will try and get suggestions and how the residents can be part of this. They will also plan goals and go over facts and concepts.

Ms. Becker suggested the surveys could be out at the Board of Supervisor meetings. Mr. Simone agreed and explained Wikimapping.

Ms. Becker stated that Mr. Simone's presentation was great and asked if there was any way to get it to the members of the Planning Commission. Mr. Simone stated he will send the members a PDF. He also explained he has requested the accident reports for the Township and will get them next week.

Mr. Chartrand stated his mindset changed after the fatality accident and he wanted to state that he generally thinks about the grid or the box between Sumneytown Pike, Welsh Road, Valley Forge and Allentown Road cutting through the middle. He explained that almost all of those are PennDOT Roads, and if the focus can be on that box first and make things safe that would be the best. Mr. Simone stated District 6 is pretty good to work with and they work with Fran Haney often on these projects. He explained he is very progressive, and they can meet with PennDOT and CKS Engineering. Mr. Simone stated they have a relationship with District 6, and they can be helpful with this as well as some of the grant money that is available to the Township.

Ms. Younce stated Lower Salford received a grant for sidewalks to connect the retail area of their townships, but then some of the people in the township were against it. Ms. Younce asked what they used as excuses to resist the project. Mr. Simone stated every connectivity project always has people who are against it. He expressed people state they do not want to pay for maintenance or want people walking up to their stores, etc. His opinion is to listen to the concerns and try to address them the best way possible.

Ms. Becker agreed and stated that when Lower Salford first made a presentation for sidewalks the residents were firmly against it; but when they switched it to trails, they were for it. Mr. Simone stated he always tries to come back to safety and frame it from a safety point.

Ms. Becker stated that in her neighborhood they have sidewalks and people still walk in the street.

Mr. Simone explained he will make changes to the survey and get them a copy. He will get post cards made up and distribute them widely and at the next Board of Supervisors meeting and ask that people continue to announce the study.

Supervisor Kristen Moyer was also present for the presentation.

Supervisor Rich Marino stated they want to know the most important areas. He stated the Weikel Road residents recently had a debate over putting in a sidewalk as asphalt (more like a trail) vs. concrete, because the residents felt if concrete, they would have to maintain the path and they would not if it was asphalt. Mr. Simone stated he didn't think there was anything in the ordinance about that, but potentially something to investigate. He stated trails are not addressed in the SALDO. Mr. Marino mentioned the sidewalk on Snyder Road is going to be connected; however, they are not putting sidewalks in front of Morgan Log House.

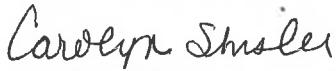
Mr. Chartrand stated he was there for the proposal for sidewalks on Weikel Road and likes the idea that they are connecting from Forge Gate to the pool.

Discussion regarding the parks and crossings.

Mr. MacKay asked if we have any additional business.

Hearing none, Mr. Vavra made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Becker seconded.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Shisler

Towamencin Township

Planning Commission Secretary/Asst. Zoning and Planning Officer