

**LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**March 21, 2013**

The Board of Commissioners of Lower Pottsgrove Township held its regularly scheduled work session meeting on Thursday, March 21, 2013 at the Lower Pottsgrove Township Municipal Building, 2199 Buchert Road, Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The following attended:

**Board of Commissioners:** Jonathan H. Spadt, President; Bruce L. Foltz, Vice President; Michael McGroarty, James D. Kaiser and Stephen M. Klotz.

R. Kurtz Holloway, Solicitor; Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager and Michele Cappelletti, Secretary.

Rodney P. Hawthorne, Manager, was absent from the meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Commissioner Spadt announced that the Board met in executive session immediately prior to tonight's meeting at 6:00 p.m. to discuss two contractual matters: the Bleim Road project and the police contract. No action was taken.

**PRESENTATION:**

**Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commissioner (PMRPC) Fiscal Impact and Market Analysis**—John Cover of the Montgomery County Planning Commission delivered a presentation on "Marketing the Pottstown Region: A Focus on Lower Pottsgrove Township and the Fiscal Impact Analysis Report for Lower Pottsgrove Township." Mr. Cover gave an overview of the Report, which consists of the following four parts:

**The Community Assessment Report** profiles the eight member municipalities and gives a summary of business activity in the Region.

**The Regional Market Assessment** defines potential gaps in the Region's economic activity and uses three different population growth scenarios to project demand for commercial activity and identify opportunities for industrial development.

**The Strategic Regional Economic Development Implementation Plan** recommends strategies for achieving economic development in the Region, including proactive recruiting efforts, expanding arts and culture, improving transportation infrastructure and signage and specific changes to some municipal regulations.

**The Fiscal Impact Analysis** evaluates the revenues and costs of new development to all eight municipal governments and the Region's four school districts. In conjunction with the Fiscal Impact Analysis, the consultants who authored the Study also created a **Fiscal Impact Model**. Using the Model, municipalities can input information about potential

development into the Excel document to determine the fiscal impact of a project or development on a community.

Mr. Cover pointed out that the market analysis showed that the entire eight-municipality Pottstown metro region can absorb approximately 400,000 sq. ft. of retail over the next 20+ years. Lower Pottsgrove's Sanatoga Interchange Plan, alone, calls for approximately 400,000 sq. ft. of retail.

The fiscal impact analysis shows that Lower Pottsgrove is one of two municipalities in the region that will operate on fiscal deficits if it follows the current projected path for development. The study concludes that less development is better for the Township's budget in the long term. Mr. Cover said that this study looked at the impact of development as the Township is currently zoned or planned to be zoned. He said that the Township could use this information and develop a different approach to future development in the Township, which may have a better impact on the Township's long-term financial future. The fiscal impact model is a tool to help the Township analyze the impact of proposed developments on its budget. He encouraged them to utilize it.

Commissioner Spadt thanked Mr. Cover for the informative presentation. He will review the Report in its entirety. Commissioner Spadt asked if living near two cooling towers and the Pottstown mailing address were part of the assumptions in the growth projections.

Regarding the cooling towers, Mr. Cover said they seem to have had very little impact on retail and housing development in Limerick. He also did not think the towers have an impact on commercial mixed use development. Mr. Cover said the developers are looking at location and felt Lower Pottsgrove should get the word out that this area has a lot to offer.

Regarding the Pottstown mailing address, Mr. Cover's assessment was that industry from outside the region doesn't recognize the address. They look at workforce transportation, quality of life and consider many other conditions before the Pottstown mailing address.

Commissioner Foltz said according to the Report, Lower Pottsgrove is competing with Upper Pottsgrove, West Pottsgrove, North Coventry, etc. for retail. He asked what about Limerick? Mr. Cover said the report takes into account what is happening in Limerick, Upper Providence and Lower Providence and Limerick is factored into the ultimate numbers.

Ms. Elliott advised the complete report is available online at the Pottstown Regional Metropolitan Planning Commission website.

Commissioner McGroarty thanked Mr. Cover and said some of the numbers in the report are sobering when thinking about growth in the future. He felt planning and taking a look at the longer term is how you grow.

**COMMENTS FROM VISITORS:**

**Tony Doyle**, 1745 Kepler Road, said he would feel better if Rodney Hawthorne was referred to as "Mr. Hawthorne" or "Rodney Hawthorne" in his Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) instead of just "Hawthorne." Commissioner Spadt said Mr. Hawthorne is fine with the way it is.

Mr. Doyle said Mr. Hawthorne's MOU was effective October 1, 2011. He said in 2013, it has to be revisited because every two years, when a new Board comes in, it has to be addressed. Commissioner Spadt said if the new Board wants to readdress the MOU, it can be readdressed.

Mr. Doyle asked about the accumulation of unused sick days stated in Mr. Hawthorne's MOU. Ms. Elliott said according to the Personnel Policies manual, an employee can accrue up to 60 total sick days; if any more than 60 days are accrued, the employee loses those days and unused days are cancelled at retirement.

Mr. Doyle said Rod Hawthorne has 60 days unused sick time and it costs the Township additional money because he didn't take them. He said Rod makes \$2,057.69 per week, \$411 per day, so 60 sick days amount to \$24,660 of unused sick time. He felt with sick days, the Township should start a "using or losing" policy because the employee is paid twice – he is paid for the sick day he doesn't take and also for the day he works.

Commissioner McGroarty asked Mr. Doyle if he would prefer not to cap the sick days; for example, if Mr. Hawthorne did not take his 8 sick days per year for 30 thirty years, should we pay him for 240 days, rather than pay him for being off 8 days per year? Commissioner Kaiser said our policy says we don't pay him. Commissioner Spadt said the MOU will be readdressed at some point in the future.

Mr. Doyle said he would like to see the new truck and asked what the hours of operation are for the Township's Road Crew. Commissioner Foltz said they work 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Mr. Doyle said it is dark at 6:00 a.m. and he felt these employees should work the same hours as the rest of the Township in case they are needed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Klotz made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the March 4, 2013 Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Kaiser seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

**SPRING VALLEY FARMS:**

Brennan Marion of Homsher Hill, LLC was present to answer questions from the Board regarding his revised subdivision plan for Spring Valley Farms.

With respect to open space, Commissioner Spadt asked why Mr. Marion is interested in having the Township acquire the open space and why should the Township have to buy it. Mr. Marion explained that he could, by right, build many more homes than the 265 units he is proposing for the site using the PRD Zoning District. In order for him to

build at this density, and sacrifice extra revenue, he needs to sell the remaining land, preferably to the Township as open space, to subsidize the development. Selling the proposed undeveloped land (approximately 95 acres) to the Township is required to make the plan happen. Commissioner Kaiser said Mr. Marion's approved plan is building fewer units over a larger area. At the price point they are offering, the gross revenue would be higher if he were building according to the plan that was previously approved. Mr. Marion said the approved plan does not work in this market, as there is no demand for it.

Mr. Marion stated that he thinks the proposed plan flows well, is an award-winning plan and accomplishes the Township's goals for Pleasantview Park. Mr. Marion said he cannot build the old plan and hopefully he can garner the Board's support for the new plan.

Commissioner Foltz asked Mr. Marion what happens if the Township cannot afford or chooses not to buy the open space. Mr. Marion said he could not build the development. Commissioner Spadt said Mr. Marion would probably get out and put the entire parcel up for sale. Mr. Marion said he would almost have to, he couldn't build it.

Commissioner McGroarty said the acreage for the open space is 95 acres. Commissioner Spadt asked how much of the 95 acres is buildable. Mr. Marion advised all of it is usable for active recreation and the buildable area is approximately half of the 95 acres. Mr. Marion said the gross acreage of the parcel, before netting out the right-of-ways, etc. is 145 acres. His plan builds on less than 51 acres.

Ms. Elliott commented that Mr. Marion is one of very few developers who is proposing a project with significantly less density than he could get by right per the Township's Zoning ordinance. Most try to fit as many buildings as possibly permitted by the Zoning ordinance on their parcels. Mr. Marion said he has a different view on developing and believes in high quality, well-designed, walkable developments.

Commissioner Spadt said there are people expressing their opposition to the project on Facebook and Board members have received negative feedback about townhomes. These will be competing factors against the Township's purchase of the open space.

Commissioner Spadt said the proposed plan will be reviewed by the Township's engineers. He polled the Commissioners for their individual opinions. Commissioner McGroarty said he has a lot of questions and hasn't seen any studies or reviews from the engineers. He needs answers to his questions. Commissioner Klotz agreed with Commissioner McGroarty, he wants to see studies and numbers. He did like the idea of building in a smaller envelope.

Commissioner Spadt said Mr. Exley will report his findings at the next meeting. He asked if the Board is interested in learning more. Commissioner Klotz wants to learn more but he is concerned about the numbers for the appraisal. He felt he could get over

the issues if the development is done right. Commissioner Spadt said the Board has not authorized the appraisal yet.

Mr. Marion commissioned another traffic study and according to the study, there is no need for realignment of the road. Commissioner Foltz said PECO was recently working at the property and people could have thought the project had already started.

#### **RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES:**

**None.**

#### **CORRESPONDENCE AND INFORMATION:**

The following information was included in the Commissioners' packets:

1. Solicitor's Report on Temporary Use & Occupancy Permit Requests dated March 19, 2013.
2. Letter from Alyson Elliott. Re: 2766 East High Street Agreement for U&O, Land Development dated March 15, 2013.
3. Pottstown Mercury article on Ryan Homes Windlestrae Green Development dated March 10, 2013.
4. DEP Incident Notification – Green coloration in creek.
5. Letter from Robert L. Brant, Esq. Re: Sanatoga Green; Dinnocenti Tract, South Park Road.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Regional Recreation Coordinator**—Ms. Elliott provided the Board with the proposal for a Regional Recreation Coordinator for its review and consideration. The Township Parks and Recreation Board will be considering the proposal at its meeting on Monday, March 25, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. and all Commissioners are welcome to attend and be part of the discussion. Ms. Elliott is available to answer any questions the Commissioners may have regarding the Regional Recreation Coordinator position.

#### **SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT:**

**None.**

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Development Proposal for Evergreen Road**—After discussion, the Board set Monday, May 6 at 6:00 p.m. as the date and time for a presentation on development of the Dinnocenti Tract on South Park Road.

**Warrant #810**— Commissioner Klotz made a motion to approve Warrant #810 for the month of February 2013. Commissioner McGroarty seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

**Acceptance of Treasurer's Report**—Commissioner Klotz made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for the month of February 2013, as submitted by Jennifer Marsteller. Commissioner Foltz seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

**COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:**

There were no Commissioners' comments.

**SOLICITOR'S COMMENTS:**

Solicitor Holloway updated the Board on the generator project. All paperwork is in place and the Notice to Proceed was issued on March 11, 2013. It is now in the hands of the contractor.

**OPEN SPACE COMMENTS:**

Joe Zlomek of the Sanatoga Post asked if getting an opportunity for open space commits the Township to purchase it. Commissioner Spadt replied no. Mr. Zlomek asked if the Township purchases the open space, does it commit it to the project (Spring Valley Farms) as proposed. Commissioner Spadt said no, but if we agree to the open space, we are working towards the project as proposed.

Mr. Zlomek asked if Commissioner McGroarty's proposal of several weeks ago, regarding the "big picture" of open space purchases, has been explained. Ms. Elliott advised that the Township has an open space plan that lists properties set aside for acquisition and the Township has a goal of interconnecting its open space.

Commissioner McGroarty brought up the funding mechanisms for the purchase of open space. Mr. Zlomek questioned whether the Township should take the public's temperature on whether or not they want to buy the open space and asked if the Board has taken that into account. Commissioner Spadt said if we move forward, it will become part of the project.

Commissioner McGroarty questioned do we or don't we want open space and noted that Upper Pottsgrove's open space initiative was a lengthy process. Ms. Elliott said the Parks and Recreation Board, at the direction of the Commissioners has been looking into funding mechanisms, such as an open space tax or a recreation tax, to help fund the acquisition, development and maintenance of its parks. Also, part of the duties of the Regional Recreation Coordinator would be to look at options to help municipalities fund their open space opportunities.

There being no further business, the public meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Next meeting will be held on Monday, April 1, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michele M. Cappelletti  
Township Secretary