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MEETING NOTES

Project:	Upper Gwynedd Township Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan	Project No.:	23042.10
Location:	Upper Gwynedd Township Building	Meeting Date/ Time:	11.29.23 6:30– 8:30pm
Re:	Public Meeting 1	Issue Date:	12.06.23

ATTENDEE LIST:

See attached sign-in sheet.

Simone Collins: Pete Simone (PS), Tim Adams (TA), Michelle Armour (MA), Derek Dureka (DD)

GENERAL NOTES:

Presentation

Sarah Prebis, Upper Gwynedd Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced the project and thanks everyone for attending.

PS reviewed the agenda for the meeting and introduced the consultant team and firm background.

PS reviewed the purpose of comp/rec planning process and importance of meeting current needs without compromising those that could arise in the future.

Important questions to consider include: How do you keep young people here? How do you help the elderly age in place? How do you get these improvements funded?

PS reviewed the project scope and the steps culminating to the final plan.

PS reviewed existing data and base mapping.

Emphasized analysis of potential connections to regional trail network (existing & planned trails)

Clarified MS4 mandates and emphasized the opportunity for stormwater improvements to be made in parks.

Emphasized opportunities for tree canopy improvements, and that there is significant funding available for tree planting.

Explained the STRAVA APP and the purpose of reviewing this data (way to understand where runners and bikers are already comfortable)

How can we encourage less confident riders and increase their accessibility?

PS began Township Tour

- Emphasized the popularity of the Nor-Gwyn Pool. Are there opportunities for water features elsewhere?
- Emphasized the “blank canvas” nature of Garfield Park. Emphasized the need to be sensitive to surrounding neighbors.
- Stated that there are opportunities for naturalizing parks, and that park improvements don’t necessarily have to be physical but can be natural.
- Stated intent to meet with the school district to understand how the SD uses its facilities and cooperation with municipal programming.
- Emphasized the benefits of a close and productive relationship between the municipality and the school district.
- Acknowledged that Lansdale Borough owns Whites Road, but that shouldn’t limit Township ability to consider improvements/recommendations, since residents use it just as much.
- Emphasized that all of our best ideas come from the residents because they know the township the most intimately.

Brainstorming Session

1. There used to be meadows at Whittaker Park, and I think there is an opportunity for naturalization without sacrificing sports fields.
2. Several pockets of no sidewalks within the Township.
3. I’d like to see more shade within Parkside Place (I often choose Whites Road because it has more variation in elevation and is more exercise, and it has more shade).
4. Could there be more trails within the wooded areas of Parkside Place.
5. (PS clarified that not all trails need to be ADA)
6. There is a new traffic light at Whites Road Park around stony creek development, and there is an opportunity for connections between Whites Road and the Martin’s tract (if there were a trail network there).
7. The problem with asphalt is that it gets so hot (discussed options with stone dust/porous pavement and respective drawbacks).
8. Safety needs to be considered, especially with heavily wooded trails.
9. PS stated that the best safety enforcement is for a trail facility to be heavily used (eyes and ears)
10. Lack of parking at Whittaker and West Point, and there are a lot of people who “drive to walk”.
 - a. More pickleball or paddle tennis opportunities? Acknowledge the noise issues with pickleball. PS acknowledged that it could be a fad, but that’s ok because facilities can always be changed in the future.
1. Opportunities for skateboarding?

2. DD discussed Upper Dublin conversion of a golf course with 6 miles of trail, where skateboarding is encouraged. Also discussed the pump track that is in development. Emphasized that skateboarding should also be viewed as a form of transportation.
3. PS emphasized the importance of attendees to share the public opinion survey.
4. Section on North Wales Rd entering the borough where there is no sidewalk/bike lanes, and I see children walking there with backpacks. And you are forced to walk on private property.
 1. Sandra clarified that Liberty Bell Trail Study is evaluating options to remedy this.
 2. PS emphasized that these kinds of things literally are "life and death".
5. Resident stated there is also going to be a speed limit reduction there (which always doesn't happen)
 1. DD stated that North Wales will be part of the planning process as well.
6. PS discussed Sumneytown widening project, and whether it might be more appropriate to add a bike lane, instead of additional travel lanes.
 1. PS stated that this comes down to a value judgement for residents.
7. I think bike lanes are wonderful, but unless there is separation or buffering, there is still a high danger.
8. Resident discussed the Masterton teacher who was killed while biking in a bike lane and stated that biking on Sumneytown without a buffer would make them nervous, even as an experienced biker.
9. Resident stated that she often has to make a turn while driving that crosses the bike lane.
10. I used to coach soccer, and we always played on school fields, who were always quick to close them down in inclement weather etc. (opportunities for township owned sports fields).
11. PS clarified a strategy is for the Township to acquire parcels to develop into such, or if there are opportunities to convert fields to artificial turf. And whether the SD could be a partner.
12. Do you consider speed bumps?
 1. Sure - PS stated intent to share Trail Improvement Toolbox at public meeting 2.
13. Have other school districts allowed municipal use of their sports facilities?
14. DD clarified that the new fields were created in partnership with the school district. Stated that a partnership might be appropriate because you often need a lot of parking to support those facilities.
15. DD stated that there are still maintenance costs with artificial turf fields and that the maintenance window is between 8 to 10 years for replacement.
 1. Is that just weather or wear and tear?
 - i. DD stated that it is a combination of weather, heavy use, and UV exposure.
16. The School District Referendum was discussed, and PS stated that it could be an opportunity to bring in some funding for recreation.
17. There is a definite need for baseball/softball fields for municipal use. Nor-Gwyn baseball has strong demand, and they maintain our own facilities, and are struggling to match our demand to facilitate.
18. If you are adding youth sports fields, I would encourage you to build off-road connections to facilities for youths so that they can safely access them.
19. DD stated that Green Ribbon Trail will certainly be a connection destination.
20. Sandra stated that we currently are not considering new parking at Parkside Place to supplement "trail hub" but may consider if the need becomes evident during this planning process.

21. PS recounted the example of Radnor Trail, and how it was disliked at inception by the neighbors abutting it, and now they love it and want gates in their fences to access the trail.
22. PS stated that it is always more difficult to retrofit and add a trail after someone has been living there for a while.
23. PS stated that the high costs of sidewalks will require sidewalk recommendations to be prioritized for safety and connectivity.
24. Are there any thoughts about Equestrian facilities?
 1. PS stated that it depends whether there is a strong equestrian community and noted the strong variance in horse attitude in terms of coexistence with other trail users.
25. Resident stated a desire for trail statistics/studies to be posted on the Township website. PS recommended residents to look at the Montgomery County Return on Environment Study.

Cards

General Facts

- More interesting walking routes eg. Whites Road Park
- Pickleball is popular
- Paddle tennis
- No sidewalk or shoulder along North Wales Road
- Liberty Bell Trail and the ROW on North Wales Road
- Only use School District sports fields

General Concepts

- Connectivity, especially for areas with sidewalk gaps
- Trail connections between destinations
- Variety of trail surface (stone dust vs. asphalt)
- Safety on wooded trails
- Some parks need more parking
- Skateboarding
- Bike lanes still unsafe without protection/buffers
- Speeding and traffic calming
- Turf fields and partnership opportunities
- Need additional ball fields (besides school district fields)
- Provide off-road routes for kids to youth facilities
- Wayfinding signage
- Additional water features

Parkside Place

- Shade
- Trails
- Lighting from Parkside to Clover Drive

- More pickleball
- Restrooms near amphitheater
- Improve bathhouse at Nor-Gwyn Pool
- Early swimming hours at the pool
- Lazy river

Whittaker Park

- Meadow/Trees/naturalization
- North end gets wet/soft (add a surfaced path)
- Fitness stations

Rexdale

- Trees/naturalization
- Scout projects were vandalized

Garfield Park

- Connect to neighborhood to the south and school to the north
- Softball fields
- Do not want organized sports at Garfield
- Lots of bugs (gnats)
- Lots of activity (playground and informal soccer)
- Walking Path

West Point Park

- Poor sidewalk access

Whites Road Park

- Lots of dog walkers (don't always clean up)
- Dog park?

Next Steps

Committee Meeting 2 is scheduled for January 24, 2024, from 6:30 to 8pm, and will cover Data & Analysis progress.

Public Meeting 2 is scheduled for March 27, 2024, and will cover initial concepts.

This report represents the Professional's summation of the proceedings and is not a transcript. Unless written notice of any correction or clarification is received by the Professional within ten days of issue, the report shall be considered factually correct and shall become part of the official project record.

Sincerely,

SIMONE COLLINS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Peter Simone, Tim Adams, Michelle Armour, Derek Dureka

Upper Gwynedd Township Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan
Public Meeting #1 - November 29, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

Name	Email
David Kratz	
Samantha Kratz	
Ed Burkholder	
MIKE Zumpino	
CATHY MONTIEGEL & ALAN STRYESKI	
Rob Monser	
BOB KELLY	
Steve Finley	
Tom Duffy	
Wendy Beatty	
David Valasco	
Garry Oldt	
Jo Ferguson	
Mary Burns	
Tom Alvarez	
Phil Goodwin	
Mark McHale	
Dan O'Brien	

Upper Gwynedd Township Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan
Public Meeting #1 - November 29, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

Name	Email
JUDY VOSE	
JACK QUIBLET	
MARK SMITH	
Rebecca Moodie	
Anthony Hoxie	
Joseph Miller	
Jon West	
William Jackson	