



WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

www.mylocation.com/whitemarsh

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Dear Neighbor:

Keeping our promise to keep you informed about land use issues in Whitemarsh Township, the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association (WTRA) is pleased to provide you with this newsletter. Contained in this issue is the following information:

- Report of January 9 Planning Commission meeting & recap of public comments
- Notice of February 13 Planning Commission meeting
- Strategy for sustaining a strong presence
- Information on how you can help
- Update on proposed Corson Quarry development

If numbers make a difference in conveying public will, then the impressive turnout at the January 9 meeting of the Whitemarsh Township Planning Commission spoke volumes about this community's concern regarding future development in the township. An estimated 700 people attended, prompting a comment by Planning Commission member Charles Hough that this was the largest turnout on any issue he had seen in his 21 years on the Commission.

The overwhelming majority of people who spoke that evening voiced concern or opposition to the CCRC proposal. The likelihood of increased flooding, worsening traffic, and loss of the open space that makes Whitemarsh Township unique were the most frequently cited reasons for their concern.

The Planning Commission decided to hear further arguments before making its recommendation to the Township's Board of Supervisors. **It has scheduled another public meeting for Tuesday, February 13 at 8 p.m. at the Colonial Elementary School auditorium. All residents are urged to attend this meeting.** (Details are posted on the WTRA website: www.mylocation.com/whitemarsh.)

Members of the local media, including Channel 10, the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and the *Colonial/Springfield Sun* covered the meeting. The *Colonial/Springfield Sun* article, headlined "Engineer: Erdenheim Farm project will increase traffic, which is already dismal, can be found on the Erdenheim Farm Development page on the WTRA web site.

A STRONG, SUSTAINED COMMUNITY PRESENCE IS CRUCIAL

The large turnout at the January 9 meeting offered the commissioners a visible demonstration of the breadth and depth of the community's concerns regarding this proposed development. It is crucial that we sustain this presence at township meetings if we hope to counterbalance the well-funded efforts and determination of the developer, who has hired expert legal counsel, a high-profile public relations firm, and marketing consultants to ensure a favorable vote by the township. Therefore, we hope you will make every effort to attend the February 13th meeting and all others that are scheduled in the future.

SUMMARY OF JANUARY 9 WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Recap of the Developer's Proposal:

- The developer has proposed the construction of a 96-acre Continuing Care Retirement Community at the corner of Flourtown and Thomas Roads in Lafayette Hill. The proposed facility would encompass 54 acres of Erdenheim Farm and the adjacent 42-acre tract currently occupied by Eugenia Hospital. The development would include 150 cottages, 175 apartments, and 88 assisted living or skilled care beds. With the exception of the 150 cottages, all facilities would be located in a 300,000 to 400,000 square foot building.
- To develop this property as proposed, the developer has submitted a new zoning definition, "CCRC," for adoption by the township. If approved, the developer would then request that this 96-acre tract, currently zoned AAA-Residential, be rezoned to CCRC. The proposed CCRC ordinance would allow the current housing density of 1 dwelling unit per acre to be increased to 4 units per acre.

The attorney for the developer presented an overview of the project, which was followed by the traffic impact report commissioned by the Township from engineering firm Valley Forge Laboratories. (The full traffic report will be posted on the WTRA web site soon.) Among the traffic study's findings:

- The intersections of Joshua & Flourtown Roads and Stenton & Flourtown Roads are *currently* over capacity. On a scale of A (excellent) to F (unacceptable), both received a grade *below* an F.
- The development would generate an additional 962 daily car trips in the immediate area.
- If the CCRC is built, the installation of a traffic signal and widening of the roads would be necessary at the intersection of Thomas and Flourtown Roads, the proposed location of the development's entrance.

Presentations and statements opposing the developer's proposal were made by the following organizations: Whitemarsh Township Residents Association (statement available on our website), the Whitemarsh Valley Farms Community Association (representing homeowners near the proposed development), and the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club.

A few individuals spoke in favor of the proposal, including an attorney representing the Dixons, owners of Erdenheim Farm. They believe it will fill a community need and it addresses their concern for the future use of the Eugenia Hospital property. Although the attorney did not discuss the elderly Dixons' long-term plans for the future of the farm, he did say they had "no intention to sell" any additional land. Representatives of the Founders (senior citizens who are the development's initial investors and wish to become its residents) also spoke in support of the need for such a facility in the township.

Of the individuals who stood up to speak against the developer's proposal, many shared common concerns. Here is a summary of these concerns:

Traffic

Many expressed concerns about the increase in traffic generated by the CCRC's residents, employees, visitors and delivery trucks. Concerns were also voiced that the road widenings necessary to accommodate this traffic would negatively impact on the area's livability, safety, rural character, and property values.

Flooding

Concerns were expressed that although this project, like every development project, calls for the construction of retention ponds to capture and control the release of stormwater, these measures would not be sufficient and that the area's homes and roads would experience more frequent and severe flooding than they do now.

Environmental

Two environmental experts addressed the potentially detrimental effects of this development on the area's natural habitats. They noted the ecological condition of the nearby Wissahickon Creek is highly dependent upon surrounding land use and expressed concern about further degradation of the stream's habitat & biology. Also of concern was the loss of the mature forest on the Eugenia Hospital property, home to songbirds, mammals and amphibians. (These comments available soon on our web site.)

Zoning Changes

Some voiced concerns about the long-term repercussions of approving a higher-density zoning designation for this property and the precedent this would set for future development in our township.

Other Issues

- The Montgomery County Director of Public Safety and a Barren Hill volunteer fireman said that the project would place additional demands on already strained public services.
- Citing the major development project proposed for nearby Corson's Quarry, others questioned whether enough attention had been paid to the cumulative effects of these two developments.
- One speaker, referring to the projected cost to live at the proposed facility, questioned whether it would, as supporters claim, serve the broad needs of the Township's elderly, or just a select few.
- Also questioned was the need for such a large development and why it could not be built within the existing Eugenia Hospital property. One speaker also proposed relocating the CCRC facility to Corson's Quarry.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you share the concerns expressed by your Whitemarsh neighbors, here are a few things you can do:

Write A Letter

Individual letters expressing your concerns will help to inform the Board of Supervisors and ensure that their decisions reflect the true desires of the larger community. Send your letters to:

Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

In your letter, please reference the development project(s) you are addressing: Erdenheim Farm/Eugenia Hospital Development and/or Corson's Quarry Development (see the Quarry information below). Please request that copies be distributed to the Planning Commission as well.

Tell Your Neighbors

Whenever and wherever you run into friends and neighbors, tell them about these two proposed developments. Not everyone has heard. Encourage them to visit the WTRA web site, www.mylocation.com/whitemarsh, for more information or to join the WTRA.

Stay Informed

Detailed information and regular updates on the proposed development of Erdenheim Farm/Eugenia Hospital and Corson s Quarry are posted at the WTRA web site. Please visit often.

Share Your Expertise

If you have expertise that you think would be helpful to the efforts of the Whitemarsh Township Residents Association, please call 610-828-5351 or 610-941-0441, or email harrietc@erols.com.

In other news of interest to Whitemarsh Township residents:**UPDATE ON PROPOSED CORSON S QUARRY DEVELOPMENT**

The DePaul Group, owner of the Highway Materials Quarry (formerly known as Corson s Quarry) has proposed to build a 650,000 to 700,000 sq. ft office and apartment complex on 54 acres on the northeast side of Stenton Avenue between Flourtown/Cricket Road and the railroad tracks. The development would include four 4-story office buildings, three 7-story apartment buildings (totaling 600 apartments), and parking for 3,450 cars.

The Township has stated that it may begin hearings on the Quarry development in late February. We will let you know as soon as a date has been set. In the meantime, more information on this project is available on the WTRA web site.

TOWN MEETING WITH CONGRESSMAN JOE HOFFEL

On Saturday, January 27 from 9:30-10:30 a.m., US Congressman Joe Hoeffel, our representative in Washington, will hold a public Town Meeting at the Whitemarsh Township Building, 616 Germantown Pike. As a member of Congress, Mr. Hoeffel is not involved in township government matters. However, we believe it is important to keep him informed about issues of concern to his constituents. Anyone interested in meeting and speaking with Congressman Hoeffel is invited to attend.

Thank you for joining your neighbors in the effort to keep Whitemarsh Township "a great place to live and work." Looking forward to seeing you at the February 13 Planning Commission meeting!

The Whitemarsh Township Residents Association

<http://www.mylocation.com/whitemarsh>

Send Email to: harrietc@erols.com

To discuss your involvement call 610-828-5351 or 610-941-0441