



The Whitemarsh Vista

The Whitemarsh Township Residents Association Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 5

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Keeping our promise to keep you informed

regulations to meet changing needs, development of a revitalization plan for the Germantown Pike corridor, and completion of a continuous trail through the Township along Wissahickon Creek. Some of these recommendations have been acted on, such as the purchase of the Silt Basin and the WFIL Radio Tower property, but others have not.

In proposing the committee, Steve Brown, chair of the EAB, said, “This is a new time that needs a new effort.”

The make-up and organization of the committee, including how broad a

community representation it should have, was discussed, but the Supervisors decided to leave the details for another meeting.

WTRA to Sponsor Board of Supervisor Candidate Forums

As we did in 2001, the WTRA will be sponsoring public forums this fall for the candidates running for Board of Supervisors. The forums are intended to provide residents with a clearer understanding of the individual candidates’ views on the issues affecting the township. The exact dates for the forums will be announced in a later newsletter.

Environmental Advisory Board Proposes New Open Space Committee

At its meeting on May 8, the Board of Supervisors voted to approve a proposal by the Environmental Advisory Board to revive the Township’s Open Space Committee in order to update the Township’s Open Space Plan.

The Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) advises the Township on environmental issues and provides input on development proposals.

The Open Space Committee was established in 1995 to formulate the Township’s first Open Space Plan. This plan set forth a number of recommendations, including retention of the township’s remaining agricultural lands, protection of scenic resources, revision of land use

Board of Supervisors Candidates Endorse WTRA Open Space and Smart Growth Action Agenda

Prior to last week’s primary, all of the candidates running for the Board of Supervisors – both Republican and Democrat – endorsed the WTRA’s Open Space and Smart Growth Action Agenda.

This Action Agenda, presented to the Whitemarsh Board of Supervisors in 2001, comprised a comprehensive set of recommendations for achieving maximum preservation of the township’s remaining open space and effectively managing future growth. Also included in the Agenda were a set of Land Development Principles setting minimum standards for new development.

Among the 2001 Action Agenda’s recommendations were creation of an Environmental Advisory Board; incorporation of Growing Greener principles into Township subdivision and land development ordinances; prioritization of open space preservation in the Township’s draft Comprehensive Plan; and creation of special districts or zoning overlays to protect sensitive natural areas, such as the township’s waterways. Since 2001, all of these recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. However, other recommendations still have not been acted on, including endorsement of a set of minimum standards for development and creation and funding of an educational outreach effort to citizens informing them of private-sector options for preserving land.

This fall, the WTRA will again sponsor public forums when residents will have an opportunity to hear from the candidates about their vision for Whitemarsh and their plans to carry forward the Action Agenda they have all endorsed.

While the candidates’ endorsements are not a guarantee, if those who win this November honor their campaign promises, Whitemarsh residents should see continued progress toward realizing a more balanced approach to managing growth and preserving those resources that are so important to our township’s character and quality of life.

Upcoming Events & Meetings PLANNING COMMISSION

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Township Building, 616 Germantown Pike

June 10, 2003

TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

The Planning Commission will meet with members of the Shade Tree Commission and Environmental Advisory Board regarding the proposed Tree Protection Ordinance.

Action Required: Review and discuss to provide recommendation to Board of Supervisors.

GROWING GREENER ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS STUDY

Castle Valley Consultants, Inc. will facilitate a discussion on incorporating Natural Lands Trust "Growing Greener" concepts into the Township Ordinance.

Action Required: Discuss and provide comment / direction to consultant.

Planning Commission Nearing Completion of its Zoning Ordinance Review

At its May 13 meeting on the Growing Greener Ordinance Amendments, the Planning Commission reviewed the three smallest residential zoning districts in the township – AA, A and B, covering lot sizes ranging from 30,000 to 10,000 square feet. It has already reviewed and developed proposed changes for the larger residential districts, AAAA (Quad A) and AAA (Triple A).

Among the issues discussed by the Planning Commissioners were whether to allow cluster developments in these smaller districts, whether to set a minimum Conservation Area (the area encompassing the natural resources on the tract plus any existing right-of-ways), and what percentage of open space, above and beyond the Conservation Area, to require.

The governing principle guiding all proposed ordinance revisions is "density neutral" – there will be no increase in the number of dwelling units from what is currently permitted under existing zoning. Under the new zoning, houses may be permitted to be built on smaller lots in order to accommodate land set aside as open space and the Conservation Area, but the total number of houses permitted will not increase.

The Commissioners spent a lot of time thinking through various scenarios and making sure that the "density neutral" rule would not be compromised by any changes they were proposing. "We're honor bound

to keep density under control in this township," said Commissioner Charlie Hough.

Among the changes being recommended are to (1) introduce an estate lot option in all three districts, as was already done for the Quad A and Triple A districts, which would allow much larger lots sizes and therefore fewer homes; (2) increase the percentage of open space required in AA and A districts from 50% to 70% and 40% to 50% respectively, which would be applied to the Adjusted Tract Area – (what remains after the Conservation Area and other rights of way are subtracted from the Total Tract Area); (3) establish a mandatory Conservation Area of 28% in these smaller districts to help control lot yield and ensure the density neutral goal. With smaller lots sizes being permitted under the new zoning as a compensation for the increased open space requirements, the Commissioners feared that without setting aside a minimum amount of land up front, a developer might be able to build more lots than is allowed under current zoning.

The next Zoning Ordinance Amendment meeting is scheduled for June 10 at the Township building.

WTRA Survey–Thanks for your Participation

The WTRA would like to thank everyone who participated in our recently completed Township-wide survey. We are now in the process of tallying the results. Thank you also to those who stated they would like to become actively involved...

we will be following up with you in the next few weeks. And to the many new members who signed up: **welcome!**

Hill at Whitemarsh to Present Preliminary Plan on June 3

On Tuesday, June 3, the Hill at Whitemarsh will return to the Planning Commission for its next round of plan reviews. The developer submitted a draft preliminary plan last fall and received feedback from the township engineer. Since then, the developer has been working with the Township and the Monitoring and Mediation Committee, comprising representatives from the community groups who helped frame the Community Agreement, to make requested changes to the plan.

Once the Planning Commission has completed its review (which may take more than one meeting), it will make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, which then must also review the plan. If the preliminary plan is approved, the next stage is to develop a final plan for Township review. If this is approved, construction may begin.

The June 3 meeting will be held at the Township Building at 8 pm.



Whitemarsh Township Residents Association

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