

THE FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

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Winter 2003



Zoning Makes a Difference

The image of Worcester as a rural farm community has been the focus of our supervisors for several generations. Keeping the pastoral character was a key component of Worcester's comprehensive plan, which is currently under review. As development and suburban sprawl continue to increase pressure upon our township, it is zoning ordinances that help us contain and manage development to preserve our rural character.

In regard to the overall development of the township, zoning ordinances restrict what can be built and the function of the building, whether commercial, residential or agricultural. Through zoning the township is able to promote its comprehensive plan by placing industry in one area and high density dwellings and retail establishments in village-like centers, such as Fairview Village, Center Point and Cedars. Expanses of open space between the town centers and visible from the through corridors like Rt. 73 and Rt. 363 leave one with the overall impression of a rural community.

More specifically, zoning ordinances also determine how individual lots can be developed. In these cases zoning ordinances restrict what takes place on a property, how much of the total lot is allowed to be built upon, how high the structure can be, how close a building can be to the property line, etc.,etc. Our zoning code regulates development on individual lots and at the same time reinforces the overall objectives of the township's comprehensive plan.

Many new developments request and receive zoning variances. The Amoco at Rte. 363 and Germantown Pike was granted numerous variances. The previously proposed CVS at Township Line and North Wales Roads requested variances. If it is to be built, the newly proposed CVS at Germantown Pike and Trooper Road will also need variances. In many cases, these variances are so broad that they make existing zoning meaningless. If a developer can request a "variance" to put up a building twice the size allowed by the zoning code, what's the point of having the zoning code at all?

For many commercial developments, obtaining requested variances can determine whether or not the project is implemented. This is where township residents can have a real impact on development. It is essential to attend Zoning Hearing Board meetings when developers request variances and voice your opinion. We must let our Zoning Hearing Board know that we do not want variances granted which negatively impact our township and compromise the township comprehensive plan. This is one way you can work with the legislative process and make a difference in Worcester.

FOW would like to thank HAYES, Inc. and HAYES Plus for sponsoring this newsletter.

Fairview Village Problems - Water & Sewers

Many residents of the Fairview Village area of the township have been attending the Supervisor meetings due to the planned installation of sewer and water lines in the area. Often, heated discussions ensued, with the residents presenting many points of view and offering suggestions.

At the September 18th meeting, a State Grant for \$750,000 was presented by Rep. John Fichter, who was instrumental in obtaining this money to help with the cost of the sewer project. Savings average about \$7,000 for each of the 112 homeowners involved. Still, many residents restated financial hardship, and several complained that they are forced to hook up although they have no problem with their systems.

At the October 16th meeting the hardship on many of those involved was again pointed out. For some, the only alternative is for the Township to put a lien on their property. Residents have requested the opinions and suggestions of those involved be sent to the state. At the residents' request, Supervisor Board Chairman Frank Davey (after prodding) agreed to include the minutes from the last 8 months of board meetings as well as any resident letters submitted.

A new bombshell fell when it was announced that Pennsylvania American Water Company would install water mains on Methacton Avenue and Adair Drive only if ALL the owners agree to hook up. Chairman Davey then stated that they might make public water mandatory in that area. The plan is to have the water installed at the same time as the sewers.

At the December meeting it was decided Worcester would assist with the costs of installing the mains and pumping station. "The cost of laterals, recapture costs, tapping fees, on-site system abandonment costs, and home to lateral plumbing costs are to be paid by the property owners served by the sewers." Chairman Davey said, "The individual homeowner's cost will be between \$8,500 and \$10,000" - instead of \$23,000 as projected! The project awaits state and DEP approval.

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An Interview with Frank Davey, Chairman of the Worcester Board of Supervisors

Many changes are happening in Worcester. FOW met with Frank Davey recently to get his perspective on these changes.

FOW: Recently an announcement was made that the township is putting Open Space “on hold.” Please explain.

Davey: We have no intention of abandoning the Open Space Program. What we are doing is reassessing the costs. The County & State supplement our costs but between the attorneys, appraisers, surveyors, and consultants involved in preserving a property there is room to streamline the process. By creating a more standard format moving forward we can reduce our expenses.

FOW: What progress has the Open Space Program made?

Davey: We have preserved the Markley, Markel, Harris and Gerstenmeier properties. We are also pleased to see township resident Larry Smith purchase the Heebner Property (138 acres) as opposed to seeing a developer purchase it. The township has acquired 14 acres of this property as well as the Lenhart property.

FOW: What is the Greenway we have heard about?

Davey: This concept has been in the township for many years. Originally, it was planned to connect Evansburg State Park with Peter Wentz Farmstead. This plan had major problems due to the crossing of Valley Forge Road (Route 363) and Skippack Pike (Route 73). We have awarded Simone Jaffe Collins a contract to study a possible Community Greenway Plan. The current study is to see if it is feasible to complete the greenway from Heebner Park to Evansburg State Park. We have already obtained rights of way from many landowners.

FOW: We have always supported the purchase of Heyser Field (behind the Worcester Township Community Hall in Fairview Village). Is the township interested?

Davey: I am aware of the support to purchase this property. We are interested but the price is too high. There are other properties in this area being considered for ball fields. For example, Chadwyck Village will be dedicating 4 acres of parkland to the township in the next few months. Also, the Sunnybrook development has a designated park area for the future. These areas would be accessible to all residents. *[Recently, during township Supervisor meetings many Fairview Village residents requested the Heyser Property (located behind the Worcester Township Community Hall) be included as part of the Open Space Program to provide a play area for those living there.]*

FOW: Has the “Slip Ramp” been stopped? What’s next?

Davey: We have been notified by the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission that they are not going forward with their plans for the slip ramp at Schultz Road and Morris Road.

We are thrilled that public opinion and the township prevailed. The slip ramp at Schultz Road was an inappropriate remedy for traffic problems. It is a dead issue now; however, it is possible that they could revisit it in 10 years. They are still planning to widen the turnpike from the Mid-County interchange to the Lansdale interchange using the modified alternative which is the narrower of the two plans. *[FOW submitted a petition with approximately 400 signatures against the slip ramp. We can make a difference!!!]*

FOW: What is the current status of the sewers in the Fairview Village area?

Davey: Plans to expand the sewers to the 112 homeowners in Fairview Village have been sent to the state and we are awaiting their approval. We have been successful in obtaining a \$750,000 grant, saving each resident \$7,000. We are working on additional financial solutions.

FOW: How can the township save historic houses while properties are being developed?

Davey: This is a very real problem. Preservation Ordinances have been challenged as a “taking.” This means that they have taken away some of the value a property previously had before the ordinance was passed. We are interested in working with developers to save these historic homes. There can be a trade off of public improvements such as sidewalks and curbs if it does not interfere with public safety and is in the best interest of the township. We are currently doing this with the Thompson property. An assessment of the home was done and it can be preserved.

FOW: Is it possible for the Planning Commission to give input to the Zoning Board?

Davey: Yes, but in a limited way. The Zoning Board is an independent board whose sole purpose is to assess applications. The Zoning Board decides what is in the best interest of the township. Each application is judged on its own merits as it applies to the law. By law it must be kept separate. The Planning Commission could submit recommendations to the township Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor Robert Brant. He would evaluate the suggestions and pass along information legally permissible to the Zoning Board.

FOW: Do you have any other concerns at this time?

Davey: Traffic is a problem which is not going away. Accessibility from the side streets to the main roads such as Germantown Pike, Valley Forge Road, and Skippack Pike is becoming an increased challenge. We are currently studying traffic on Germantown Pike with five other municipalities. In addition, we are in the final stages of adding an Impact Fee Ordinance. This would raise money from new developments to be used towards transportation improvements.

FOW thanks Chairman Davey for taking the time to talk about these issues and commends his efforts to keep Worcester green.

Approved & Proposed Developments in Worcester

(List does not include subdivisions of fewer than 10 units)

APPROVED	TOTAL # OF UNITS (10 over)
Abruzzi Estates	54
Ager Tract	14
Barley Lane	10
Brunner Tract	13
Cedar Hill	10
Center Point Farm	173
Chadwick Place	96
Detwiler (Merrybrook)	16
Fawn Creek	46
Glengarry Highlands	11
Green Hill Country Club	16
Heritage Village	46
Hertzog	21
Hillcrest	61
Hollis Estates	30
Huganir Property	18
Longwood Meadows	11
Marx Tract	11
Meadowood (Cottages)	44
Methacton Estates (Saddlebrook)	10
Milestone	276
Rosenlund	21
Spring Lake	23
Sunny Brook Estates	176
PROPOSED	
Cane Subdivision	13
Kumpf-Bell	46
Thompson/Scott	<u>25</u>
TOTAL	1,291

Smith Proposes Farm Market

Andrew & Melissa Smith have proposed a farm market on Stump Hall Road near Hollow Road (formerly the Heebner property). FOW endorses the planned agricultural use rather than a housing development, however, some neighbors have expressed concerns about the size of the farm market, traffic on Stump Hall Road, and planned bus parking. A traffic study has been recommended by the Planning Commission. The Smiths go to the Board of Supervisors on March 19, 2003 to request a conditional use permit.

Recent Additions to the Horse Show

The 62nd Annual Farmer's Union Horse Show was held last year on Saturday, June 2, at Heyser's Field (behind the Worcester Township Community Hall) in Fairview Village. This event is the oldest continuous horse show in Montgomery County and one of the oldest in southeastern Pennsylvania. FOW has been participating for many years with a fruit cup stand and annual raffle. This past year we stepped it up a notch. FOW manned the food concession as well as the raffle booth with many great gifts donated by area businesses. In order to attract more of the community to this fun-in-the-sun day, we added a flea market in the adjoining township community hall parking lot. It was a great success! We are going to do it again this year.

Mark your calendars for the first Saturday in June. FOW and the Farmer's Union Co. would love to have other community groups join us on that day to make this truly a Worcester event. Volunteers are always needed. Please call Jeannie Steigerwalt at 610-489-7904.

We would like to thank the following businesses for their donations. We greatly appreciate your generosity and support!

*Allen Antiques
Asher Florists
Bean Road Nursery
Bit of Heaven Tack Shop
Bow Ties
Georgia Dukes
His & Hers Hair Salon
Patti Loughridge Horticultural Services
Mary Kay Cosmetics
O & F Farms
Plaza Flowers
Rick's Heritage Tack Shop
Rischers Florists
Second Glance Hair Salon
Troxel Cemetery Services
Williams & Co Fine Jewelry*

Are Developers Poised To Take Over Worcester Township? You Bet They Are!

Developers are poised to take over Worcester and any other township where they can find open space to grow houses. This is nothing new, but recently builders stepped up their efforts to profit at the expense of preserving land by reneging on their earlier support of open space. They claim that open space initiatives prevent necessary growth in the housing market. The Pennsylvania Builders Association will begin lobbying efforts to eliminate legislation, established in 2000, which gave municipalities unprecedented control over building within their borders. Now builders want a "compelling rationale" established before public funds are used to buy any more land.

In contrast, a forum on Smart Growth was held early in October. In attendance were state and local political leaders as well as builders and those in favor of comprehensive regional planning. They spent a day discussing successful development programs, which support growth in the housing market without creating more urban sprawl. These projects involve developing and redeveloping in areas that already have a density of housing, or under-utilized or

abandoned industrial sites. The proposed new urbanism is a community development trend with high density, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods loaded with amenities and considerate of traffic issues and factors, which affect local economies and tax dollars.

The next few years, undoubtedly, will be crucial ones for communities like ours. In addition to losing open ground forever, development leads to an increase in vehicles on already overburdened roads, pressure on water resources, an increase in school population, and ultimately an increase in local taxes. Preserving open space makes good economic as well as environmental sense. Do your part to help keep the open land that is left in Worcester green. Contact local decision makers and newly elected representatives. Let them know what your perspective is. See the Friends of Worcester website (www.friendsofworcester.org) for links to conservation and preservation organizations, as well as names and addresses of our local supervisors and elected state officers who need to hear from each of us.

Once it's Gone, it's Gone Forever!

S U P P O R T FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER is a non-profit organization made up of new and long time residents of the township. All involved residents share an appreciation for the rural quality of Worcester and share a common concern for its future. FOW seeks to influence that future. All funds received are used to support our efforts to preserve open space, maintain the rural lifestyle of the community and keep our neighbors informed through our minutes and newsletters. All Friends are involved on a strictly volunteer basis. Friends receive our monthly agenda and minutes as well as phone chain notification of important township events.

Supporter - \$20

Contributor - \$35

Benefactor - \$50 or more

All residents, contributing or not, are always welcome at FOW monthly meetings.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

You may include my name as a contributor in your newsletter.

Please send your contributions to:

**FRIENDS OF WORCESTER
P.O. BOX 545
WORCESTER, PA 19490**

The Worcester Comprehensive Plan Revisited

The township Board of Supervisors has recently asked the township Planning Commission to conduct a complete review of the Worcester Township Comprehensive Plan. Our supervisors have signed a contract with Montgomery County for a member of the Montgomery County Planning Commission to work with our township planning commission on this project. According to this contract, assistance can be provided up to ½ day per month. The result of the last Comprehensive Plan review was adopted in 1995.

The review will be conducted with priorities being given to demographics, existing and future land use, transportation, and open space. The demographics section will be updated to reflect information from the 2000 census. The Existing Land Use Map will be updated to show changes due to new development. The Future Land Use Plan will be reviewed to determine if revisions need to be made relative to changes in the existing land use patterns. The Transportation Plan will be reviewed and modified relative to the Township's Municipal Capital Improvements Plan. This will reflect the township's policies concerning road improvements. Finally, a map will be prepared to show all publicly owned open space and parklands and other lands permanently protected or conserved. The information shown will be compared with the recommendations of the Township's Open Space Preservation Plan in order to evaluate the township's progress and continuing open space needs. When completed, the Revised Comprehensive Plan can be used to correct the current zoning so that it matches the planned use for each area of the township.

IMPORTANT! IMPORTANT!

Please write or call our Worcester Supervisors and let them know you support their active participation in the preservation of open space.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Frank L. Davey, Chairman
John H. Graham, Vice Chairman
Chase E. Kneeland, Secretary

Township of Worcester
1721 Valley Forge Road
P.O. Box 767
Worcester, PA 19490-0767

(610) 584-1410

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER OFFICERS

Kim David - President (610/584-1805)
Michael Simeone - Vice President (610/584-2075)
Wini Hayes - Treasurer (610/584-0371)
Barbara McMonagle - Secretary (215/699-8225)
Mary Leister - Recording Secretary (610/584-5129)

Join us at these upcoming meetings and events WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT

February 18	7:30PM	Kim & Chris David 1704 Berks Road 610-584-1805
March 18	7:30PM	Ron & Maryellen Shore 3214 Stump Hall Road 610-584-1835
April 22	7:30PM	Mike & Mary Lou Crush 3103 Skippack Pike 610-584-0873
May 20	7:30PM	Jenna & Steve Alpher 3026 Stump Hall Road 610-584-3337
June 7	8:00AM	Farmers Union Horse Show & FOW Flea Market Heyser Field (behind Fairview Village Community Hall) Call 610-489-7904 for info

Thank You, Worcester Neighbors

As you probably know by now, the proposed turnpike slip ramp on Schultz Road has been canceled. Public input included 390 residents of Worcester, Upper Gwynedd and Towamencin Townships signing the Friends of Worcester petition in opposition to the Schultz Road slip ramp. Worcester Supervisors Davey, Kneeland and Graham and Rep. Fichter actively supported township residents in their efforts to defeat the proposed slip ramp. Our collective voice was heard! Good job Worcester neighbors--- sometimes the "little guy" wins after all!!!!

FOW Website Continues to Grow

The Friends of Worcester website is designed to provide the residents of Worcester Township with valuable and timely information.

A new committee has recently been formed to manage and maintain the website, making sure that the information being provided is timely and pertinent to our Worcester neighbors.

On our website, you can see the latest Worcester news, read Friends of Worcester newsletters and meeting minutes, view pictures in the photo gallery, obtain legislative information, and much more. A lot more will be added this year.

Check-out www.friendsofworcester.org today, and leave your e-mail address so we can keep you up to date on the happenings in Worcester.

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CVS - The Destroyer

Once again CVS rears its ugly red lettering. Known nationwide for targeting and destroying historic buildings in its effort to sprawl across the country, CVS has submitted plans to develop another site in Worcester.

Not long ago, CVS tore down the historic Mr. Ron's Public House in Whitpain Township to construct its typical monolithic structure. Now, CVS threatens to deform the intersection at Trooper Road and Germantown Pike. Currently this intersection is home to the Norriton Presbyterian Church, whose rustic historic character is essential to our township and all of Montgomery County. The other two corners are occupied by historic buildings modestly and tactfully converted into commercial applications.

CVS has proposed a 14,800 sq. ft. building with oversized parking lots, inappropriate lighting, intrusive signage, two drive-thru lanes, and 24 hour daily operation. The zoning variances required will more than double the allowed building size in this district. What better means to destroy our rural character?! Worcester residents must ready themselves like the minutemen of colonial days. We need to take a stand and make our views known. When the zoning battle comes, we must unite!

WORCESTER TOWNSHIP MEETINGS
Board of Supervisors - 3rd Wed. of each month
Zoning Hearing Board - 4th Tues. of each month
Planning Commission - 4th Thurs. of each month

Standard Mail
US Postage
Worcester, PA
Permit No. 30