

Presentation -Neshaminy Greenway Trail – P. Gordon, BC Planning Commission

Meeting 2/4/2014 7:00 PM

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Bucks County Planning Commission's Environmental Planner (BCPC); Paul W. Gordon presented the Board with an overview of the Trophy Abilities Study for Upper Neshaminy Creek. The idea was first created by Bucks County Parks Board in 1955 as a linear park system along the Neshaminy area. In 1974\1986 the county reaffirmed its commemorative linear park's concept as Bucks County Park and Recreation plan. In 1989 after the Dark Hallow Damn plan was abandoned, the County dedicated its Dark Hallow County park. In 2003\2004 the Watershed River Conservation plans for upper, middle and lower Neshaminy also recommended the establishment of a trail system along the creek. In 2004 the Neshaminy Creek was identified as an open space priority land and the regional green space priority project by the Greenspace Alliance. In 2005 the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission for the Delaware Valley area identified the Neshaminy Creek Greenway as part of the 2030 Greenspace network. In 2011, the County adopted the Open Space Greenway plan, which identifies 27 different greenway corridors through the county, including the Neshaminy Greenway. In 2012, the County adopted the Bucks County Bicycle Master Plan with the Neshaminy Creek as a key component. In 2013, the BCPC asked many residents what they wanted for the Parks and Recreation system. Bikes lanes and paths were a majority vote at 54% and trails at 65%.

Upon the results, the County applied for various funding sources to conduct the trophy ability studies for different creek segments. The Neshaminy Creek Greenway system was funded by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Regional trails program through the William Penn Foundation. Other funding resources came from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Coastal Zone Management Program, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Department of Community and Economic Development through the Marcellus Shale 2013 funding. All funding received totals \$154,000 and completes the trophy abilities work for the Neshaminy. Match for all funding is devised in staff time and not by funds being outlaid.

Mr. Gordon reported on the status of the projects by indicating the county did not need to apply for additional grant funding for a segment of the Neshaminy Creek trail since Bensalem Township previously received funding and completed all trophy ability work for this area. Upper Neshaminy Feasibility study incumbencies seven different municipalities (Doylestown, Buckingham, Warwick, New Britain Township, Wrightstown, Chalfont and New Britain Borough). It's county owned land at 9.5 miles with 8 municipal parks. There are very heavily sloped areas with overhanging rock cliffs along Doylestown Central Park, Delaware Valley College and the Eight Arch Bridge.

Mr. Gordon then provided an outline of the proposed trail routing, which is broken up into six segments with the first beginning at Twin Stream Park in Chalfont and run through the Wilma Quinlan Nature Preserve in New Britain Borough. Mr. Gordon noted there is a proposal to connect through the New Britain Train Station, where easement acquisition work is underway. The existing right of way along Bristol Road will be used as a back up if the train station route falls through.

Segment two begins at the Route 202 Parkway and continue onto Lower State Road near the White Eagle Lab development. The goal is to connect onto Central Park in Doylestown which has become a challenge. From the island near Cory Road intersection, there are three proposed routes. The first will be to connect from a path off the Public Training Center. The second is off Bridge Point Park towards old Edison Furlong Bridge.

Segment three will run behind Easton Road north of the Neshaminy Creek Bridge. However, private easements pose a challenge coming off Easton Road.

Segment four will begin at Easton Road off Route 611 towards York Road off Route 263. It will begin on county land along the northern side of the creek towards Valley Road. On Valley Road pedestrians will pass a pond and cross the Neshaminy in order to access New County park facilities. A proposed fishing pier, picnic area, restroom

facilities and site for canoeing and kayaking are in the works. Connector trails are also proposed along Valley Road towards Pebble Hill Road. The second connector trail is proposed from land owned by Heritage Conservancy towards the Village of Buckingham. Many residents have asked to connect through the Middle Bucks of Technology, but with various private owned streets it may be difficult. However, with the recent improvements announced along Route 263, residents will be able to access a trail along Mill Road that will connect to a trail near the school.

Segment five will begin at York Road off Route 263 towards Dark Hallow Road. Beginning at Mill Road there are another three routing options. The first will begin on county land near Heritage Conservancy into an existing trail system towards the Estates at Dark Hallow. The second and third options provide great connectivity. There is a challenge with Heritage Conservancy owned parcel to obtain an easement, which is currently under discussions. Although it's dead end road, the BCPC is trying to minimize on road segments as much as possible for safety. Unfortunately, the right of way is not contiguous of having a trail. The second option will continue onto Meetinghouse Road and the third will continue toward the Hampton Chase community near Dark Hallow Road. Once on Dark Hallow Road, another challenge was to connect onto the Gin Mill campus of Delaware Valley College. Due to easement terms regarding the Warwick Foundation, trails are not allowed on the property. These properties are currently preserved for agricultural purposes. The solution was to route the pedestrians on Dark Hallow Road towards the Heritage Conservancy easement near the Neshaminy Creek, where a hiking trail can be found off Rushland Jamison Road. The hope is to allow a connection off Hill Road onto a 500 foot segment towards Wilkinson Road, where pedestrian can walk on an easement from Delaware Valley College.

Segment six will begin on Wilkinson Road on a heavy canopy and right of way with no private easements. The trail will continue towards Sagepoint Road onto the County's park facilities toward Neshaminy.

Mr. Gordon concluded by reporting on his Tuesday, January 28th presentation at Doylestown Library, the response was much supported. All information regarding the trail system can be found on the Bucks County Planning Commission's website at <http://www.buckscounty.org/docs/planning-commission/upperneshaminycreektrailproposal.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

Open Space Committee Annual Report - Chairman Dr. Joshua Feldstein

Members are Tom Kelso; Vice Chairman, Jeffrey Fehr, Don Richardson, Staff Liaison; Stephanie Mason, Allison Hamilton, and Board Liaison; Barbara Lyons.

Dr. Feldstein reported Doylestown Township currently has approximately 17,700 residents where 15.54 square miles are occupied, which represents 9,945.6 in total acreage. 739.8992 acres were donated as gifts. Delaware Valley College preserved 233 acres and 305.6 by a portion of Pine Run to total 1,278.5492 acres or 12.855%. The committee has made every effort to preserve all open space possible. The number of acreage remaining is very minimal. The committee has only spent 50% of the Bucks County's \$620,408.00 allotment. There is a 25% additional match which should come from the township. However, the committee never asked the township to allocate the money. Doylestown Township is the only community able to convince and educate residents to donate land, without the match.

Dr. Feldstein concluded by reporting Doylestown Central Park consists of 100 acres available for the benefit and pleasure of residents. In comparison, New York's Central Park consists of 843 acres, which is 8.5% bigger and testifies how Doylestown accomplishes something extra ordinary to offer something wonderful.

Acreage is becoming limited and Dr. Feldstein urged residents who own more than ten acres to donate a portion to the township or contact the township to provide names of any residents with large properties.

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