

**FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WORKSHOP MEETING  
APRIL 12, 2006**

Chairman Whipple called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Present were Supervisors Norman Hughes, Roger Wilson and Juanita Bennett. Vice Chair Price was absent. Also present were Township Mgr. Steve Ross, Phil Geoghegan, Chair of the Open Space Committee, Jack Stefferud representing Natural Lands Trust and Wendy Toman, Chair of the Historical Commission. There were approximately 10 members of the public present.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Historical Commission – Bus Trip:**

Ms. Wendy Toman, Chair of the Historical Commission, advised that the proposed bus trip to the National Constitution Center sponsored by the Historical Commission did not get the number of people necessary to charter a bus. The deadline for sign-ups has been extended but it's highly unlikely that they will get 40 people.

Chairman Whipple moved that should they get 30 people, but not 40, as part of the Historical Educational Cost to the Township, he is in favor of the Township picking up the small cost difference between 30 and 40. Supervisor Norman Hughes seconded the motion. The vote was 3 ayes and 1 nay from Supervisor Juanita Bennett. The motion carried. The reason Supervisor Bennett voted against the motion is that the trip funded residents from other townships, not just Franklin.

**Natural Lands Trust:**

Mr. Jack Stefferud from Natural Lands Trust (NLT) addressed the Board and those present regarding grant funding as related to interests in open space. His presentation included descriptions of the Farmland Program and the Natural Area Program which are the two main programs funded by the County and State for the purpose of acquiring conservation easements or fee simple purchases. He described the application processes for each and recommended that if the Township is applying for a grant under the Farmland Program that they enlist the services of John Goodall of Brandywine Conservancy (BC) who has the knowledge and experience necessary to maximize an applicant's chances of success in the application process. Mr. Stefferud briefly touched on the Challenge Grant Program.

After a very thorough explanation of the entire process, Mr. Stefferud answered the Board's questions elaborating on the descriptions of the two programs and explaining the level of funding that is typical from the County and the State.

The appraisal, which is the first step in the process, was thoroughly discussed and explained by Mr. Stefferud. He advised that the cost of the survey is reimbursed if the application is successful. Only state certified appraisers are used and Mr. Stefferud has a list of the certified appraisers that he prefers.

Mr. Phil Geoghegan, Chairman of the Township's Open Space Committee (OSC), addressed the Board and answered their questions, the first of which involved the criteria used to prioritize properties that are on the OSC's two lists. Mr. Geoghegan explained that the two lists are now one list and that the criteria used to prioritize properties for the Farmland and the Natural Area Programs were taken directly from the Commonwealth's list of minimum criteria. He listed the criteria for the Natural

Area Program emphasizing that the most important of those is having a willing landowner. He stressed, as did Mr. Stefferud, that the landowner's decision to preserve his land is both personal and voluntary.

He clarified why the Strawbridge property is not included on the list and explained that although the property may not qualify in either category, Mr. Strawbridge has expressed interest in preserving his property.

Mr. Stefferud explained the potential for tax advantages to the landowner who donates a portion of his land for an easement. He explained the caps per acre that are imposed by the county and state for easements and what criteria is used to determine what land to protect by easements and what land to purchase. He explained how the value of a conservation easement is calculated and what impacts that value. He stated that when it's possible to get up to 90% of the purchase price from the state and county, it may be worthwhile to focus on properties other than ones that are high on the priority list. In answer to a question from a Board member he confirmed that conservation easements serve to reduce the density of a specific parcel because the eased land cannot be used to calculate open space. He complimented the Township on the job they have done in leveraging their open space money.

The presenters responded to questions from the floor and additional questions from Board members. Interest was expressed in bringing in Diane Hoopes to discuss updating the ASA (Ag Security Area) and to see how many farmers are interested in joining, particularly owners of those properties identified by the OSC as properties that would score well in the grant program. The purpose of the ASA was explained by Chairman Whipple.

**Public Comment:**

Supervisor Wilson expressed an interest in providing the public with more of the information that is distributed to the supervisors. Specifically, he proposed that information regarding the water and sewer systems that are being considered for the Kemblesville area be made available to the public.

Supervisor Wilson read his motion which was then discussed and amended, resulting in the following motion:

Supervisor Wilson moved that the Township immediately prepare and provide written information to the public on the water and sewer systems that are being considered for all plans publicly on file with the Township and reviewed by the Township and that this be done at the May 17, 2006 BOS Meeting, unless it is ready by the May 10, 2006 BOS Meeting, and that in addition to being distributed to the public that it be placed on the website. Supervisor Bennett seconded the motion.

Township Mgr. Ross expressed concern that the public may be misled by information that will be disseminated to them at this time due to the wide range of variables that could impact that information in the future. However, Mgr. Ross will prepare a draft which will be reviewed by the Board and the Township Solicitor.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**APPROVED**

Supervisor Bennett asked the Board to consider the following issue for action at the April 19<sup>th</sup> BOS meeting:

She referenced the 10-20 acre rezoning that is taking place in neighboring townships, specifically Oxford Township, and is being discussed in Franklin Twp. Prior to the adoption of the new zoning ordinance in Oxford, six farms filed subdivision plans. Supervisor Bennett said that the Franklin Township residents fear that their property values will be affected by the rezoning that is being discussed here. She is suggesting that some sort of written document stating that if rezoning devalues your property, we will not do it, be placed in the comp plan or some other place and is asking that such a discussion be placed on the agenda for next week's meeting.

Discussion followed regarding the legality of such a proposal. It was agreed that the Solicitor's input is needed on the issue.

There was brief discussion regarding the purpose for taping the meetings and the format and preparation of the minutes.

The Board thanked Jack Stefferud and Phil Geoghegan for their presentations.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen J. Ross  
Township Mgr./Sect.