

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of March 19, 2025**

Present: Craig Melograno, Chairman
Rich Valiga, Vice-Chair
Maureen Nunn
Danielle Porreca
Michael Mrozinski
Craig Adams

Patty Furber, B&Z Administrator
Jim Hersh, Gilmore & Associates

Absent: Rusty Beardsley

Call to Order:

The meeting of the Lower Gwynedd Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes: January 15, 2025

A motion was made by Mr. Adams and seconded by Ms. Porreca to approve the minutes of the Lower Gwynedd Township Planning Commission meeting of January 15, 2025. The motion carried unanimously.

ACTS - Gwynedd Estates Skilled Nursing Facility - Review of Planning Module:

Township Engineer, Mr. Jim Hersh, explained to the PC the requirements for the planning module for the ACTS Skilled Nursing Facility at Spring House Estates. Mr. Hersh stated that the proposed facility will consist of 39 nursing beds, and as a result, will increase their sewer flow, which requires a planning module. Mr. Hersh stated the planning module was reviewed by the Montgomery County Planning Commission and is also required to be reviewed by Lower Gwynedd's Planning Commission for ACTS to submit their application to the DEP. Mr. Valiga wanted to know why the applicant didn't realize this would be a requirement before their first presentation. Mr. Hersh stated that DEP gave a determination after their initial review and informed them that a full planning module would be required. Mr. Valiga stated that 400 gallons a day is used as guidance, but when they measure the flow, what happens if they submit 100 gallons on their application. Mr. Hersh stated that they are submitting 100 gallons because these skilled nursing units will consist of one person/one bed which would be estimated to be

100 gallons per day, per person. Mr. Hersh stated this was reviewed by his office and is consistent with what would be acceptable by DEP.

Mr. Melograno wanted to know why they didn't hook up through Upper Dublin. Mr. Hersh stated there was a discussion with the applicant regarding going through Upper Dublin or Lower Gwynedd. He stated that it was decided that the sewer would go through Lower Gwynedd Township which was determined by the township's 537 plan. He stated that the sewer would be serviced by a privately owned pump station that would generate approximately around 15 EDU's. Mr. Melograno wanted to know if the pump station would be adequately sized for the increased flow. Mr. Hersh stated that it should suffice.

Mr. Hersh stated that there are a series of questions on form Component 4A that are required to be answered. He proceeded to go through the questionnaire. Mr. Hersh discussed question number 5 "Does this project propose encroachments, obstructions, or dams that will affect wetlands." He stated no to that question, since a conditional use application was submitted for the encroachment. He stated they have proposed offsets to relocate flow to other parts of the site. Mr. Hersh stated that he was unsure of the answer but didn't think it would affect the wetlands. Mr. Melograno wanted to know about question 16 "Has a waiver of the sewage facilities planning requirements been requested for the residual tract of this subdivision?" Mr. Hersh stated that this was not a subdivision, and the question is asking if a waiver was requested for a planning module. Mr. Melograno wanted to know if a waiver was requested. Mr. Hersh stated that a waiver was not requested since that would have to be signed by his office. Mr. Melograno stated that "residual" might mean they might ask for more capacity in the future. Mr. Hersh stated that he would look further into that question prior to Mr. Melograno signing the application.

A motion was made by Mr. Melograno and seconded by Ms. Porreca to recommend approval of ACTS DEP Planning Module with the following recommendations:

1. Gilmore's office to check for inconsistencies and do further research on question number 16 regarding a waiver for a residual tract and question number 5, verify that there will be no encroachment into the wetlands.

The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.



Lower Gwynedd Township:

1. Presentation of the sidewalk/trail plan: Mr. John Farrell, Project Manager & EMS

Coordinator for Lower Gwynedd Township and Mr. Jim Hersh, Township Engineer, were present for the presentation regarding an updated map of the sidewalk and trail system within the township. Mr. Farrell stated that he has been working with Mr. Hersh putting together a strategic plan for the sidewalks and trails for the township. He stated there have been previous discussions with the Parks & Recreation board, Environmental Advisory Council and now he wanted to get input from the PC regarding the plan. Mr. Farrell stated that he worked with Ms. Sandi Feight-Hicks, Recreation Director, who expressed to him an urgent need to update the existing trail maps.

Mr. Farrell stated that part of the process was to look for major priority gaps within the trail system that need to be connected. He stated that their goal is to have a map/document in place to use during the review of land development applications to determine if sidewalks or trails should be installed. He stated that there are community designations located on the map such as schools, religious facilities and shopping areas. Mr. Melograno wanted to know if this map would be incorporated into the comprehensive plan. Mr. Farrell stated that this would be a separate map from the comprehensive plan. Mr. Melograno felt that there shouldn't be any discrepancies, and the maps should coincide with each other. Ms. Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager and Director of Building & Zoning, was in attendance and explained that the comprehensive plan is going to address trails and sidewalks from a much higher viewpoint. She explained that this sidewalk/trail map will pinpoint exact locations and serve as a better tool for future subdivision and land development applications.

Ms. Porreca wanted to know if any of the HOA boards would be notified regarding installing sidewalks. Mr. Farrell stated that they haven't reached out to any of the HOA boards since this is more of a wish list for future connections. He stated that they are more than welcome to attend future board meetings.

Mr. Valiga reiterated what Mr. Melograno stated that he didn't think it was appropriate to have different plans and not be consistent. Ms. Worman stated that Ms. Claire Warren from Montgomery County was up to speed with both plans. Mr. Melograno stated that he would be hesitant to short-circuit feasibility and felt that it should be up to us to determine if a trail should be installed.

Mr. Hersh stated that Ms. Hicks completed a ton of research, going through numerous documents trying to find horseways trails that were not maintained, but have easements, to include on the map. He stated they also looked to see if any trails leave Lower Gwynedd and connect into another adjacent municipality trails, like the Green Ribbon Trail. Ms. Worman stated that this map could be included as an appendix to the comprehensive plan for reference purposes. Mr.

Melograno stated that having this as an appendix to the comprehensive plan would keep that from being used against us.

Mr. Hersh stated when they started with the Parks & Recreation board, they gave feedback regarding where they could see potential future connections. He stated for example; a priority connection would be along Welsh Road to install a trail in order to connect some of those isolated neighborhoods to the township trail system. He stated there have been previous discussions about connections to the 309 expressway in relation to the BET discussions. He stated that if that project doesn't happen, it would still make sense to have some level of pedestrian activity under the 309 expressway. He stated that the township has already attained easements with Gwynedd Mercy University and Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School for a trail along the Evans Road frontage. He stated that there has been feedback from the Greycliffe community for a potential connection to the Green Ribbon Trail.

Mr. Hersh stated that the EAC board wanted to know why the trail for Evans Road would be a priority and not a connection from south of Sumneytown Pike down to the train station. He felt that was a very good point and will discuss it with the Board of Supervisors. He stated that there would be several challenges involved with the connection for the trail on Evans Road due to it being a PennDOT road, clearing frontages on residential properties and the right-of-way. Mr. Melograno wanted to know how to incorporate this map with future land development applications that come in front of the planning commission. Mr. Hersh stated that when someone comes in with a land development application and it doesn't make sense to install a sidewalk or trail, then a fee-in-lieu should be considered. The fee-in-lieu would fund trail sections that are priority or match a grant. He stated that Gilmore could note in their review letters if a property is within a priority route. Mr. Melograno thought this would make the process much easier. Mr. Hersh stated this process also included reviewing the SALDO (Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance) to see if there would be any changes that could help us get more trails into the locations we want. He felt nothing had to be changed in the ordinance but based on the wording with the MPC regarding sidewalks, we can't force someone to do offsite improvements. Mr. Melograno wanted to know if we should be making a distinction between paved and unpaved trails. Mr. Farrell stated that this is all about connectivity. Mr. Hersh stated that he would like to expand on the requirement section in SALDO to identify the ownership and maintenance responsibilities for sidewalks and trails. He stated the township shouldn't have to take on that burden. Mr. Valiga wanted to know if there would be any specifications on trails, if they would have to be paved. Mr. Hersh stated that there is a section in SALDO that requires all trails to be paved. Mr. Melograno wanted to know if this map would go back to the planning

commission and how this would become an official document. Mr. Hersh stated that they intend to incorporate all the comments they feel are warranted and bring those back to the Parks & Recreation board, then to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Nunn wanted to know when this would be available for public comment. Mr. Hersh stated there would be a presentation at an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting. Mr. Valiga wanted the PC members to be notified when this is listed on the board's agenda. Mr. Farrell stated that this would be scheduled for one of the May board meetings. He stated that he would send out a link to the maps to the members of the PC and would appreciate feedback by March 28th.

2. **Update of the comprehensive plan:** Ms. Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager and Director of Building & Zoning stated that she will be emailing the PC members a link to the draft comprehensive plan. She stated that it is 98 pages, and that the public adoption process has not started yet. She is just looking for feedback. Ms. Worman stated that the plan will be back to the PC during summer when the public process starts. Ms. Worman stated that the comprehensive plan is a long-range plan that identifies the community vision and acts as a guide for future growth and development. She went through the timeline of the comprehensive plan process and touched on the community outreach efforts that have been made, including open houses, surveys, and attendance at public events like Fall Fest. These outreach efforts were used to gather feedback and data from the public to help assist the steering committee in crafting a plan. She reviewed the chapters covered by the plan and the format of the plan which basically sets a goal and then offers recommendations on implementation to achieve the stated goal. She used the trail connections goal as an example explaining that the stated goal was to increase trail connectivity and the recommendation was to develop a plan prioritizing connections, i.e. the Sidewalk and Trails Plan that was presented this evening. She continued that the last part of the plan is the focus area section which centers on the revitalization of Bethlehem Pike. Mr. Melograno had an issue with the notations on the future land-use map designating specific parcels, such as Berkadia, as "town center mixed-use". He felt that would generate a lot of negative feedback and should be changed to mixed-use. Ms. Worman agreed to take that back to Claire. Mr. Melograno stated that he thought keeping the Bethlehem Pike corridor its own entity would be preferred. Ms. Worman encouraged the PC members to read through the draft. She stated she would appreciate comments to be sent prior to the next comprehensive plan meeting scheduled for April 14th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Patty Furber, Secretary