



## JOINT BOC-PC WORKSHOP

CP Workshop

AGENDA-MINUTES

June 10, 2020

1. **CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.**

**As this is a virtual GoTo Meeting, Township Manager Renee Bickel took a Roll Call Vote for attendance purposes as follows:**

**Board of Commissioners:**

Commissioner Wolk: HERE  
Commissioner Mobilio: HERE  
Commissioner Kelly: HERE  
Commissioner Setton: HERE  
Commissioner Morgan: HERE

**Planning Commission:**

David Dunbar: HERE  
David Wilson: HERE  
Diane Kelly: HERE  
Brian Hite: HERE  
Bill MacNair: HERE  
Alan Tope: HERE  
Vinny Quinn: ABSENT

**SWT Staff:**

Renee Bickel, Township Manager  
Randy Cope, Director of Twp. Operations  
George Kinney, Director of Community Development  
Dave Manhardt, Director of GIS and IT Projects  
Gregg Adams, CD Planner  
Joseph A. Zator, Twp. Solicitor, Zator Law Offices  
Jennifer Alderfer, Twp. Solicitor, Zator Law Offices  
Tony Tallarida, Twp. Engineer, The Pidcock Company  
Tracy Fehnel, Executive Assistant

Prior to the start of the meeting, George Kinney, Director, Community Development Department went over meeting protocol.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **NOTIFICATION:** All Public sessions of the South Whitehall Township Board of Commissioners are recorded. The recording is kept and posted to boarddocs.com until the minutes of the meeting are approved. Said recording is then destroyed if a request is not made to retain the electronic version at that time.

**\*(boarddocs.com; USERNAME: swhitehall; PASSWORD: swtpublic)**

President Morgan explained that this evening is a joint meeting between the Board of Commissioners and the Planning Commission, primarily to update everyone as to the status of the Comprehensive Plan (CP)

4. **INFORMATIONAL AND/OR DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Consideration of Township Response Letter to PennDOT Regarding Transportation Improvement Plan Update**

Bill MacNair, Chairman of the Planning Commission, explained this is a letter to LVPC and PennDOT with regard to comments on the Traffic Improvement Plan. He went through and noted all the projects in our area, and asked that we be given an opportunity to comment with the LVPC and PennDOT when these come up. He went on to explain that he mentioned two other projects on the TIP Plan that were removed—the “309 Betterment North of Rt 22” and “Covered Bridge on Lapp Road” Projects. We have already received an email back from the LVPC/Becky Bradley that they have accepted this and they will be sure to include us as they plan these projects in our area. The purpose of sending this in is so that we have a place holder, and that we have made comments on the regulations, so as these projects come up, we do get the opportunity to see what is going on. Bill explained that there are times when a small change in the design can mean a big change for somebody locally. It is also good to be involved as the projects are getting planned so that we get the opportunity to comment. President Morgan thanked Mr. MacNair for his work on this—it is really appreciated.

5. **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE** (Presentations all found on boarddocs.)

a. **Presentation of Phase 2 Results - Dave Manhardt, Director of GIS and IT Projects**

Dave Manhardt explained we will be going over the results of Phase 2 of the CP—from our “Where should we grow?” outreach. We will address “where we should grow”, and “areas to protect and improve”.

Recap of process:

Phase 1 was Existing Conditions & Guiding Principles (events held at High School); Projections & Build Out; and Land Use Scenarios.

Phase 2 is where we had the map exercises – Question asked was, “Where should we grow?”

Phase 3 is what we are just now beginning, which comprises of going over the results of the map exercises done in Phase 2.

Later steps will be summarized at end of presentation.

Phase 2 – Where should we grow?

- Total of 90 participants; had 4 public stakeholder meetings; 2 focus group meetings; 1 joint BOC-PC Meeting; and completed 26 maps in this process.
- In the where should be grow exercises, participants indicated 2 areas they feel are important to protect and 2 areas they want to improve.
- Areas to protect are primarily in the area north of Huckleberry, along the Jordan Valley. These areas will be considered as we move forward. (On the map, Cedar Crest/Huckleberry—the downhill side of Huckleberry, is the area marked with the most green hexagons.)
- Areas where improvements are needed – Dave said people indicated (see orange hexagons) intersections as areas needing improvements, such as Cedar Crest & Walbert; Cedar Crest & 22; Tilghman (the interchange); the Kmart area; and 309/22/Ridgeview.

- Comments were also written on the maps, which will be utilized in the next phase when we put together the story map, which is an online map, which will allow more people to participate and comment on each hexagon—what they feel needs to be protected or improved.

Question – What improvements were represented by the participants? Dave explained that we allowed for a wide opinion. What we found is that improvements centered primarily around road improvements. Part of the reason we want to get more comments is to see what else we could be missing.

It was pointed out that the Ridge Farm development has a lot of improvement stickers, and the question is how many of those stickers meant that they did not want the RF development to go in there? What did the word “improvement” really mean to the participants? Dave explained if that was the case, they would have used a green protection dot to indicate that.

- Population & Employment was another thing we asked people to work on. We took the LVPC projections, divided that up, and asked people to indicate where they think that growth will go.
  - Ridge Farm received a “high” population, which took a considerable chunk out of total projections.
  - Cluster of hexagons is around the Route 22 area.
  - Regarding jobs, there is one “high”, which is by the old Kmart site. There are some “lows” around the 309/Walbert area, as well as along N. Cedar Crest, and some in the Orefield area.
- In the areas (employment & population) where growth is anticipated, the question was asked—what type of development is anticipated? Three types considered were: Greenfield, Infill, and Redevelopment. We came up with 18 combinations/scenarios, which will be used in the next phase to ask everyone how each of these combinations look.
- Development Types – Greenfield, north of the High School; Redevelopment around the chemical plant; etc. Also, map indicates in the development type hexagons the population (top line) and employment (bottom line)—none, low, medium, high. This will be used to ask people how they think this should look. i.e. How should the low/low, development type-infill look? How should this develop? Then, when we add the Improvement/Protection stickers, this adds another layer as we consider how we should grow. If there are improvements, how do we incorporate those improvements for the rest of the updates.
- Next Steps – The Story Maps are created, which is a website with a dynamic map in it, which will present the results. This will provide an opportunity for people to comment.

Phase 3 – This is where we start talking about how and where we should grow. Through visual preference surveys, we will get an idea of what people want development to look like.

Phase 4 – The results of the preference surveys will then funnel down to Sub-Committees, where they will evaluate their subject matter as it relates to the where and how, and

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formulate or change policies. This is the next phase, and why we are going through this part of the process is to be able to inform the subcommittees, give them enough information, and keep them on point as to where the people want it to grow, this is how they want it to grow, and then how do we formulate the comprehensive plan to make that happen.

Dave did confirm that there will be recommendations coming out of the CP to make changes to the zoning ordinances in order to be consistent with this plan as it develops.

Dave also said that developments that were approved as of the beginning of this process, were included in the existing population/jobs—those reflected approved development.

All questions were answered at this time.

**b. Presentation from Traffic Engineer - Scott Pasterski, Civil Engineer/Project Manager, Keystone Consulting Engineers**

Mr. Pasterski gave a presentation on **Traffic Evaluations**, as it relates to the update of our CP. As part of any CP, what comes along with that is traffic, as well as how it may impact the surrounding road networks, the traveling public, and potential increased congestion—all this affects quality of life, commerce, air quality, and safety. Traffic has to go along with this entire process. Going to take you through what we have started to prepare as a result of the update to this process.

**Traffic Model – Corridors & Intersections**

Traffic Model Measures:

- Intersection Capacity Utilization
- ICU Level of Service
- Qualitative Description of Intersection Performance

He went on to say that the first thing they looked at doing was developing a base traffic model, which can be used for comparison. The goal is the existing condition, plus any development that may be in the pipeline (approved development), is the baseline being used. In order to determine what corridors/intersections should be considered, we took our cue from the workshops held, and based on where the development was anticipated to go, we made selections on that basis. The two things that would affect that is if there would be development along one of the routes, with intersections—Walbert Avenue, 309 corridor from Ridgeview Drive to Lime Kiln Road, Cedar Crest Boulevard from Walbert Avenue all the way to Orefield Road. This is also based not only on anticipated development, but where the traffic is expected to go, such as Cedar Crest Boulevard to the south of Walbert Avenue, the Hamilton Boulevard corridor, Tilghman Street corridor.

A preliminary model has been done for intersections with SWT, and also some which extend outside the boundaries of the SWT, since these intersections may also be affected. Additional analyses will be done as this project progresses.

Signalized intersections – Looking at these intersections where possible congestion may occur. We are currently looking at congestion on the corridors as a result of new development.

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These intersection currently make up the bulk of the analysis being done. The model we are using for that is called the Intersection Capacity Utilization Model. This ICU method is ideal for planning applications, which is dependent on the lane configurations at each intersection and the volumes on the roadway. With this information, we can get an estimate of how an intersection is functioning or how it will function when future development is added. In order to get traffic volumes in the Township, we have included all studies done by development dollars and studies done by PennDOT, which have been used to get our baseline data and will springboard off this.

The model outputs to be provided will include the intersection capacity utilization—how much more traffic can this intersection take. Our outputs are measures of effectiveness.

The other output is a Qualitative Description of the Intersection Performance – Where studies will be done regarding delay of traffic which will be graded A-G.

As future planning exercises take place, we will layer other layers of traffic on top of the base model to see what the impact is to the intersections. From there we can anticipate where future intersection improvements might be needed. From a planning standpoint, it will give us an idea of what to expect.

TIP Project information will be given to Mr. Pasterski, if he doesn't already have, to be included in his analyses.

Commissioner Wolk - Might there be some consideration for including some non-PennDOT roads based on significance of future traffic, the amount of development, and locations of development?

Mr. Pasterski - Yes, they could be. The evaluations are currently based on the preliminary information from the workshops, but as we get more into this, and more information becomes available, and know what the developments are, as we get into the next stage of this study and actually take the trips from those developments and distribute them to the road network, and/or find that these other roads should be included, we can certainly expand this model if we need to. Huckleberry Road can be added.

Dave Manhardt – If there are intersections that raise a red flag, because of a particular development, they can certainly be added, and he suspects they will be. In addition to incorporating TIP Projects, the ability to incorporate proposed improvements from proposed development is one of the things he is excited about regarding the potential of this model being used.

Brian Hite – Felt the 309/Tilghman Street Interchange Project should be added. He felt that could be a real game changer for our community. Also, he said Tilghman Street should be taken all the way out to the Turnpike interchange at least, because there are a series of lights there that could be problematic.

Comments duly noted by Mr. Pasterski. He said that as we dive more into this, we will know where the impacts will be and that the map we are looking at will evolve and grow.

David Burke – Did we address industrial development on the maps? The warehouses have about 600 trucks a day, coming out at 309/Ridgeview. Wanted to make sure we are not forgetting that. Mr. Pasterski said these will be included.

### **Traffic Planning Handbook**

In addition to the base model, we will prepare a Traffic Planning Handbook, a tool the PC would use. This tool would have basic traffic information regarding their planning developments. This information is based on traffic documents. In this way you would not have to search for information, it would be in the handbook.

- ITE Trip Generation Rates for Typical Land Uses
  - Land Use Type • Independent Variable • Weekday • AM Peak • PM Peak
  - Shared trips between the uses. This results in a traffic reduction when certain uses are paired together.
- FUTURELV: Regional Comprehensive Plan – A page or two of information so the PC will know what the LVPC was thinking when they prepared the future LVPC Plan and they can choose to consider, or not consider that feedback. You will know at a glance what the prior study had determined.
  - Transportation Considerations – consideration of other modes of transportation. Public transportation will serve to decrease traffic volumes.
- Public Transit (LANTA)

### **Next Steps**

Layer on any future developments, like Ridge Farms, that have not been approved yet, which could potentially be part of the traffic stream. In the future we would want to layer that onto the traffic model.

We would want to take the developments that had been identified, the types of developments, the location of those developments, and use the same ITE Trip Generation Manual to determine trip generation. We would then distribute that traffic to the network, as it relates to the intersections identified, and then re-run our traffic model to see where the impacts are. From there we can then tell where any hot spots will be—intersections pushed over capacity, operating at a worse level of service than previously, and where we can anticipate the likelihood of future improvements, whether a developer or municipal funded project, or a TIP Project.

Modify Plan Development – when warranted and/or feasible.

No additional comments or questions at this time.

### **c. Presentation from Land Use Economist - Todd Poole, President, Founder, and Managing Principal of 4Ward Planning Inc.**

*(Part way through this presentation, Mr. Poole lost power due to a storm, he then called back in and was unable to view any of his presentation; however, he continued with a verbal presentation. Original presentation has been posted to boarddocs, along with the other presentations.)*

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Mr. Poole explained this is a high-level presentation as to what is likely to happen over the next 36 months, and probably in the years beyond with regard to industry, land-use as a result of COVID-19. We want to show you what trends will have influence on SWT's CP.

Major Land Uses likely to fundamentally change over the near- and long-term: Housing • Retail • Restaurants and Entertainment Venues • Office • Light Industrial • Recreation

### **Pre-Pandemic Trends**

- Housing
    - Regarding residential development, we saw a sharp up-tick in development of luxury apartments and townhomes.
    - Increase in rental versus owning.
    - People seemed to favor the studios and one/two bedroom units. There has been a demand for the smaller units pre-COVID, which may not be the case post-COVID.
    - Big over the last decade was housing near transit and in walking distance to amenities. This will probably continue to stay big, but people are not looking to jump onto mass transportation any time soon where people are in close proximity.
  - Retail – Many were already struggling pre-COVID due to e-commerce. Organizations similar to a Sears, Kohls, Target. The pandemic has helped to accelerate certain trends already in motion—the death of the department store or the acceleration of its expiration. *(At this point Mr. Poole lost power and called back in.)* As a result of the larger economy shut down, we will continue to see more bankruptcies.
  - Office – demand for suburban office space was waning pre-pandemic
    - Technology has made it a lot easier to work remotely. This whole pandemic accelerated the transformation of the office setting.
    - Younger workers want urban work environment, more amenities, within walking distance.
  - Light Industrial - A land-use category, which has been a darling in real estate for at least ten years, and is only solidifying that position in part because of e-commerce. More particularly now because of e-commerce and everyone is under lock down—everything is being done online. This combines with other needs for warehouse space, which has been on the rise. SWT has been experiencing this and will continue to do so. This is a land-use class that has strength and certainly coming on the other side of the pandemic, that particular category in my opinion will only continue to grow. It is likely to grow also because of nationalizing the supply chain—to bring more of the supply network currently strewn around the globe back to the U.S. This too will create a greater demand for light industrial space in a lot of different places.
  - Restaurants & Entertainment Venues – Restaurants have the ability to revitalize—you are not buying things, but an experience. Restaurants represent that. Over the last 10-12 years there has been an explosion of that type of business and land-use in the U.S. particularly in urbanized areas and even in suburban areas. This has been complimented by entertainment venues such as bars, bowling alleys, etc. This has been driven by the
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growth of discretionary income. As a side note, data shows that the American consumer is not better off than they were 30 years ago.

- Recreation - Public Recreation, Parks, Trails, Civic spaces that are controlled by municipal and county government. Leading up to this moment in time, there has been a resurgence in people using these spaces certainly in local government, in non-profits investing in these spaces, and this will not likely change, but in fact is likely to increase for a variety of reasons, not least of which it is a low-cost means of recreating and getting outside, and obviously in our current times, these are things that people really want to do.

**The Next 36 Months** – For these different land-use categories.

Housing – can be most difficult to predict. The big take-away for housing is that with a lot of uncertainty in the job market, a lot of businesses are not re-opening their doors again, which will necessitate people having to double and triple up in somebody's home. The trend leading to this moment in time was the creation of much smaller household units for 1 & 2 person households, which this trend may pause or even reverse entirely over the next three years, as people are financially unable to rent or purchase their own place. In terms of housing, a return of developers wanting to build three/four bedroom units, townhouses or apartments, or single family detached homes. Mr. Poole thinks the larger count bedroom units will come back into favor, because households are going to grow in size because of financial pressures.

Mr. Poole went on to say that he thinks we will see over the next few years developers petitioning to build three and four family housing units to help facilitate families and larger households to domicile together in order to save money. He feels this will be in the near term, as well as the long term.

Single-family detached housing – Mr. Poole said he realizes SWT has a lot of single-family detached housing; however, he expects that this will be paused, in part for financial reasons. In the mortgage market, lending standards are already becoming more strict. This will translate into fewer people being able to purchase homes, new or existing. This will further translate into fewer single-family developments being built. He expects this to be the case over the next three years.

There will still be the demand and an appetite for developers to build rentals for the obvious reasons, but feels rentals will be built to accommodate larger amounts of people per unit.

Retail – We will see more of the same. Things will accelerate regarding store closures. The old Kmart site will present itself as a re-development site. Well capitalized developers will be coming in, wanting to get these properties on the cheap and then repurpose them, probably for a mix of uses, not least of which is residential.

Smaller retailers are not likely to come out of this COVID—they won't reopen. For both restaurants and retailers, the chains are the ones who will weather the storm the best. Coming out of this we will have fewer restaurants, fewer retailers, and a lot more e-commerce. Over the next three years, people for fear of contracting an illness, will not frequent venues as in the past. It is unclear as to when people will begin to feel safe.

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Light Industrial – Over the next three years, Mr. Poole believes you will see this ramp up. You will see developers and business owners come in seeking approvals, particularly for underperforming retail sites, like the Kmart site. Perhaps to use this site as a fulfillment center, like an Amazon; You should consider how you are going to handle these within your CP policies and your ultimate zoning ordinances.

Recreation – Mr. Poole said the demand for public recreation will continue to rise, not only for local residents, but from people outside the area—you will see increased use. At this moment in time, you can take advantage of that and look at some of your zones, public spaces, and recreational areas to see where there is opportunity to create revenue generation, whether it is in a partnership, private-public partnership, or doing it on your own. There are going to be millions of people who will never be returning to their jobs, and will not have discretionary income to spend going out, but having inexpensive public recreation available to them will be meaningful. This is an opportunity to bolster those resources, maybe rethink the resources you have, how they are positioned to provide different types of recreation. For example, a pop-up drive-in theater, which would allow your park space to be used.

You want to think in terms of how your zoning is going to facilitate the investment for the changes just talked about. Coming up with zoning changes that would include looking at form based code that would include looking at an expedited permitting process to allow for development to happen sooner, rather than later. For example, it is looking at the former Kmart site and saying, it will never be what it was before, or what it was intended to be; therefore, would we be comfortable with a mixed-use, residential, or are we comfortable with this being light industrial. If so, let's look at changing the zoning sooner, rather than later because this will be an investment which will pay off in terms of being a tax appeal. As a Township you will be receiving lots of tax appeals from retail operators, because the value of those properties is going to plummet dramatically. The best way to counter that would be to say what is market receptive going forward and let's get that zoning in place as soon as possible in order to shorten the low ratable value and get it turned around.

We have left a world we will never return to—restaurants, retail—many are permanently lost and zoning needs to reflect that. Housing will also continue to change gradually, under the assumption that we will be in a high unemployment environment for some time to come. As a point of reference, during the great recession, we reached a high of 10% unemployment at its height. For every percentage point for unemployment, it takes about one year to shave that point off. We were down to 3.5/4% unemployment, it took close to a decade to get there. We are unofficially close to 20% unemployment and officially at 15%. That being said, we will be in a high unemployment environment for years to come, and further exasperated by companies eliminating further jobs. Zoning also needs to reflect that we will have more e-commerce—same-day delivery, next-day delivery, which we will need a bigger footprint for that. We will see more retail space converted to medical office space.

The long-term outlook is not going to look anything like what we just left. We have moved into a new world which will continue to evolve.

Mike Wolk – Feels it would be good to have an economic analysis done and asked Board what their thoughts were on the matter. Procedurally would like to finalize that it will be done. He asked if everybody agrees with this suggestion.

Dave Manhardt said that way back in Phase 1, there were two things made clear were economic impact and transportation. That is why we are involving Todd Poole and Scott Pasterski early in the process. Todd and I spoke on how to best incorporate the economic impact, and when, in our process. He would also be able to speak more on a fiscal analysis and how it might be incorporated into our CP.

Todd Poole – He said this is referred to as a **fiscal impact**. Fiscal, being that we are looking at both the perspective tax and other fee revenues generated by developments—housing, commercial, industrial, as well as the respective service costs—municipal, school, inclusive of capital improvements that might be necessary. His advice is you absolutely do want to perform a fiscal impact analysis in advance of finalizing your CP. Because, you want to know, if in fact this thing got built out, what does this look like fiscally? Are we better off, the same, or worse off? You can't know that until you do some projections or an analysis to say where we are likely to be given currently known factors, tax rates, and values, as well as population, kids in our school system, etc.

You would do this when you start getting down to a preferred buildout of CP in terms of what you would like to see developed, then one of the final things you would do is to test that fiscally and ask, how did that turn out for us? In this way, if we do not like how something turned out, we would have an opportunity to tweak the policy in the CP, so that when you go to zone for it, you're not adversely impacting yourself in the fiscal segment sense.

Commissioner Wolk – Should we have a vote to have the fiscal impact done? President Morgan said that is part of the Plan. Dave Manhardt said this will be done in Phase 4. Once we get through our “Where” and our “How”, we will know what it is going to look like. We will have a clearer understanding of how to measure the fiscal impact. It can't be started until we get through that process.

Dave said that he and Todd spoke briefly about looking at the fiscal impact for each of the sections from a utility standpoint, based on these land-use decisions. Incorporating it throughout that next phase is where we are leaning towards and then probably summarizing at the end. Todd mentioned about doing the fiscal impact prior to finalizing the plan, which allows us the flexibility to go back in and tweak CP Policy with an understanding of what those impacts are.

Q: What do we do with these already vacant office buildings in the Township? Is there a way for us to reuse what we have, before we build new; and can we put something in place in order to do this.

Mr. Poole said a municipality can steer someone toward a particular vacancy. But he said that we are going to begin to see over the next few years the owners of these office properties come in and ask for a zoning variance for the space to be converted for the purpose of light industrial use or for the space to be redeveloped for light industrial. As mentioned before, light industrial is going to be a hot commodity.

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All questions were answered by Board/Public at this time.

Commissioner Wolk thanked all the gentlemen for their presentations. He felt it was the right information we needed at this time.

President Morgan in closing thanked all the gentlemen and said they did a great job, and we look forward to the next Phase.

Dave Manhardt said you will be able to find information regarding the CP on our website at: [www.swtcompplan.org](http://www.swtcompplan.org)

6. **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** - Non-agenda items. NONE.
7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** No executive session after this meeting.
8. **ADJOURNMENT:** At 8:27 p.m. a MOTION was made by Commissioner Kelly, which was seconded by Bill MacNair to adjourn. All in favor; none opposed.
9. **APPROVED:** On June 17, 2020, a MOTION was made by Commissioner Kelly, which was seconded by Commissioner Wolk, to approve the June 10, 2020 – Joint BOC-PC Workshop Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

Roll Call Vote taken as follows:

Commissioner Wolk: AYE  
Commissioner Setton: AYE  
Commissioner Mobilio: AYE  
Commissioner Kelly: AYE  
Commissioner Morgan: AYE  
MOTION carried.