

Franklin Township Newsletter

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Developing a trail network for Franklin Township

A trail network – for hiking, biking, equestrian use and maybe even snowshoeing and cross country skiing (if it snows) – connecting places within Franklin Township and connecting to other trails in neighboring townships and states. That is what could be part of the future for Franklin Township residents.

While an old idea, the plan to develop a trail network in Franklin Township began with the Open Space Committee over three years ago. “We had the idea to put trails through some of the open spaces that were being preserved in the Township so that people could use and enjoy

these natural resources,” said Phil Geoghegan, chairman of the Franklin Township Open Space Committee. The idea grew from there.

The Committee dedicated a great deal of time investigating how to establish a trail network. A Feasibility Study and Master Plan were needed to address not only where the trails should go, but also how to obtain right-of-ways and funds for trail construction and maintenance.

Two grants, one from PECO Energy and the other from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, were awarded to fund \$29,000 of the \$38,000 it would cost to complete these studies. The planning/consulting firm of Ray Ott and Associates, of West Chester, Pa., was hired. A Trail Committee was formed to guide the trail studies.

The first phase of this plan is the feasibility study, which includes input from the community. On September 26, Ray Ott conducted a public workshop where residents were asked to mark on a Township map where they thought trails could be built. According to Geoghegan, the meeting was well attended and there was a lot of enthusiasm and support - and some skepticism - for establishing a trails network.

The results of this public input session will be compiled onto a map and presented at a public Trail Committee meeting scheduled for Monday, November 19, at 6 p.m., in the Township Office.

There has been some concern from a few property owners about liability issues if people walk across their property. Geoghegan stated that trails would only be built in areas where everyone agrees they are wanted. “If owners don’t want a Township trail on their property, there won’t be one,” he said.

“This has to be a win-win situation or it won’t work,” Geoghegan exclaims. “Trail developers have learned to ask the community what they want and then put it in for them. Anything we do must have sound economic and social backing from the community.”

Addressing the issue of connecting to trails outside of the Township, the Trail Committee is talking to neighboring communities to develop trails of consistent materials that actually meet each other at Township boundaries. Franklin, London Britain, New Garden, and New London Townships are currently meeting with the White Clay Wild and Scenic River administrator and Chester County Planning to coordinate trails throughout the watershed.

A completed trails network is still a dream for the future. Once the Township has a complete picture of what its residents want, and where trails can physically be located, then it can get to work and trail by trail begin to create places where residents can walk, bike, ride horses, and maybe even snowshoe.

Comp Plan’s Conceptual Trail Network



When the Township updated its Comprehensive Plan recently, it included a conceptual map that the Open Space Committee created with over 22 miles of possible trails within the Township. The map included the Township’s only official trails – the trails in Crossan Park. Other “unofficial trails” that have been used by generations of people were added to the map, as well as other places where residents might enjoy hiking, biking, or riding horses. This map was also based on Chester County’s “Linking Landscapes,” in which Chester County planners identified regional recreation trails. In Franklin Township four trails are named including:

- part of the Middle Branch of the White Clay Creek,
- part of the East Branch of the White Clay Creek,
- part of the Elk Creek (along the southwest boundary),
- a wildlife corridor on the West Branch/White Clay Creek.