

LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP

JOINT SESSION of the BOARD OF SUPERVISORS and the VALLEY FORGE CORPORATE CENTER REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

JUNE 29, 2009 MEETING MINUTES

1) Public Meeting: Call to Order

- a) Supervisor Altieri called the public meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

3) Roll Call:

- a) The following members were present: Supervisors Altieri, Brown, and Dininny.
- b) Supervisors DiPaolo and Sassu were absent.
- c) Also present were Township Traffic Engineer Ken O'Brien, Township Landscape Architect Dave Roberts, Township Solicitor David Onorato, Township Engineer John Chambers, Community Relations Coordinator Denise Walsh, Director of Special Projects and Technology William Roth, and Township Manager Joseph Dunbar.

4) Chairman's Comments:

- a) Supervisor Altieri remarked that this special meeting was being held to discuss one of the most critical projects in the Township, and included both the Corporate Center's Redevelopment Committee and the Board of Supervisors. While the meeting includes a public hearing, this is also intended to be a working meeting to allow full discussion of the issues.

5) Public Hearing:

- a) *Mr. Tim Kurek was present to create a complete record of testimony for the following hearings.*
- b) An ordinance amending Chapter 96 of the Lower Providence Township Code, repealing provisions regarding existing service areas, establishing new service areas, and establishing transportation impact fees for each service area:
 - i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Brown made a motion to enter into a public hearing. Supervisor Dininny seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.
 - ii) Mr. Onorato provided a background on the project and key elements that have been completed up to this point in time.
 - iii) Mr. O'Brien discussed the project components already completed, including the Act 209 ordinance previously adopted in 2001, which is being updated with this new ordinance. The Land Use Assumptions Report (LUAR) has been adopted, and provides new Transportation Service Areas (TSA) for the Township. A Roadway Sufficiency Analysis (RSA) and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will need to be completed.
 - iv) Mr. O'Brien spent considerable time reviewing suggested improvements, and explaining how these improvements can or cannot be paid for with Traffic Impact Fees (TIF). He reviewed service levels for areas of the Township where improvements are being considered, noting the CIP is the next step in the process for projects. Mr. O'Brien also identified the new TIF for TSA 1 is \$1,822, and for TSA 2 is \$413.
 - v) Mr. O'Brien requested that the Board adopt the May 2009 Traffic Impact Fee study and the impact fee ordinance this evening.
 - vi) Supervisor Dininny had questions relating to how existing conditions work into the plan.
 - vii) Supervisor Brown had questions on how existing TIF money would be reallocated with the new TSA's.
 - viii) There were no public questions or comments on this matter.
 - ix) **MOTION** – Supervisor Brown made a motion to close the public hearing. Supervisor Dininny seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.

6) Ordinances & Resolutions:

- a) Resolution adopting the Transportation Impact Fee Study dated May 2009:
 - i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Dininny made a motion to adopt the Transportation Impact Fee Study dated May 2009. Supervisor Brown seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.
 - b) An ordinance amending Chapter 96 of the Lower Providence Township Code, repealing provisions regarding existing service areas, establishing new service areas, and establishing transportation impact fees for each service area:
 - i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Brown made a motion to adopt this ordinance. Supervisor Dininny seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.
- 7) New Business:**
- a) Presentation and discussion by the Valley Forge Corporate Center Redevelopment Master Plan Implementation Committee (VFCCRMPIC):
 - i) Supervisor Altieri noted that she has been a part of the various transportation and revitalization committees, and the work on this plan has not been done in a vacuum. This plan is the culmination of work done by staff, developers, committee members, etc., over a three-year period. This presentation is very thorough and warrants the attention being given in a special meeting, and Supervisor Altieri thanked everyone for allowing this meeting to occur.
 - ii) Mr. Dunbar acknowledged the committee members, including Mr. Chambers, Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Onorato, Mrs. Walsh, Mr. Roth, Mrs. Altieri, Mr. Dininny, and Mr. Michael Siegel who has provided valuable input throughout this process.
 - iii) Mr. Dunbar explained that the Township property taxes collected in 2008 put \$1.5 million in the general fund, which does not even cover the \$2 million it costs to run the Lower Providence Police Department. Earned Income Tax (EIT) and the Local Services Tax (LST, formerly the EMS tax) are very important in generating revenue for the Township.
 - (1) In 2002 there were 1,902 jobs in the business park, which increased to 2,105 by 2004, and 3,220 by 2008. Even with this job growth, the EIT has flat-lined out.
 - (2) The Valley Forge Corporate Center (VFCC) is not owned by one entity or developer, which makes it difficult to implement some of the desired changes for that area.
 - (3) In 2004, the Township began to take a hard look at the VFCC, which had a nearly 60% vacancy rate. A number of businesses wanted to leave the Township, or new ones did not want to come here because of the traffic congestion in this area. As a result of this, the Township has become a key contributor providing input into the River Crossings Project to improve this situation. Mr. Dunbar noted that 105,000 cars traverse the Schuylkill River Bridge on Rt. 422 each day, with 60,000 cars coming off of Trooper Road.
 - (4) Mr. Dunbar reviewed maps of the VFCC, identifying the various occupancy rates and projected job losses of more than 500 jobs in the coming year.
 - iv) Mr. Dunbar explained that a study of the nine adjacent municipalities in this area rated traffic and development costs for each Township. Lower Providence rated 9 out of 9 (the worst rating) on overall development costs for starting up a new business. This rating takes into consideration up-front development costs, various Township fees such as Park & Recreation, and the cost for EDU’s. Adoption of the new ACT 209 resolution this evening will move Lower Providence up to 7 out of 9. Overall this is still not a good thing as there are a lot of vacancies in the Township, there are lost jobs, and it is hard to attract new jobs up front.
 - (1) Mr. Roth noted that according to this same study, while Lower Providence ranks higher for new development as a start-up cost, the Township ranks 3 out of 9 for overall annual operating costs.
 - (2) It was noted that other municipalities have Mercantile or Business Privilege taxes that Lower Providence does not have. Mr. Dunbar relayed the story of a firm that decided to locate in King of Prussia, but once they were there told Mr. Dunbar they would have been better off in Lower Providence because we do not have a Gross Receipts Tax as Upper Merion does.

- (3) Mr. Dunbar noted that some places also run their own sewage treatment centers, which increases costs.
- (4) Supervisor Altieri noted that Montgomery Township is number 1 for development, but number 9 for ongoing operating fees.
- (5) Supervisor Dininny commented that it was interesting to compare these costs. The work the Township has done here is very important. Residential development is down, but the Township needs to live off of its revenue. The Rt. 422 project needs to be driven by this Township, and the work completed so far is impressive.
- v) Mr. Onorato noted that after the Township adopted the VFCC Master Development Plan, prepared by Simone Collins back in March 2008, they need to determine the uses allowed under zoning.
 - (1) Simone Collins proposed the use of sectors in the VFCC, with some being high density, some residential, etc. The Board needs to determine how they want to go through zoning.
 - (2) It was suggested that sectors such as Eisenhower Circle, or Rittenhouse be created. They need to identify what type of sector will have the greatest impact. These sectors will exist as overlay districts within the VFCC. Some of the sectors will have mixed uses to encourage people to stay in the area during lunch and after business hours.
 - (3) Mr. Onorato noted that the Board may want to consider some additional uses not currently permitted in the IP zoning district such as a bake shop, adult day care, child care, etc.
 - (4) If a conference center were to be permitted, it would need to be restricted to within a certain sector, and the number of such centers should also be limited.
 - (5) Mr. Chambers noted that uses currently permitted in the IP district would continue to be permitted. This ordinance is a first attempt to identify other potential uses
 - (6) Supervisor Brown asked if communication antenna meant towers? Mr. Onorato indicated they do not; they need to look at the code to see what is permitted. Mr. Brown questioned several other types of uses, which Mr. Onorato noted they could restrict uses as deemed appropriate by the Board.
 - (7) Both Supervisors Brown and Dininny commented that it would be difficult to promote commercial development within the VFCC, as drive through traffic is needed for success of such businesses.
 - (8) There was a general discussion of the types of uses that could be permitted from a commercial business perspective. It was noted that foot traffic is also important to these businesses. It was also noted that the use of the special exception to permit these businesses would take careful consideration as to their impact on the surrounding neighbors in this newly designed district. Mr. Onorato noted that the Zoning Hearing Board or the Board of Supervisors would be able to place restrictions on these businesses as necessary
 - (9) Supervisor Brown commented that some uses would require further definition or restriction, such as welding, which is permitted everywhere.
- vi) Mr. Roth suggested discussion of specific zoning sectors and how they were determined.
 - (1) Mr. Roberts explained that he reviewed the initial plan and made suggestions he thought would be useful. When they analyzed the mixed-use sector, a high-density area was added to create this sector. They looked at the properties involved. This is called an industrial park, however it is more like an industrial subdivision as there is no one controlling entity to make this vision occur.
 - (2) For Eisenhower Circle, they have taken pieces of individually owned property to create a circle. To create this area, four property owners and one or more buildings would need to be moved. Some buildings are fully occupied, so you would not want to disturb them. They will focus on the empty buildings
 - (3) Mr. Roberts recommended eliminating the mixed use on Eisenhower, and concentrating on the intersection of Van Buren and Adams, and discussed other parcels in this area. There are vacant buildings in the Jefferson Square area; and they may be able to get the property owners

involved to energize this area of the park. Mr. Roberts noted they need to balance the retail and industrial base while discussing possible parcels for redevelopment.

- (4) Mr. Roberts discussed the impact of the TIF and rezoning on attracting new businesses to this area. He also suggested the creation of a park within a park at Jefferson and Van Buren. This Office Technology Core would be a self-contained office technology sector, providing offices the ability to control it for safety.
 - (5) Mr. Roberts suggested a round about circle to calm traffic at Adams and Van Buren Avenues.
 - (6) He also noted that more specific discussions with property owners must occur with regard to the proposed zoning sectors and additional zoning standards.
- vii) Mr. Dunbar discussed the status of the River Crossings Complex project. The plan should be approved in late 2010, with construction beginning in 2011.
- (1) Mr. Dunbar discussed other traffic projects in the area, including a joint project with West Norriton to widen Trooper Road and add a lane going into the VFCC. Congressman Sestak was in support of a joint funding request of \$8 million for this project, and included it in his request for the reauthorization of the next transportation bill. This bill faces a 12-18 month delay, but the Congressman's support is very important, as the project would cover 80% of the funding with Federal dollars.
 - (2) Mr. Dunbar indicated that they are working on a close-loop camera system along Trooper Road with West Norriton. There are other transportation projects being worked on in conjunction with West Norriton, and Senator Specter and Congressman Sestak's offices, which should occur in the next few years.
 - (3) Mr. O'Brien discussed the conceptual plan to widen Trooper Road to five lanes from just north of Audubon Road to Shannondell Blvd. This includes three southbound lanes at the Audubon Road approach, and signalization at Trooper Road and Monroe Blvd. There is also the possibility of adding two left turn lanes onto West Norriton roads.
 - (4) Mr. O'Brien noted that the proposed extension of Norris Hall Lane across Trooper Road to Egypt Road, with an extension from Adams Avenue to Shannondell Blvd., would take some congestion off of Trooper Road. This will also provide a connection to the corporate center.
 - (5) Mr. Dunbar noted these are all conceptual plans at this point in time.
 - (6) Supervisor Brown asked how people on Rittenhouse Road would get to their homes? Mr. O'Brien indicated there could be a cul-de-sac roadway to provide access to these homes.
 - (7) Mr. Brown commented that a lot of the traffic on Shannondell Blvd is there because people want to turn at a signalized intersection. He remarked that you couldn't turn left onto Egypt Road from Rittenhouse Road. Mr. O'Brien indicated that this would be signalized eventually.
- viii) Mr. Chambers reviewed an aerial view of the VFCC. He is in the process of determining where the pedestrian connections should be so this can be presented to the business park owners. He reviewed the proposed locations for sidewalks on all of the streets in the VFCC. In the middle of Adams Avenue, they are proposing a planted island similar to that on Monroe Blvd. There will be street trees and some other additional landscaping.
- ix) Mr. Roth noted that CMX has provided virtual trail connections and gateway and signage improvements.
- (1) Mr. Roberts explained these are a visualization of how to call out the major entrances to the VFCC, providing a unique VFCC identifier.
 - (2) Currently, there are no sidewalks in the corporate center, but they are needed.
 - (3) The gateway signage creates a palate of elements to be repeated throughout the corporate center. This draws the eyes to the gateway, moving them away from surrounding loading docks, parking lots, etc.
 - (4) The proposed treatments would be the same at all major entrances, and are located within the public domain. Smaller versions of this treatment would be used at secondary entrances to the corporate center.

- (5) Street lights, pedestrian crossings, bus stops, etc. would be added throughout the corporate park to promote pedestrian traffic.
- x) Mr. Dunbar commented that they are trying to work toward bringing the business park back to the forefront and attracting new business. By adopting the Act 209 ordinance, they are on the road to making it easier to get here.
 - (1) Mr. Dunbar suggested that the Board might want to reconsider how Park & Recreation fees are funded. Currently, these are generated by new development, however that fund is running a deficit right now. The Sewer Authority (SA) is also re-evaluating its' Act 57 fees.
 - (2) Mr. Onorato noted that the SA is required to re-evaluate their connection fees under Act 57. This fee is based on anticipated future capital costs for the system, and a per capita use. Currently, one EDU is \$4,200. The SA is trying to lower that cost, and there should be some action in that direction within the next few months.
 - (3) Mr. Dunbar remarked that the Township needs to take a more active role in marketing the business park. They have worked closely with Senator Rafferty on projects such as the Velodrome, which did not work out, however they may be able to work with his office on new projects. If the Board is willing to support some of the ideas brought up this evening, they will set up a meeting to discuss this with the business park owners.
 - (4) Supervisor Brown asked if the Park & Recreation fee was based on the use expected within a certain zone within the IP? Mr. Dunbar explained that there is a price per lot for residential construction, and a price per square foot for businesses. Mr. Dunbar requested that the Board authorize the various items on this evening's agenda. Supervisor Altieri noted it was critical that they move forward with these projects.

b) Authorization to move forward and develop new mixed use zoning for Valley Forge Corporate Center (FVCC):

i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Dininny made a motion to move forward with this project. Supervisor Brown seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.

c) Authorization to move forward with zoning map amendments:

i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Brown made a motion to move forward with the zoning map amendments. Supervisor Dininny seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.

d) Authorization to implement gateway, signage and pedestrian access improvements:

i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Dininny made a motion to move forward with these improvements. Supervisor Brown seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.

e) Authorization to continue with the Master Plan Implementation timeline:

i) **MOTION** – Supervisor Brown made a motion to continue with the Master Plan Implementation timeline. Supervisor Dininny seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. There was no public comment on this item.

8) Comments and Other Business:

- a) Supervisor Brown thanked everyone for all of the time and energy put into developing this plan. He is hopeful they will move forward and make these improvements.
- b) Supervisor Dininny discussed the history of the project, and commented that he hopes the new supervisors do not let this project die. The staff has done very good work. While it is easy to be discouraged when projects fall through, and easy to be excited with new projects, it is difficult to “close the deal.” Mr. Dininny remarked that Township staff is consistent and has to continue with this project.
 - i) Mr. Dunbar remarked that staff is not deterred by projects that have fallen through. They will keep working with the Board to achieve success on this project. Mr. Dininny commented that all of the Township's services are depending on the success of this project for funding so taxes will not have to be increased.

c) Supervisor Altieri thanked the committee for all of the time and effort put into this project, and thanked the Board for recognizing the need for this special presentation and discussion.

9) Adjournment:

a) **MOTION** – Supervisor Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Supervisor Dininny seconded the motion. The motion *passed* 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Next Work Session Meeting: July 2, 2009

Next Business Meeting: July 16, 2009