

## MEMORANDUM

TO: West Pikeland Township Comprehensive Plan Task Force  
Steve Ross, Township Manager  
Jake Michael, Chester County Planning Commission

FROM: Edward A. Theurkauf, RLA, ASLA - Committa Associates  
Nanci Sarcinello, AICP - Sarcinello Planning & GIS Services

DATE: February 25, 2010

SUBJECT: **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE - COMMUNITY MEETING #2  
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Following is a summary of public comments pertaining to the draft update of the West Pikeland Township Comprehensive Plan as presented at Community Meeting #2 on 1-13-10. We have also added information and analysis to the commentary as discussed at the Comprehensive Plan Task Force meeting on 2-24-10.

1. Growth Area – Concern was expressed that Plan policies would promote overdevelopment of the growth area.

It was pointed out by another resident that the Plan represents continuation of consistent Township planning, zoning, and regulatory policy regarding land use and density over the past two decades.

Proposed refinements to the Township's previous planning policies are:

- Recommendations to decrease the residential cluster development density bonus within both the residential growth and rural conservation areas.
- Stricter limitation on high intensity commercial development.
- Consolidation of the Pickering/Chester Springs Villages into one village.
- Conservation/Greenway corridors as a central land use planning concept.

It is important to note the role of the Comprehensive Plan in providing consistent policy recommendations, but the ultimate enactment of regulations and policies is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors.

2. Task Force Composition - Some participants questioned whether residents of the growth area were adequately represented on the Task Force and asked whether this could be shown on a map.

The Task Force is comprised of representatives of numerous Township boards and committees, and includes (4) at large members of the community. Task Force address files indicate that (5) of the (14) resident members live within the growth area. Further, the Task Force has conducted outreach to HOA representatives in the growth area, and all Task Force meetings are advertised and open to the public. Outside comment is welcome.

3. Sewage Facilities Plan – A resident stated that proposed sewage facilities upgrades would promote undesirable commercial development, especially in Anselma.

We note that although the proposed sewage facilities may allow a greater intensity of development than would on lot septic disposal systems, the proposed Comprehensive Plan recommends disallowing some uses currently permitted in Anselma, such as drive-through commercial, auto sales/repair, trucking, self-storage, junkyards, adult commercial, and

gambling. These uses would still be allowed in the Opperman's Corner Commercial Village, consistent with existing Township planning and zoning policies and the requirements of state municipal land use law.

It is our understanding that the Township's Act 537 sewage facilities plan is under review while the necessity for upgrades in existing residential communities is evaluated. The Comprehensive Plan recommendations on proposed sewage facilities will reflect the goals of the land use plan with regard to environmental protection, historic resources, development intensity, and the coordination of infrastructure with development.

4. Commercial Development – A resident is concerned about the appropriateness of commercial development in the Township, given the abundance of such uses in the surrounding area. The same resident stated that there should be no expansion of the Opperman's Corner commercial district.

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The argument that some land uses are inappropriate in certain locations has been the basis of advocacy for multi-municipal planning and zoning. The Township has participated with multi-municipal planning initiatives to coordinate on issues such as recreation planning. With regard to land use, the only way to legislate against certain uses within the Township would be through multi-municipal zoning, which would involve compromise with other local governments in zoning districts and land use decisions.

Overall, the Comprehensive Plan recommends more prohibitions against high intensity commercial uses, by restricting them to Opperman's Corner only. The existing zoning permits intensive commercial at Opperman's Corner, Anselma, Chester Springs, and Pikeland Villages.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends increased opportunity for low impact commercial and office uses compatible with residential through expansion of the Chester Springs/Pikeland Village.

No increase to the size of the Opperman's Corner commercial village is proposed.

5. Multi-municipal Planning – Participants advocated participation in multi-municipal planning efforts, either with Downingtown or with Phoenixville regional plans.

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There is a question as to whether the Downingtown effort is defunct, and the Phoenixville plan is adopted and would require significant revision to include West Pikeland. Nonetheless, there may be benefits to future inter-municipal cooperation. The Township is currently participating with the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities on a regional recreation plan.

6. Pickering Creek – Consistent with Comprehensive Plan recommendations, the Green Valleys Association submitted a petition requesting that Pickering Creek be re-designated from High Quality – Trout Stocking to Exceptional Value. PA DEP has completed field work and information gathering. Concurrent with the petition review, the petitioners began providing additional information such as land use, management plans, local ordinances, and easements for DEP consideration in hopes of satisfying the EV qualifying criteria. This additional information is being reviewed, and a draft report and recommendations are in progress, which is hoped will be ready for public review and comment later this summer.

7. Developer Impact Fees – A developer suggested the Township should levy development fees for impacts on schools, roads, recreational resources, and other off-site impacts.

There may in certain circumstances be leeway for townships to negotiate voluntary contributions from developers. However, the MPC specifically prohibits municipalities from requiring offsite impact fees by ordinance, except for transportation and recreation fees in conjunction with municipal transportation studies and recreation plans. West Pikeland has a recreation plan, but no transportation study.

Developer recreation impact fees may be used for trails and greenways.

8. Residential Development Goal – A resident questioned the plan goal to “promote” residential development in harmony with Township character.

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The term has been changed to “accommodate”.

9. Tree Removal/Replacement – Residents questioned whether the tree replacement requirement applies to all uses, or just to developments. One suggested a larger clearing allowance without replacement should be considered, to reduce forest fire risks to property.

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The proposed regulations would apply to new developments only and not to existing landowners, consistent with existing regulations. The exemption would be reduced from 15,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet, to promote forest resource protection.

10. Historic Foundations – A resident stated that the Township’s historic institutions are in financial difficulty, and this could result in undesirable changes to the historic districts. More municipal and community support for these institutions was urged.

11. Historic Districts – The Township was urged to put more authority in the hands of the Historic Commission and HARB. Another resident questioned who decides what characteristics are appropriate to historic districts.

12. Institutional Properties – A participant urged the Township to nurture relationships with institutional landowners to create opportunities for conservation should property ownership change.

The Township has a Land Trust and an Open Space Advisory Committee that work with private and institutional land owners to promote conservation through easements and other measures.

13. Open Space – One resident opined that open space should be for aesthetic purposes only and should not be accessible or serve recreational needs. This individual also insinuated that trails promote crime.

Although there is difference of opinion within the Township regarding the necessity for additional sports facilities, numerous public surveys and the previous goals workshop demonstrate broad support for publicly accessible and usable open space. Thus, the Comprehensive Plan advocates creation of a network of safe, well designed, properly maintained trails within an open space system that advances the Township’s priorities of environmental stewardship, accessibility, and recreation.

There is no research to support the belief in a causal link between trails and crime, and in fact numerous studies demonstrate a positive relationship between trail proximity and increased property values.

14. Stormwater – A participant stated that the Comprehensive Plan should address stormwater management, water quality, and groundwater recharge, and that strategies should be developed to improve existing facilities.

The Comprehensive Plan advocates strengthening the Township's surface and groundwater protection standards, including compliance with the integrated water resource planning methodologies of the County's Watersheds Plan.

Existing stormwater management facilities that have failed should be referred to the County Conservation District for corrective action.

15. Implementation – A resident expressed the view that the Township's plans and policies have been appropriate and consistent, but that a breakdown has occurred with implementation and enforcement. This person also advocated expressing architectural controls in the ordinances, especially pertaining to the types of development at Opperman's Corner.

The Comprehensive Plan includes an action plan for implementation, including specific steps to be undertaken, timing, and responsible parties. It also advocates context appropriate site design and architectural standards for each of the village districts.

16. Adoption Process – Residents asked about the remaining review and adoption process. One asked whether the public would vote on the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

There will be two more Task Force meetings for discussion of the draft Plan, and a public presentation before the Planning Commission tentatively scheduled for May 2010. A public adoption hearing before the Board of Supervisors is tentatively scheduled for August 2010.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code places Comprehensive Plan adoption authority with the Board of Supervisors. There is no provision for adoption of a municipal comprehensive plan by public referendum.

17. Public Accessibility – Participants asked how they could view the draft Comprehensive Plan and be kept up to date with the proceedings of the Task Force. Some requested detailed minutes of the Community Meeting.

It was suggested that the draft plan be posted on the Township web site, and copies could be maintained at the Township offices and library for review. The Task Force Chairman stated that this summary of the Community Meeting comments would be available for public review within 45 days. This will be done.

All Task Force meetings are advertised and open to the public.

The West Pikeland Township Comprehensive Plan Task Force welcomes additional comment on these and other topics related to the Comprehensive Plan update. Comments may be emailed to Task Force Chairman Mario DiBenedetto at [mrdrd@verizon.net](mailto:mrdrd@verizon.net).