

Parks and Recreation Board
Strategic Planning Meeting to Develop Parks, Trails & Recreation Plan
Work Session #2
Charlestown Elementary School
2060 Charlestown Road
Malvern, PA 19355
Minutes of March 29, 2012 - DRAFT

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Welcome: Bob Jones, Chairman Parks and Trails Committee
Bob welcomed those present and briefly reviewed the history and progress of the township's review and planning process for the next 20 years of recreation in Charlestown township. The purpose of the planning process as outlined by Township Supervisor, Charlie Philips, in a letter on May 17, 2011 is as follows:

This plan should be one that incorporates access to recreational opportunities in other areas of the township not served by Charlestown Park as well as the inclusion of trails with a plan to provide for connections to regional trails where appropriate.

The plan should be one that encourages residents and visitors to actively use the facilities, as is currently the case at the Charlestown Park, while not adversely affecting the neighbors.

Because there is a growing interest in bike riding there should be thought given as to how to provide bike trails or bike lanes in appropriate locations in the township.

The current areas to consider should include the Brightside Farm, which is a major Township asset that is underutilized, the eventual Jenkins Park, Charlestown Park, the TND trails and future ball fields, the Horseshoe Trail, and the other trails that have been designated during the open space easement process.

The plan should include possible funding opportunities from the county, state, and federal governments as well as foundations that encourage such uses.

At a detail level the implementation of the plan should list immediate financial considerations to become operational and a longer range financial plan that establishes future financial requirements based on the plan. Also, recommendations as to the maintenance issues should be addressed.

Bob introduced Charlie Philips, Township Supervisor, who was in attendance and then passed the meeting to Tom Comitta, Planning Consultant to the township.

Introductions: Mr. Comitta asked those present to introduce themselves; and to indicate where in the township they live. In attendance were:

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|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| 1. Marcella Kubovsak | 108 Victoria Ct | 610-324-8983 | Nvrsemkr@aol.com |
| 2. Terry Locky | Greenbriar Circle | 610-827-9355 | |
| 3. Barbara Dewilde, | Valley Hill Road | | |
| 4. Carollyn Casswell | 2146 Valley Hill Rd | | wcasswell@verizon.net |

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| 5. Esther and Walt Underhill, | Valley Hill Road | |
| 6. Chris Lawrence, | Pine Drive | 610-256-7583 |
| 7. Susan Beck | | |
| 8. Brian Pyle, | Valley Hill Road | 610-363-7698 |
| 9. Paul Hogan, | Sidley Hill Road | |
| 10. Jay Jacomin | Phoenixville Soccer Club | |
| 11. Mark Connolly | 50 Broadwater Lane | |
| 12. Matt Virgilio | 26 Sam Hill Rd | 484-202-8167 mwvirgilio@yahoo.co |
| 13. Patrick Doud | Phoenixville Area Soccer Club | |
| 14. Betsy Pilgrim | Mine Road | 610-935-2179 |
| 15. Chris Galbraith | Sunny Hollow | 610-935-4886 |
| 16. Sue Staas | Hollow Road | 610-933-9766 suestaas@verizon.net |
| 17. Charlie Philips | Hollow Road | |
| 18. Mike Zalovich | 735 Cedar Dr | 610-917-0214 |
| 19. Tom Committa | Consultant | |
| 20. Bob Jones | Parks and Rec | |

Rails to Trails: Tom introduced Chris Lawrence, who is working with Rails to Trails between the Schuylkill River Trail and the Chester County Trail, following the old Devault Train line. Chris explained that although the line has not yet been abandoned by the Norfolk Southern Rail company, the effort now is to be sure that the corridor is kept open so that when changes are made, the trail will become a reality. Chris is recruiting volunteers to help in the effort to keep the proposed trail front and center; and to address the process of dismantling the rail line. He estimates that the timeline is fairly immediate. Even though the commuter rail line (the Candy Line) is still a possibility, it will probably not happen. *If you are interested, Chris' email address is riverwind@*

Mark Connolly added that good news things are happening in Phoenixville - the Schuylkill River Trail will be completed from the site of the old Foundary to the existing trail section from Spring city which ends at the Cromby power station.

Brief Recap on the Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan: Tom Comitta

Purpose of the community meetings is to talk about different ideas and concepts of Recreation in Charlestown that should be considered by Parks & Recreation & Trails committee. We are currently in the visioning process, based on the information and data that we have gathered through the questionnaire. Our hope is to report on the process to the supervisors in June. The last time the township went through this process, recreation ended up being part of the comprehensive plan of 2001.

Questionnaire Results: Chris Galbraith presented her final summary of final tabulations of Survey Results: (see attachment)

Chris reported that 251 residents responded to the questionnaire. She particularly thanked Matt Finlay for his help in recording the results.

Demographics:

- o Chris pointed out that the oldest residents rule in the Twp . the 38 to 60+ age group. Average time of residence in the township among the respondents is 17 years Respondents were evenly distributed across the township .

- Those living in townhouses tend to use their own facilities
- Many living in the township never use many of the available facilities; which is a reminder to us that we must communicate about the facilities that are available.
- The Nature center does very well in awareness . is there a lesson to be learned?
- Respondents in general support recreation in the township
- Chris was impressed by the variety and number of activities selected by respondents.
- The clear winners were nature, biking and hiking
- However, the second tier, picnic area, fitness trails, dog park, community theater, is very interesting
- The majority of respondents support and will attend a Community day in Charlestown.
 - 80% of respondents favor open space
 - Taxes are an important issue:
 - Respondents support open space and recreation;
 - but emphasize no more taxes.

Comments:

Chris mentioned that there were too many interesting comments to detail; but listed a few of the most striking:

- Comments on maintenance of Charlestown park = needs maintenance
- Need for Police protection, traffic control, especially on Rte 29
- Interest in Rails to trails
- Interest in a Municipal pool and a Community center
- Need for better communication . and the need to collect email addresses to facilitate communication among residents.

Chris speculated on some of the implications of the data:

- Our township is Multigenerational; it may be important to include grandparent needs
- Our residents intend to live here for a long time and want to know what will be happening in the future.
- There are many facilities in our neighborhood that are not being used
- The township's resources: time and money are limited.

Tom pointed out that the purpose of the community meetings is to generate ideas based on the data.

The final results from the questionnaire will be published and on the website.

Recap of the First Visioning Workshop on February 29, 2012:

Tom distributed a prioritized list of preferences for the use of Township recreation funds that was compiled at the February meeting. He asked the participants to grade the list (1, 2, 3) and to select their highest priority. *Tabulations are attached.*

Comments: This exercise generated lively discussion:

- Mark Connolly suggested that we prioritize acquiring easements for trail development. (Paying for trails)

- Dog Parks seem important
- Children's Playgrounds are important:
 - Some improvements needed in Charlestown Park . jungle gyms,
 - Charlestown School playgrounds are important.
 - It seems important to have a place for parents, grandparents and kids to gather while kids play. Brightside Farm . centrally located and have a place to play.
 - Questions about the purpose and use of Brightside Farm were discussed. A specific question was: **is it possible to walk around the farm, to go see the cows, etc. The answer: yes. – but remember it is a working farm – please stay out of the hay fields!**
- Number One Choice from this exercise was for an Open Area and seating for Theater and Concerts, especially for Kids theater.
 - It was suggested that this could promote a sense of community.
 - Involve older people+
 - Wisner Rapp could be a center for some activities on a small scale.

Township Easements:

Charlie Philips briefly explained open space easements in the township:

- large landowners can sell development rights to township . the twp. can give cash plus tax deductions for ten years.
- These easements are funded by a ½ of 1 percent earned income tax, devoted to open space, which was adopted by 85% of township residents who voted in the 2008 election.
- 85% of open space easements include trail easements.

Visioning Exercise:

Participants were asked to indicate where each recreational activity should be placed in the township.

Tom Comitta suggested that the township is composed of several Character Areas: Residential, Planned Communities, industrial, Open Space . wooded and farm. Next to consider is how the Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan should fit these areas. He proposed three steps to consider:

- First: ideas on enhancements at existing Parks, Recreational Areas, Open Space Areas, and Trails
- Ideas for enhancements in Devault @ Spring Oak & Pickering Grant proposed TND, as well as on Township property
- Ideas for enhancements in other areas of the Township

Questions to ask should be:

- What open space types are most appropriate in each of the character zones?
- What facility type would be appropriate in each character zone 20 years from now?

- How large an area should each proposed or existing facility serve?
- Resources should be put into %o to+places.
- Resources maintained by twp should serve the twp.
Tabulations of responses are attached.

Next steps: Will be to draw ideas for each venue. Tom will present these at the next and final community meeting on April 30 at the **Great Valley Middle School**.

Final discussion and comments:

- Bike Trails need to be put in the plan.
- Chester County maintains a Map of 40 trails around Charlestown. Missing links need to be put in. (<http://www.chesco.org/ccparks/lib/ccparks/trails>).
- The County also maintains map of existing thoroughfares for bikers.
- Charlestown Park seems inaccessible to most of the township.
- The character zones and service radius concepts are very important. The Service radius must justify recreation fees paid by developers.
- Devault may be the place for parks of last resort.
- Concerns for Charlestown Park . it needs refurbishing! Some are willing to pay and to help.
- At the end of the day, the township residents will have a wish list and then must decide how to pay for them.
- Need a strategy for defining areas that are public and to connect them by trails through the township.

Next Steps:

Mr. Jones thanked the participants for coming this evening and for the productive discussion. Mr. Comitta said the final work session will be held at the Great Valley Middle School on April 30th at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment:

Mr. Comitta adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Staas
Chair, Trails Committee

ADDENDA: TABULATIONS

Park, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan

Charlestown Township Chester County, PA

VISIONING SESSION PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2: March 29, 2012

Responses to Question 3

Hypothetically, how would you spend/dispense \$100.00 of park, recreation, open space, and/or trail resources? (The list below reflects the order of dollar values, from highest to lowest from the 2-29-12 respondents.)

TABULATIONS: April 9, 2012

<u>Item</u>	<u>Indicate Priorities</u>			<u>Indicate Your</u>
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>#1 Choice</u>
Improve/Rehabilitate Existing Parks & Recreation Areas	13	7	1	(6)
Acquire Land for Open Space	7	5	6	
Develop New Trails	10	6	2	(2)
Protect Historic Resources	10	8	1	
Improve/Rehabilitate Existing Trails & Signs	12	4	2	
Develop New Parks & Recreation Areas	7	6	6	

Acquire Easements to Preserve Open Space	11	5	3	(6)
Picnic Tables	5	10	3	
Gateway Signage	3	6	9	
Parking	4	10	5	
Barn Rehabilitation	6	2	10	
Historic Markers	2	11	5	
Benches	3	9	6	
Lighting	1	7	10	
Landscaping	1	5	12	
Tennis Court	4	2	12	(1)
Children	8	6	4	
Dog Park	5	6	7	

Open Area & Seating for Theater, Concerts	6	8	5	(4)
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A = Highest Priority; B = Moderate Priority; C = Low Priority

Park, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan

Charlestown Township, Chester County, PA

VISIONING SESSION PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2: March 29, 2012

Place an (X) to indicate where you believe certain Park and Recreational Facilities should be located.

TABULATIONS: April 9, 2012

Existing Park & Recreational Facilities													
P & R facilities	A. Charlestown Park	B. Brightside Farm	C. Charlestown E.S.	D. Ice Dam	E. Jenkins Tract	F. 6.2 Ac. Devault	G. Baughman Mill	H. Rev War Cemetary	I. Longwood School	J. Grange	K. Rapp House	L. Nature Center	M. Markley
1. Amphitheatre	6	7	3		2	3				1		1	
2. Arts Venue	1	2	2		1	2	9			6	5	5	
3. Baseball/Softball Field	6	1	2			3						1	
4. Basketball Courts	8	1	3			2							
5. Biking Trails	5	9	1	4	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
6. Community Gardens		10				1			1			2	2
7. Cross-Country Ski Trails	2	5	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8. Dog Park	8	7			3	5							
9. Equestrian Trails	3	6	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10. Fitness Trails	8	6	3	2	5	1						1	
11. Hiking Trails	3	8	2	6	4	1							

12. Ice Skating Park				2		2				1		2	1
P & R facilities	A. Charlestown Park	B. Brightside Farm	C. Charlestown E.S.	D. Ice Dam	E. Jenkins Tract	F. 6.2 Ac. Devault	G. Baughman Mill	H. Rev War Cemetery	I. Longwood School	J. Grange	K. Rapp House	L. Nature Center	M. Markley
13. Lacrosse Field	7	1	1			2							
14. Music Venue	5	11	2		1	3				5	1	2	
15. Nature Trails	1	6	1	9	3		1	1				4	1
16. Passive Open Space	1	7		2	6	1		3	1				
17. Picnic Pavilion	10	9		2	7	4	4					2	
18. Picnic Tables	12	6		4	6	3	2		1			1	
19. Playground	10	4	3		5	5	2			1			
20. Restrooms	15	12	3		3	3	3	1		6	3	1	
21. Senior Center	5	6	1			1	1			4	2	2	
22. Sledding Hill	4		1									1	
23. Soccer	11	2	2			2							
24. Teen Center	3	4	1			3				2			
25. Tennis Courts	6	3	3			4				2			
26. Theatre Venue	6	8	4		1	4				5		2	
27. Tot Lot	4	2	3		3		2			1			
28. Volleyball	7	4	2			2							